

How to Safely Recover Food:

Local Education Agencies

Following these practices can help you safely recover your surplus food in compliance with Senate Bill 1383 and local ordinances. Items marked with ★ are necessary to comply with these laws (if you are a local education agency with an onsite food facility or a private school with a cafeteria ≥5,000 sq ft or 250+ seats).

Stop waste from the start!

- Conduct a food waste audit. Save money and be eco-smart by producing only the amount of food needed to serve students based on past history, as deemed nutritionally balanced by the facility's registered nutritionist.
- Set up a [Food Share Table](https://smchealth.org/sharetable) where students and staff may return unwanted, unbitten, and unopened cafeteria items for others to take if they would like more food than what was provided. Consider offering second servings (when available and allowable) for increased consumption and to prevent surplus. To setup a Food Share Table (School Share Table) at your San Mateo County school, visit smchealth.org/sharetable.
- Educate students and staff about plate waste prevention and donation (e.g. with posters or trainings) and involve them in donation and waste reduction efforts.

Plan Your Food Recovery Logistics

- ★ Contract with a Food Recovery Organization (FRO) that is a 501(c)(3) to comply with USDA requirements on donating surplus food. Please visit <https://sustainsmc.org/foodrecovery> for a list of available organizations.
- ★ Work with 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.
- Under the right circumstances, you may be able to work with 501(c)(3) organizations that already operate at your sites to receive and redistribute surplus food onsite. The organization would need to hold the necessary permits. Please contact your local health department for more information.
- Establish a dedicated area (in compliance with [CalCode](#)) for storing and labeling (with date and contents) food designated for donation.
- ★ 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*
- Food thermometers
- Dedicated refrigerator/freezer space
- Labeling and recordkeeping supplies
- Food Share Table components
- 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 and 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.
- Anyone packaging food donations should take a food safety course and/or obtain a Food Handler Card.
- Package donations in shallow, sanitary containers. Do not mix different foods in the same container.
- Label containers with type of food and date prepared/stored.
- Donate food nearest its expiration date first.

For specific questions about food safety, contact your local Environmental Health Department:
envhealth@smcgov.org

Confirm your FRO's specific food recovery policies. You may also use the information below as a rough guide, always defer to food safety regulations in CalCode:

Potentially Donatable Foods	Foods that Cannot Be Donated
• Surplus pre-packaged foods, with labeling intact • Surplus prepared foods kept at safe temperatures or cooled down (per CalCode protocol), and labeled with date and contents • Unbitten, uncut fruits with a peel*, including lightly bruised or soft produce • 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	• Contaminated: bad odor, moldy or discolored • Packaging is torn, contaminated, and has holes, dents, or broken seals • Food not in its original packaging and missing ingredient label and/or a date (N/A for produce) • Unpackaged foods previously served • Perishable foods that were not held at safe temperatures
* Fruits with edible peels (e.g., apples, pears) must be washed prior to re-distribution.	

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.

