



Guidance for Self-Service Community Pantries

The Department of Food and Consumer Safety does not require licensure for food pantries distributing pre-packaged non-potentially hazardous foods from an approved source. Self-service community pantries would be allowed if the product is limited to shelf stable food products. This guidance serves to clarify what can be done in self-service community pantries and review best practices to keep the community safe.

HELPFUL TERMS

Potentially Hazardous Foods: Foods that require time and temperature control in order to prevent bacteria growth.

Shelf Stable: Foods that can be safely stored at room temperature, or "on the shelf," are called "shelf stable." These non-perishable products include jerky, country hams, canned and bottled foods, rice, pasta, flour, sugar, spices, oils, and foods processed in aseptic or retort packages and other products that do not require refrigeration until after opening. Not all canned goods are shelf stable. Some canned food, such as some canned ham and seafood, are not safe at room temperature. These will be labeled "Keep Refrigerated."

Approved source: Approved means that the facility where the food is produced, prepared, or processed meets or exceeds the standards of the responsible regulatory agency. Food must come from a facility that is regulated and inspected. Food prepared or repackaged in a home is not approved.

Self-Service Pantry Guidance:

- Pantries should be built to be weather and vermin resistant.
- Pantries outside should have doors to prevent animals from getting into the food.
- Pantries should be adequate size to house donations and monitored. Donations should not be placed on the ground or where exposed to elements if the pantry is full.
- Pantry shelving and surfaces should be easy to clean.
- Pantries should be placed in approved locations in accordance with local zoning requirements.
- Extreme heat or cold can reduce the integrity of packaging, increasing food safety risk. During very cold or hot weather, it is recommended that canned and jarred goods not be distributed.



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- It is preferable to have these pantries inside a community center or common area to allow temperature control and monitoring for intentional contamination.
- Signage or guidance should be available to ensure community members provide only approved product in a safe condition.
- Donated prepacked food must have its original labeling.
- Pantries should have a person in charge or “captain” monitoring donations and pantry conditions regularly. Person in charge should check donations, clean any spills, and check for rodent or pest activity. Contaminated or unapproved donations should be removed.

Do not accept and dispose of:

Dented or swollen cans

Packaging with signs of rodents or insects

Open or damaged boxes & containers

Product with missing labels

Water damaged product

Items with visible mold

Homemade foods or leftovers

Expired baby formula

Approved food donation examples (in original packaging):

Plastic jars of applesauce

Soup mixes

Canned beans

Peanut butter

Canned fish or chicken

Rice

Crackers

Pasta

Granola Bars

Cereal

Mashed potato flakes