

Donating food

Act requirements:

- Donated food must be safe and suitable and, if applicable, information on keeping the food safe and suitable must be provided.

Food that is donated needs to be safe for human consumption. Food is unsafe if it is likely to cause the person eating it harm. There may be circumstances when food that is donated or given away could be construed as food for sale and provisions of the Food Act 2014 would apply. Particular care needs to be taken when donating foods that need temperature control and/or have a “use-by” date.

Issues that should be addressed when donating food include:

- food subject to a product recall for safety reasons must not be donated;
- food marked with a “use-by” date must either be used or thrown away by that date. It must not be donated after that date because it may be unsafe to eat after this date, even though spoilage may not be visible;
- where donated food will be safe to eat for only a limited time, inform the person receiving the food of the time limit;
- inform the person receiving the food about any food in a donation that requires special handling or storage;
- food marked with a “best-before” date can be donated after the date has passed, provided it is otherwise fit to eat. There may be some loss of quality after this date but there should not be any safety issue with the food;
- food withdrawn from sale because of incorrect and/or faulty labelling may be donated; however, correct information about the food needs to be provided with the food so that consumers have the information they need to make informed choices;
- for pre-packaged donated food, the packaging, or at least the inner wrapping, should completely enclose food. Do not donate any pre-packaged food in damaged wrapping that exposes the food – it may have become contaminated;
- food must be clear of mould or slime or other signs of spoilage, e.g. packaging inflated by spoilage gasses;
- cans that are excessively rusty or have been damaged along seams, or “spring” at the end, or are leaking must not be donated;
- fresh meat that will be frozen for donation should be frozen no later than on its “best-before” date. It should be hard-frozen when it leaves donor storage;

- chilled foods for donation should have been maintained in the chill-chain at or below 5°C;
- hot foods for donation should have been thoroughly cooked and kept above 60°C.

Further tips when donating food include:

- work closely with the receiving organisation to identify:
 - the range of foods that are most useful and can be safely handled;
 - the best or most appropriate times for food collection;
- check that the receiving organisation is aware of what needs to be done to keep food safe;
- if reusing boxes and packaging, ensure that these have not been used for anything other than food and have been made clean and hygienic;
- keep food items separated from non-food items;
- keep raw food separate from cooked and/or ready-to-eat food.

Food gifted to family and friends in Care settings

You may want to provide guidance to the families and friends of those in your care on the safe handling of food so that the food they bring in is in the safest condition possible.

Food you can not donate

Homekill or recreationally caught seafood.