

# How to Safely Recover Food

## WHOLESALE FOOD VENDORS AND DISTRIBUTORS

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!

- Conduct a food waste audit. Save money and be eco-smart by purchasing only the amount of food needed to meet customer demand.
- Work with your supply chain to clearly label or define the difference between safety-based and quality-based dates to reduce customer confusion.
- Rotate perishable stock at every delivery to minimize waste.
- Evaluate which storage containers best maintain food quality.
- Consider selling/donating to specialized markets for bruised or blemished produce, such as juicing businesses, or working with the Upcycled Food Association.
- Consider making surplus food available to staff.

### PLAN YOUR FOOD RECOVERY LOGISTICS

- ^Contract with a Food Recovery Organization or Service (FRO/S) that is a 501(c)(3) to comply with the CA Dept. of Education and USDA Guidance on donating surplus food. Please visit Zero Waste Sonoma for a list of available organizations: <https://zerowastesonoma.gov/materials/food>
- ^Work with FRO/S to set a schedule that meets your storage space and operational needs while maximizing the freshness and amount of edible food for quick redistribution. Notify your FRO in advance if you expect to have more surplus than usual, so they can prepare accordingly.
- Establish a dedicated area (in compliance with CalCode) for storing and labeling (with date and contents) food designated for donation.
- Properly depackage 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 FRO/S will track and/or weigh for you)

\*Check the packaging preferences of your FRO/S partner. Ideally, find an FRO/S that will work with reusable containers. Reusable containers can be a significant cost-saver and are better for the environment.

^These items are necessary to comply with these laws.



[WWW.ZEROWASTESONOMA.GOV/  
MATERIALS/FOOD](https://www.zerowastesonoma.gov/materials/food)

## CONFIRM YOUR FRO/S'S SPECIFIC DONATION POLICIES. YOU MAY ALSO USE THE INFORMATION BELOW AS A GUIDE:

### CAN BE DONATED:

- Surplus pre-packaged entrees, 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

### CANNOT BE DONATED:

- Contaminated: bad odor, discoloration, moldy and/or bulging packaging
- 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)
- Packaged 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.

\*Some dented cans are safe to donate. See Pocket Guide to Can Defects for info.



### DETERMINE WHAT TO DONATE AND 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.
- Label containers with type of food and date prepared/stored.
- Never put hot food directly into the refrigerator or freezer.
- Donate food nearest its expiration date first.
- For specific questions regarding food safety, contact the **County of Sonoma Department of Health Services, Environmental Health and Safety Section**.

**County of Sonoma  
Department of Health Services,  
Environmental Health and  
Safety Section**  
Phone: (707) 565-6565  
EH@sonoma-county.org

### KEEP RECORDS

- ^You must keep the following records onsite: a copy of your contract with each FRO/S, including types of food and frequency of collection or delivery, and pounds of food recovered per month.

### FREE FOOD RECOVERY SOFTWARE AVAILABLE

- Zero Waste Sonoma has purchased a license for [www.Careit.com](http://www.Careit.com), a food recovery software that matches donors with excess food to non-profit recipients to feed local residents in need. To sign up for a free Careit account, please visit [my.careitapp.com/auth/register](http://my.careitapp.com/auth/register) and sign up as a "Business."



FOR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RELATED TO SB 1383 REGULATIONS,  
PLEASE CONTACT ZERO WASTE SONOMA:

ZWS-SB1383@SONOMA-COUNTY.ORG

(707) 565-3375

[WWW.ZEROWASTESONOMA.GOV](http://WWW.ZEROWASTESONOMA.GOV)

