



## DONATED FOOD GUIDELINES

ACCEPTABLE FOODS	UNACCEPTABLE FOODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Whole fruits &amp; vegetables, including home-grown (see <b>Appendix A</b> for more details)</li> <li>● Commercially canned foods</li> <li>● Dry, unopened, packaged goods (e.g. cereal, crackers, pancake mix etc.)</li> <li>● Baked goods without perishable fillings (must come from a facility with a valid <i>AHS Food Handling Permit</i><sup>1</sup>; i.e. not homemade)</li> <li>● Baked goods with perishable fillings and ready-to-eat cooked foods (e.g. surplus foods from restaurants or events) IF it meets the following criteria:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the product is not leftover food from a patron’s table or open buffet;</li> <li>○ the product has been chilled and maintained at or below 4°C and protected from contamination at all times; and,</li> <li>○ the product comes directly from a facility with a valid AHS Food Handling Permit.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>High-risk foods</i><sup>1</sup> that are maintained at or below 4°C if refrigerated, or below -12°C if frozen (see <b>Appendix A</b> for more details)</li> <li>● Wild game meat IF received through a program approved by AHS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Foods in bulging, rusty, leaking or severely dented cans</li> <li>● Cans without labels, unless there is reliable assurance as to the contents of the can</li> <li>● Dry goods that aren't in sealed packages</li> <li>● Loose goods that aren't in food grade packaging (e.g. loaves of bread in garbage bags)</li> <li>● Home-processed/canned fruits or vegetable (e.g. jam, pickles, blanched vegetables)</li> <li>● Eggs that are cracked or visibly dirty</li> <li>● Meat and poultry which have not been inspected</li> <li>● Fish products not caught with a commercial license</li> <li>● Any food that has been contaminated by insects, rodents, or chemicals</li> <li>● <i>High-Risk Foods</i><sup>2</sup> that are not maintained at or below 4°C if refrigerated, or below -12°C if frozen</li> <li>● Expired products (see <b>Appendix B</b> for more information on expiry vs. best before dates)</li> </ul>

**Reference:** [Guidelines for Distribution of Donated Foods](#). Alberta Health Services, December 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Facilities with an **AHS Food Handling Permit** include restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores, commercial kitchens, etc. (not personal homes)

<sup>2</sup> **High Risk Foods** are foods which will support the growth of pathogenic micro-organisms (i.e. meat, poultry, seafood and seafood products, dairy products, soups, sauces, gravies, eggs and egg products, baked goods with perishable fillings, etc).



# DONATED FOOD GUIDELINES

## APPENDIX A - ASSESSING QUALITY

### PRODUCE

Fruits and vegetables that may not appear to be top quality are often partially, if not entirely usable. Bruised/scarred produce is usually still edible - the bruised/scarred portion of the item can be cut away and very little of the fruit is wasted. Bruising is most often caused by the handling and method in which the fruit is shipped, and is *not* an indicator that the item is spoiled.

Whole/uncut produce can be donated from both AHS-approved facilities and home gardens. If produce has been cut/prepared, it must be treated as a *high risk food* and transported appropriately (see **Appendix C**). Only accept cut/prepared produce from AHS-approved facilities (not personal homes).

#### When to refuse/discard:

- If the majority of the produce is bruised, mouldy, extremely discolored, has a foul odour, or the skin is wrinkling or peeling away with the slightest touch
- If the item is not whole (i.e. has been cut) and has not been kept refrigerated or frozen

### BAKED GOODS

If baked goods contain dairy (eg. cheese) or meat, they must be treated as a *high risk food* and transported appropriately (see **Donated Foods Transportation Guideline**). Only accept baked goods from AHS-approved facilities (not personal homes).

#### When to refuse/discard:

- If the item is considered high risk and has not been kept refrigerated or frozen
- If there is any visible sign of mould or the product has a foul odour

### MEAT & PREPARED MEALS

Meat and prepared meals (such as salads, sandwiches, pasta, etc.) are always considered *high risk foods* and must be transported as such (see **Appendix C**). Only accept meat & prepared meals from AHS-approved facilities (not personal homes) and only if they meet the best before guidelines (see **Appendix B**).

#### When to refuse/discard:

- If the item has not been kept refrigerated or frozen, or is past the time guidelines given in **Appendix B**
- If there is any visible sign of discolouration, mould, or the product has a foul odour



# DONATED FOOD GUIDELINES

## APPENDIX A - ASSESSING QUALITY

### DAIRY

Dairy is always considered a *high risk food* and must be transported as such (see **Appendix C**). Dairy does not need to be frozen, but only accept dairy from AHS-approved facilities (not personal homes) and only if it meets the best before guidelines (see **Appendix B**).

#### When to refuse/discard:

- If the item has not been kept refrigerated or frozen, or is past the time guidelines given in **Appendix B**
- If there is any visible sign of discolouration, mould, inconsistent texture, or the product has a foul odour
- If the product has been tampered with (ie. is not sealed)

### EGGS

These are always considered *high risk foods* and must be transported as such (see **Appendix C**). Only accept eggs from AHS-approved facilities (not personal homes or farms). We can accept eggs that are past the best before date as best before dates do not reflect food safety, but peak food quality, and with eggs a simple test of placing the egg in a glass of water will tell you whether or not it is safe to consume: if it sinks (can sit horizontally or vertically), it's still good; if it floats, throw it out!

#### When to refuse/discard:

- If the item has not been kept refrigerated
- If the eggs are leaking, cracked, or visibly dirty



# DONATED FOOD GUIDELINES

## APPENDIX B - UNDERSTANDING BEST BEFORE vs. EXPIRY DATES

**EXPIRY DATES** refer to food safety. The only foods in Canada required to have expiry dates are infant formula, meal replacements, and nutritional supplements. These items should not be bought, sold, donated, or eaten after the expiry date.

**BEST BEFORE DATES** are an indicator of peak quality, *not* food safety. They apply to unopened food only. Foods that are past their best before dates may lose some freshness or change in flavour, texture, or nutritional value, but it does not mean they are unsafe to eat. The following table lists the amount of time that food is generally still acceptable for distribution past the best before date.

**Table B-1: Guideline for Distributing Food Past the Best Before Date**

	PRODUCE	BREAD	GRAINS & CEREALS	DAIRY		JUICE
				milk & cheese	butter	
Room temperature	up to 1 month*	1 week	12 months	<2 hours	1 week	1 month
Refrigerated	up to 1 month*	2 weeks	-	2 weeks	3 months	6 months
Frozen	1 year	1 month	-	6 months	6 months	1 year
Canned/jarred	1 year	-	-	-	-	1 year

\*Depending on the produce item

	RED MEAT		POULTRY		SEAFOOD	
	raw	cooked	raw	cooked	raw	cooked
Room temperature	<2 hours	<2 hours	<2 hours	<2 hours	<2 hours	<2 hours
Refrigerated	3-4 days	within 3 days of preparation	3-4 days	within 3 days of preparation	3-4 days	within 2 days of preparation
Frozen	12 months (whole) 3 months (ground)	3 months	12 months (whole) 6 months (processed)	2 months	4-6 months	-
Canned/jarred	-	1 year	-	1 year	-	1 year

**Reference:** [Guideline for Distributing Food Past the Best Before Date](#). Food Banks Canada, July 2013.



# DONATED FOOD GUIDELINES

## APPENDIX C - TRANSPORTATION OF DONATED FOOD

### TRANSPORTATION OF LOW RISK FOODS

*Low-risk foods* are foods which will not support the growth of pathogenic micro-organisms.

**Examples:** dry foods, unopened commercially canned foods, whole fresh fruits and vegetables, baked goods without perishable fillings, etc.

#### **Pick-up protocol:**

- Arrive at vendor between hours described in route details.
- Do not accept any food items that are not fit for distribution (based on the criteria outlined in the above sections); leave these items with the vendor to compost.

#### **Drop-off protocol:**

- Drop-off donation at service agency as per instructions described in route details

### TRANSPORTATION OF HIGH RISK FOODS

*High-risk foods* are foods which will support the growth of pathogenic micro-organisms.

**Examples:** meat, poultry, seafood and seafood products, dairy products, soups, sauces, gravies, eggs and egg products, baked goods with perishable fillings, etc.

**Allowable transport time (between vendor and service agency):** up to 60 minutes

#### **Supplies required:**

- cooler, thermometer
- refrigerated truck for donations over 20 cubic feet in size and/or 100 kg in weight



# DONATED FOOD GUIDELINES

## APPENDIX C - TRANSPORTATION OF DONATED FOOD

### TRANSPORTATION OF HIGH RISK FOODS (continued)

#### Pick-up protocol:

- Arrive at vendor between hours described in route details.
- Do not accept any food items that are not fit for distribution (based on the criteria outlined in the above sections).
- Check temperature of frozen/refrigerated food items:
  - Do not accept any refrigerated food item if temperature is greater than 4°C.
  - Do not accept any frozen food item if temperature is greater than -12°C.
- Place all acceptable donated food in cooler. All frozen/refrigerated food donations must fully fit within the cooler with the lid firmly closed.
- Leave any items that are not fit for distribution or did not meet the temperature requirements with the vendor to compost.

#### Drop-off Protocol:

- Arrive at service agency within 60 minutes of picking up the donation.
- Check temperature of frozen/refrigerated food items:
  - Remove any refrigerated food from donation if it's temperature is greater than 4°C.
  - Remove any frozen food from donation if it's temperature is greater than -12°C.
- Let the service agency staff know if any items did not meet the temperature requirements upon delivery so that they can compost these items.