



Nutri-Facts

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Greetings all!

Studies suggest that nearly 1 in 8 Texas households is food insecure, meaning that there is a lack of safe and nutritious food for a healthy, active life. When food insecurity is not addressed, families face hunger.

This issue of Nutri-Facts focuses on the steps needed to conduct a successful food drive. Since food drives often occur during the holiday season, this issue will be handy for 4-H clubs interested in conducting a community food drive. For agents, I have included a suggested time line of activities that need to occur before the food drive begins. In addition, this issue has a fact sheet on the types of food typically needed by food banks and pantries. Check with your local food pantry or food bank to see if there are any additional items needed. Also, if you are looking for a theme for your food drive, check out issue #8 of Nutri-Facts (Securing Food During Insecure Times). There is also a brief news release that focuses on the types of foods often needed by food banks and pantries as well as food safety concerns to think about when donating food. Keep in mind that food insecurity and hunger occur throughout the year, so this is an activity that can be done at any time.

Since Nutri-Facts is designed for agent use, I appreciate and welcome any comments/suggestions that you have about this resource. **Also, I am always looking for topics that will be of use to you and the people you work with. If you have any ideas/suggestions for future topics of Nutri-Facts, just let me know.**

Eat Well!

Jenna

What is the difference between a food bank and a food pantry?

Generally speaking, a food bank is a nonprofit organization that collects surplus commodities from the government, edible but often unmarketable foods from private industry (like fresh fruits and vegetables), and foods from private donations for use by nonprofit charities, feeding programs, and food pantries at a nominal cost. In most cases, food banks do not distribute food directly to people.

A food pantry is also a nonprofit organization that distributes bags or boxes of groceries (and sometimes non-food items) to people who are facing food emergencies. Food pantries receive food from both food banks and through private donations (including food drives).

Why host a food drive?

Food banks and food pantries are often the first line of defense in preventing hunger in our community. Excess government commodities are distributed frequently through food banks but these organizations also rely on volunteers and private donations of food and money to continue their existence in the community. Despite gains in the national economy, there is evidence that the usage of food banks and pantries is on the rise. A 1998 survey of 117 food banks in 40 states found that requests for food assistance exceeded the amount of food available by more than 20%. Of those food banks surveyed, 87% reported that requests for food had risen within the past year.

Organizing a Successful Community Food Drive - A Possible Activity for 4-H Clubs

A food drive can be as short as one day or as long as several weeks. If this is your first food drive, you might want to start off with a simple one-day food drive. Remember, only collect non-perishable foods and non-food items if indicated by the food bank or pantry. Here are some ways of collecting food:

- T** Distribute fliers and empty grocery bags (paper or plastic) to homes in selected neighborhoods one week before the food drive. Most organizations will distribute the flier and bag on a Saturday and ask the household to leave a bag of food on the doorstep during the morning of the following Saturday. This way, people can donate food they have at home without leaving their house. Volunteers are needed to pick up the food and take it to a central location.
- T** Place empty boxes or barrels in schools, grocery stores, community centers, and selected businesses for a designated period of time (2-3 weeks is common). Have fliers and posters available throughout the store and let people drop off their donated food at the store. **Be sure to get approval from the stores, community centers, and business first!**
- T** Place empty boxes or barrels in churches and other faith-based organizations for a designated period of time (2-3 weeks). Post notices in church bulletins or fliers or have the church/religious leader make an announcement during services.

Time Line - Planning the Food Drive

6 Weeks Before the Food Drive:

- T Identify the organization(s) who will benefit from the food drive (local food pantries or a community food bank). Invite a representative from that organization to be involved with the planning process. Be sure to visit with the organization to identify any specific food (and non-food) needs that might be present.
- T Establish a small committee to plan and coordinate the food drive. Select a chairperson.
- T Establish subcommittees to handle the details of the food drive. Appoint/elect a chairperson for each subcommittee:
 - Planning** (Date/time planned for the food drive)
 - Promotion**
 - Collection & storage of the food** (Who will pick up donated food? Where will collected food be held until picked up? Can the site also be used as a place for people to drop-off food?) If the food will not be picked up by the benefitting organizations that day, arrangements will have to be made so the food can be stored. Try to have the food picked up the day of the food drive.
- T Invite local food businesses, service agencies, churches, civic clubs and schools to participate in the food drive. Develop a list of volunteers (names and phone numbers).
- T Develop a one-page flier describing the food drive. Be sure to give suggestions about the types of foods needed. See the fact sheet attached.

4 Weeks Before the Food Drive:

- T Make sure a copy of the flier is given to all contacts (including the food bank or pantry). Check with volunteers and make sure they still plan to participate. If any additional people/businesses/organizations have expressed interest in participating in the food drive, contact them and add their names to the list (**Planning subcommittee**).
- T Contact the food bank or pantry that will be receiving the donated food. Arrange for pickup of the food. If the food needs to be stored (which it will if you are holding your food drive over a 2 to 3-week period), make sure you have a site to store the collected food. The site for food storage should be visited to make sure it is safe for food storage. If the receiving organization does not have the means to pick up the food, contact local businesses and civic groups to see if they will help deliver food to the food bank or pantry. (**Collection and storage subcommittee**).
- T Plan a media campaign to advertise the food drive. Print fliers and write news releases for distribution. Ask that the food drive be advertised on local radio stations. Be sure to check with the local news paper to see how far in advance a news release needs to be submitted. Contact your local television station to brief them on the event. (**Promotion subcommittee**).
- T Contact local schools, community centers, faith-based organizations, and grocery stores to see if they will donate space for food collection. Posters advertising the food drive can be made and placed at community centers, notices can be printed in church bulletins, and perhaps an announcement can be made during church/religious services. On the day of the food drive, volunteers can distribute fliers to individuals entering the grocery store to encourage donations "on the spot" (**Planning and Promotion subcommittees**).
- T If you are involving grocery stores, churches, business, and community centers, decorate the boxes and barrels for collecting food (**Collection and Storage subcommittee**).

2 Weeks Before the Food Drive

- T** If businesses and organizations have volunteered to help store or deliver food to the food bank or food pantry, contact them and confirm their commitment to the food drive.
- T** Contact the food bank or pantry to brief them on the progress. Make sure the date for food delivery is OK.
- T** If the food is to be stored prior to delivery to the food bank or pantry, make sure the site selected is still available.
- T** Have volunteers sign up for the following jobs:
 - Distribute fliers & posters to stores, schools, businesses, and faith-based organizations
 - Distribute, check, and empty food bins.
 - Set up the major food collection and storage site
 - Work at the major food collection site (receiving and sorting food)
 - Deliver fliers and food bags to neighborhood houses

1 Week Before the Food Drive

- T** Have all committees and volunteers meet to review job duties and assignments.
- T** Make sure the media has been briefed on the event.

Day Before the Food Drive

- T** Call all volunteers and organizations participating in the food drive and remind them that the food drive begins the next day.
- T** Distribute food boxes and barrels to stores, schools, businesses, and faith-based organizations.

Week 1 of the Food Drive

- T** Check food boxes and barrels daily (maybe twice a week for faith-based organizations) and remove food when the box/barrel is full. Take donated food to the designated storage site.
- T** Distribute fliers and bags to households that Saturday of week 1. Donated food will be picked up the following Saturday morning.
- T** Try to get media attention about the food drive.

Week 2 of the Food Drive

- T** Check food boxes and barrels daily (maybe twice a week for faith-based organizations) and remove food when the box/barrel is full. Take donated food to the designated storage site.
- T** Visit households that received a flier and empty bag. Pick up donations left by the household and take to storage site.
- T** Try to get media attention about the food drive.

Note: Be sure to take pictures during the event. If possible, weigh the food collected so you can report the # of pounds of food collected during the food drive. This will give you goal to match/beat next year!

After the Food Drive

- T** Remove all fliers, boxes and barrels from stores, schools, businesses and faith-based organizations.
- T** Transport food from the storage site to the food bank or pantry.
- T** Write thank-you notes to all organizations that participated in the event (this includes the stores, schools, businesses and faith-based organizations).
- T** If possible, write a thank-you letter to the community, thanking them for donating food to the food drive. Have the letter printed in the local paper along with a picture and the number of pounds of food received.

Additional ideas for food drives:

1. If your organization has boxes and barrels in grocery stores, have volunteers distribute fliers about the food drive to customers entering the store. This will help bring attention to the food drive and allow customers to select and donate food more easily. Most likely, this would be done on a Saturday. **Be sure to get approval from the grocery store.**
2. Work with your local library and see if you can have a "food for fine" exchange. Library patrons who owe fines for overdue books can "pay" for their fine by donating a can of food. The price of the fine would determine the number of food items needed to pay for the fine.
3. If you live in a town that has a university or college, work with campus organizations to organize a food drive. At the end of the semester, have students living off-campus donate left-over non-perishable food items instead of throwing them away or moving them back home.

Donating Food to Food Pantries and Food Banks

Each year, an estimated 20% of all edible food goes to waste. This is food that could be used by food banks and food pantries to feed households, including those with children and older adults, facing food insecurity and hunger. When donating food to a food bank or pantry, food safety and nutrition are issues that must be considered.

Food Safety

When donating food, select nonperishable foods commercially packaged in cans, boxes, plastic bags and plastic containers. It is not recommended that foods packaged in glass containers be donated since these containers can break and contaminate the food. Also, foods canned at home should not be donated because of the possibility of a food-borne illness.

Foods with the following characteristics should be considered unsafe. These foods should not be donated and should be discarded.

Canned items should be discarded if:

- they are so bent that they cannot be opened with a manual can opener
- they are bent to the point that they cannot be stacked on a shelf
- they are dented along a seam
- there is a presence of rust pits so severe that there is a hole in the can
- the can is swollen or bulging
- there are holes or punctures in the can
- the can leaks
- the label is missing
- it is baby food, including infant formula, that is passed the expiration date

Items packaged in paperboard boxes should be discarded if:

- the inner package is torn or slit open
- there is evidence of insects
- it is baby food that is past the expiration date

Items packaged in plastic bags or containers should be discarded if:

- any tamper-resistant seals are damaged
- there is any evidence of insects
- there is any sign of spoilage such as mold
- it is baby food that is past the expiration date

If you have any doubt as to the safety of a particular food item or if you have food that you would not serve to your family, do not donate it to the food pantry or food bank.



Nutrition

When deciding about what foods to donate to a food bank or pantry, don't forget nutrition. Studies show that people who face food insecurity and hunger consume diets that fail to meet the recommendations of the Food Guide Pyramid and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Over time, this can increase one's risk for developing chronic disease.

When deciding to donate food to a food bank or pantry, think about the Food Guide Pyramid. Below are some suggestions that are welcome by most food banks and pantries:

Bread, Cereal, Rice & Pasta Group

Flour
Rice
Oatmeal
Macaroni, noodles, or spaghetti
Saltine crackers
Biscuit, muffin, and pancake mixes
Cornmeal or grits
Canned pasta
Noodle mixes
Ready-to-eat cereal
Macaroni & cheese mix
Infant cereal



Vegetable Group

Canned vegetables (any variety)
Vegetable juice (100% juice)
Spaghetti sauce
Vegetable soup
Tomato soup

Fruit Group

Canned fruit juice (100% juice)
Canned (any variety)
Dried fruit



Milk, Yogurt, & Cheese Group

Infant formula
Powdered milk

Evaporated milk
Instant breakfast drinks
Canned and boxed pudding

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans & Eggs Group

Canned meat, tuna, chicken & salmon
Dry beans, peas, and lentils
Canned pinto & red beans
Peanut butter
Canned chili



Fats, Oils, & Sweets Group

Cooking oil
Sugar
Jelly & Jam
Syrup
Mayonnaise
Salad dressing



Non-food items

Bath soap
Laundry detergent
Dishwashing detergent
Shampoo
Toilet paper
Diapers
Toothpaste
Feminine hygiene products



Adapted from Food for ME: A Citizen Action Fact Sheet for Community Food Recovery, University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Bulletin # 4304 and 4302. *Educational programs of Texas Cooperative Extension are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin.*

News release

For many families, the end of the month means more than just running out of money. It also means the end of food available in the household. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, an estimated one in eight Texas households experience difficulties securing safe and nutritious food. While Food Stamps and other federal food programs can help prevent hunger, statistics show that more and more individuals and families are turning to food banks and pantries for emergency food assistance. This means that more resources, including food, money, and volunteers are needed by these organizations to continue serving families in need.

"Donating food is one way that communities can help stock the shelves of a food bank or food pantry," says Jenna Anding, Ph.D., R.D., Extension nutrition specialist with the Texas Cooperative Service. However, if a person is going to donate food, there are some safety and nutrition factors that we need to remember. "First, if you have food that you wouldn't eat, don't give it to a food bank or food pantry," says Anding. This includes baby food that is past the expiration date, and foods with large dents, torn packages and signs of insect infestation. Also, leave home-canned foods at home. Most food banks and pantries won't take home-canned items because of an increased risk of a food borne illness. In addition, avoid donating foods in glass containers, unless requested by the food bank or food pantry. This is because items in glass containers can break easily. If there is any doubt as to the safety of the food, discard it.

"Second, think about nutrition," advises Anding. While cookies, candy, and soda are treats many people enjoy, families experiencing food shortages need more. "Think about the Food Guide Pyramid and try to donate one or more foods from each group," suggests Anding. Foods that are welcomed by food banks and pantries include rice, pasta, noodle mixes, infant cereal, canned fruits and vegetables, canned soups, canned fruit juice (100% juice), powdered milk, canned infant formula, canned meat, tuna, and chicken, dry beans and peas, canned beans, peanut butter, cooking oil, sugar, jelly, and mayonnaise.

What about non-food items such as bath soap and shampoo? "These items are also welcomed by families facing emergency food shortages," says Anding. Other non-food items to donate include toilet paper, toothpaste, diapers, laundry detergent, dishwashing detergent and feminine hygiene products.

Remember, it's not the quantity but rather the quality of the foods you donate. Families in need are not helped with food that is unsafe or nutrient poor. When deciding what to donate, think about how a family might use the food to make a meal. A can of turnips that has been in your pantry for 2 years probably won't help much but a box of macaroni and cheese and a can of tuna fish can make a quick dinner that many people would appreciate.

For more information about donating food and non-food items, contact _____, county Extension agent at _____ (phone number), or _____ (local food bank or pantry) at _____ (phone number).