



Healthy, Safe Food Donation Guidelines

Loving Spoonful developed these guidelines to help the food industry donate safe and healthy food to feed Kingston residents in need. They outline what retailers, food manufacturers, caterers, hotels and other donors need to know to enable donations of safe and healthy food.

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(Adapted from BC Centre for Disease Control Environmental Health Services, Metro Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society. 2015 Jul. Industry Food Donation Guidelines. Available online at <http://bit.ly/1nwJ8Ah>)

Healthy Food for Healthy Communities

Loving Spoonful enhances access to healthy food

Since 2008, Loving Spoonful's food access programs (Food Reclamation and Grow A Row) have collected and delivered over 250,000 lbs of fresh, perishable food, working with grocery stores, caterers, restaurants, bakeries, gardeners and farmers to prevent good food from going to waste. Our hard working volunteers deliver directly to 25 local agencies including women's shelters, homeless shelters, meal programs, drop-in centres and pantries where individuals and families can take the fresh food home. Every pound of food reclaimed provides the equivalent of one healthy meal, totalling an equivalent of over 250,000 meals since its inception.

We are proud to present *Loving Spoonful's Healthy, Safe Food Donation Guidelines* describing our values about healthy food and our vision relating to the distribution of safe and nourishing food through our food access programs. These guidelines provide clarity for retailers, food manufacturers, caterers, hotels, farms and other food businesses to make appropriate donations that ensures *everyone* in our community has access to safe and health food.

Increasing access to good, nutritious and safe food is a priority

Loving Spoonful has multiple goals when reclaiming surplus food; we seek to save food from the landfills, provide food to those who are in need and provide community members with safe and nutritious food that enhances their health. The objectives of these guidelines are to state our intention to focus on the distribution of healthy foods to our community. Loving Spoonful defines healthy food as whole foods, as well as minimally refined and processed foods and beverages that have little or no added sugar, sodium, saturated fat, or trans-fat.

It is essential for agencies that provide meals to have healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, dairy, lean protein and whole grains to prepare balanced meals for their participants. As documented by review of consecutive years of reporting by KFL&A Public Health in their annual report, *The Cost of Eating Healthy*¹, the cost of food is increasing rapidly and people on restricted budgets are unable to afford good food. Meal providers are also struggling to balance the cost of good food, the need to feed increasing numbers of people, while considering the taste preferences and dietary needs of their participants.

It is well known that "food insecurity" decreases a person's ability to enjoy a healthy diet with preferred or cultural foods; to meet dietary/nutrition needs; and maintain good health through food-related medical needs.² Often, people who depend on charities for food have to forgo their special

¹ Public Health of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, *The Cost of Eating Healthy*, 2015, 2014, 2013.

² Individual and Household Food Insecurity. Position Statement. Dietitians of Canada. 2016

dietary needs to meet their basic hunger requirements. These considerations are at the heart of our desire to distribute the healthiest food possible to help agencies provide fresh and nourishing meals to enhance people's lives.

Good food = healthy food

Loving Spoonful believes healthy lives are built from good, whole foods. Vegetables, fruit, dairy, nuts, protein sources and fresh water are the building blocks of a balanced diet; we emphasize these in our food access programs (Food Reclamation, Grow A Row) and our food skills programs (Community Kitchens, GROW Project). Our food access programs rely on donations of good food for redistribution to community agencies. This food must be fresh, healthy and in good condition. Our volunteers are taught to accept fresh food donations "only if it is good enough to feed to your family." The old adage "beggars can't be choosers" is replaced at Loving Spoonful by "everyone needs good food."

The following foods are preferred:

- Fresh or frozen vegetables
- Fresh or frozen fruit
- Healthy main courses
- Fresh soup
- Fresh sandwiches
- Dairy
- Meat - protein is always in low supply
- Legumes, nuts, seeds
- Fresh bread and low-sugar baked goods (e.g., bagels)



Less nutritious and/or un-safe foods may not be acceptable

Many clients accessing meal programs obtain the majority of their dietary intake through charitable means.³ While we understand and respect that all foods work towards mitigating hunger, we also know that healthier foods provide nutrients and energy needed for overall strength and well-being. Food and beverages high in fat, sugar, salt and overly processed are less healthy. Our community partners may still choose to accept these items, but Loving Spoonful minimizes its handling of sweetened products such as pastries and muffins. Loving Spoonful will not accept items such as cakes, pop, candy, chocolate.

Synthetic trans fat restrictions

Some food companies have taken strides in eliminating artificial trans fats while others have not. Unfortunately, there remain too many products that contain high amounts of these fats.⁴ This includes many foods often consumed by children such as cakes, donuts and brownies. Loving Spoonful wishes to be proactive by limiting trans fat in all foods distributed and used in its food skills workshops. Ideally all foods would contain 2% trans-fat or less of total fat content for all foods.

The 2% and 5% restrictions are based on the Health Canada Trans Fat Task Force Recommendations released in 2006.⁵ These restrictions allow for the presence of naturally occurring trans fat in ruminant meat and dairy products and for small amount of trans-fats that are unavoidable in the processing of fats and oils.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 260	Calories from Fat 120
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 13g	20%
Saturated Fat 5g	25%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 660mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 15%	

Loving Spoonful volunteers will not analyze the content of each food donation. However, by knowing what foods contain trans fats, appropriate donations can be arranged during initial discussions.

Where do I find trans-fat in ready-made food?

Pre-baked food, Cookies. Cakes, Pies, Tortilla wraps, Bread crumbs and croutons, Pre-fried food, Egg rolls, French fries, Asian noodles, Onion rings, Fish sticks, Chicken nuggets/burgers, Taco shells, Potato, corn or tortilla chips, Nacho cheese sauce, Non-dairy creamer, Garlic or fat spreads, Powered specialty coffee or drink mixes including hot chocolate and bubble tea

³ BC Centre for Disease Control Environmental Health Services, Metro Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society. 2015 Jul. Industry Food Donation Guidelines. Available online at <http://bit.ly/1nwJ8Ah>

⁴ Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation. http://www.restricttransfat.ca/ready-made_foods.html

⁵ TRANSforming the Food Supply. Ottawa: Minister of Health

Food safety – A priority

Date labelling on pre-packaged foods

Food is often removed from inventory because it is close to its best before date (BBD). Loving Spoonful will accept certain foods past the BBD. The "best before" dates are not indicators of food safety, neither before nor after the date. BBD is simply a date set by the manufacturer to assure the customer of the product's quality—that the food will still have the texture, colour, or flavour that the customer has come to associate with the brand.⁶ BBDs apply to unopened products only; once opened, the shelf life of a food may change. Generally, food companies apply a BBD that is approximately 20% shorter than the true date after which food quality is expected to deteriorate.⁷ Perishable foods may also be frozen before their BBD to extend the period that they can be safely used.

There are many reasons why a food product may be un-sellable, such as overstock of items near the best before date (BBD) or contamination during food processing. Overstocked product can be donated; contaminated food cannot.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency outlines only five types of products that need to have the expiration date label:⁶

- ✘ formulated liquid diets (a nutritionally complete diet for persons using oral or tube feeding methods)
- ✘ foods represented for use in a very low-energy diet (foods sold only by a pharmacist and only with a written order from a physician)
- ✘ meal replacements (a formulated food that, by itself, can replace one or more daily meals)
- ✘ nutritional supplements (a food sold or represented as a supplement to a diet that may be inadequate in energy and essential nutrients)
- ✘ human milk substitutes (infant formula)

These foods should not be eaten if the *expiration date* has passed. They should be discarded.

⁶ Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Date Labelling on Pre-packaged Foods. Government of Canada (2014)

⁷ Newsome R, Balestrini CG, Baum MD, et al. Applications and perceptions of date labeling of food. *Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety*. 2014; 13(4):745-69. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/food-guide-aliment/view_eatwell_vue_bienmang-eng.pdf

Concerns regarding liability

An initial concern for donors to Loving Spoonful's food access programs is exposure to liability if a recipient of the food becomes ill, regardless of the cause. However, Ontario's Donation of Food Act addresses that concern.

Ontario's Donation of Food Act, 1994, ensures that a donor is not liable for damages as follows:

- 1) A person who donates food or who distributes donated food to another person is not liable for damages resulting from injuries or death caused by the consumption of the food unless,
(a) the food was adulterated, rotten or otherwise unfit for human consumption; and
(b) in donating or distributing the food, the person intended to injure or to cause the death of the recipient of the food or acted with reckless disregard for the safety of others.
1994, c. 19, s. 1 (1).*

Donors are encouraged to discuss any concerns they have about this or food donation generally with Loving Spoonful staff.

Benefits of donating good food to Loving Spoonful

- Feed the community – your surplus food can make great meals for those in need in Kingston.
- Cost savings – disposal of good food costs money. Reduce costs through donation.
- Tax credits – non-refundable donation credits are available to farmers and individuals who donate good food.
- Promotion – Loving Spoonful will promote you – or not – depending on your wishes.
- Staff satisfaction – staff enjoy working for a company that helps the community and reduces its food waste.
- It's easy, safe and convenient for donors – Loving Spoonful does the work.



Without Loving Spoonful, we would not be able to meet the daily food needs of our clientele. This relationship enables us to provide numerous healthy meals to women and their families, as well as operate nutrition-based programming. – Elizabeth Fry Shelter for Women

To meet the needs of the community for good, safe food:

We accept:

- ✓ Perishable foods before or near the best before date including fresh fruit and vegetables
- ✓ Fresh meat before the best before date or meat that is frozen before the best before date.
- ✓ Dairy before or near its best before date
- ✓ Soups and sandwiches -- still fresh
- ✓ Frozen fruit and vegetables
- ✓ Healthy main courses
- ✓ Beans, legumes, nuts
- ✓ Fresh breads and low-sugar baked goods (e.g., bagels)
- ✓ Food that has been laid out in chafing trays, (e.g., catered buffet), but not served

We will not accept:

- ✗ Any food that is part of a food recall
- ✗ Any food for which safe food handling processes were violated (e.g., unrefrigerated perishable food)
- ✗ Mouldy, badly bruised, or limp
- ✗ Potentially exposed to contamination
- ✗ Any food showing signs of spoilage or decay (such as mold or a bad odor)
- ✗ Highly processed foods (e.g., chips, pre-packaged frozen meals)
- ✗ High-sugar foods (e.g., cakes, pop, candy, chocolate)

(Adapted from: City Harvest Quick Reference Sheet Donor Q&A. Retrieved from http://www.cityharvest.org/images/uploads/site/FY15_New_Donor_Kit.pdf)

To learn more about how and where to donate food contact:

**Loving Spoonful's Food Access Coordinator at
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