

# Perishable Donation Guidelines

Thank you for helping us feed Arizona families.

To ensure food safety, please follow these guidelines for ALL donated product.

- **Packaging:** Sealed, unopened, labeled, with a visible code date (except for whole produce). Exterior packaging damage is acceptable if the interior packaging remains intact.
- **Condition:** No mold, leaks, off-odor, or severe dents/rust near seams.
- **Storage:** Keep at safe temperatures — Refrigerated at 40°F or below | Frozen at 0°F or below.
- **Separation:** Prevent cross-contamination. Ex: Keep raw meat away from produce.
- **Not Accepted:** Alcohol, opened or unlabeled items, visibly spoiled food.

*Please note: We are not able to return re-usable bins, crates or totes.*

For the health and safety of our neighbors, food that does not meet the specified criteria should be thrown away. A helpful rule of thumb — please don't donate items you won't eat in a few days.

When considering a donation of perishable foods, remember, it takes 3-5 days to reach the dinner table.

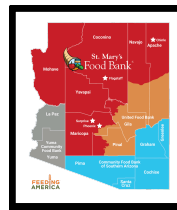
## Why does it take 5 days?



Day 1  
Donations are received at St. Mary's Food Bank.



Day 2  
Food is inspected, sorted, packed, and allocated.



Day 3  
Food is sent to more than 600 partner agencies and distribution sites across 81K square miles of AZ.



Day 4  
Food is distributed to hungry individuals and families.

## ▶ Sample produce guidelines:

### Acceptable

Scarring, discoloration, misshapen, etc. (any physical defect)



### Reach out immediately

Short shelf life, wrinkling/yellowing/browning with age.



### Not acceptable

Mold or decay that affects the product; exterior mold covering more than 10 percent of the donation; pests and/or odor.



## ▶ Visit these resources for more information:

Still Tasty: <https://www.StillTasty.com>

Food Keeper: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>

Bill Emerson Act: <https://www.congress.gov/-/104/crpt/hrpt661/CRPT-104hrpt661.pdf>

Schedule a donation pickup at [fooddonations@stmarysfoodbank.org](mailto:fooddonations@stmarysfoodbank.org) or (602)-343-3103

Product Category	Acceptable	Not Accepted
Baby Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Wet” baby food accepted from retail/wholesale donors only</li> <li>• Donate 21 days before code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Wet” baby foods from individual, residential, or food drive donors</li> </ul>
Bakery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sealed retail packaging</li> <li>• Labeled with all ingredients</li> <li>• Up to 3 days past code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loose, unwrapped, open or unsealed packaging</li> <li>• Unlabeled product</li> </ul>
Beverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refrigerated: 1 week past or frozen prior to code date</li> <li>• Frozen: 1 year</li> <li>• Soda/energy drinks: 9 months past code date</li> <li>• Shelf stable juices: 18 months past code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcoholic beverages</li> </ul>
Bulk foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepted on a case-by-case basis</li> <li>• Please call St. Mary’s with any large bulk items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Items intended for restaurant dispensing/mixing machines</li> <li>• Ice cream mixes/bases</li> </ul>
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If frozen by code date: 3 months past code date</li> <li>• Refrigerated dairy/juice must arrive at St. Mary’s warehouse on or before code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expired</li> </ul>
Deli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store at 40° or below</li> <li>• MUST BE sealed and labeled with all ingredients.</li> <li>• Prepared items (hummus, salsa, pesto, salads, etc.) by code date</li> <li>• Meats/cheese: Freeze or donate within 24 hours of code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsealed, expired (except frozen)</li> </ul>
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 1 week past sell by date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken or frozen eggs</li> <li>• Cartons or other products with visible egg leakage.</li> </ul>
Frozen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintained at 0°F</li> <li>• Up to 6 months past code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defrosted or refrozen items</li> </ul>
Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep separated to prevent cross-contamination.</li> <li>• Freeze meat before donating whenever possible.</li> <li>• Frozen Seafood up to 3 mo. past code date</li> <li>• Frozen Meat up to 6 mo. past code date</li> <li>• Fresh meat: 7 days prior to code date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meats butchered, packaged by individuals.</li> <li>• Meat from residential sources</li> <li>• Defrosted, refrozen, freezer burn, or discolored product</li> </ul>
Produce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In good condition with at least 5 days shelf life</li> <li>• Home grown citrus is accepted Jan 10-April 30</li> <li>• Packaged cut produce 3 days before code dates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No odor, moisture, or decay</li> <li>• No citrus accepted after April 30 from individuals and homeowners</li> </ul>
Seasonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edible pie pumpkins only</li> <li>• Edible items only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carving pumpkins</li> <li>• Flowers or plants</li> <li>• Loose candies not labeled for individual sale</li> </ul>