



Food Safety Information

Our Mission

Our mission is to feed Southwest Virginia's hungry through a network of partners and engage our region in the fight to end hunger.

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Food Safety

Disclaimer of Warranties and Limitation of Liability

The Food Bank provides its agencies food and other grocery products on an “as is” basis and **does not make any express or implied warranties** of the food or grocery products that it distributes. Further, the Food Bank believes that it qualifies for the liability limitations of the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act [P.L. 104-210, 110 Stat. 3011 (1996)] when it distributes donations of apparently wholesale food and other product and apparently fit grocery products. This federal law is applicable so long as the Food Bank is acting in good faith, but it does not apply if damages are the result of intentional acts or gross negligence. This law may also be applicable to agencies depending upon the facts and circumstances.

Distressed Canned Food Guide

Distressed canned foods may be potentially hazardous to consumers. In almost every case, laboratory analysis is required to determine the safety of the food. We agree that this is not practical. This guide is intended to assist food establishment operators in determining the safety of distressed canned foods without laboratory testing.

Cans Not Approved for Use:

- Sharp dent on side seam; flat dent is OK
- Sharp dent on top or bottom seam; unless it is a “seamless” can.
- Rust/Pitted, which cannot be brushed off
- Cans that leak
- Missing labels
- Swell at top or bottom
- Springer or Flipper; vacuum seal broken
- Sharp dent with crease; pointed ends

Additional Information

Information on food safety and recalls may be found at:

www.ext.vt.edu – Virginia Cooperative Extension

www.usda.gov - United States Department of Agriculture

www.vdh.gov – Virginia Department of Health

www.fda.gov - U. S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, Food & Drug Administration

www.foodsafety.gov – links to most United States government websites

Storage and Handling of Product:

Raw meat must never be placed above other product in a refrigerator and must always be thawed in safe/approved procedures.

All cleaning items and chemicals should be stored separately from food products to prevent contamination. Chemicals and cleaning items may **never** be stored above or on the same shelf as food items.

There cannot be evidence of pest infestation in the storage area.

Food and other product may not be stored at a private residence or in a storage facility or building that is on an individual's personal property. All food storage must be either at the agency's facility or in a designated off-site storage area (**Not a mini-storage unit**).

Transport of refrigerated and frozen Food Bank products:

1. Refrigerated and frozen food items must be transported in coolers with ice or cold packs to prevent thawing or spoilage.
2. Another option is to cover refrigerated and frozen items with a freezer blanket. The freezer blanket will keep your cold items at safe temperatures if used properly. You can purchase freezer blankets at your local Food Bank branch.
3. Agencies also may use a refrigerated vehicle to transport cold items.
4. Agencies must use one of the above methods to transport refrigerated and frozen foods year round.

Food Container Inspection Guidelines

1. The following items are to be automatically thrown away regardless of the condition of the package:
 - a. Prescription drugs
 - b. Unlabeled ammonia, bleach and other household chemicals
 - c. Leaking liquid soap and leaking personal care items such as shampoo and hand lotion
 - d. Pesticides and toxic substances such as: *Raid, Drano, oven cleaners, paint, lighter fluid, etc.*
 - e. Aerosols missing the outer lid and/or the inner button
 - f. Cans, jars and bottles **without manufacturer's label**
 - g. Good service items in broken containers such as: paper plates, napkins, cups, plastic silverware, sandwich bags, plastic wrap, tinfoil, etc.
 - h. Personal hygiene items in broken containers such as: toothpaste – punctured or out of its' box, mouthwash, vitamins and non-prescription drugs
 - i. Paper products in broken containers such as: tissues, paper towels, diapers and sanitary napkins
 - j. Home canned products**
 - k. All food and regulatory compliance standards must be maintained at all times and any evidence of failure to do so will result in probation or termination.

2. Container List and Inspection Procedures

Double-wrapped containers (food and non-food) may be any of the following: bags, boxes, sacks and plastic wrapped items (such as cereals, pasta, rice, sanitary napkins, medication, etc.). These products have an inner seal or container to protect the contents if the outer container is damaged.

- a. If the outer container is damaged, remove the inner container and inspected for:
 - Holes
 - Exposed products
 - Insect infestation
 - Cross-contamination – spills from other products
- b. If the inner container is intact:
 - Repair damage to outer container, if possible
 - Return the inner container to the repaired outer container
- c. If inner container is damaged, throw it away

3. Inspection of Canned Items

The Food bank does not accept home canned products. If any cans are received in any of the following conditions, throw them away!

- a. Bulging
 - Ends of can are rounded outward
 - Lid of can “gives” (moves in and out when pressed)
 - Can makes “clicking” noise
- b. Rust – what to look for
 - Pitted rust (the rust has worked its’ way into the metal)
 - Rust underneath or on the double seam (the seam around the top)
 - Rust on the top and/or bottom of the lid of the can
- c. Holes or leakage
- d. Deep razor cuts and scratches
- e. Improperly formed seams which may be due to manufacturer error
- f. Cans which do not seem full
- g. Dents
 - Sharp, pinched edges on a dent
 - Deeply creased metal
 - Dents crossing the side seam (runs from the top to the bottom of the can)
 - Pull-top lids with dents or fractures (i.e., snack-pack puddings).
Dents that cut into the rim of the can
 - Double seam is pulling away from the can

4. Glass Jars and Bottles

If you find any jars/bottles in the following conditions, throw them away!

- a. Dirt of stain caused by liquid contaminants on the surface of the jar.
- b. Leakage
 - Stained label
 - Dirt or food product underneath the lid
- c. Contents of the jars/bottles
 - Mold: may appear as stringy growths in juices or off color in other foods
 - Discoloration or contents
 - Unusual product separation
 - Sloshing of food that should be solid or semi-solid
 - Contents of the jar/bottle appears to be less than standard full
 - Foreign object in contents
- d. Tops of jars/bottles
 - Missing lids – throw away unless there is a clean, dry intact foil seal protecting the contents
 - Chipped or cracked lid – throw away unless there is a clean, dry intact foil seal protecting the contents
 - Lids that are bulged, swollen, with raised buttons, or that “click” or “give”
 - Loose, dented, or crooked lids – throw away unless it can be tightened and the lid is intact or there is an intact foil seal
 - Lid with pitted rust
 - Plastic bottle with split seams or sides

5. Paper and Cellophane Packaged Products

If you find any paper/cellophane products in the following conditions, throw them away!

- a. Single layered packages with open flaps, unglued ends, razor cuts, punctures, tears or split ends
- b. Double layered packages with open flaps, unglued ends, razor cuts, punctures, tears or split ends unless there is a safe intact inner waxed or cellophane bag
- c. Any package with gnaw marks
- d. Any package with spill, stains, odd smells or a sticky or greasy appearance
- e. Boxed juices that are leaking, bulging or soggy
- f. Cardboard cans (*i.e., Pringle Potato Chips are sold in cardboard cans*) are to be evaluated as paper packaging. Even severely dented cardboard items are safe to use as long as they are **not** open because paper, in contrast to metal, is not brittle

6. Labels

The U.S. Fair Packaging and Labeling Act prohibit the distribution of any food item (except fresh fruits and vegetables) without a label. Labels should contain:

- a. Common name of the product (i.e., apple sauce)
- b. Name and address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor
- c. Quantity of the contents (i.e., 10 oz.)
- d. Common name of each ingredient (i.e., salt or sugar)

Products with torn labels are acceptable when **all the above information** is legible and complete.

Many people are on restricted or specialized diets, while others may be allergic to individual foods. The ingredients list helps them avoid products which may cause allergic reactions or is life threatening.

7. Tape Usage

We use tape marked with Food Bank printing to repair usable products (i.e., torn cartons, loose labels and cartons with unsealed flaps). The Food Bank tape assures our customers the product has been checked and found acceptable. We do not use non-Food Bank tape. Using clear unmarked tape for repair fails to show the product has been checked.

Shelf Life Reference Guide

Estimated Shelf Life

| Product | Past Code Date | Discard if: |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Cans/Bottles/Aseptic containers | 1 to several years | Bulging, leaking, damaged seal, severe dents, popped safety seal |
| Cereal/Crackers | 6 months to 2 years | stale, insects |
| Freezer Products | 3 months to several years | off odor/taste |
| Pasta | Several years | insects, mold, stale |
| Prepared Salads & Dips (refrigerated) | Use by date, unless otherwise specified | Past date |
| Refrigerated Juices/ Tea | 1 to 4 weeks | Mold, fermentation, off odors/taste |
| Rice | Several years | Insects, mold, stale |
| Yogurt | 1 to 3 weeks | Mold, off odor/taste |

**** Do not accept Baby Food, Baby Juice or Instant Formula Past the Due Date**

Proper Storage Prolongs Shelf Life

The chart is a quick reference for estimating the shelf life of products after the stamped date. Most items are good to eat after this date. Products will last longer if properly stored. Keep frozen foods at 0° F or below and refrigerated foods at 33-39° F. **Make sure cold-storage products are transported and put away within one hour after pick-up.**

Dry products including cans and packaged goods will last longer if stored in a cool, dry place. These products do not usually grow bacteria unless packaged goods become damp, or the seal of cans or bottles becomes damaged. Under ideal conditions, many of these products will last several years.

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