

Donating Safe and Nutritious Food to Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

The Situation

The United States has an abundance of food; yet many people in the U.S. still suffer from food insecurity and use food assistance such as food pantries and soup kitchens. Further, it is estimated that 30-40% of the US food supply is wasted, although some of it could be utilized by hungry families. Donations of safe and healthy food to food pantries and soup kitchens can help provide food to hungry families and also reduce food waste. It is critical that donated food is as safe and nutritious as possible so that more people have access to safe and healthy food, rather than just whatever has been in the back of someone's cupboard too long.

What We Did

K-State Research and Extension Specialists and agents developed a Fact Sheet, Leader's Guide, and presentation materials for local agents to provide food safety and nutrition information to groups organizing food drives and individuals donating to food drives. Numerous local extension units presented the materials to various community groups and interested individuals. Other KSRE personnel shared food drive cards developed by the KSRE SNAP-Ed program that lists ideas of a wide variety of healthy food donations and also shared information on safe and healthy food donations through press releases, social media, pod casts, newsletters and other avenues.

Outcomes

Of the 148 people that completed an evaluation after attending a presentation on this topic:

- 99% said they agreed completely or agreed somewhat that they learned which foods can be safely donated to food pantries and soup kitchens.
- 99% also said they agreed completely or somewhat that they learned safe practices in donating food to food banks and food pantries.
- 98% agreed completely or somewhat that they planned to take action and/or change something in their life after completing this lesson.



Success Story

Multiple participants noted that they learned how to combine foods donations to make a healthy meal or a meal kit gift basket for someone, “rather than donating what I don’t need”. Participants also learned about donating foods for people with special needs, such as gluten free and diabetics. Many also noted that they will check the dates on canned goods more carefully and plan to donate to food pantries and soup kitchens more often.

Contacts

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Lesson Objectives:

1. Identify foods that are and are not safe to donate to food pantries and soup kitchens.
2. Discuss safe practices in donating food to food banks and food pantries.
3. Develop a list of the top three points that you will consider the next time you donate to a food bank or soup kitchen or organize a food drive.