

How to Safely Recover Food

Large Event Organizers

Following these practices can help you safely recover your surplus food, in compliance with Senate Bill 1383 and local ordinances. Items marked with a ★ are necessary to comply with these laws.

Stop waste from the start!

- Conduct a food waste audit. Start the conversation with your vendors to ensure you're working towards the same goal. Encourage vendors to save money and be eco-smart by producing only the amount of food needed.
- Consider including in vendor contracts a requirement to prioritize prevention of wasted food and to prioritize bids that take initiative to reduce overproduction.
- Ask vendors to consider cutting prices on unsold food at the end of the day.
- Consider making surplus food available to staff or volunteers.
- Publicize your efforts through signage or by hosting a waste-cutting challenge for attendees (consider setting up a social media hashtag such as #NoWasteAt___).

Plan Your Food Recovery Logistics

- ★ Contract with a Food Recovery Organization (FRO) well in advance of the event and provide estimates about the amount of surplus food you expect to have so that the organization can prepare to collect and redistribute it. Please see this [LOCAL LINK](#) for a listing of available organizations.
- ★ Work with your FRO to set up a recovery plan that considers storage space, timing, and other operations so that you can maximize food freshness and have it quickly redistributed.
- Establish a staging area (in compliance with [CalCode](#)) for participating vendors. This can include: labels (for indicating date and contents), refrigerated and shelf-stable storage space, and packaging.
- Ensure that vendors properly depackage and compost any inedible food or food scraps that are not safe or suitable for food recovery.
- ★ Be ready for inspections, if necessary.
- ★ You must recover the maximum amount of edible surplus food.

Secure Necessary Equipment

- Food-safe containers or transport bags*
- Dedicated refrigerator/freezer space
- Labeling and recordkeeping supplies
- Scale, if you are tracking the weight of donated foods (some FROs will track and/or weigh for you)

*Check the packaging preferences of your FRO partner. Ideally, find an FRO that will work with reusable containers. Reusable containers can be a significant cost-saver and are better for the environment.

Determine What to Donate & Ensure Food Safety

- Ensure that vendors are following standard safety and food handling protocol per [CalCode](#) for all food, whether it's intended for sale or recovery. For specific questions about food safety, contact your local Environmental Health Department: [\[contact info\]](#)
- Confirm your FRO's specific donation policies. You may also use the information below as a rough guide, always deferring to food safety regulations in CalCode:

| Potentially Donatable Foods from Commercial Kitchens | |
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| Potentially Donatable Foods | Foods that Cannot Be Donated |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsold and unserved produce, dairy, meats held at safe temperatures • Fresh foods or foods frozen on or before the date on the package • Unopened canned/dry-packaged food, securely sealed and dated appropriately, with labeling intact • Food near quality expiration dates • Lightly bruised or soft produce • Non-labeled food products with date and contents recorded • Pre-packaged meals sealed appropriately with date and content labels • Surplus unserved prepared foods kept at safe temperatures or cooled down (per CalCode protocol), and labeled with date and contents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contaminated: bad odor, discoloration, moldy and/or bulging packaging • Packaging is torn, contaminated, has holes, dents, or broken seals • Food not in its original packaging and missing ingredient label and/or a date • Foods previously served to consumer • Perishable foods that were not held at safe temperatures |
| <p>Mobile Food Facilities (MFF) and Temporary Food Facilities (TFF) have limitations. At the end of the day, potentially hazardous hot foods must be destroyed/composted.</p> | |

Keep Records

- ★ You must keep the following records onsite: pounds of food recovered each month, a copy of your contract with each FRO, list of food types being recovered, and frequency of pickup/delivery.

Scan the QR code for more tips on tracking and preventing food waste.



