Londa Nwadike, Kansas State University/University of Missouri Extension Food Safety Specialist

Introduction
The United States (U.S.) has an abundance of food; yet many people in the U.S. still suffer from food insecurity and utilize food assistance, such as food pantries and soup kitchens. Hungry families could use some of the significant proportion of the U.S. food supply that regularly goes to waste. In fact, an estimated 30-40 percent of the U.S. food supply is wasted—that is, not available for human consumption—with 31 percent food loss at the retail and consumer levels. Food retailer and consumer donations of safe and healthy food to entities such as food pantries and soup kitchens can help feed those hungry families while reducing food waste.
Some groups may be reluctant to donate food that would otherwise go to waste for fear they will be liable if the food they donate makes someone sick. Therefore, the U.S. Congress in 1996 passed the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act to reduce potential donor liability for donations made in good faith. In particular, this act can help grocery stores, restaurants and similar retail organizations feel more comfortable about donating food, instead of needlessly sending food to the landfill.

However, it is critical that such entities receive food donations that are as safe and nutritious as possible so that more people have access to safe and healthy food, rather than just whatever food has been in the back of someone’s cupboard too long. This lesson provides food safety tips for people who are donating food to such entities, as well as for groups organizing food drives.

**Objectives**

- Identify foods that are safe to donate—and those that are not—to food pantries and soup kitchens.
- Discuss safe practices for donating food to food banks and food pantries.
- Develop a list of the top three points for participants to consider the next time they donate to a food bank or soup kitchen or organize a food drive.

**Intended audiences**

 Adults and youths who may be donating to a food pantry, food bank or soup kitchen, or organizing a food drive. Such groups may include:

- Parent-teacher organizations
- Community clubs
- 4-H Clubs
- School organizations
- Church groups
- Philanthropic groups

**Before the lesson**

1. Review this leader’s guide and its companion fact sheet (#N1311).
2. Check listed references for more information.
3. Assemble materials, including:
   - Pens or pencils
   - Copies of the fact sheet
   - Copies of the evaluation to be distributed following the lesson
4. Look at the list of suggested illustrations in the “During the lesson” section below, and determine which illustrations you will use to reinforce food safety concepts. Gather the necessary materials for those illustrations and activities.

**During the lesson**

1. Give each participant a copy of the fact sheet and a pencil, and allow a few minutes for each person to review the information.
2. Allow 45 to 50 minutes to teach the lesson. Try to answer questions as you go along, instead of waiting until the end.
3. Begin by asking participants why they think food safety is important when they donate to food pantries and soup kitchens.
4. Discuss the introductory paragraphs from the fact sheet. Be sure to emphasize that it is important to donate food that is safe and nutritious, and not just any leftover
food, because many people who use food
pantries and soup kitchens are young, old,
pregnant or sick and particularly vulnerable
to foodborne illness.

5. Ask and allow participants to discuss
each of the questions in the fact sheet
before continuing with the answers and
explanatory information.

6. Use the accompanying PowerPoint
presentation (including photos on slides)
to discuss some of the important points for
donating foods safely.

7. Use any of the following suggested
illustrations and discussion starters while
reviewing the relevant section:

a. Bring some foods and ask if they should
be donated (e.g., outdated food, dented
cans and home-canned foods, as well
as some foods that are acceptable to
donate).

b. Show a food thermometer, and discuss
safe food holding temperatures (above
135 degrees F or below 41 degrees F).
Perhaps mention that though these
are the Food and Drug Administration
(FDA) holding temperature regulations
for food businesses, the FDA and the U.S.
Department of Agriculture generally
use 140 degrees F and 40 degrees F in
consumer information on safe holding
temperatures, as those temperatures are
safer and are easier to remember.

i. Reiterate that food thermometers
are inexpensive (~$5) and important
for monitoring the proper
temperature to control microbial
growth.

ii. Mention that thermometers
must be calibrated for accuracy.
More information on calibrating
thermometers is available on Page
10 of K-State Research and Extension
publication 31381.

c. Show an example of a large food-grade
container that is safe for holding food.
Also, show a garbage bag or can, which
should be used for holding trash, not
food for consumption.

d. Show pictures of dented cans or the
flowchart poster from North Carolina
State University2 showing when it is safe
to use dented cans.

e. Show the MyPlate graphic3 and talk
about what constitutes nutritious meals
for people, including those in need.
Show the suggested nonperishable
items for food drives card included in
the fact sheet, and talk about ideas for
food donations from each food group.
Emphasize that variety is valuable! For
example, if everyone donates canned
corn for the food drive, a food pantry
client may end up eating corn at every
meal. Also talk about special dietary
needs that might exist for a food pantry
client who has diabetes, high blood
pressure or is pregnant, etc., and what
foods might be healthful for those
special needs.

f. Discuss local opportunities to donate
food, reviewing the location of your
nearest food bank, soup kitchen,
homeless shelter, etc., as well as such
information as their hours of operation.
Discuss the timing of community
food drives and other opportunities
to donate food (e.g., some churches
collect food year-round), and discuss if
this group should organize a safe and
healthy food drive for the community.

g. Arrange for your group to visit the
local food bank, soup kitchen, homeless
shelter or another entity that uses

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donated food. Tour the facility, talk to the manager or volunteers on duty and ask what foods or other things they need—such as cash or additional volunteers—and how your group can help.

8) Ask participants to discuss the top three points they will consider the next time they donate to a food bank or soup kitchen or organize a food drive. Have them write down a few key points they plan to consider on the fact sheet.

9) Ask the participants to fill out an evaluation for the program.

10) Thank the audience for their participation.

References


Author

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Reviewers

• Bill McKelvey, University of Missouri Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security

• Sandy Procter, Ph.D., State Extension Nutrition Specialist, Kansas State University

• Linda Beech, Ellis County Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent, Kansas State University
Evaluation

We appreciate your opinions! Please help us make our programs better by taking about 5 minutes to answer the following questions. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may skip answering one or more questions if you wish. The information that you share will be held in the strictest confidence. We will summarize it in reports, in order to evaluate our program. We greatly value your participation. Thank you!

Scale: 1-Agree completely, 2-Agree somewhat, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree somewhat, 5-Disagree completely

1. As a result of this program, I learned which foods can be safely donated to food pantries and soup kitchens.
   1  2  3  4  5

2. As a result of this program, I learned safe practices in donating food to food banks and food pantries.
   1  2  3  4  5

3. As a result of this program, I have also learned (please indicate)
__________________________________________________________________________________________

4. I plan to take action and/or change something in my life (at home, play, or at work).
   1  2  3  4  5

5. If agree, please describe the action or changes you plan to make and when:
__________________________________________________________________________________________

6. Additional comments:
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

7. A University of Missouri Extension representative may contact me later to talk about this program (We are asking for your contact information so that we may follow up with you about what you learned from this program):
   ____ No   ____ Yes

8. If yes, my contact information is below: (e.g. name, phone and/or email):
__________________________________________________________________________________________