5 Steps for setting up & maintaining a Food Donation Program

1 Identify food fit for donation.

- **Surplus food in holding.** Food that was in holding for service but not ultimately served.
- **Excess inventory.** Extra inventory due to an ordering error, event cancellation, etc.
- **Dated food.** Most “expiration dates” refer to quality, not safety. Food items past the date label can be donated if they still look, smell, and feel safe to eat. (Infant formula is the only exception and cannot be donated past the date label.)

- ✗ Food not fit for human consumption, e.g. moldy, discolored, or rotting food.
- ✗ Food that was in the "danger zone" (41°F–135°F) for over two hours.
- ✗ Any food that was not handled in accordance with standard kitchen health and safety protocols.

2 Establish internal logistics.

- Identify where food donations will be stored.
- Designate staff champions/leads.

Special considerations for prepared food:

- Prepared foods must be rapidly cooled from 135ºF to 70ºF within two hours, and from 70ºF to 41ºF within four hours.
- Prepared food may require repackaging. This can be done with existing supplies (catering pans, to-go containers, etc.). Repackaged food must be labelled with a date. If possible, include allergen and ingredient information as well.

3 Connect with a food recovery organization and establish a written agreement.

- Contact a local food bank to get connected with a food recovery organization.
- Establish a contract or written agreement with the food recovery organization. (You must retain a copy on-site.)

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https://sandiegofoodbank.org/food-drives/food-industry-donations/

For more information, visit https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp.

4 Create an SOP and train staff.

- Develop Standard Operating Procedures to document the food donation logistics and process.

Sample SOP

Section A. Food Eligible for Recovery
- Outline foods that are unfit for donation (use the information provided in this document).

Section B. Logistics & Procedures
- Include photos of where food donations will be stored.
- If donating prepared food, include photos or description of re-packaging procedures.

Section C. Food Recovery Organization Information
- Include contact information for your food donation recipient partner.
- Include pick-up schedule (days of the week & times).

Section D. On-site Contacts
- List contacts at your organization who will oversee/monitor food recovery efforts (e.g. chefs, managers, etc.).

- All staff should be aware of the food donation program so that they can contribute to its success. Ensure that current staff undergo training, and that new staff are trained when they join.

Staff Training Strategies:

- Assign a couple managers to provide food donation training to all staff. Create a list of all staff and have them sign next to their name once the training is complete.
- Include food donation training in new staff onboarding procedures and orientations.
- Consider offering monthly prizes to food donation champions (e.g. meal passes) to encourage participation.
- Work with the local food bank or your food donation recipient to organize a volunteer day or tour so staff can see where their food donations end up.

5 Keep records.

- For each food recovery organization that you have a contract or written agreement with, keep record of:
  - The **name, address and contact info** of the service or organization.
  - The **types of food** that will be collected or self-hauled.
  - The established **frequency** that food will be collected or self-hauled.
  - The **quantity** of food collected or self-hauled, measured in pounds recovered per month.