

Food Safety Guide



Who is this guide for?

This guide has been prepared for members of the Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance and is available for download at www.afra.org.nz/food-safety-guide.

Why read this guide?

The purpose of the AFRA Food Safety Guide is to protect the safety and dignity of recipients who consume rescued food. It will also uphold the public perception of food rescue organisations and make it easier to comply with government food safety expectations.

While food rules under the Food Act 2014 apply only to food that is traded, not donated – food safety is still important for our sector.

The Ministry of Primary Industries has reviewed and offered comments on this guidance.

What is food safety?

Food safety is about preventing food from causing illness or harm. Food can be unsafe if it contains certain 'hazards', which fall into three categories:

- (1) Biological (bugs): certain bugs can make people sick. Food can be unsafe if it has high enough levels of these bugs.
- (2) Chemical: Many chemicals can make people sick if in or on food
- (3) Physical (foreign): glass, metal or other sharp objects can sometimes get into food and cause harm.

Acknowledgements

This guide has been produced with significant input by Kaibosh and KiwiHarvest - thank you to the teams for creating great resources which we have been able to share here.

Linked Resources

There are linked resources in this guide which won't be available on published copies. For a full list of all linked resources visit www.afra.org.nz/food-safety-guide

Cover photo credit: Kara Scherer

This resource was last updated 17 November 2021

Contents

1. Rescuing Food page **5**

Guidance for Food Donors

2. Transporting Food page **7**

Guidance for Drivers

3. Sorting / Storing Food page **9**

- A. The Staff
- B. The Surroundings
 - i. Clean premises
 - ii. Clean people
 - iii. Refrigeration
 - iv. Anti-pest measures
- C. The Food
 - i. High risk foods
 - ii. Allergens
- D. The Sorting
 - i. Best-before Dates guidelines
- E. Keeping Records

4. Distributing Food page **15**

- A. Final Checks
- B. Recalled Food



Photo credit: Just Zilch



Rescuing Food

All parties within the donation chain are responsible for ensuring that food is kept safe and suitable for human consumption.

It is important to have clear guidelines on what food will be rescued. We suggest that staff members who manage donor relationships or pick-ups should familiarise themselves with this section and this section is passed on to food donors.

Good Samaritan Clause - s 352, Food Act 2014

Also known as *Immunity of Food Donors*, this clause applies to businesses who donate food they would normally sell. Provided food is safe and suitable when it is donated and comes with any information needed to keep it safe and suitable, a donor is protected from liability under the Food Act 2014.

1. Food is **unsafe** if it is likely to cause the person eating it harm.
2. Food is **unsuitable** if it is contaminated, deteriorated, in a condition that affects its intended use or people can't tell what is in it.

Information for food donors

Do not donate:

- Food past its 'used-by' date (more on 'use-by' and 'best-before' dates on page 12)
- Food that may have been opened, has damaged packaging or broken seals
- Food that has clear signs of spoilage e.g., mould, slime, discoloration or rusty, dented or bulging cans
- Packaged food that has had its original label removed
- Food that has been thawed and then refrozen
- General rubbish e.g. cut scraps or floor sweepings
- Food that is subject to a current recall notice: a list of recalled foods can be found [here](#)
- Home prepared food.

Please inform us if food:

- Is safe to eat only for a limited time
- Requires special handling or storage

Please ensure:

- Packaging covers food and hasn't been used for anything other than food
- Food items are separated from non-food items
- Raw food is separated from cooked/ready-to-eat food
- Hot food for donation is thoroughly cooked and kept above 60°C
- Meat is hard-frozen when received
- Other food that is frozen is still hard-frozen when received
- Chilled foods for donation have been maintained in the chill-chain at or below 5°C
- Where possible, keep allergen food separated from other food. Common allergen foods are: peanuts, eggs, fish, tree nuts, soy, shellfish, wheat/barley/oats/rye, sulphites, lupin, milk and sesame.

Are dented tins ok?

Each food rescue organisation will have a way of handling dented cans, but we recommend this advice from [LoveFoodHateWaste](#):

"If a tin has a small dent, but otherwise there appears to be nothing wrong with it, the food should be safe to eat. But if a can has a deep dent – one that you can lay your finger into – it should be discarded."

For further information, please see MPI ["Donations of food from commercial sources"](#).

Photo credit: Waiheke Resource Trust



2. Transporting Food

It is important that your vehicles have the capacity to keep cold food cold and frozen food frozen. Ensure that this section is passed on to relevant staff members, particularly drivers.

Guidance for Drivers

- Transport the following foods at or below 5 °C: dairy, meats, eggs and prepared foods.
- Ensure that frozen foods remain frozen: food frozen may be transported at or below 5 °C if transit time is less than an hour to delivery (be prepared for the impact of weather and traffic on journeys).
- Ensure raw food and cooked food are separated.
- Rescued food should be packed into crates or cardboard boxes.
- The cargo floor and walls of the truck chiller should be cleaned at least once a week or whenever there are spillages.
- Crates should be wiped down once a week.

Here's a tip!

Have a separate coloured small plastic box clearly marked 'not for distribution or human consumption' in the vehicle to pop any food item that has been compromised for example, damage in transit or it got dropped at loading/unloading time.

If your vehicles do not have cold storage capacity, please get in touch with dawn@afra.org.nz.



Photo credit: Fair Food



Photo credit: Kaibosh

3.

Sorting Food

While the Food Act requirements do not apply to food rescue sites as they are not donors that trade in food, food rescue organisations still have a duty of care to ensure the safety and suitability of the food they give out.

This means:

- Keep food in the same condition it was received until distributed to the end user
- Ensure food is appropriately stored, refrigerated or frozen.

A. The Staff

Pick a food safety leader

Each food rescue site should nominate a staff member to 'lead' food safety measures and be responsible for keeping up to date with this guide and any other MPI guidance. It is recommended that staff members attend food safety training. Regular checks are recommended frequently with an annual audit to ensure whether food safety guidance needs updating.

It is also recommended that a volunteer within any volunteer groups is nominated to be a 'lead' on food safety. Every volunteer should need to know how to keep food safe and suitable and should receive an initial training briefing from either the staff lead or volunteer lead.

B. The Surroundings

Clean premises

- A cleaning schedule should be created e.g, what needs cleaning, how often and by whom.
- Premises must be kept clean to a high standard.
- Surfaces used for food sorting must be cleaned and sanitized prior to and following each use.
- Phones should be kept away from food, sorting areas and equipment.
- Ensure any equipment, utensils or repackaging materials are clean.
- Flooring should remain clean and mopped with hot water.
- Provide for rubbish areas away from sorting areas.



Clean people

- Hands should be properly washed (see this [MPI guide](#) or [video](#)).
- New volunteers should be trained by key staff members.
- Hair should be properly tied.
- Clean clothing, shoes and aprons should be worn and appropriate PPE (gloves, masks and high-viz vests) where needed.
- Anyone sick or feeling unwell should not volunteer or sort food - many food rescue organisations have a 48-hour standdown for people who have been unwell.

Refrigeration

- The temperature of cool rooms should be between 0 – 5 °C.
- Vegetables should be stored in a cool room.
- Potatoes, citrus and onions should be ideally kept in a dry storage area.
- Fridges should be checked for maintenance issues and thermometers should be available for checking fridge temperatures.
- Cool storage units should be washed inside and out at least once a year.
- It is good practice to check temperatures of food daily at the start and end of a shift.

Here's a tip!

Use a second thermometer in your chiller to check the temperature is recorded properly.

Have your inbuilt thermometer recalibrated yearly - your refrigeration service can do this for you.



Anti-pest measures

- Anti-pest measures should be installed and monitored.
- Precautionary pest control may be needed.

Handling chicken

We recommend that our members avoid handling fresh chicken.

However, if you choose to, we strongly encourage you to seek and employ best practice advice for all aspects of storing, sorting and distributing fresh chicken.

All team members who handle chicken should be trained according to your guidelines.

A good resource to start with is available from the [Ministry of Primary Industries](#).

C. The Food

High-risk foods

High risk foods should be visually inspected and stored under food safe conditions.

Foods considered high risk include:

seafood	meat	dairy products	eggs	prepared fruit salads
small goods such as ham and salami	poultry such as chicken and turkey	cooked rice	cooked pasta	prepared salads such as potato, pasta, rice salads and coleslaw

Many food rescue organisations avoid all raw chicken, seafood and shell-fish.

Based on [MPI advice](#), AFRA recommends not taking homekill, which they suggest should be eaten by either the animal owner or direct contacts of the farmworkers.

Based on [MPI advice](#), AFRA recommends keeping eggs cool (in the fridge) and in general, eggs should not have a best-before date of longer than 35 days. Current [MPI advice](#) includes washing your hands after handling eggs and only distribute eggs that are clean (for example, free from dirt, faecal matters and cracks).

Allergens

In the same way as raw foods are kept apart from ready-to-eat foods, foods that don't contain allergens should be kept separate from allergen-containing foods, and handled appropriately so they don't become contaminated.

Common allergen foods include:

peanuts	dairy including eggs and milk	fish	sulphites	soy
shellfish (i.e. crustacea such as crabs and prawns and molluscs such as mussels and oysters)	cereals containing gluten such as wheat, barley, oats, rye and spelt	tree nuts (such as almond, brazil nut, cashew, hazelnut, macadamia, pecan, pinenut, pistachio and walnut)	lupin	sesame

*Special attention should be given to **bagged salads and pre-cut vegetables** even before the best-before date.*

Check daily in chilled storage for any sign of deterioration (liquid, slimy or 'wet look') and discard immediately if seen.

D. The Sorting

There is a difference between **use-by** (do not distribute) and **best-before** (can still distribute and may be safe to eat).

Remember that the recipient community organisation will take a day or two to distribute food to whānau, so this time difference should be taken into account.

Use-by Date <i>Food Safety</i> Do not distribute food after this date.	Best-before Date <i>Quality</i> You can eat food after this date, but it may not be at its best.
<p>A use-by date means there is a potential health risk if consumed after midnight of that date.</p> <p>Under no circumstances are products past their use-by date to be consumed unless they have been frozen prior to that date.</p>	<p>A best-before date indicates the period for when the product is at its optimal quality.</p> <p>Products with a best-before date are safe to consume after that date although the quality will deteriorate. If deterioration or spoilage becomes noticeable, it is then a health/ safety risk. If it looks ok and smells ok, you can generally eat it.</p>
Do not distribute food that has past its use-by date.	Food can be donated after the best-before date provided it is fit to eat.

AFRA members do not distribute food that has past its use-by date except where donations comply with food safety exemptions as given by the food producer.

For more guidance, please see these resources from [MPI](#) & [Love Food Hate Waste](#) or for more information on use-by, best-before, packed-on and baked-on dates, see this article from [Consumer](#).

E. Keeping Records

Though not required, it is recommended that each food rescue organisation keeps records around food safety.

Templates can be [viewed here](#) but should cover at the least:

- Staff training records i.e. that someone trained is meeting training requirements
- Staff sickness records
- Refrigeration and chill-chain needs are met
- Cleaning and sanitising checks
- 'When something goes wrong' register - for example, accidents or near misses.

A copy of all documents or requirements should be kept for at least four years.

Best-Before Guidelines

Food type		Don't give out if....
 DAIRY	Fresh milk	3 days or more after 'best-before date'
	Yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, cream	2 weeks or more after 'best-before date'
	Eggs	2 weeks or more after 'best-before date'
	Soft cheese: brie, camembert	2 weeks or more after 'best-before date'
	Mayonnaise, hollandaise and tartare sauce	1 month or more after 'best-before date'
 MEAT	Fresh meat - not chicken or shellfish	After 'best-before' date. Only give on 'best-before date' if meat is to be consumed on that day.
	Fresh meat - chicken or shellfish	We recommend you DISCARD IMMEDIATELY
	Cured meat - bacon, salami etc.	After 'best-before' date. Only give on 'best-before date' if meat is to be consumed on that day.
 BREAD	Fresh bread	2 or more days after 'best-before' date
	Packaged breads	10 days or more after 'best-before' date
 DRINKS	Smoothies	2 days or more after 'best-before' date
	Juices	1 week or more after 'best-before' date
	Fizzy drinks	6 months or more after 'best-before' date
 READY MEALS	Salads (bags and pottles)	Don't distribute after 'best-before' date
	Single serve microwave meals/bulk prepared meals	On or after 'best-before' date
	Fresh pies, pizzas and quiches	3 days after 'best-before' date
	Fresh soups (plastic pouches)	2 weeks or more after 'best-before' date
 OTHER	Tofu	1 week or more after 'best-before' date
	Dips (including hummus)	1 week on or more after 'best-before' date
	Packaged chips, biscuits and crackers	1 month or after 'best-before' date
	Chocolate and sweets	2 months or more after 'best-before' date
	Dried nuts and fruits	3 months or more after 'best-before' date
	Packaged cereals and muesli bar	6 months or more after 'best-before' date
	Spreads and chutneys	6 months or more after 'best-before' date
	Canned goods	1 year or more after 'best-before' date
	Dried bulk goods (flour, sugar, oats etc.)	1 year or more after 'best-before' date

These are **guidelines only** as referenced by international website www.eatbydate.com and in consultation with AFRA members and MPI.
You should always question any food past its best-before date before re-distributing back out into the community.



Photo credit: Love Soup

4.

Distributing Food

While the obligations under the Food Act to ensure food is safe and suitable to eat apply to food businesses only, all parties within the donation chain have a duty of care to ensure food is safe and suitable. For example, once food is with a recipient organisation they have a similar duty of care to the end consumer of keeping food safe and suitable.

Having said that, it is in the food rescue organisation's best interests to have in place appropriate guidelines and procedures to ensure continued suitability and safety of donated food. This will upkeep safety as well as brand and reputation. Recipient organisations may also be able to learn from the expertise (and this guidance) for food rescue organisations.

A "Recipient Food Safety Guide" which can be handed on to recipients/recipient organisations as an awareness raising resource and can be downloaded from the [AFRA website](#).

A: Final checks

At the point of transaction to recipient/s:



Undertake a final check for any delivery spoilage



Draw attention/ pass on relevant best-before date guidance (on pg 13)



Note food needs to remain frozen if in a frozen state

B: Recalled Food

If you become aware that food already delivered is under recall, please alert the recipient/s immediately. If it is not possible to contact the recipient/s then an appropriate measure would be to use social media and signage to advise of the recall and to inform that the affected foods should not be consumed and/or distributed.

A list of recalled foods can be found [here](#). You can also [subscribe to MPI's](#) email alerts

The Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance proudly works with



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

