

Greater Vancouver Food Bank Food Distribution Guidelines

Preamble

The Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) collects and distributes food and products to registered GVFB clients and Community Agency Partners across Greater Vancouver (Vancouver, New Westminister, the North Shore, and Burnaby). The guidelines contained within this document have been created to ensure the safety of food moving through our facility. The GVFB receives community donations and relies on the generous support of our volunteers, as such it is our collective responsibility to ensure the safety of all products distributed. We provide all staff and volunteers with the basic skills and knowledge for safe food distribution. Any deviations to these guidelines are considered exceptions, never 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. With the nature of donated products, often we can expect to see approximately 10% of these goods falling below standards. If you do notice items that do not meet these standards, when unpacked at your facility, do not distribute or cook with them. Please contact The GVFB immediately, with pictures and descriptions of the product so we may track and investigate the issue. As food comes from donations and is sorted by volunteers, we always encourage the practice: when in doubt, throw it out.

GVFB Return Policy

The GVFB will not accept returns on items that have been ordered or selected by an Agency, unless items are damaged or do not follow our Food Distribution Guidelines, below. Please refer to the [CAP Policies and Procedures](#), for further information.

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

1. Relevant staff and volunteers engaged at the GVFB have a clear 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 clients and CAPs. 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 immediately.
4. Ensure standard temperature controls for the storage of refrigerated and frozen products in accordance with the local health authority by undertaking daily inspections and recording the temperature of warehouse fridges and freezers.
5. Ensure standard temperature controls for the transportation of all food products 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 comprised 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, excluding frozen items that were frozen before their best before dates.
2. Any canned goods where the can appears to be opened, swollen or bulging, leaking or has mold, has visible signs of rust or corrosion, or where 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, visible water or moisture damage on the packaging, or signs of chewing or pest infestation.
4. Any food product past its best before date according to our GVFB BBD food distribution guidelines up to 18 months depending on the product.
5. 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 manufacturer's packaging, for example, any frozen food product that has thawed.
7. Cases of food product that are cross-packed (food items mixed with household items).
8. Household items containing chemicals or bleach stored 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 guidelines below for information about how long past a best before date a food item is safe to consume. Please note, we always encourage visual inspections in addition to the BBD.

Product	Examples	Dry	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 • Frozen vegetables 		30 days	180 days	
Fresh cut fruits and salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh cut fruits and vegetables • Salad mixed bags 		14 days	N/A	
Juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoothies 	9 months	10 days	9 months
DAIRY					
Fresh plant protein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daiya cheese • Tofu, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yves Protein 	N/A	3 days	90 days
Milk and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almond milk • Butter, creams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Coffee creams 	6 months	3 days	N/A
Ultra-High Temperature (UHT) Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tetra Pak cartons • Rumble Protein Shakes 		6 months	2 days	N/A
Yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probiotics • Sour cream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yogurt • Yogurt drinks 	N/A	14 days	N/A
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs • Egg whites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liquid eggs 	N/A	35 days	N/A
Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft/hard cheese 	N/A	14 days	90 days
Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy-based • Deli meats • Dips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hummus • Kraft trays w/meat • Kids' snack trays 	N/A	2 days	N/A
MEAT, FISH, AND POULTRY					
Bulk meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large cuts of meat 		N/A	2 days	90 days
Deli meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cured or dried meat • Ham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salami • Smoked meats/sausages 	N/A	10 days	90 days

Product	Examples	Dry	Refrigerated	Frozen
Soup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh packaged soups 	N/A	3 days	120 days
Entrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken Sensations • Microwave meals • Pies and pastries • Frozen meals • Shepherd's pie • Lasagna 	3 months	2 days	90 days
Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large cuts of fish 	N/A	2 days	150 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	N/A	N/A
Fruits and vegetables (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit cocktail • Carrots • Jackfruit • Corn • Peaches • Green beans • Pineapple • Olives • Water chestnuts • Peas 	18 months	N/A	N/A
Tomato sauce (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomato paste sauces • Pureed, whole, diced, or crushed tomatoes 	18 months	N/A	N/A
Meat and fish (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ham • Spam • Salmon, tuna • Turkey 	18 months	N/A	N/A
Plain beans and lentils	Dried or canned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chickpeas • Kidney beans • Lentils 	18 months	N/A	N/A
Canned and tetra soups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain and vegetable based soups/broths (less than 8g protein) 	18 months	N/A	N/A
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	N/A	N/A
Hot beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee • Ovaltine • Hot chocolate • Tea 	18 months	N/A	N/A
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	N/A	N/A
NUT BUTTER AND BAKING GOODS (JARS)				
Tomato sauce in jars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasta sauce 	18 months	N/A	N/A
Nut butters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almond butter • Soy butter • Peanut butter • Sunflower seed butter 	12 months	N/A	N/A

Product	Examples	Dry	Refrigerated	Frozen	
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	N/A	N/A
Mayonnaise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayonnaise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miracle Whip 	4 months	N/A	N/A
Salad dressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creamy dressings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salad dressings 	2 months	N/A	N/A
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	N/A	N/A
Plain grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amaranth • Barley • Couscous • Faro • Fonio • Kamut • Millet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quinoa • Rice • Rye • Sorghum • Spelt • Teff 	18 months	N/A	N/A
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	N/A	N/A
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	N/A	N/A
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	N/A	N/A
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* 	Expiry Date	N/A	N/A
Adult supplements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost • Ensure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protein bars/drinks • Supplements • Vitamins 	Expiry Date	N/A	N/A

*NOTE: Diapers go in separate bin.