

Greater Vancouver Food Bank Distribution Guidelines and Best Practices

Preamble

The Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) collects and distributes food and products to registered GVFB clients and community partner Agencies across the Greater Vancouver area including the city of Vancouver, New Westminster, the North Shore, and Burnaby. The guidelines contained within this framework have been created to ensure the safety of food moving through our facility. We are aware that we are dealing with community donations and volunteer food sorters and, in order to ensure the safety of all products distributed, it is our collective responsibility. We will provide all staff and volunteers with basic knowledge to make certain that any deviations to these guidelines are exceptions and never considered to be common practices.

Policy Statement

The GVFB works to ensure that food distributed in the community meets and/or exceeds established safety and quality standards set forth by Food Banks Canada.

To achieve this, we will work collectively to make sure:

1. Relevant staff and volunteers engaged at the GVFB have an understanding of the Food Distribution Guidelines outlined within this document.
2. Physical space and infrastructures are continually inspected and monitored with adherence to cleanliness, adequate temperature controls, and safety required by the local health authority.
3. Donation acceptance is guided by the GVFB Food Donation Acceptance Policy in addition to food quality and nutritious food options rooted in our food quality criteria.

The GVFB will:

1. Screen all potentially unsafe food (perishable and non-perishable items) prior to distribution to members and Community Partner Agencies. This includes the examination of packaging for safety and product nutrition and ingredient information, as well as a review of best before and expiration dates on potentially unsafe items and products.
2. Perform initial screening of all fresh fruits and vegetables upon receiving product. If, upon inspection, the majority of items appear to be spoiled, soft, or badly bruised they will be composted.
3. Follow all packing guidelines as they relate to potentially unsafe foods, such as dairy and meat products. Products which are received in a condition not in accordance with that indicated on the packaging will be disposed of.
4. Ensure standard temperature controls for the storage of refrigerated and frozen product in accordance with the local health authority by undertaking daily inspection and recording of the temperature of warehouse fridges and freezers.

5. Ensure standard temperature controls for the transportation of all food products product in accordance with the local health authority. Conduct regular temperature readings of all refrigeration units on trucks and adhere to a strict maintenance and cleaning schedule.
6. Ensure that food is covered and stored at least 15 cm off the floor and that packaging is in safe condition.
7. Ensure that all household products that are compromised of chemicals and/or bleach are packed on the bottom layer of all pallets.

The GVFB will not distribute:

1. Any food product that has exceeded the expiration date displayed on the product.
2. Any canned good where the can appears to be opened, swollen or bulging, leaking or has mold, has visible signs of rust or corrosion, or the label is missing or illegible.
3. Any dry goods where there appears to be signs of a rip or tear in the inner packaging, there is visible water or moisture damage on the packaging, or displays signs of chewing or pest infestation.
4. Any food product 18 months past its best before date (BBD), in accordance to our GVFB BBD food distribution guidelines.
5. Distribute any baked product, for example bread, that shows any visible signs of mold.
6. Any food item in a state outside of that outlined on the manufacturers packaging, for example, any frozen food product which has thawed.
7. Cases of food product which are cross packed (food items mixed with household items).
8. Transport household items containing chemicals or bleach in a manner that would allow the chemicals to leak on food products.

GVFB Best Before (BB) Food Distribution Guidelines

Foods past their **best before dates are safe to eat**. Please refer to the handy guidelines for information about how long past a best before date a food item is safe to consume.

Product	Examples	EXTERNAL		
		Refrigerated	Frozen	
BAKED ITEMS				
Bread products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bagels • Hamburger buns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot dogs • Sliced bread 	14 days	90 days
FRUITS AND VEGETABLES				
Fresh fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh uncut fruits and vegetables • Frozen cut fruit bags 		30 days	180 days

			EXTERNAL	
Product	Examples		Refrigerated	Frozen
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frozen vegetables 			
Fresh cut fruits and salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh cut fruits and vegetables Salad mixed bags 		DO NOT DISTRIBUTE PAST BB DATE	Not applicable
Juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juices Smoothies 		10 days	Not applicable
DAIRY				
Fresh plant protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daiya cheese Tofu, etc. Yves Protein 		3 days	90 days
Milk & alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almond milk Butter, creams Milk Coffee creams 		3 days	Not applicable
Yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probiotics Sour cream Yogurt Yogurt drinks 		14 days	Not applicable
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eggs Egg whites Liquid eggs 		35 days	Not applicable
Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cream cheese Soft/hard cheese 		14 days	90 days
Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dairy-based Deli meats Dips Hummus Kraft trays w/meat Kids' snack trays 		2 days	Not applicable
MEATS AND MEALS				
Bulk meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large cuts of meat 		2 days	90 days
Deli meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cured or dried meat Ham Salami Smoked meats/sausages 		10 days	90 days
Entrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken Sensations Frozen meals Lasagna Microwave meals Pies and pastries Shepherd's pie 		2 days	90 days
Soup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh packaged soups 		3 days	120 days
CANNED FOOD				
Mixed entrees (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soup with 8g or more protein per 250ml and canned meals At least 2 food groups together—stews, chili 		18 months	Not applicable
Fruits and vegetables (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit cocktail Jackfruit Peaches Pineapple Water chestnuts Carrots Corn Green beans Olives Peas 		18 months	Not applicable
Tomato sauce (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tomato paste sauces Pureed, whole, diced, or crushed tomatoes 		18 months	Not applicable

			EXTERNAL	
Product	Examples		Refrigerated	Frozen
Meat and fish (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ham • Salmon, tuna 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spam • Turkey 	18 months	Not applicable
Plain beans and lentils	Dried or canned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chickpeas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kidney beans • Lentils 	18 months	Not applicable
Canned and tetra soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain and vegetable based soups/broths (less than 8g protein) 		18 months	Not applicable
WET AND DRY BEVERAGES				
Water and pop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still and natural carbonated, no additives • Flavoured water, club soda, pop 		18 months	Not applicable
Hot beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee • Hot chocolate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ovaltine • Tea 	18 months	Not applicable
Fruits and vegetable juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable, fruit, or vegetable and fruit juices with puree as the first ingredient 		12 months	Not applicable
Dairy and milk alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almond milk • Coconut milk in tetra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powdered milk • Rice milk • UHT tetra milks 	3 months	Not applicable
NUT BUTTER AND BAKING GOODS (JARS)				
Tomato sauce in jars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasta sauce 		18 months	Not applicable
Nut butters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almond butter • Peanut butter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soy butter • Sunflower seed butter 	12 months	Not applicable
Baking and cooking supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cake mixes • Flour • Honey • Oil • Salt • Spices • Spreads • Sugar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfredo sauce • BBQ sauce • Dips • Jam • Ketchup • Mustard • Relish • Salsa 	12 months	Not applicable
Mayonnaise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayonnaise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miracle Whip 	4 months	Not applicable
Salad dressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creamy dressings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salad dressings 	2 months	Not applicable
SNACKS, GRAINS, AND SIDE DISHES				
Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confectionary • Crackers • Dried fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granola bars • Nuts and seeds • Trail mixes 	12 months	Not applicable
Plain grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amaranth • Barley • Couscous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quinoa • Rice • Rye 	18 months	Not applicable

			EXTERNAL	
Product	Examples		Refrigerated	Frozen
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faro • Fonio • Kamut • Millet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorghum • Spelt • Teff 		
Grain and potato side dishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boxed rice or pasta with added ingredients • Dry soups • Taco shells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant mashed potatoes 	18 months	Not applicable
Plain pasta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egg noodles • Lasagna • Plain macaroni • Penne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain noodles • Rice noodles • Spaghetti 	18 months	Not applicable
Breakfast cereals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boxed cereal • Cream of wheat • Prepackaged hot and cold cereal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant oatmeal • Oatmeal 	12 months	Not applicable
Baby items and supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby food • Cereal • Formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby wipes • Misc. baby items* 	Distribute until expiry date	Not applicable
Adult supplements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost • Ensure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protein bars/drinks • Supplements • Vitamins 	Distribute until expiry date	Not applicable

* **NOTE:** Diapers go in separate bin