

Food rescue guide for schools



Help your community and the environment

In the United States, as much as 40 percent of food produced for people to eat is wasted along the food chain. Grocery stores, restaurants and institutions are responsible for about 40 percent of this waste. Meanwhile, 11 percent of Minnesotans don't have a steady supply of food to their tables. Donating surplus prepared food helps local hunger-relief agencies serve those in need, including many children and seniors.

Donating food also helps the environment by preventing waste. Wasted food is the most prevalent material in the trash by far, representing about 20 percent of the trash by weight. When food is wasted, the water, energy, fertilizer and cropland that went into producing the food is wasted, too.

"Our department is concerned about how our actions contribute to climate change. Fixing our food systems using tactics like reducing our food waste, is critical to reducing our carbon footprint and making an impact on climate change. We must be part of the solution"

–Barb Mechura, Nutrition Director at Hopkins Public Schools

You are protected from liability

Food donors are protected by the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Act, which was passed into federal law in 1996. Organizations that donate food in good faith to a nonprofit for distribution to food insecure individuals are not subject to civil or criminal liability that arises from the condition of the food.

Sharing tables

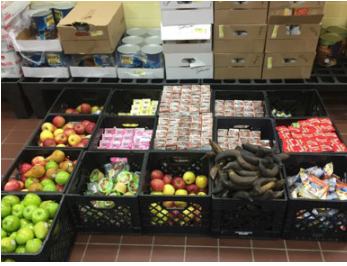


If your school does not already have a sharing table in the cafeteria, set one up! Students put unwanted food and beverages on the sharing table which other students can take. Work with nutrition staff and follow guidelines from the MN Department of Education and MN Department of Health.

Items that can be put on a sharing table:

- Whole fruit with a thick peel like bananas and oranges, as well as washed apples
- Fruit or applesauce cup, bags of carrots or other packaged fruits or vegetables
- Unopened, pre-packaged items, such as granola bars, cereal packs, crackers
- Shelf stable packets of ketchup, mustard, or mayonnaise
- Unopened milk, string cheese, and yogurt when a temperature control mechanism (time used as a temperature control or a mechanical holding unit) is in place

Food donation



Some schools in Hennepin County donate surplus prepared food from the kitchen, and others donate items from the cafeteria. Items that are accepted on a sharing table have the potential to be donated.

The following organizations can schedule regular pick-ups for donated food.

- Loaves & Fishes
 - Food rescue webpage: loavesandfishesmn.org/programs-2/food-rescue
- Feeding America's Meal Connect program
 - (312) 263-2303 or info-mealconnect@feedingamerica.org
 - mealconnect.org

How can I keep the food safe?

The Minnesota Food Code applies to all donated food.

Donated prepared foods and potentially hazardous foods must meet the temperature requirements below. Some examples of potentially hazardous foods include cut tomatoes or melons, dairy products, meats, poultry, seafood, most cooked food and cut leafy greens.

1. Cold food must be maintained at 41°F or below.
2. Hot food must be maintained at 135°F or above.
3. Cooling process for hot food: potentially hazardous food must be cooled from 135°F to 70°F in less than 2 hours, and cooled from 70°F to 41°F or below in less in 4 additional hours for a total of 6 hours.

How should I label the food?

Requirements for labeling depend on whether the food is in its original package or has been prepared as a meal.

- Donated commercially prepackaged food labels must clearly show the name of the item or food, manufacturer information, list of ingredients, and use-by date -- if included. Must contain the statement: "Donated Food-Not for Resale."
- Donated prepared food must be labeled on the outside of the container with the name of the food, the food donor, and the preparation date. (Example: Lasagna prepared 1/12/22, from Linden Elementary, 123 Main Street). Each individual item does not need to be labeled.

How should I transport the food?

- The donated food should be accompanied by a log sheet with times and temperature of the product when it left the donating establishment. Upon arrival at the receiving establishment, record the time and temperature on the log sheet. The product should be delivered at 41°F or below for cold items or 135°F or above for hot items.
- The log sheet should be filled out completely, be kept with the product and retained for a minimum of three months at the receiving establishment.
- If the potentially hazardous food is received at a temperature between 41°F and 135°F, it should be discarded.

Request assistance

For assistance starting a food rescue program, contact Kira Berglund at kira.berglund@hennepin.us.

