



How to Safely Recover Food

Restaurants and Commercial Kitchens

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!

- Evaluate your methods for tracking overproduction. Consider investing in software to track and reduce surplus and wasted food.
- Consider selling surpluses at a discount towards the end of meal service or prior to closing, to maximize the retail value of food before donating what's left.
- Consider displaying signage to explain to customers why certain changes that reduce waste, such as limiting offerings at the end of service, have been implemented.
- Experiment with options for smaller meal sizes and portions.
- Consider making surplus food available to staff.

Plan Your Logistics

- ★ Contract with a Food Recovery Organization (FRO). Please visit <https://sustainmc.org/foodrecovery> for a list of available organizations.
- ★ Work with your FRO to set a schedule that meets storage space and operational needs while maximizing the freshness and amount of edible food for quick redistribution.
- Establish a dedicated area (in compliance with [CalCode](#)) for storing and labeling (with date and contents) food designated for donation.
- Properly unpack 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 and Ensure Food Safety

- Follow standard safety and food handling protocol per [CalCode](#) for all food in your possession, whether it's intended for sale or recovery.
- 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 donation 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
● Unsold and unserved produce, dairy, and 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 ● Non-labeled food products with date and contents recorded ● Surplus unserved prepared foods kept at safe temperatures or cooled down (per CalCode protocol), and labeled with date and contents	● Contaminated: bad odor, discoloration, moldy and/or bulging packaging ● If 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

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.

