

# Donating Safe and Nutritious Food to Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

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## Introduction

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. Much of the food in the U.S. food supply is wasted but some of it could be utilized by hungry families. In fact, it is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of the food supply is wasted (not available for human consumption) in the U.S., with 31 percent food loss at the retail and consumer levels. Donations of safe and healthy food by food retailers and consumers to entities such as food pantries and soup kitchens can help provide food to hungry families and also reduce food waste.

Some groups may be reluctant to donate food that would otherwise be wasted because of the fear of liability if the food they donate makes someone sick. Therefore, in 1996, the U.S. Congress passed the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act to reduce potential donor liability if donations are made in good faith. In particular, this act can help grocery stores, restaurants, and similar retail organizations feel more comfortable donating food rather than needlessly sending food to the landfill.

However, it is critical that the food donated to such entities is as safe and nutritious as possible so that more people have access to safe and healthy food, rather than just whatever food has been in the back of someone's cupboard too long. This lesson provides food safety tips for people who are donating food to such entities, as well as for groups organizing food drives.



## 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.

## Intended Audiences

Adults and youth that may be donating to a food pantry, food bank, or soup kitchen or organizing a food drive, such as:

- Parent-teacher organizations
- Community clubs
- 4-H clubs

- School organizations
- Church groups
- Philanthropic groups

### Before the Lesson:

1. Review this leader's guide and the fact sheet (MF3352).
2. Check listed references for more information.
3. Assemble materials including the following:
  - Pens or pencils,
  - Copies of the fact sheet, and
  - Copies of the evaluation (on page 4) to be distributed following the program.
4. Look at the list of suggested illustrations in the "During the Lesson" section below and determine which illustrations you will use to reinforce food safety concepts. Gather the necessary materials for those illustrations and/or activities.

### During the Lesson

1. Give each participant a copy of the fact sheet and a pencil and allow a few minutes for each person to review the sheet.
2. Allow 45 to 50 minutes to teach the lesson. Try to answer questions as you go along, instead of waiting until the end.
3. Begin by asking participants why they think food safety is important when donating to food pantries and soup kitchens.
4. Discuss the introductory paragraphs from the fact sheet. Be sure to emphasize that it is important to donate food that is safe and nutritious, and not just any leftover food, because many people who use food pantries and soup kitchens are particularly vulnerable to foodborne illness because they are often young, old, pregnant, or sick.
5. Ask each of the questions in the fact sheet and allow participants time to provide their answer before continuing with the answer and explanatory information.
6. Use the accompanying PowerPoint presentation (including photos on slides)

to discuss some of the important points for donating foods safely.

7. Use any of the following suggested illustrations and discussion starters while discussing the relevant section:
  - Bring food and ask if items should be donated (for example, outdated food, dented cans, home-canned foods, as well as some food that is acceptable to donate).
  - Show a food thermometer and discuss the safe food holding temperatures (above 135°F or below 41°F). You can mention that these are the Kansas Department of Agriculture/FDA regulations for holding temperatures but for consumer information, FDA and USDA generally use 40°F and 140°F as the safe holding temperatures because those temperatures are safer and are easier to remember.
    - Reiterate that food thermometers are inexpensive (about \$5) and important to monitor the proper temperature to control microbial growth.
    - Mention that thermometers must be calibrated for accuracy. More information on calibrating thermometers is available on p. 10 of KSRE publication MF3138.
  - Show an example of a large food grade container that is safe for holding food. Also, show a garbage bag or can, which should be used for holding trash, not for holding food for consumption.
  - Show pictures of dented cans or the flowchart poster from North Carolina State University showing when it is safe to use dented cans.
  - Show the MyPlate graphic and talk about what makes nutritious meals for people, including those in need. Show the suggested non-perishable items for food drives card included in the fact sheet and talk about ideas for food donations from each food group. Emphasize that variety is valuable! For example, if everyone donates canned corn for the food drive, a food pantry client may end up eating corn at every meal. Also talk about special dietary needs that might exist for a



food pantry client who has diabetes, high blood pressure, pregnancy, or other conditions and what foods might be healthful for those special needs.

- Discuss local opportunities to donate food — discuss the location of your nearest food bank, soup kitchen, homeless shelter, or other entity and their hours of operation, etc. Discuss the timing of community food drives and other opportunities to donate food (for example, some churches collect food year round) and discuss if this group should organize a safe and healthy food drive for the community.
  - Arrange for your group to visit the local food bank, soup kitchen, homeless shelter, or other entity that uses donated food. Tour the facility, talk to the manager or volunteers on duty, ask what foods or any other items such as cash or volunteers they need and how your group can help them.
8. Allow the participants to discuss the top three points they will consider the next time they donate to a food bank or soup kitchen or organize a food drive. Have them write down a few key points they plan to consider on the fact sheet.
  9. Ask the participants to fill out an evaluation for the program.
  10. Thank the audience for their participation.

## References and Sources for Further Information

Canto, A., B. Ingham, and S. Larson. (2015). *Safe & Healthy Food Pantries Project*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Extension. Available from : <http://fyi.uwex.edu/safehealthypantries/>

Check Your Steps. FoodSafety.gov 2013. Available from [www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics](http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics)

Choose MyPlate. <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate> and other locations.

Food Safety for Kansas Farmers Market Vendors: Regulations and Best Practices. KSU/Kansas Department of Agriculture publication. Available from: [www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3138.pdf](http://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3138.pdf)

Haley, James. *The Legal Guide to the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act*. University of Arkansas Law Notes. August 8, 2013. 2013 Ark. L. Notes 1448. Available from: <http://media.law.uark.edu/arklawnotes/2013/08/08/the-legal-guide-to-the-bill-emerson-good-samaritan-food-donation-act/>

Healthy Shelves: Promoting and Enhancing Good Nutrition in Food Pantries. University of Missouri. 2012. Available from: <http://foodsecurity.missouri.edu/healthy-shelves/>

Kansas State University Nutrition Education Program. Available from: <http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/humannutrition/>

North Carolina State University. *Food Safety- Food Pantries and Food Banks*. <https://foodsafety.ces.ncsu.edu/food-pantries-and-food-banks/>

North Carolina State University Food Pantries and Food Banks food use flow chart: <https://foodsafety.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Can-I-use-this-can.pdf?fw=no>

U.S. Food Waste Challenge Frequently Asked Questions. Available from: [www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm](http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm)

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**Donating Safe and Nutritious Food to Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens**

We appreciate your opinions! Please help us make our programs better by taking about 5 minutes to answer the following questions. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may skip answering one or more questions if you wish. The information that you share will be held in the strictest confidence. We will summarize it in reports, in order to evaluate our program. We greatly value your participation. Thank you!

Scale: 1=Agree completely, 2=Agree somewhat, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree somewhat, 5=Disagree completely

As a result of this program, I learned which foods can be safely donated to food pantries and soup kitchens.

1    2    3    4    5

As a result of this program, I learned safe practices in donating food to food banks and food pantries.

1    2    3    4    5

As a result of this program, I have also learned (please indicate):

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I plan to take action and/or change something in my life (at home, play, or at work).

1    2    3    4    5

If agree, please describe the action or changes you plan to make and when:

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Additional comments:

A Kansas State University Extension representative may contact me later to talk about this program (We are asking for your contact information so that we may follow up with you about what you learned from this program):

No  Yes

If yes, my contact information is below: (e.g. name, phone and/or email):