

Greater Vancouver Food Bank

Agencies Distribution Guidelines

Updated March 2025

Preamble

The Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) collects and distributes food to registered GVFB clients and Agencies. These guidelines ensure the safety of food handled in our facility. Relying on donations and volunteer support, we emphasize the collective responsibility to maintain safety in all distributed products. All staff and volunteers are trained in basic skills and knowledge for safe food distribution. Deviations from these guidelines are exceptions, not standard practices.

Policy Statement

GVFB is committed to distributing food that meets or exceeds the safety and quality standards set by Food Banks Canada. Given the nature of donated products, approximately 20% may fall below standard. If substandard items are identified upon unpacking at your facility, do not distribute or use them. Instead, immediately contact the GVFB with pictures and product descriptions for tracking and investigation. Remember: 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, except for damaged items or those not aligning with these Food Distribution Guidelines. Please refer to the *Agencies' Policies and Procedures* on our website for further information.

To achieve this, we will collectively:

1. Ensure staff and volunteers are well-versed in these Food Distribution Guidelines.
2. Inspect regularly, monitoring physical spaces and infrastructures for cleanliness, temperature control, and safety as per local health authority standards.
3. Guide donation acceptance by the [GVFB Food Donation Acceptance Policy](#) and our criteria for food quality and nutrition.

The GVFB will:

1. Screen all potentially unsafe food items before distribution, checking packaging, nutrition, ingredient information, and expiration dates.
2. Initially inspect all fresh fruits and vegetables upon receipt. All spoiled, soft, or badly bruised items will be composted.

3. Maintain standard temperature controls for storing refrigerated and frozen products, with daily inspections and temperature recordings in warehouse fridges and freezers.
4. Adhere to local health authority standards for transporting food products, including regular temperature checks of refrigeration units on trucks and strict maintenance and cleaning schedules.
5. Store food at a minimum of 15 cm off the floor and ensure packaging is in safe condition.
6. Pack household products with chemicals/bleach on the bottom layer of all pallets.

The GVFB will not distribute:

1. Food products past their expiration date, except for frozen items frozen before their best before dates.
2. Canned goods that are opened, swollen, bulging, leaking, moldy, or show signs of rust or corrosion.
3. Dry goods with ripped or torn inner packaging, visible water damage, or signs of pest infestation.
4. Food products past their best before date, adhering to our GVFB Best Before (BB) Food Distribution guidelines, which vary up to 18 months depending on the product.
5. Baked goods that are showing any signs of mold.
6. Cross-packed cases (mixing food items with household items).
7. Household items with chemicals or bleach stored in a way that risks leakage onto 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.

			EXTERNAL		
Product	Examples		Dry	Refrigerated	Frozen
BAKED ITEMS					
Bread products	<ul style="list-style-type: none">BagelsHamburger buns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hot dogsSliced bread	NA	14 days	90 days
FRUITS AND VEGETABLES					
Fresh fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fresh uncut fruits and vegetablesFrozen cut fruit bagsFrozen vegetables		NA	30 days	180 days
Fresh cut fruits and salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fresh cut fruits and vegetablesSalad 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 cheeseTofu, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Yves Protein	N/A	3 days	90 days
Milk & alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Almond milkButter, creams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">MilkCoffee creams	6 months	3 days	N/A
Yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ProbioticsSour cream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">YogurtYogurt drinks	N/A	14 days	N/A
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">EggsEgg 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-basedKid’s snack traysDips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">HummusKraft trays w/meat	N/A	2 days	N/A
MEATS AND MEALS					
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 meatHam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SalamiSmoked meats/sausages	N/A	10 days	90 days
Soup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fresh packaged soups		N/A	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 mealsAt least 2 food groups together—stews, chili		18 months	N/A	N/A
Fruits and vegetables (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fruit cocktailJackfruitPeachesPineappleWater chestnuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CarrotsCornGreen beansOlivesPeas	18 months	N/A	N/A
Tomato sauce (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tomato paste saucesPureed, whole, diced, or crushed tomatoes		18 months	N/A	N/A
Meat and fish (canned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">HamSalmon, tuna	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SpamTurkey	18 months	N/A	N/A
Plain beans and lentils	Dried or canned: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Chickpeas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kidney beansLentils	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 additivesFlavoured water, club soda, pop		18 months	N/A	N/A
Hot beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CoffeeHot chocolate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OvaltineTea	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 butterPeanut butter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Soy butterSunflower seed butter	12 months	N/A	N/A

			EXTERNAL		
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">• Jam• Salsa• Sugar• Spreads	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