



Connecticut Food Donation Made Easy

This food rescue guidance document is part of a series aimed at helping commercial food service providers – e.g., restaurants, hotels, corporate cafeterias, and supermarkets – reduce the volume of organic waste they dispose.

The US EPA’s Wasted Food Scale ranks feeding hungry people near the top of its priorities as a strategy to reduce wasted food. Businesses and institutions should consider how each strategy on the EPA Scale can contribute to a comprehensive food waste reduction plan.

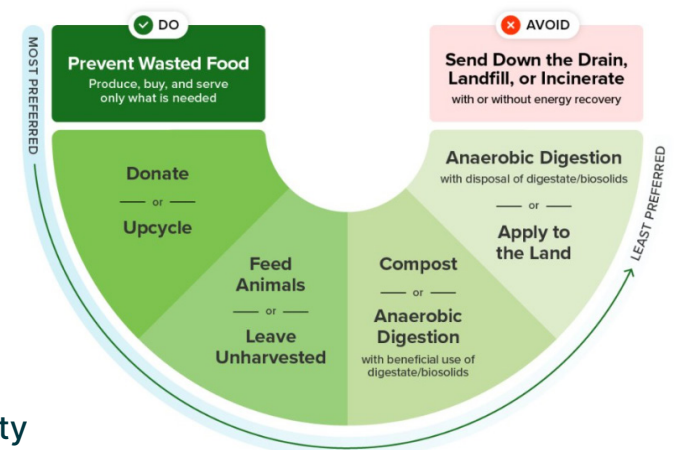
This document is intended to provide guidance to organizations interested in establishing food donation programs by offering a broad overview of how successful food donation programs should be structured. In order to have a successful food donation program there are four key steps that must be taken:

1. Identify the types and amounts of food to be donated
2. Identify partner organizations in your area with which to work
3. Determine packaging, storage, and labeling requirements to ensure food safety
4. Determine how food will be transported as well as pick-up frequency and quantities



Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food



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CET

Resilient climate solutions

cetonline.org/wasted-food-assistance-in-connecticut/



Why should my business donate surplus food?

After reducing food waste at the source, the US EPA ranks feeding hungry people as the next highest priority for reducing wasted food. Food donation yields financial, environmental, and social benefits as approximately 1 in 8 people in Connecticut currently face hunger. Further, according to [ReFED](#), Connecticut residents discarded the equivalent of 1.04 billion meals in 2019 in surplus food. At the same time, every day, businesses throw away thousands of pounds of food. Much of this food could instead feed hungry people. Decreasing the volume of wasted food can reduce the overall cost of business operations and increase operational efficiency. It can also mitigate significant greenhouse gas emissions and enable a range of beneficial end uses.

Selecting, labeling, and storing food for donation

Most categories of food can be donated, as long as the food is “apparently wholesome” or “fit for human consumption”. Donated food should be properly packaged and stored to prevent contamination and spoilage. The following table provides specific guidance for packaging, storing, and labeling foods; these should look familiar as they are aligned with best practices for food handling.



Food Handling Guidelines for Donating Food

	Prepared Foods	Packaged Foods	Fresh Produce
Examples of foods and storage requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrees (pasta, pizza, vegetables, prepared meat): Chilled at 41°F or below or frozen at 0 °F or below • Baked goods: Cool and dry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelf-stable (boxed, canned foods): Cool and dry • Meat (fresh), dairy, perishable: Chilled at 41°F or below • Meat (frozen or unprocessed): Frozen at 0 °F or below 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole: Cool and dry • Chopped: Chilled at 41°F or below
Recommended language for the label	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The name and location of food distribution organization (pre-printed) 2. The name and location of donor 3. The food description 4. The date of donation 5. Allergen disclaimer statement (pre-printed) <p>WARNING! This container holds rescued food! This food may contain, have come into contact with, or have been produced in a facility which also produces milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, almonds, pecans, hazelnuts/ filberts, pistachios, cashews, coconuts, pine nuts, macadamia nuts, and/or Brazil nuts), fish, shellfish (crab, crawfish, lobster, shrimp, mussels, and/or oysters), wheat, soybeans, and/or sesame seeds,</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The common or usual name of the product 2. The name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor 3. The net quantity of the contents 4. The common or usual name of each ingredient, listed in descending order of prominence <p>(Packaged foods typically have sufficient labeling from the retailer)</p>	No label required



Schools can develop donation programs for edible surplus. The [Food Donation by Connecticut Schools](#) guide provides state-specific guidelines and resources for establishing similar programs.



FOOD DONATION BY CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS Guidelines & Resources

The US EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy ranks feeding hungry people as a top strategy for reducing wasted food. Schools should consider how each strategy on the EPA Hierarchy can contribute to a comprehensive food waste reduction plan. The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) has worked with stakeholders including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut Department of Agriculture, food rescue organizations, food banks, and local health officials to develop this guidance document.

This document, produced in 2019, is intended to provide guidance for Connecticut schools on opportunities to donate food internally and externally. The document consolidates federal and state regulations, including information on liability protection, health codes, and more.

Food Donation Laws and Liability Protection

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (42 U.S.C. § 1791) encourages food donations by providing liability protections for businesses that donate 'apparently wholesome' food in 'good faith' to nonprofit organizations. [42 U.S.C. § 1758\(i\)](#) explicitly states that schools participating in the national lunch program that donate excess food receive liability protection under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act. [Extensive legal research](#) does not turn up a single legal case related to food donation liability. There are several laws pertaining to food donation at the federal and state level.

Connecticut has also passed [state legislation](#) to provide additional liability protection for donors. These laws protect donors that donate food to nonprofits for distribution by that nonprofit or to nonprofits that distribute it to other nonprofits, unless the donor "knew or had reasonable grounds to believe" that the food was not fit for human consumption.

SHARE TABLES IN CONNECTICUT – INTERNAL DONATION

"Share tables" are tables or stations, some of which include small refrigerators with glass doors, where children may return whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat. These items are then available for other children who may want additional servings.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Connecticut State Department of Education support the use of share tables when the school food authority (SFA) implements measures to prevent foods and beverages from being leftover, and complies with all local and state health and food safety codes. It is important to remember that the intent of the school nutrition programs is to serve healthy meals to students, and SFAs must take steps to minimize excess food. If a SFA continually has excessive quantities of leftover foods, the food service program must review and adjust food service items, menus, production practices and customer acceptance to ensure the maximum consumption of meals and snacks by students during the school day.



Building a Donation Program

Food donations are an important strategy for feeding vulnerable populations in need and providing access to safe, healthy food. When setting up a food donation program it is important to establish procedures that protect the safety of donated foods. For prepared foods, temperature logs should be kept showing that proper temperature has been maintained. Write down standard

operating procedures (SOPs) on how you will handle food for donation, where you will store it, and what types of food you will be donating. Make sure to train all staff about your food donation program – hold staff meetings, create signage, and create checklists. Share your SOPs with the organizations you partner with so everyone involved is on the same page.

Finding Partner Food Rescue Organizations


There are many organizations that accept and distribute food for donation. It is important to build a network of partners that can accept your surplus food, so seek out the organizations in your area that distribute food to those in need. If you are having trouble locating organizations in your area, speak with other local businesses that have food donation programs. You can also look for non-profits that work in waste diversion.

Contact CET at 888-410-3827 or e-mail ReduceWasteCT@cetonline.org for more information.

Partnering with Food Rescue Organizations

Frequent communication and site visits with partner food rescue organizations can foster positive relationships, build trust, and help drive successful donation programs. It is also important to have a written agreement (see sample on right) with partner organizations so that there is shared understanding of what foods will be donated, how that food will be handled and stored, and how frequently that food will be transported.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection provides **Food Waste Reduction and Recovery** resources to help businesses and schools with efforts to prevent and redirect wasted food.

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Food Donation Agreement Form

Food Donor Organization	Food Distribution Organization
Representative	Representative
Address	Address
Phone	Phone
Email	Email

Food Product	Packaging	Storage Conditions	Check all that apply	Quantity and frequency
Prepared Foods	Food-grade packaging	Chilled to 41°F or below, or frozen at 0°F or below		
Chilled Perishable Prepackaged Foods	Original packaging or food-grade packaging	Chilled to 41°F or below		
Meat, poultry, fish (fresh)	Original packaging or food-grade packaging	Chilled to 41°F or below		
Meat, poultry, fish (frozen)	Original packaging or food-grade packaging	Frozen at 0°F or below		
Dairy Products	Original Packaging or food-grade packaging	Chilled to 41°F or below		
Shelf stable foods	Original packaging			

For additional information on categories of donated food and how they must be handled see Appendix A (pg 39-40) of the Comprehensive Resource for Food Recovery Programs April 2016 revision.

Describe how food will be transported. Include pickup frequencies and how food will be packaged for transport (e.g. in coolers, in refrigerated truck).

Wasted Food Solutions Hotline: 888-813-8552 wastedfood@cetonline.org
Food Donation Page: <https://wastedfood.cetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CET-Food-Donation-Guidance.pdf>

Food Donation Laws and Liability Protection

There are several laws pertaining to food donation at the federal and state level. The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (42 U.S.C. § 1791) encourages food donations by providing liability protections for businesses that donate 'apparently wholesome' food in 'good faith' to nonprofit organizations. 42 U.S.C. § 1758(I) explicitly states that schools participating in the national lunch program that donate excess food receive liability protection under the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#). Extensive legal research does not turn up a single legal case related to food donation liability.

Some states have laws that provide additional protections for food donation. In Connecticut, the law offers protection for donors that supply food to a nonprofit organization in good faith, provided that the donation meets state safety and labeling guidelines. The Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic has created state-specific Legal Fact Sheets for Connecticut to provide information about [Liability Protection](#), and [Tax Incentives for Businesses](#).

DONOR NAME AND LOCATION	Ex: ABC Restaurant 1234 main St, Dallas, TX
FOOD CHARITY NAME AND LOCATION	Ex: XYZ Shelter 5678 Main St, Dallas, TX
FOOD DESCRIPTION (MENU DESCRIPTION):	Ex: Black Bean Burger
DATE OF DONATION:	Ex: 11/02/2015
WARNING! This container holds rescued food! This food may contain, have come into contact with, or have been produced in a facility which also produces milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, almonds, pecans, hazelnuts/filberts, pistachios, cashews, coconuts, pine nuts, macadamia nuts, and/or Brazil nuts), fish, shellfish (crab, crawfish, lobster, shrimp, mussels, and/or oysters), wheat, and / or soybeans.	
DONOR NAME AND LOCATION	
FOOD CHARITY NAME AND LOCATION	
FOOD DESCRIPTION (MENU DESCRIPTION):	
DATE OF DONATION:	
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Food Labeling

The Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic created a document specifically about [date labeling laws](#) in Connecticut.



Sector Spotlight:

Aux Délices

With four stores and a central commissary kitchen, **Aux Délices** offers prepared food, catering, cakes and pastries, as well as cooking classes. For the past two years, the business has partnered with **Food Rescue US** to **redirect edible surplus to hungry people**. Through this partnership, Aux Delices has donated **37,597 estimated meals** between January and July 2021.

On a daily basis, Aux Délices employees collect food from each store in sealed containers, which are then transported in bags back to the commissary kitchen where they are staged for pick-up. Seven days a week, Food Rescue US volunteers visit the commissary kitchen to collect bagged items for donation. Donated foods include **sandwiches, breakfasts, breads, pastries, and other prepared items - from chicken parmesan to soup.**

The ability for Aux Délices to coordinate their food donation program out of **one central kitchen** has streamlined the process for both the business and its food rescue partners. Aux Délices is responsible for packaging and transporting food back to their central location, and then **Food Rescue US** handles the remaining logistics. This organization **serves as one point-of-contact who coordinates other agencies and volunteers to collect the food.** They also monitor program success by tracking donations, and support Aux Délices if questions or concerns arise.

In reflection about the program, Laura Kraus, Corporate Catering at Aux Délices, notes that **“working with Food Rescue US has made it so easy – they have coordinated all volunteers and partners and are very well organized.”**

Aux Délices has experienced numerous benefits from participation. Not only is it beneficial to know that food isn't wasted, staff appreciate knowing that edible surplus is being redirected to people facing **food insecurity**. Additionally, this program provides the business, which already donates to local organizations around holidays, yet another way to give back to the community.

Food Rescue US is a nonprofit with 34 locations in 21 states and the District of Columbia. This organization **coordinates volunteers to pick-up and deliver surplus edible food to local rescue agency partners**, providing streamlined coordination, and filling the gap of moving food from the point of generation to sites where it can be redistributed. Those interested in establishing a **donation program or volunteering** with the organization can find contact information and additional details at **[foodrescue.us](https://www.foodrescue.us)**.



Sector Spotlight:

Stop and Shop

With a goal of sending zero waste to the landfill, **Stop & Shop has taken a comprehensive approach to its food donation program.** While prevention is a focus for the business, it also recognizes that there are times in which surplus edible food cannot be avoided. As a result, the business strives to donate as much food as possible. Inedible food scraps are collected and delivered to the company's **anaerobic digester** at its distribution center in Freetown, MA, producing energy to fuel the facility.

The retailer has established a clear chain of command that supports **collaboration with local food rescue agencies** while ensuring consistency across its stores. Stop & Shop designates contacts within departments at each location who are responsible for monitoring and overseeing food rescue on the sales floor. To add a layer of support, a **Sustainability Lead** at each site is tasked with acting as the main point of contact for a partner rescue agency, ensuring that food is prepared properly. The Sustainability Lead quickly relays any feedback back to staff as needed. Monitoring the program for success, the regional staff with oversight of several store's efforts monitor trends in the program and expertly coordinate to ensure that **donation opportunities are maximized**, while **minimizing unnecessary surplus.**

This expanded food donation program encompasses **meat and seafood, grocery, frozen, dairy, produce, and bakery items.** To ensure food safety, meat and seafood designated for donation is frozen immediately and kept separately in boxes in the freezer until collected by a rescue agency volunteer.

While practices vary slightly by department, employees typically collect food in boxes labeled for donation, and store the items in the freezer, refrigerator, or a designated location until it is picked-up. During the past twelve months, **91 Stop & Shop stores in Connecticut donated** the equivalent of **over 1,700,000 meals** through this program.

The business partners with [Connecticut Foodshare](#), which work with local entities to ensure food is collected for donation. According to Connecticut Foodshare, Stop & Shop is unique among retail donors in having a designated staff person at every store location to ensure the success of the donation program. Through this partnership, both parties monitor donation volumes, offering a check and balance to track program impact.

“Stop & Shop is committed to sustainability, and we’re proud that many of our sustainability initiatives help protect the environment and nourish our communities. By working with partners such as Connecticut Foodshare, as well as local food pantries, we are able to divert unsellable, donatable food into people’s kitchens rather than landfills,” explains Maura O’Brien, External Communications & Community Relations Manager at Stop & Shop. “Throughout the pandemic, a spotlight has been placed on the need to redirect food to those in our communities in need of support.”

Connecticut Foodshare has been in operation for nearly 40 years and coordinates a fleet, agency partners, and volunteers to schedule pick-ups from retailers and deliver food to sites where it can be redistributed. Connecticut Foodshare works with 350 stores in the state to rescue food. Feeding America’s MealConnect platform offers a free tool for donors to connect with outlets across the country for their edible surplus. More information about donating to Connecticut Foodshare or volunteering for the organization can be found online at ctfoodshare.org.



CET helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste. CET acts as a catalyst to accelerate the development of a vibrant marketplace to divert wasted food from the commercial and institutional sectors. We have been a leader in the wasted food reduction and diversion movement for more than 20 years, implementing some of the first wasted food composting programs in the country, and contributing to effective public policy.

We believe that better managing wasted food is critical in order to address climate change, feed more hungry people, and grow our economy. If you are a city, state or federal agency, industry group or foundation, and want to tackle the issue of wasted food, please contact us!

Phone: 888-410-3827 | Email: ReduceWasteCT@cetonline.org
cetonline.org/wasted-food-assistance-in-connecticut

This document was developed in collaboration with health officials, food rescue organizations, food banks, and organizations with established food donation programs. Updates to the document were made possible by a Healthy Communities grant from EPA Region 1. Updates to this document were made possible through a contract between the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Conservation and CET.