Food Collection Guidelines

What to donate

Any nonperishable food item may be donated, even if it is past its "best by" date. Food banks have special extensions on certain foods that are safe after the manufacturer's date, and they will internally sort items according to these regulations. Nutritious, staple food is of most value to hungry families. Specifically, the following are some of the most requested food items:

- beans (canned or dry)
- canned fruits and vegetables
- canned meats and fish such as tuna
- canned or boxed complete meals (ravioli, spaghetti O's, etc.)
- cereal
- peanut butter or jelly (in plastic containers, please)
- macaroni and cheese
- pasta
- pasta sauce (in plastic containers, please)
- brown and white rice
- shelf-stable milk
- canned soup, stew, and chili

What not to donate

Please do not donate the following:

- **Non-food items.** Though your local food bank *will* take non-food items, they will not count toward your totals for this campaign.
- **Candy**. Let's help provide Illinois families with good-quality, nutritious food.
- **Homemade food**. We must follow food safety standards for food preparation and cannot accept homemade treats (no matter how delicious they may be!).
- **Food in glass containers.** These have a high risk of breakage.
- **Fresh produce.** Produce will not be collected soon enough to avoid spoilage.
- **Perishable items.** We will not have cold storage facilities at collection sites to safely store perishables and frozen items.
  - Food Banks and most food pantries can accept perishable items directly. If you are interested in donating perishable items or fresh produce, please contact your local food bank or food pantry for more information.
- **Food in open containers.** This includes cans, bags, bottles, and all other containers.
- **Food that is missing original labels or packaging.** In order to comply with food safety and allergen warning standards, please only donate food that is still in its original packaging with all product and ingredient labels intact.