

# Guide for Businesses to donate food



Many area restaurants, caterers, grocers and food service companies are helping people who experience hunger.

While steps can be taken to plan and prepare food carefully, sometimes excess food and unused ingredients are inevitable.

## Why donate?

**Support your community.** Food businesses are an important part of the community and there is a vibrant and extensive network of partners throughout the region working to collect and distribute food donations. Donating healthy, edible food can have a big impact in people's lives.

**Stay competitive.** Employees and customers want to support businesses that have sustainable practices. By tracking the type and amount of donations, businesses may identify other opportunities to reduce food waste and costs throughout their operations.

**Conserve resources.** Your donations help ensure that the valuable resources such as water, land and energy that went into producing, processing, shipping and storing food are not wasted.

## Liability and tax incentives

Federal and state laws protect you from liability when you donate food in good faith that you believe to be safe and edible ([Bill Emerson Food Donation Act](#) and [Oregon Good Samaritan Law](#)).

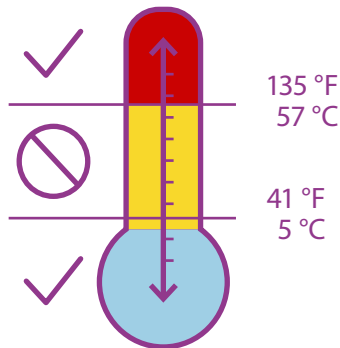
## Tips for successful donation

- Build partnerships and get to know the food donation organizations in your community to understand what types of foods they can accept.
- Always call ahead. Food donation organizations need to assess the time, effort and coordination necessary to pick up or receive your donated food.
- Prioritize the donation of healthy food most desired by food donation organizations and the people they serve; avoid sending unusable food that they then may have to dispose of later.
- If possible, establish a regular frequency of donations and provide larger quantities of food rather than small sporadic donations. For small or infrequent quantities consider donating to employees first.
- Work with your donation partners to establish a system for labeling and tracking donations.

Businesses that donate are eligible for federal tax deductions. Work with your accountant or business manager for financial advice.

## Keep food safe

Protecting the health of the communities we serve is the highest priority. It is critical to maintain hot or cold temperature control on foods you will be donating to reduce the risk of food spoilage, microbial growth and foodborne illness. Separate foods by type (e.g. meat, dairy) to avoid cross contamination.



**Cold Food must be kept at 41 °F or below**  
**Hot Food must be kept at 135 °F or above**

After cooling hot food properly, package food in food-grade, sealed containers and label with food name, ingredients, potential allergens and date it was frozen or prepared. Label non-frozen foods with a use-by date, which is six days after the food was prepared.

## Resources

In the Portland Metro region, go to [foodwastestopswithme.org/donate](https://foodwastestopswithme.org/donate) to connect with local government program staff who can:

- Help you identify local organizations serving donated food in your community
- Help you identify supplies you may need (e.g. labels, food-grade plastic bags, durable containers with lids, donation tracking logs)
- Provide free resources, technical assistance and food waste prevention tools

**Beaverton**  
503-526-2665

**Clackamas County**  
503-742-4458

**Gresham**  
503-618-2258

**Portland**  
503-823-7202

**Washington County**  
503-846-3605

## Food that can or cannot be donated

Always call ahead; not all donation organizations can accept all items

### Can donate



- Bulk food items
- Canned, packaged or boxed food items, commercially processed
- Commercially baked goods
- Entrees and prepared items that have not been served to the public
- Frozen foods, commercially packaged
- Grab-n-Go packaged items
- Fruit and vegetables—fresh, packaged or loose
- Meat—raw, cooked or frozen and stored separately
- Dairy products and eggs
- Food prepared and stored according to safe handling guidelines
- Shelf-stable (non-perishable) foods that are at or near the Sell-By or Best-By date

### Cannot donate



- Prepared food that has been served to the public, or is past the 7-day mark from the day it was prepared
- Food that has been in the temperature danger zone for four hours or more
- Food that was improperly cooled or stored
- Food in open or torn containers and bags
- Food in unlabeled packaging