

A Guide to Providing Food for Direct Donation



The Washington State Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Ecology are eager to help you safely donate food. For more ways to help, consider donating money, your time, or using social media to advocate safe food donation.

This guide offers best practices for providing direct donations to food insecure members of your community.

Contact your local health department food safety office for additional advice on donating food safely.

Your local WSU Cooperative Extension office is also a good source of food safety information.

- Local Health Department contacts: www.doh.wa.gov/foodsafetycontact
- WSU Cooperative Extensions: <http://pubs.cahnr.wsu.edu/locations/>



Food Safety Program
360-236-3330

FOOD RESCUE

Donation Guide — Share Pantry

Thank you for working to help your community by hosting or donating to a share pantry! Follow the best practices in this guide to make sure the food you provide is legal, wholesome, and safe.

What is a share pantry?

Share pantries are small, unattended, open-access food pantries. Food donations are provided by members of a neighborhood or community and generally use a “Take what you need, leave what you can” model.

Who is responsible?

The share pantry should have a host/steward who is responsible for ensuring that the food provided is wholesome, safe, and protected from contamination.

We recommend the host obtain a WA State Food Worker Card (www.doh.wa.gov/foodworkercard) and post donation guidelines to help donors know what food donations are suitable. The host should also check the share pantry regularly to make sure donations are appropriate.



How should food be stored?

Donated food needs to be protected from pests and environmental contamination. We recommend that food be stored:

- In a highly visible or public area to prevent tampering or vandalism.
- At least 6 inches off the ground.
- Produce: Stored in an open-air environment to prevent mold growth and food deterioration.
- Packaged foods: Stored in an enclosed area with tight door seals and overhead protection to prevent weather and pest damage. A share pantry example enclosure is provided in the photo above.



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture



Be part of the food waste solution!

Food waste is the largest component of our state's municipal solid waste, with edible food making up 8% of overall garbage, as noted in the Washington State Department of Ecology 2015-2016 Waste Characterization Study. The Environmental Protection Agency developed a Food Waste Recovery Hierarchy which lists feeding hungry people as one of the top strategies to prevent and reduce wasted food. By donating edible food, you can be part of the food waste solution and help reduce hunger in your community!

The Good Samaritan Food Donation Act

Chapter 69.80.031 RCW, also called the "Good Samaritan Food Donation Act," offers responsible food donors protection from criminal and civil liability if "apparently wholesome" food is donated to hunger relief organizations like food banks and meal programs. However, individuals providing direct donations to the hungry through share pantries are not protected by this law. Because share pantries are not hunger relief organizations, it is especially important that share pantry hosts and donors operate with judgment and diligence to make sure donated food is safe and wholesome.

What foods can be provided by a share pantry?

Share pantries should only provide shelf-stable, unopened, commercially packaged foods and fresh whole produce. These foods are considered low risk for causing illness and can be provided without obtaining a permit from the local health department. Although these foods do not require refrigeration for safety, they still need to be protected from contamination.

Types of food that can be provided by a share pantry



Store-bought or home-grown fresh, whole produce



Shelf-stable, unopened, commercially packaged food including food past its expiration or 'best buy' date. Examples: boxed baked goods and commercially-canned goods.



What foods can be provided by a hunger relief organization?

Refrigerated, frozen, or prepared foods are considered high risk for causing foodborne illness and cannot be provided at a share pantry. These foods are only allowed to be served by hunger relief organizations that are registered with the local health department. Hunger relief organizations must follow the Retail Food Code to ensure food is prepared and stored safely.

Types of food that can be provided by a hunger relief organization



Cut or ready-to-eat produce



Unpackaged ready-to-eat foods



Refrigerated or frozen foods



Prepared foods such as soup or casseroles

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