

#FeedHV-Food Safety Guidelines

The Feeding the Hudson Valley Campaign is a food rescue and gleaning program administered by the Hudson Valley Regional Council. The FeedHV mobile app is funded by grants from the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley with support from the Local Economies Project, the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation, the Thompson Family Foundation, the Bruderhof, the Louis Greenspan Charitable Trust and other generous individuals.



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Why Participate in Feeding the Hudson Valley?

Feeding the Hudson Valley is a food rescue and gleaning network celebrating the bounty of the Hudson Valley while helping the food insecure and reducing food waste. Our web based and mobile application (app) called FeedHV links edible and nutritious leftover food from farms, restaurants & catering services, grocery stores and institutions (like hospitals and universities) to feeding programs (food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, etc.) through a network of volunteers.

With nearly 40% of all food in the United States wasted, and nearly one in eight Americans not having enough to eat, our aim is to reduce food insecurity as well as food waste in the Hudson Valley. Through a simple matching process, food donors, volunteers and nonprofit agencies will divert food from landfills to lunch boxes.

Feeding the Hudson Valley is accepting donations of unused food from grocery stores, restaurants, and farms, and we are looking for volunteers to transport food from food donors to food recipient organizations. The safety of the food and the health of its consumers are vital to maintain. This guide summarizes important food safety guidelines for the Feeding the Hudson Valley donor, transporter and recipient agency.

Food Recovery – Liability Protection

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act (PUBLIC LAW 104–210—OCT. 1, 1996 110 STAT. 3011), established in 1996, protects businesses and individuals that donate food in good faith from being held liable should someone become sick from consuming donated food. The only exception to the law is in the case of gross negligence or intentional misconduct. This Act also gives uniform minimum federal protection to donors who may cross state lines. The law protects individuals, for-profit and non-profit businesses, and governmental entities.

Even if the food may not be “readily marketable due to appearance, age, freshness, grade, size, surplus or other conditions,” the Federal Act protects food and grocery products as long as they meet all quality and labeling standards imposed by regulations at the federal, state, and local levels.

As a federal statute, The Good Samaritan Act creates a uniform minimum level of protection from liability for donors and gleaners nationwide.

Additionally New York State Law [Article 4-D, Section 71-2 71-Z](#) provides liability protection for canned, perishable food or farm products distributed free of charge. Feeding the Hudson Valley recommends consulting legal counsel for detailed information.

Types of food that can be donated

Feeding the Hudson Valley concentrates efforts on recovering prepared foods and fruits and vegetables. Donated food must be prepared by a regulated or licensed food business, such as a restaurant, caterer, wholesaler or bakery. Food made in home kitchens cannot be donated through Feeding the Hudson Valley.

- **Produce** – any type of whole (uncut, unpeeled) fruit or vegetable that is fresh (packaged or loose) and chopped fresh produce that is packed separately in food-grade packaging
- **Dairy products** (milk, cheese, butter, eggs) – Commercially packaged milk, cheese, butter and eggs chilled to 40°F
- **Bakery items** – Including bread, bagels, cakes, muffins, rolls, etc. that are prepared at a commercial baking establishment, in food-grade packaging, and have not been served to the public.
- **Pre-packaged food** (e.g. salads, entrees) – In original packaging or prepared in licensed food establishment in food-grade packaging
- **Prepared food** – any type of prepared entrée such as grilled chicken, lasagna, pasta, salad, rice or soup that has been prepared and chilled to 40°F at a licensed food service establishment but has not been served or offered to the public. Must be labeled (including potential allergens) and dated.
- **Canned and packaged items**-in original packaging

Foods Unsuitable for Donation

We DO NOT accept products containing alcohol, food that has been previously served, or food that does not meet our food safety standards.

- Frozen grocery store or factory prepared foods.
- Fresh meat, seafood, and game.
- Unpasteurized milk and milk products.
- Items that contain alcohol.
- Foods previously served to consumers.
- Home prepared, home canned or home jarred products.
- Canned goods that are open, punctured, bulging or seriously damaged.
- Foods with damaged or compromised packaging exposing the food to potential contamination.
- Items with significant decay.
- Distressed foods damaged by fire, flood, or accident.

Rules and Practices for Ensuring Safe Food Transport

With a basic understanding of food safety and good judgment, food donors, transporters and recipients can ensure that donated food is kept safe for consumption.

Transporter Personal Hygiene

- If sick, do not recover food.
- Wear clean clothes, and closed-toed non-slip shoes.
- Pull long hair up and/or wear a hat.
- Wash hands and exposed arms up to your elbows with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before handling food.
- Wash hands again if you do any of the following: use the restroom, smoke, touch your hair, face, clothes or body, handle raw meat or eggs, eat or drink or use cleaning chemicals.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke or chew gum near exposed food.

Safe Transportation of Donated Food

To help assure safe transportation of donated food:

- Perishable foods must be refrigerated as soon as possible, always within 2 hours of pick-up/delivery*.
- Use safe, nonabsorbent, leak proof pans or reusable containers.
- Never put pans containing food on the ground.
- Use thermal bags/blankets or coolers (with ice packs for cold foods) to maintain hot or cold temperature of food; do not mix hot and cold food in the same carrier.
- Keep your vehicle clean of excessive dirt, insects, animals, and any other potential contaminants while transporting food. It is a good idea to have a sheet or tarp to lay in trunk or back seat before transporting food.

As a food transporter, if you suspect that the food you are picking up is not safe, accept the food and alert the recipient organization and FeedHV so follow-up can occur with the donor.

As a recipient organization, if you think the food you are receiving is not safe, accept the food and alert FeedHV so follow up can occur with the food transporter.

****2-Hour Rule****: To keep hot foods safe, keep them at 140 °F or above. Cold foods must be kept at 40°F or below. Bacteria grow rapidly between 40 and 140°F. Discard all perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs, and casseroles, left at room temperature longer than 2 hours; 1 hour in temperatures above 90°F.

Shelf-life of Donated Food

Much of the food that will be recovered through FeedHV will be past the date on the package. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as long as foods are not open and are properly stored, it is safe to eat food after the “best by”, “sell-by” or “use-by” date. **If you think any food is spoiled – rotten, or bad – please throw it away.** Here is a list of common foods and the amount of time past the date on package that they can be safely consumed:

Fresh/frozen foods

- Prepared Tuna Fish, Chicken, Pasta Salad, etc. – 3 to 5 days
- Milk – 5 to 7 days
- Yogurt – 7 to 10 days
- Un-opened Deli Meat and Bacon – 2 weeks
- Eggs – 3 to 5 weeks

Dry goods

- Baking Mixes – 8 months
- Dry Beans and Nuts – 1 year
- Cereal and Crackers – 1 to 2 years
- Uncooked Rice/Pasta – 1 to 2 years
- Canned High-Acid Foods (peaches, tomatoes, juice, etc.) – 12 to 18 months
- Canned Low-Acid Foods (meat and vegetables) – 2 to 3 years
- Food in Glass/Plastic Jars – 2 to 3 years

For information about additional foods you can consult the following resources:

1. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/getanswers/food-safety-fact-sheets/food-labeling/food-product-dating/food-productdating> - a comprehensive explanation from the USDA
2. <http://stilltasty.com/> – a food specific database with answers to your questions
3. <http://www.stilltasty.com/articles/view/5> - Expiration dates: Should you pay attention? article explaining the terms ‘best by’, ‘sell by’ and ‘expires on’

Field Gleaning Rules

1. When gleaning, remember you are on another person's land. Treat it better than you treat your own property. We are guests; don't abuse the privilege or we may lose it.
2. Safety is of utmost importance in gleaning. If any activity is of questionable safety, do not do it. Be sure to avoid climbing trees or fences, riding on the back of trucks and working near farm machinery.
3. In the field, the field supervisor is the boss. Follow his/her instructions and directions completely.
4. Glean and park only in those areas designated by the farmer or field supervisor.
5. Every gleaner must fill out the medical/liability waiver. All gleaners under 18 must have the waiver signed by their parents.
6. Children and youth must be closely supervised by parents or other responsible adults.
7. Check the area where you have gleaned and make sure you are leaving nothing behind.
8. The field supervisor can cancel a gleaning at any time if he/she feels these rules are not being followed.

Helpful Hints

1. Dress in layers. In the mornings, it is often cool and wet. Long sleeves and pants are needed because some plants are sharp and can cut the skin. Additionally, poison ivy and poison oak may be growing.
2. Wear sturdy, closed-toed shoes.
4. Hats and gloves are recommended for all gleaners.
5. Bring water, especially when it is hot out.
6. Sunscreen may be needed by some gleaners.
7. There are no bathroom facilities in most fields, so use facilities before coming to the farm.
8. Make sure that you carry a first-aid kit with you, in case of injuries.

If you have questions about the food safety practices encouraged by Feeding the Hudson Valley and the guidelines presented here, please contact your county health department or

Feeding the Hudson Valley

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We are thankful for the willingness and vast knowledge of Community Food Rescue of Montgomery County, Maryland and The gitm Foundation for pioneering much of the food safety training to make the process as safe as possible.