



## Required Food Safety for Distributions

Agencies are responsible for evaluating food safety, to the best of their ability, upon receipt of product and prior to use at distribution for clients. This includes inspecting the storage, packaging, "eat by dates", and appearance of product.

This guide provides standards and definitions to assist in evaluating and maintaining product quality. Please remember: Safety first, and "When in doubt, throw it out".

### Understanding Food Product Dating

Manufacturers provide dating on products to help consumers and retailers decide when food is of best quality. Except for infant formula, dates are not an indicator of the product's safety, but rather, a general guide to freshness (USDA, 2019).

Note the definitions for different types of food product dating, below. When evaluating food safety, it is important to consider the meaning of these dates as well as product appearance and storage conditions.

**Sell-By date:** Tells the store how long to display the product for sale. The store rotates the stock to be sure the oldest is sold first. Consumers can add days before eating it.

**Best When Used By date:** Tells when to eat or drink the product for the highest quality flavor. This is not a purchase or safety date.

**Use-By date:** The last date to use the product at peak quality.

**Closed or Coded date:** Packing numbers for the food company.

Food Banks may adhere to "extended dates" provided by manufacturers, specifying food safety and quality beyond what is required for retail sale.

See our "Food Safety Shelf Life and Expiration Dates" guide for our standards, which are conservative in nature and represent best practices in the hunger relief field.

### Perishable Product Handling and Storage Guidelines

Upon receipt of product, inspect its storage conditions, packaging, code dates, and appearance:

- Items must be in sealed/unopened packaging with the code date visible
  - The exception to this is uncut produce
- Product must be free of discoloration, off odor, mold, decay, leakage, or seeping.
- Held at safe storage temperature. No cross-contamination in storage.
- Free of signs of infestation.

## Food Safety During Distribution, Transport/Home Deliveries

- Keep food at safe temperatures using coolers and ice, freezer blankets, cambros, etc.
- Perishable food must not be in the temperature danger zone (above 0 degrees for frozen items, 40 to 140 for uncooked items, and under 135 degrees Fahrenheit for cooked items) for more than two hours - this can include during transport, loading/unloading, and distribution.
- Check the temperature of the perishable products upon receipt and every 30 minutes while it is held or transported in a space that is not automatic temperature controlled.
- Product must remain 6 inches off the ground (on pallets, shelves or crates) and 6 inches from the wall at all times during distribution, storage AND transport.
- Regularly clean and sanitize coolers, crates and the inside of any vehicles used to transport food.
- Plan for food safety in all types of weather (heat, cold, rain and snow).
- All agencies **MUST** be approved for home deliveries prior to offering this to clients. In order to be approved, you must meet the following requirements:
  - Have a controlled temperature option for vehicle (coolers with ice, freezer blankets, cambros, etc.).
  - Delivery must be within 35-mile radius of where distribution takes place unless you have approved food storage on site.
  - Fair distribution of marketing of who can sign up for home delivery service.
  - Delivery must be conducted in one day to all clients unless you have storage on site.
  - Individual making home deliveries must have food handler's training and be able to present it.
  - Full Application for Benefits for clients must be completed prior to delivery for USDA product.
  - Individual making home deliveries must be listed as a valid "Proxy" in L2F or have a valid proxy note on file for each client they are delivering to or from a contracted employee or volunteer for the organization

## Product Integrity – Receiving, Labels and Recalls

- Any processed items distributed to clients must have ingredient labels that identify the product name, manufacturer, net quantity of product, and ingredients on each package to be given out. Items without labels should not be distributed.
- SMFB will notify agencies of USDA and FDA recalls. If St. Mary's has knowingly received or distributed any recalled items, we will inform applicable agencies as soon as possible so agencies can begin recall procedures.
- Agencies should also check their inventory and take care not to receive or distribute these products from other sources, such as food drives or Grocery Rescue
- If in doubt about the safety of an item, do not give it out.

## Food Safety Complaints

Agencies must immediately address claims of illness or unsafe food by:

- Stopping use of the product in concern, and label it to prevent further distribution or use. If product is perishable, return it to cold storage conditions.
- Contacting SMFB right away with the invoice number and starting and ending order quantity.
- Documenting: dates on products, condition, and temperature of storage and distribution areas. Photograph if there is visible contamination.

## Re-distribution of SMFB Food

Products obtained from SMFB may **NOT** be shared with, given to, or used by anyone outside of the designated agency partner and their clients. The purpose of this regulation is to protect the end consumer. When food is redistributed to other locations, the chain of custody may be lost, and it may not be possible to ensure food safety or to notify those affected in the event of a product recall.

- Agencies may not transfer product or store it at other organizations. This includes product that is intended for specific clients, as well as leftover or unwanted items
- Communicate with Agency Representative to adjust your delivery or Shopping quantity to match the number of households you expect to serve, so that you minimize leftovers
- During distribution, adjust the amount of product provided to each household so that you will not have items leftover if you are unable to store them
- If you have extenuating circumstances and cannot store or use all product, please contact your Agency Services Representative

## Food Safety Documentation

SMFB requires the following food safety documentation for **ALL agencies**:

- At least one individual with current Food Safety Training must be always on site that food is being handled or distributed
- Submit a copy of the Food Safety Training to your Agency Services Representative

Agencies that are **cooking food for clients** must:

- Have a current Health Department permit, inspection, or license to operate. Submit copies of these records to your Agency Services Representative.
- At least one individual with a current Food Protection Manager's Certification (FPMC) must be on site during meal preparation and meal service. Submit a copy of your FPMC to your Agency Services Representative and be accessible throughout the meal service.
- All agencies should maintain a Cleaning Log to document the use of any harsh chemicals, and/or to record regular cleaning of public restrooms. Cleaning logs should be kept on site for 5 years.