

How to Safely Recover Food

Wholesale Food Vendors and Distributors

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. Save money and be eco-smart by purchasing only the amount of food needed to meet customer demand.
- Work with your supply chain to clearly label or define the difference between safety-based and quality-based dates to reduce customer confusion.
- Rotate perishable stock at every delivery to minimize waste.
- Evaluate which storage containers best maintain food quality.
- Consider selling/donating to specialized markets for bruised or blemished produce, such as juicing businesses, or working with the [Upcycled Food Association](#).
- Consider making surplus food available to staff.

Plan Your Food Recovery Logistics

- ★ Contract with a Food Recovery Organization (FRO). Please see this [LOCAL LINK](#) for a listing of available organizations.
- ★ Work with your FRO to set a schedule that meets your storage space and operational needs while maximizing the freshness and amount of edible food for quick redistribution. Notify your FRO in advance if you expect to have more surplus than usual, so they can prepare accordingly.
- Establish a dedicated area (in compliance with [CalCode](#)) for storing and labeling (with date and contents) food designated for donation.
- 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 a 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 you are following standard safety and food handling protocol per [CalCode](#) for all food in your possession, whether it's intended for sale or recovery. For specific food safety questions, 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	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contaminated: bad odor, discoloration, moldy and/or bulging packaging• Packaging is torn, 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• Medications, nutritional supplements, infant formula, and alcohol

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.



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