



# Food Donation Guidelines

This quick reference sheet will guide you to properly prepare acceptable donations for Table to Table rescues and will promote efficient procedures and ensure that food safety regulations are followed.

## WE CAN ACCEPT:



### Dairy, Eggs, Cheese, & Perishable Beverages

- Refrigerated at 40°F or below (no freezing)
- Dozens of eggs, complete or incomplete
- Dairy donations on or before the expiration date
- Cheese donations up to 30 days after the expiration date
- Use discretion when donating items past expiration



### Deli & Prepared Foods

- Fresh deli product within five days of packaged date
- Prepackaged potato salad, coleslaw, & sandwiches up to & including two days after the expiration date
- Prepared foods properly chilled to 40°F or below, labeled, and dated
- Food served or placed on a buffet can be donated if the buffet is monitored for temperature and food safety



### Meat, Fish, & Poultry

- If refrigerated, raw meat, fish, & poultry must be held at 40°F or below and be within the expiration date
- If frozen, raw meat, fish, & poultry must have been frozen within 24 hours of the expiration date
- Frozen meat can be accepted up to 180 days after the expiration date
- We do not accept donations of meat or seafood meant to be consumed raw



### Produce

- At least 75% of the whole, uncut piece must be usable
- Cut & bagged produce up to two days past its cut date
- Cut produce must be refrigerated at 40°F or below
- Whole/uncut, home-grown produce
- Use discretion for quality



### Dry & Non-Perishable Goods

- Unopened soft packed goods (cereal, crackers, dried pasta, rice, etc.) up to 30 days after expiration date
- Canned and jarred goods (soup, condiments, dried herbs/spices etc.) up to 30 days after expiration date



### Frozen

- Up to 180 days after expiration date
- Double packaged with outer package damage only
- Product must be completely frozen prior to donating



### Baked Goods

- Frozen up to three months after expiration date
- If not frozen, up to two days past production date
- Use discretion for quality



Scan to sign up as a food donor



# Food Donation Guidelines

## Non-Food, Non-Traditional Donations

- Baby formula before expiration date
- Non-food items on a case-by-case basis (This includes paper products, personal items, cleaning supplies, laundry supplies, hygiene products, water, health items, etc.)
- Cookware and appliances on a case-by-case basis
- No medicine, vitamins, or medical equipment

## We Cannot Accept Food That

- Was not kept at the appropriate temperature for more than two hours
- Has damaged or compromised packaging, resulting in the loss of sanitary barrier
- Contains alcohol
- Off color or discolored product, use discretion for produce
- Has signs of mold, fungus, insects, or decay
- Thawed or refrozen product or produce with severe freezer burn
- Broken or chipped glass in packaging
- Was prepared in a home or non-commercially-licensed kitchen, including home canned products & baked goods
- Comes from privately catered events held in a residence due to temperature control issues

**Discarding food that does not meet the above criteria is not a waste. You are actually protecting the at-risk, food-insecure community that we help feed together. We encourage you to compost food that is not fit for consumption**

## Definitions

- **Best By Date:** This is a recommendation for best flavor and quality and is **not an indication of food safety**. Food can still be eaten after this date, but not taste as fresh due to a decline in quality. You'll often find this label on shelf-stable foods such as canned goods, crackers, cookies, and spices.
- **Sell By Date:** This is meant for stores not consumers as it tells retailers how long to keep a product on display. **It does not indicate food safety**. You'll often find this label on foods such as dairy products, eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, bread, and baked goods.
- **Use By Date:** This refers to the last date recommended for use of a product at peak quality. It does not indicate food safety (with the exception of infant formula). You'll often find this label on mostly perishable food, such as dairy products, meat, poultry, seafood, fresh produce, ready-to-eat-food, and eggs.
- **Freeze By Date:** This refers to the recommended date to freeze the product to maintain quality. **It does not indicate food safety**.
- The **Product Date** and **Sell Date** on products refer to different aspects of product labeling: A **Product Date** can refer to various labels such as "Best By," "Use By," or "Sell By." These dates often suggest the peak quality of the product and are not safety dates. For example, food may still be safe to eat after a "sell by" date, but it may not taste as fresh. A **Sell Date** indicates how long a product should be displayed for sale in stores. It does not guarantee food safety; products can still be safe to consume after this date if stored properly.

**Contact:** Christine Zeni, Network Director: · 201-693-3849 · [czeni@tabletotable.org](mailto:czeni@tabletotable.org)

**[tabletotable.org](http://tabletotable.org)**