Greater Cleveland Food Bank
Retail Donation Partnerships
Every morning, food industry employees across Northeast Ohio pull nutritious food off sales floors and out of coolers...and throw it into the dumpster.

These are foods that are no longer fit for sale: dated milk, for instance, or spotted bananas. They don't belong in the industry because they don't meet customers’ expectations—but that doesn't necessarily make them trash. The fact is, if handled appropriately, many of the perishable items discarded are completely safe for consumption.

As this food is discarded, there are thousands of Northeast Ohioans who cannot afford the nutritious food they need.

That's why we are pleased to introduce the Greater Cleveland Food Bank’s Retail Donation Partnership. Our mission is to ensure that everyone in our communities has the nutritious food they need, every day. As part of our ongoing commitment, we're working with partners across the food industry to put unsaleable food into the hands of those who need it.

The purpose of this guide is to show as completely as possible the opportunity that is out there—food that passes through the food industry and ends up in our landfills, when it could just as easily go to our hungry neighbors. Whether you are new to food donations, or a longtime partner of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, we hope you'll join us in building partnerships to fight waste, and fight hunger.
Why Donate?

Donate to Feed our Hungry Neighbors

Across our six-county service area, one in six residents are food-insecure. That’s 326,970 people missing a combined 58 million means every year. When you donate food to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, we put it right to work where it is needed most. With our network of over 800 member agencies and programs, your donations can reach our neighbors in need in as little as a day!

Donate to Reduce Waste

Fully 40% of the food produced in the United States of America is thrown away. That's about 63 million tons every year—for which we collectively pay $218 billion to grow, process, transport, and toss. By donating unsalable but otherwise consumable food to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, you’re saving more than just food...you’re saving labor, farmland, water, and energy, too!

Donate to Help your Tax Bill

There are tax incentives for donating, too! The PATH Act of 2015 makes the tax deductions for donated food simple, standardized, and permanent. Included in these changes is a permanent extension of relevant tax benefits to both C and non-C corporations, and an adjusted benefit cap of 15% of gross income for charitable donations of food. The Greater Cleveland Food Bank will track your donations and provide you with the receipts you’ll need. Talk to your tax advisor to learn more about your eligibility.

Donate With Confidence

Food safety is the Greater Cleveland Food Bank’s primary concern. Every donated item is checked upon arrival to make sure it meets our standards for distribution. Working with guidelines from the USDA, FDA, Feeding America, and more, we can safely give out donated food, even products deemed unsuitable for the sales floor!

In addition to our culture of food safety, federal law provides robust protections for donors under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act of 1996. This law sets a liability floor of gross negligence or intentional misconduct for persons who donate grocery products, and protects donors from liability when donating apparently wholesome food in good faith.
Creating a Program that Works for You

The most effective Retail Donation Partnerships are integrated into existing facing, culling, and inventory operations. As department heads and employees work through an aisle, they identify items that no longer meet sales standards and remove them from the sales floor. Then, if the product is still apparently wholesome and useable, it should be placed in the appropriate donation area. If not—it’s off to the dumpster!

- **Sell it!**
  - Yes!
    - Is the product fit for sale?
      - Yes!
        - Sell it!
      - No!
        - Shrink from inventory.
  - No!

- **Donate it!**
  - Yes!
    - Is the product still fit to eat?
      - Yes!
        - Donate it!
      - No!
        - Trash it!
  - No!

Pages 8-16 of this guide give a list of items that we can use, and storage conditions required to maintain food safety. It is easiest to set aside designated donation areas for different categories of product: for example, a dry-storage donation area, a refrigerated donation area, and a frozen donation area. These can be as simple as clean, food-grade boxes positioned at least 6” off the floor in the appropriate temperature-controlled area. By setting up donation areas ahead of time, donations can be quickly and safely set aside during the culling and inventory process, and the pickup process itself is greatly simplified.

Donations are picked up on agreed-upon, scheduled days by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank or one of our Member Agencies. Most food industry operations will see greatest benefit from pickups at least once a week, and often more frequently where highly perishable categories such as produce are involved.

From planning through implementation, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank is here to provide resources to you! Our representatives are available to explore opportunities, devise best-fit schedules, offer training at all levels, and provide the recognition you deserve. After all—we can’t do it without your help!
Donation Pickup Procedures

Before Pickup...

Donations must be packed in food-grade boxes to be picked up. Banana boxes or other produce boxes are often the best and easiest packing choice. Depending on store volume and pickup vehicle arrangements, donations may be palletized or set on a U-Boat to minimize pickup time.

During Pickup...

When a representative of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank or authorized Member Agency arrives for a pickup, they should be escorted to the area where donations are held. The representative will then load all donated product on to the pickup vehicle. Paper receipts confirming pickup may be provided at this time, if desired.

After Pickup...

Once your donation is transported back to a distribution facility, the product is sorted into the following categories: Dairy, Produce, Bread and Pastry, Meat, Frozen Foods, Assorted Dry Grocery, and Assorted Non-Food Items. Weights are recorded for each category and entered as donation receipts for the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. The Food Bank provides to all donors the receipts necessary to claim food donation tax benefits, as well as monthly donation statements.

Food Safety is our number one concern! Food Banks and their Member Agencies are required to follow handling procedures from the Feeding America Food Safety and Handling manual. A complete copy of the Feeding America Food Safety and Handling Manual will be made available to retailer divisions upon request.
Greater Cleveland Food Bank

Donation Acceptability and Storage Guide
Meat, Poultry, Fish

Freeze solid at 0° F or below
If in-date product is not frozen at time of pickup, it will be left in the freezer until the following pickup.

May be donated past date.
Must be frozen on or before the package date. Once frozen, and kept at temperature, it can be distributed up to 6 months later.

In original, sealed, food-grade packaging.
Store in meat boxes, separated by species, e.g. beef, pork, poultry, to avoid cross-contamination.

Labeled with description, net quantity, distributor, and ingredients.
Unless damaged or otherwise obscured, retail label contains all required information.

Would you eat it?
Thawed items, open packages, items kept in the Danger Zone (41° F to 135°F) for more than 2 hours, discolored product, or severely freezer-burned product cannot be distributed.
Frozen Foods

- Freeze solid at 0°F or below
  Product should not be allowed to thaw.

- May be donated past date.
  If kept frozen, it can be distributed up to 6 months later.

- In original, sealed, food-grade packaging.
  Outer package may be damaged, but inner packaging must be securely sealed.

- Labeled with description, net quantity, distributor, and ingredients.
  Unless damaged or otherwise obscured, retail label should contain all required information.

- Would you eat it?
  Damaged inner packages, items kept in the Danger Zone (41°F to 135°F) for more than 2 hours, and defrosted or severely freezer-burned product cannot be distributed.
Produce

Refrigerate at 41° F or below
Bulk loose produce may also be kept in cool, dry storage outside of produce cooler. Cut produce must be stored in cooler.

May be donated 2+ days past date, where applicable.
All produce donations should have at least 2 days of useable life left, regardless of package date. For bulk or loose produce, if there are no signs of decay, these items can be distributed.

Packed clean, food-grade packaging.
Place product in produce boxes (banana boxes are recommended.) Cut produce must be in sealed, food-grade packaging.

Bulk or whole produce may be donated without labels.
Cut produce must display description, distributor, net quantity, and ingredients. Unless damaged or otherwise obscured, retail label contains all required information.

Would you eat it?
Moldy or decaying produce, or items showing signs of infestation, cannot be distributed.
Dairy & Eggs

Refrigerate at 41° F or below
Milk can be frozen to extend useable life—see below.

May be donated 2+ days past date.
Milk can be distributed up to 7 days past date, or can be frozen and can be distributed 3 months past date. Yogurt, cheese, eggs, can be distributed up to 3 weeks past date if kept refrigerated.

In original, sealed, food-grade packaging.
Leaking or ruptured dairy products cannot be repackaged. Eggs may be consolidated or re-boxed.

Labeled with description, net quantity, distributor, and ingredients.
Unless damaged or otherwise obscured, retail label contains all required information.

Would you eat it?
Open packages, items kept in the Danger Zone (41° F to 135°F) for more than 2 hours, and discolored product cannot be distributed.
Baked Goods

Store in a cool, dry place.
Bread can be frozen to extend useable life—see below.

May be donated 5 days past date.
In-house baked goods should be donated by the day after production (day-old bread.) Frozen bread (in-house or production) may be distributed up to 6 months past date.

In sealed, food-grade packaging.
Baked goods packed loose in trash bags cannot be distributed.

Labeled with description, net quantity, distributor, and ingredients.
In-house baked goods may instead be labeled with name & location of the Food Bank, name and location of donor, description of food, date of donation, and a pre-printed allergen disclaimer.

Would you eat it?
Open packages, stale or moldy product, or items not in food-grade packaging cannot be distributed.
Shelf-Stable Grocery

Store in a cool, dry place.
Do not store in freezing temperatures: damage to packaging may result.

May be donated 1 month past date.
Useable life far exceeds package dating.

In original, sealed, food-grade packaging.
Outer package may be damaged, but inner packaging must be securely sealed. Cans cannot be severely dented or creased, and cannot have any damage to seams or rim.

Labeled with description, net quantity, distributor, and ingredients.
Unless damaged or otherwise obscured, retail label contains all required information.

Would you eat it?
Damaged inner packages, severely dented cans, home-canned products, and label-less items ("mystery cans") cannot be distributed.
Prepared Foods

Freeze solid at 0° F or below
Must be frozen by package date.

May be donated past date.
If frozen as above, can be distributed up to 3 months past package or prep date.

In sealed, food-grade packaging.
Prepackaged prepared foods must be in original packaging. In-house prepared foods must be in first-use, sealed catering trays or similar.

Labeled with description, net quantity, distributor, and ingredients.
In-house prepared goods may instead be labeled with name & location of the Food Bank, name and location of donor, description of food, date of donation, and a pre-printed allergen disclaimer.

Would you eat it?
Open packages, decaying product, items kept in the Danger Zone (41° F to 135°F) for more than 2 hours, and second-servings (leftovers that have already been served) cannot be distributed.
Paper & Cleaning Products

Store in a cool, dry place.

May be donated past date.
Useable life far exceeds package dating, if items are even dated.

In non-leaking packaging, boxed separately from food.
Liquids cannot be repackaged and distributed. Dry laundry soaps may be taped shut. Open paper products can be distributed if they remain appropriately clean for their designated use.

Cleaning products labeled as required.
Label includes ingredients, directions for use. Paper products do not require a label.

Would you use it?
Liquids without caps, dirty paper products, or items with evidence of rodent activity cannot be distributed.
Personal Care Products

Store in a cool, dry place.

Must be donated in-date, where applicable. 
Non-dated items may be donated subject to labeling and packaging requirements.

In original, sealed packaging, boxed separately from food.

Labeled with description, net quantity, distributor, and ingredients.
Unless damaged or otherwise obscured, retail label contains all required information.

Would you use it?
Opened packages, and items with illegible labels cannot be distributed. Products containing Pseudoephedrine, Ephedrine, or Phenylpropanolamine (commonly found in cough syrup) cannot be accepted.
Further Reading

**Greater Cleveland Food Bank**
https://www.GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org/

**Feeding America**
https://www.FeedingAmerica.org/

**The USDA FoodKeeper Guide**
https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/foodkeeperapp/

**US EPA Sustainable Management of Food**
https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food