

## 5 Nutrient-Rich Ways to Make Meaningful Food Donations

Most food banks/pantries prefer cash donations, so that they can maximize their purchase of most-needed items. When you do donate food, focus on the nutrient-rich options listed below. Most locations will refuse perishable items, homemade products, unlabeled cans, home canned foods, and any open packages.

### 1. Donate protein foods.

These more expensive items are usually very welcome donations for hungry families. Options include canned tuna, salmon, and chicken. Canned meals - such as beef stew, chili, or hearty soups - are also good choices. Other shelf stable proteins include nuts, sunflower seeds, and peanut butter, as well as canned beans, peas, and lentils.

### 2. Donate whole grain foods.

Grain staples are important foods for every family. Maximize the nutritional value of your food donations by choosing whole grain options whenever possible. Meaningful options include whole grain pastas, quick cooking brown rice, and breakfast cereals that are lower in sugar and higher in fiber (ex. oatmeal, Cheerios®, and Chex®).

### 3. Donate canned/dried fruits and 100% juices.

Fruit and 100% juice are good sources of vitamin C (and sometimes vitamin A), as well as potassium. Excellent shelf-staple options include fruits canned in juice (pineapple, peaches, apricots, etc.), as well as applesauce and dried fruit (without added sugar, if possible). Purchase 100% fruit juice or juice mixtures in cans, boxes, or plastic bottles.

### 4. Donate canned vegetables and 100% juice.

Reduced-sodium veggies are also important sources of vitamins, potassium, and fiber, while veggie juice can be an excellent source of vitamins A and C. Tomato products - such as tomato sauce, stewed tomatoes, chopped tomatoes, prepared spaghetti sauce, and 100% tomato juice - are especially nutritious and versatile items to donate.

### 5. Donate shelf-stable dairy foods.

Dairy foods are important for families, especially growing children. Cash donations to food banks can help to purchase low-fat fluid milk, cheese, and yogurt. You can also make direct donations of shelf-stable products, including dehydrated milk powder instant breakfast, and evaporated canned milk.