

How to Host a Food Drive

Logistics

Start by contacting your local food bank and asking them for a list of what foods they need and what foods they will and will not accept; below are just examples of a general case. Be sure to determine how long you want your food drive to last. Typical food drives last around one or two weeks, but determine the optimum time based on your campus.

As soon as possible, begin advertising your food drive by hanging up posters, banners, and flyers around campus. Also utilize social media to advertise; most groups will make a Facebook event and send reminders through that, and they will typically also encourage club members post statuses about the drive. Ask different organizations on campus to donate to the food drive, or to partner with your club in hosting it. Ask residence halls if you can place donation boxes in their front desks and ask them to share information about the drive with their residents.

Think outside the box in how you get people interested! Consider making your food drive themed, or make it a competition! You can also consider having categories of awards, such as largest donation from an organization, or you can give a reward to donors, such as a raffle ticket for every 5 pounds of food donated.

After you gather your donations, handing the food over to the food bank will need to be figured out on a case-by-case basis with your food bank. Typically, food banks will arrange to have a truck pick up all donations at an agreed upon time, but this might not always be the case. If your representative chooses to pick them up, be sure to choose a day that works well with events on campus, such as move-out.

Whatever you do, have fun with it! Be sure to share your work with the rest of CKI!

What items are typically acceptable?

Each food bank will have its own set of guidelines to follow, so be sure to check first! In general, be sure to collect non-perishable food items, and ensure your donations are lower in fat and sodium!

- Protein items- This includes canned items such as tuna, chicken, or stews, or even items such as peanut butter or beans.
- Fruits and vegetables- Canned fruits or vegetables are ideal, especially fruits in their own juice, water, or light syrup, or low-sodium vegetables.
- Oil and spices- Although most people might not think of it, canola oil or olive oil and spices are ideal items for a food bank! These items allow recipients to cook more varied and interesting meals.
- Healthy snacks and cereals- Be sure that if you pick out any cereals or healthy snacks that they are low in sugar. Dried fruit, nuts, and cereal/granola bars are ideal.
- Canned meals- Again, verify that these meals are low on salt and fat, but any canned meals are great items to collect.
- Stable shelf-life milk- Items such as dry milk or milk that does not need to be refrigerated are in great need.
- Fresh produce and frozen foods- While these items do have an element of perishability, many food banks will accept these items. A great way to turn your food drive into a volunteer event is to have a harvesting event to collect fresh produce for your local food bank.

What items are typically not acceptable?

Health is the main concern when it comes to donations, so usually only health-related concerns will prevent items from being accepted. Again, double check with your food bank!

- Damaged items-Some items like cans might have dents, but depending on the damage to the item, it might be acceptable. Be sure to verify if your donations will be accepted ahead of time.
- Homemade food items- Because these items are not sealed and ingredients are not listed, these items cannot be accepted. If you want to cook or bake, you can always host a bake sale to fundraise for your food bank, or see if they ever need meal prep for an event!
- Opened items- These items are no longer sealed, and are a health hazard to consume. Please ensure all items are sealed.
- Expired items- This also represents a health hazard due to risk of illness. Be sure to check your expiration dates in advance and check with your food bank about all guidelines in advance!
- Items packaged in glass- Glass packaging can easily crack and become a hazard to both volunteers handling the items and clients receiving the items.
- Bulk items- Food banks might not be able to repackage bulk items into sizes that can be distributed more easily, so it is better to skip straight to the smaller sizes!