

Donating Safe and Nutritious Food to Food Pantries

Our county has an abundance of food, yet many people in the U.S. still suffer from food insecurity. In fact, it is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of the food supply is not available for human consumption with 31% food loss at the retail and consumer levels.

When donating to a food pantry or food bank, it is important to not just “clean out your cupboard” and donate the foods that you don’t want or can’t use anymore. Food pantries also do not want to waste food, but do not want to provide unsafe or unhealthy food to their customers either.

Cash donations are also greatly appreciated by food banks and food pantries. They can buy the items most needed by their clients and will not have to take the time to sort and move donated items.

A frequently asked question on the topic: Can I donate “expired” food? Do NOT donate food that is past its “best by,” use by,” or “sell by” date. It may take a while for the food to actually get on the food pantry shelf and then to the consumer.

When donating, try to donate foods that would fill a healthy and safe plate.

Fruits: canned in light syrup or juice; dried: peaches, applesauce, raisins, fruit cocktail, apples, pineapple, oranges, cranberries, pears, 100% fruit juice.

Vegetables: low sodium canned: corn, peas, carrots, beets, green and wax beans, mixed vegetables, sweet potatoes/yams, tomatoes and tomato sauces, soup.

Healthful grains: whole-grain crackers, brown rice, whole grain pasta, whole-grain breakfast cereal, whole wheat flour, cornmeal, oatmeal, granola bars.

Protein foods: canned or dried beans: kidney, navy, garbanzo, pinto, great northern, black; canned tuna or salmon (water packed), canned chicken; nuts: walnuts, pecans, peanuts, almonds, and nut butters.

Dairy: nonfat dry milk, evaporated milk, and shelf-stable (UHT) milk. Contact your local food pantry to find out what other items they many need. Consider gluten-free, dairy-free, nut free items as well.

For additional information the publication, *Donating Safe and Nutritious Food to Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens*, MF3352, is available at www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3352.pdf.

