



Starting a Food Pantry

This 'how-to' document was created by Karen Check from Woodin PTA. The original version was geared towards helping PTAs/schools start their own food pantries and has been adapted to suit any organization.

Considerations when getting started

1. Ask potential pantry users what types of food they'd like
2. Location
3. Shelves, bins, etc
4. Guidelines for what to accept
5. Guidelines for access (who, when etc.)
6. Outreach (fliers/posters/website/social media)
7. Donations: what, when, how. If you plan to set up a community donation bin in an outdoor location, be sure to use a water/pest proof container
8. Person in charge of overseeing donations, shelving, tracking inventory, and re-stocking

Basic food items (see separate list for shelf-life info)

- Canned meat: chicken; tuna
- Hearty soups, stews, chili, ravioli
- Canned fruit
- Canned vegetables
- Canned beans (black, white)
- Dried beans (black, pinto, white)
- Boxed mac & cheese
- Shelf-stable (needs no refrigeration) milk: regular, soy, almond
- Chicken, beef, vegetable broth
- Pasta sauce
- Pasta
- Rice: long grain white; whole grain
- Dried lentils, peas
- Vegetable oil
- All-purpose flour, masa
- Cold breakfast cereal; instant oatmeal
- Spices and herbs
- Granola bars, trail mix, other healthy snack items
- Juice
- Peanut and other nut butter
- Jam

Other items to consider

- Personal hygiene products: soap, shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products
- Household cleaning products: laundry soap, dish soap (unscented brands if possible)

Duties of person in charge of the food pantry

- Shelves food, checks expiration dates, keeps track of inventory
- Removes/disposes of expired food
- Purchases items for the pantry as needed
- Coordinates with outside sources to acquire food donations
- Shares and exchanges donated items with other pantry programs

Additional Considerations

Have a list of most needed items (see Outreach in ‘Considerations when getting started’)

Money in a pantry budget to support the program

Refrigerator

Recommended Consumption Guidelines for Dry and Canned Goods Shelf Life (from Food Lifeline)

<u>Product</u>	<u>Consume By*</u>
Dried beans and pasta	Indefinitely, use best judgment
Dressings, mayonnaise	12 months
Cereal, crackers, pre-packaged dry foods	12 months
Shelf stable jarred foods	24 months
Canned foods	Indefinitely, use best judgment
Baby food, dry and canned	On or before
Shelf stable milk	12 months
Shelf stable rice, almond, and soy milk	12 months

*This outlines the **amount of time past the date on the package** that the food should be safe and wholesome to consume as considered by Food Lifeline’s Food Safety Committee. These recommendations assume that all product has been handled properly, and that containers are not damaged. Please use your best judgment and **when in doubt, throw it out.**

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