

Food Distribution Guidelines

Updated on Oct 25th, 2022

Preamble

The Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) is a charitable organization, registration 107449787 RR0001, with a mission to provide healthy food to those in need. The GVFB is committed to its vision of healthy communities through fair and effective food systems.

The GVFB collects and distributes food to registered GVFB clients, Community Agency Partners (CAPs) and Provincial Agency Partners. The guidelines contained within this document have been created to ensure the safety of food moving through our facility. The GVFB receives 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 from 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 20% of these goods falling below standard. If you 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 a CAP, 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, product nutrition and ingredient information, as well as a review of best before and expiration dates.
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. Ensure standard temperature controls for the storage of refrigerated and frozen products in accordance with the local health authority. Coolers and freezers are monitored digitally 24 hours a day.
4. Ensure standard temperature controls for the transportation of all food products is 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.
5. Ensure that food is covered and stored at least 15 cm off the floor and that packaging is in safe condition.

The GVFB will not distribute:

1. Any food product that has exceeded the expiration date displayed on the product.
 - a. However, frozen items that were frozen before their best before dates are allowed.
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.
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 Food Distribution Guidelines, which is up to 18 months depending on the product.
5. Any baked product, for example bread, that shows any visible signs of mold.
6. Cases of food product that are cross-packed (food items mixed with household items).
7. Household items containing chemicals or bleach stored in a manner that would allow the chemicals to leak on food products.

GVFB Best Before Food Distribution Guidelines

Foods past their best before dates are safe to eat within established guidelines. 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 best before date.

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 	NA	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 	NA	30 days	180 days	
Fresh cut fruits and salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh cut fruits and vegetables • Salad mixed bags 	NA	14 days	N/A	
Juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoothies 	12 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
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	12 months
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 • Kids' snack trays • Dips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hummus • Kraft trays w/meat 	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
Soup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh packaged soups 		N/A	3 days	120 days

Product	Examples	Dry	Refrigerated	Frozen
Entrees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken Sensations • Frozen meals • Lasagna • Microwave meals • Pies and pastries • Shepherd's pie 	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 • Jackfruit • Peaches • Pineapple • Water chestnuts • Carrots • Corn • Green beans • Olives • 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 • Salmon, tuna • Spam • 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 • Hot chocolate • Ovaltine • Tea 	18 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 • Peanut butter • Soy 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 • Spices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreads • Salsa • Jam • Sauces • Sugar 	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	14 days	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"> • Fonio • Barley • Couscous • Faro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quinoa • Rice • Rye • Spelt 	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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penne • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formula • 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"> • Supplements • Vitamins 	Expiry Date	N/A	N/A

**NOTE: Diapers go in separate bin.*