

FOOD SAFETY
GUIDELINES FOR
SOUP KITCHENS

FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR SOUP KITCHENS

These guidelines are the result of a collaboration of community food providers (soup kitchens), Environmental Health Officers throughout the province, and the Ministry of Health's Food Protection Program. Providing a safe food supply for our community is the goal for all involved in this process. The partnership created a guideline that can be used as a resource for both new and existing soup kitchens.

All the agencies involved in creating these guidelines have acknowledged the true need for a reference document to assist the soup kitchens with their operations.

Soup kitchens are unique in that they have very different needs from those of restaurant/retail premises. Soup kitchens rely mainly on donations, which raises a variety of issues. The source of the food varies. The history of the food may also be unknown. How was the food stored? How long was the food stored? The staff/volunteers are constantly changing. There's also a greater likelihood of poorer consumer health status, e.g., elderly, immune-compromised, nutrition deficiencies, etc.

The materials contained in these guidelines should be used as a resource for training staff and volunteers. Feel free to copy, enlarge posters, laminate, etc. The intent is to share information on food safety, and to help ensure that the food items being served in our soup kitchens are safe for their consumers.

How to use these guidelines

- 1) Ask all staff/volunteers to read them from cover to cover.
- 2) Photocopy posters, tip sheets and keep them handy (e.g., post on walls, in reference binder, laminate etc.).
- 3) Incorporate them into staff/volunteer training or refresher programs.

FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR SOUP KITCHENS

Table of Contents

A.	Introduction	1
B.	Definitions	1
C.	Application of Guidelines	1
D.	Administration	2
E.	Acceptable and Unacceptable Foods	2
F.	Food Safety	4
	1. Construction/Maintenance of Physical Facilities.....	4
	2. Personal Hygiene	4
	3. Temperature Control.....	5
	4. Protection from Contamination.....	6
	5. Labeling	7
	6. Salvageable Food.....	7
	7. Sanitary Facilities and Controls.....	7
	8. Garbage and Refuse	7
	9. Insect, Rodent and Animal Control	8
	10. Vehicles.....	8
	11. Employee Volunteer Training.....	8
G.	Conclusion	8

Appendix

- Donor Application - Form
- Record of Food Received by Server – Form
- Donor’s Do’s and Don’ts/Special Care – Sheet
- Damaged Products Posters
- Dates on Food Packages – What do they mean?
- Recommended Storage Times

A. Introduction

In recent years, there has been increased interest in how to provide adequate amounts of safe, nutritious food to people who don't have the means to acquire it themselves. These guidelines have been developed to provide a method of redirecting surplus supplies of food, in a safe manner, to those in need.

In the past, donations of excess food have been limited because of concerns about the potential for liability on the donor if illness or death were to result from the consumption of donated food. During the spring of 1997, *The Food Donor Encouragement Act* was passed by the provincial legislature to exempt food donors from liability for damages from injuries or death caused by consuming donated food. (Note: Protection from liability under this *Act* does not apply if the food is adulterated, tainted, spoiled or otherwise unfit for human consumption and the donor intended to injure the food recipient, or otherwise acted in reckless disregard for the safety of others). Soup kitchens do require an operating permit, and must contact the local Health Authority to obtain approval.

B. Definitions

Soup kitchen means a non-profit organization that

- a) operates with the exclusive intent of feeding the hungry and
- b) receives, holds and processes food to be consumed on the premises.

Food bank means a non-profit organization that

- a) operates with the exclusive intent of feeding the hungry, and
- b) receives, holds, packages, repackages and distributes food to be consumed off the premises, but does not process food.

Process means to make food ready-to-eat and includes cooking, reheating and reprocessing previously processed food.

C. Application of Guidelines

These guidelines apply to soup kitchens but not to food banks. Separate guidelines, *Food Safety Guideline for Food Banks* has been developed for food banks. Both of these guidelines may be viewed on the internet at www.bccdc.org. Soup kitchens differ from food banks in that they offer prepared food for immediate consumption on the premises, while food banks offer recipients food to be prepared later, at home. Because of this, soup kitchen operations are generally considered to pose a higher risk of a food poisoning outbreak.

These guidelines provide minimum food safety measures that must be in place to make sure that surplus food donated to soup kitchens does not cause foodborne illness. The Environmental Health Officer from your local Health Authority may refer to this document while conducting an inspection of your soup kitchen.

D. Administration

Donation of surplus food to a soup kitchen may be made on a regular basis, or on a one-time only basis. Donors that plan to donate on a **regular basis** are required to register as a donor (see *Donor Application*), with the local Health Authority. Persons or facilities that donate food only on an occasional or one-time-only basis should also review these guidelines, as the food handling information is relevant whether you are preparing food for donation or for family and friends.

The *Donor Application Form* need only be completed **once**, unless circumstances change and the information needs to be updated.

Facilities that receive donated surplus food (i.e., soup kitchens), must obtain a permit to operate as a food services establishment from the local Health Authority.

E. Acceptable and Unacceptable Foods

Eating improperly processed food may cause foodborne illness. Wholesome food, good food handling practices, properly designed and constructed food preparation facilities, adequate refrigeration and properly trained staff, all contribute to producing a safe product for the consumer.

Food donations may vary from “ready-to-eat” foods, to individual ingredients the soup kitchens may use in meal preparation.

There are some restrictions on the types of foods that may safely be used. **Some foods have a greater potential to cause foodborne illness and must not be used under any circumstances.** These include:

- a) Leftover food from a patron’s table;
- b) Unpasteurized dairy products;
- c) Spoiled foods;
- d) Processed, potentially hazardous foods (see below) prepared in a private home;
- e) Home canned foods: particularly meat, fish and vegetables, or “combination” foods, e.g., antipasto;
- f) Potentially hazardous foods that have not been stored at a temperature below 4°C (40°F) or above 60°C (140°F);
- g) Ingredients that have not been stored according to the manufacturer's instructions;

- h) Physically or chemically contaminated foods;
- i) Foods that have passed their expiry/best before dates*;
- j) Foods made from damaged products.

*Some expiry/best before dates are safety-related, while others are related to quality issues. As a rule, potentially hazardous foods (see definition) that exceed their expiry/best before date **should not** be consumed; for non-potentially hazardous foods, you should use your own judgement. *“If in doubt, throw it out”* or contact your local Health Authority for advice.

Donated potentially hazardous foods may be served. However, it is extremely important that safe food handling practices (see pages 4 & 5) are applied at all times when handling these foods. Potentially hazardous foods include *foods that consists in whole or in part of: milk or milk products; eggs; meat; poultry; fish; shellfish; or other ingredients in a form capable of supporting rapid and progressive growth of infectious or toxigenic microorganisms. This does not generally include foods that have a pH of 4.6 or lower (i.e., lemons or vinegar) or a water activity (a_w) value of 0.85 or lower.*

Potentially hazardous foods include:

- a) Meat and meat products;
- b) Dairy products;
- c) Eggs and egg products;
- d) Seafood and seafood products;
- e) Tofu products;
- f) All soups (except dried mixes before moisture is added, or unopened, undamaged cans);
- g) Sauces and gravies;
- h) Cooked rice, grains and cereal (e.g., moisture has been added);
- i) Cream and meat filled pastries;
- j) Pies (including pumpkin pie, but excluding other fruit pies).

NOTE: All potentially hazardous and processed foods received by soup kitchens must come from sources approved by a health agency (e.g., permitted restaurants, approved food processors).

Donated foods that are not potentially hazardous may also be used by soup kitchens. These foods do not pose the same health risk as the potentially hazardous foods listed above.

“Non-potentially” hazardous foods include:

- a) Dried goods, (e.g., sugar, flour, etc.);
- b) Food products that do not require refrigeration;
- c) Whole, fresh fruit;
- d) Whole, fresh vegetables;
- e) Baked goods (not cream- or meat-filled);
- f) Unopened, commercially packaged or canned goods;
- g) Condiments (e.g., salt, sugar, ketchup, relish, mustard, jam).

F. Food Safety

Persons preparing food for others must handle the food carefully. It is highly recommended that all persons involved in the preparation or handling of food in soup kitchens complete the *FOODSAFE Level 1* program. *FOODSAFE* courses are available through local community colleges or local Health Authorities, and by correspondence.

1. Construction/Maintenance of Physical Facilities

For new operations, the physical facility should be reviewed with the local Environmental Health Officer (EHO) who can provide advice on its appropriateness, and tips on improvements to ensure the safe handling of food.

- Floors, walls and ceilings should be kept in good repair.
- Lighting should be adequate in hand-washing areas, toilet rooms and areas where food or food ingredients are examined, sorted or stored and utensils are cleaned. Consider using shielded lights to protect against broken glass falling onto unpackaged food.
- Soup kitchens should be ventilated well enough so that condensation does not form and drip onto food or food preparation surfaces.
- Food should not be stored under plumbing pipes or other pipes that could leak their contents onto food or food preparation surfaces.
- All food products should be stored at least 6 inches (15 cm) above the floor to prevent contamination.

2. Personal Hygiene

Following these food-handling procedures will minimize the risk of a foodborne illness occurring in a soup kitchen.

People are the number one source of foodborne illness. Therefore, it is important:

- to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and wear clean outer garments and some form of hair restraint;
- that food handlers wash their hands and exposed portions of their arms thoroughly in an adequate hand-washing facility before starting work, and as often as necessary, especially after smoking, eating, or handling raw meat or poultry;
- that food handlers not resume work after going to the toilet without first washing their hands;
- that no person eat food, drink beverages or use tobacco in any form, in areas where food is exposed or in areas used for washing equipment or utensils.

No person should work in the soup kitchen while ill with a disease that is communicable through food (e.g., Hepatitis A). Operators of the soup kitchen should be particularly vigilant for persons with symptoms such as diarrhea, jaundice, vomiting, and infected cuts/boils.

3. Temperature Control

Potentially hazardous foods that have been frozen must be thawed in a refrigerator, or by submerging in cold running water. A microwave oven may be used for thawing potentially hazardous foods, as long as preparation takes place immediately after thawing.

Never thaw potentially hazardous foods at room temperature.

To make sure that potentially hazardous foods are not unsafe, the following temperatures must be maintained:

- refrigeration storage temperatures 4°C (40°F) or colder
- hot holding temperature 60°C (140°F) or hotter
- frozen food temperature -18°C (0°F) or colder
- cooking or reheating food temperature 74°C (165°F) or hotter

An accurate thermometer must be provided to ensure food temperatures are monitored and recorded during storage and preparation, and while in transit on the way to the soup kitchen. Potentially hazardous foods must not be permitted to remain in the “Danger Zone” (between 4°C and 60°C) for more than 2 hours. If potentially hazardous foods are not to be served immediately, they must be either held above 60°C (140°F) or cooled to 4°C (40°F) or colder within 6 hours.

Before you accept cold food **make sure you have adequate refrigerator (or freezer) space** to keep cold foods cold (4°C [40°F] or colder) or frozen (-18°C [0°F]). Likewise, before you accept hot food, **make sure you have adequate hot holding equipment** to keep hot food hot (60°C [140°F] or hotter).

Reheat food **rapidly** to an internal temperature of at least 74°C (165°F) before serving. This temperature must be verified by the use of a **probe thermometer**. Do not use a steam table or a slow cooker to reheat food, this equipment is not capable of achieving the required temperature quickly enough.

Potentially hazardous food must be cooked in one continuous process and not partially cooked, or cooled, and then reheated to complete the cooking process.

Make sure all surplus foods that have been reheated or handled and are left over after a meal are thrown out. **Never reuse food that has been previously served and reheated. Remember, leftovers are leftovers only once!**

Make sure delivery food containers and covers are **washed, rinsed and sanitized** before returning them to the donor. Aluminum foil pans are not designed for reuse and therefore should not be reused or returned to the donor. Plastic food containers that are cracked or defective in any way should not be used.

4. Protection from Contamination

The kitchen area is only for foodhandlers. Volunteers who are not involved in preparing or handling food and clients of the soup kitchen should not enter this area.

The donor must make sure that reusable food containers have been properly washed, rinsed and sanitized before being reused.

- Food must be protected from physical and chemical contamination at all times.
- Equipment, utensils, and surfaces that come into contact with food in the soup kitchen should all be made of non-toxic, non-corrosive materials and should be easily cleanable.
- Equipment should be installed and maintained to facilitate cleaning; and kept in good repair.
- Utensils and food contact surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned; and where necessary, sanitized before being used.

For dishwashing by hand and surface sanitizing:

½ ounce of chlorine (bleach) per gallon (1 teaspoon per litre) is required. (100ppm)

For mechanical dishwashing:

¼ ounce of chlorine (bleach) per gallon (0.5 teaspoon per litre) is required. (50ppm)

- Environmental Health Officers can supply additional information regarding the different methods of sanitizing. (See *Cleaning and Storing Dishes and Utensils* from the Ministry of Health's publication *Food Protection – Vital To Your Business*). You can view this publication on the Internet at <http://www.hlth.gov.ca/protect/food.html>.
- All other surfaces and equipment should be cleaned when necessary.
- Equipment and utensils should be handled in a manner that protects them from contamination.
- All single-service articles (disposable paper/plastic plates, cutlery, etc.) should be used only once.
- Make sure food is properly packaged before being transported.

5. Labeling

All donated food must be labeled identifying the food, the date it was prepared (except canned food), temperature controls (if required) and preparation location.

In addition to the above safe food handling practices, facilities receiving donated food should complete the attached *Record of Food Received by Server* log to help ensure quality control.

6. Salvageable Food

Salvageable food should be properly stored and segregated from non-salvageable food to prevent contamination of the food available for distribution.

Foods donated as a result of a flood, fire, smoke, etc. are highly hazardous and should not be accepted. It can be very difficult to determine the damage by just looking at the food. Should you have any questions, make sure that you contact your local Environmental Health Officer (EHO) for advice.

7. Sanitary Facilities and Controls

Toilet facilities including rooms and fixtures should be kept in clean condition and in good repair at all times. Soup kitchens should have adequate, conveniently located hand-washing facilities equipped with soap and single-use towels or other effective hand-drying devices.

8. Garbage and Refuse

All refuse should be kept in leak-proof, non-absorbent containers, which should be kept covered with tight-fitting lids when stored or not in continuous use. Each container room or storage area should be thoroughly cleaned after the emptying or removal of refuse. All refuse should be disposed of often enough to prevent contamination of the salvaged food products and surrounding processing areas.

9. Insect, Rodent and Animal Control

Effective measures should be taken to prevent rodents, insects, pets and other animals from entering.

10. Vehicles

Vehicles used to transport food should be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition to protect food from contamination. Keep foods covered or in a clean container. Make sure appropriate temperatures are maintained. A vehicle that has been used for transporting refuse must not be used to transport food, until it has been thoroughly cleaned.

11. Employee Volunteer Training

To minimize the risk of serving unsafe foods, it is very important that employees and volunteer help are properly trained, especially those involved in the critical aspects of the soup kitchen operation (i.e., food preparation, especially of potentially hazardous foods, or receiving the donated foods). People with previous experience in the soup kitchen, workers from the retail/restaurant industry and staff from your local Health Authority should be sought for training purposes. Information is also available from your local Health Authority on issues such as assessing the safety of dented tinned goods.

At a minimum, the manager, permanent employees and key volunteers who are present on a regular basis are encouraged to complete the FOODSAFE Level I program. Contact your local Environmental Health Officer for information about courses in your area.

G. Conclusion

The nutrition and hunger needs within a community will vary from time to time, and from community to community. In response to these needs, generous persons and organizations may offer to donate a variety of foods prepared in various locations.

Foods prepared in facilities which have been inspected and approved by the local Health Authority (e.g., restaurants, supermarkets and residential institutions) are less likely to pose a health risk than foods prepared elsewhere (e.g., the kitchens of private homes). However, there may be times when the person responsible for operating the “server facility” (i.e., soup kitchen) is compelled to draw on food prepared in private kitchens in order to avert serious malnutrition problems in their community. It is hoped that—after reading these guidelines the “server” will be able to use sound judgement in deciding whether or not to accept food from private sources.

These guidelines have been designed for use by the management and the staff (volunteer or otherwise) of soup kitchens. Everyone who works in, or donates food to a soup kitchen should read and be familiar with these guidelines. If you need clarification on any aspect of these guidelines, you should contact your local Health Authority.

More information about safe food handling practices can be obtained by attending the FOODSAFE program, an eight-hour course which is provided for a modest cost by local Health Authorities and by many community colleges. The FOODSAFE course is strongly recommended for anyone working in a soup kitchen and for anyone who donates to a soup kitchen.

DONOR APPLICATION

FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR SOUP KITCHENS

Section A - to be completed by Donor

BUSINESS NAME: _____ PHONE #: _____
ADDRESS: _____ CONTACT PERSON: _____
MAILING ADDRESS: _____ LICENCE # (if appl.) _____
POSTAL CODE: _____

Please provide the following information regarding the food expected to be donated.

Food Type	Approx. Vol.	Type of Shipping Containers	Location Destined For	Expected Delivery Time	Frequency of Donation

(Use reverse if more space is required)

(I have read and understand the information in these guidelines)

Donor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Section B - to be completed by Public Health Officer

Approval to donate food under the *Food Safety in Soup Kitchens Guidelines* has been granted subject to the following conditions:

Public Health Officer (signature)

Date

DONOR'S DO'S AND DON'TS /SPECIAL CARE

DO'S

- ◆ Dried goods, (e.g., sugar, flour, etc.);
- ◆ Food products which do not require refrigeration;
- ◆ Whole, fresh fruit;
- ◆ Whole, fresh vegetables;
- ◆ Baked goods (not cream- meat-filled);
- ◆ (Unopened) commercially packaged or canned goods;
- ◆ Condiments (e.g., salt, sugar, ketchup, relish, mustard, jam).

DON'TS

- ◆ Leftover food from a patron's table;
- ◆ Unpasteurized dairy products;
- ◆ Spoiled foods;
- ◆ Processed potentially hazardous foods prepared in a private home;
- ◆ Home-canned foods particularly meat, fish, vegetables or combination foods i.e., antipasto etc.;
- ◆ Potentially hazardous foods that were not stored/maintained at a temperature below 4°C (40°F) or above 60°C (140°F);
- ◆ Ingredients that have not been stored according to the manufacturers' instructions;
- ◆ Physically or chemically contaminated foods;
- ◆ Foods that have exceeded their expiry dates;*
- ◆ Foods made from damaged products

SPECIAL CARE

Donations of *potentially hazardous foods* may be accepted; however, it is extremely important that safe food handling practices (see pages 4 & 5) are applied at all times when handling these foods. Potentially hazardous food includes *foods that consists in whole or in part of: milk or milk products, eggs; meat; poultry; fish; shellfish; or other ingredients, in a form capable of supporting rapid and progressive growth of infectious or toxigenic microorganisms. These do not generally include foods that have a pH of 4.6 or lower or a water activity (a_w) value of 0.85 or lower.* Potentially hazardous food include:

- Meat and meat products;
- Dairy products;
- Eggs and egg products;
- Seafood and seafood products;
- Tofu products
- All soups;
- Sauces and gravies;
- Cooked rice, grains and cereal (e.g., moisture added);
- Cream-or meat-filled pastries;
- Pies (including pumpkin pie, but excluding other fruit pies).

NOTE: All potentially hazardous and processed foods received by soup kitchens must come from sources approved by a health agency (e.g., permitted restaurants, approved food processors).