



Fighting hunger. Nourishing our community.

Healthy Foods Policy

Purpose

The Food Group believes that everyone utilizing a hunger relief program should have access to healthy foods. Healthy food access is a key component in maintaining health and preventing chronic disease in our communities. Therefore, The Food Group is committed to providing high quality and nutritious food to our hunger relief partners. Below we explain our nutrition values in regards to how we spend our money and how we handle individual and bulk donations.

How We Spend Our Money

The Food Group is committed to being a consistent source of healthy and familiar foods for our hunger relief partners and the communities they serve. We focus on providing foods that reflect a balanced diet based on USDA's MyPlate and foods that reflect the culturally specific needs of our partners.

The Food Group will prioritize spending our dollars on:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Culturally specific foods
- Whole grain products (with at least 16 grams or more of whole grains per serving)
- Food low in saturated and trans fats
- Food low in sodium
- Lean sources of protein (plant and animal sources; canned, dried, or frozen)
- Fruits that are minimally processed (canned, frozen, or dried; whole, cut-up, or pureed)
- Vegetables that are minimally processed (frozen, canned, or dried; whole, cut-up, or mashed)
- Dairy products or milk substitutes that are high in calcium
- Beverages including: 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- Basic staple foods that tend to provide the best nutrition per dollar
- Staple foods that encourage cooking and baking at home (i.e. broth, flour)

The Food Group assigns a nutrition ranking to all purchased foods offered. There are three categories including "Good", "Better", or "Best". Using this ranking system, The Food Group is committed to making sure that 90% of our purchased foods offered are "Better" or "Best" foods. Our criteria for ranking the nutritional value of foods can be found at:

<https://thefoodgroupmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Nutrition-Rank-Criteria-Sheet.pdf>

How We Handle Individual and Bulk Donations

Accepting individual and bulk donations provides an opportunity to receive a variety of healthy foods to offer to our agency partners for free.

General Guidelines for Donated Products:

- The Food Group will communicate healthy food drive guidelines to all food drive partners
- The Food Group is committed to sourcing fresh produce to distribute to agency partners for free
- The Food Group may accept bulk donations that contain a mix of healthy and other food items
- The Food Group will consider the nutritional value of any donation offered and whether or not it promotes cooking from scratch or baking

Additional information on donation guidelines can be found at:

<https://thefoodgroupmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Bulk-Donation-Guidelines.pdf>.

The Food Group will sort out individual donations and decline bulk donations of:

- All diet or regular sodas and energy drinks
- Candy (not including baking ingredients)
- Cookies and other sweet snacks
- Chips (excluding tortilla chips)

***Nutrition Rationale:** These foods are often less expensive and more accessible for people on a limited food budget. These foods also contain little to no vitamins, minerals, or other protective nutrients for the body.*

Nutrition Commitment

In addition to being committed to distributing healthy foods:

- The Food Group has a full-time dietitian on staff who provides internal expertise, oversight, and has developed a nutrition ranking system to aid in food purchasing and procurement
- The Food Group is committed to offering nutrition support services to our agency partners and leading the development and implementation of nutrition resources in hunger relief

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