



HEALTHY FOOD DONATION GUIDELINES

PURPOSE:

University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture (UADA) has, as one of its values, a commitment to supporting the health and well-being of our communities and has chosen to express this by providing healthier food donations throughout Arkansas.

In addition, UADA recognizes that heart attack, obesity, stroke, and diabetes are largely affected by diet and that the choices about what foods to donate can have a significant impact on the health and well-being of those ultimately receiving such donations. For this reason, UADA is promoting these Healthy Food Donation Guidelines to ensure that the health of our communities is considered when making food donations.



FOODS TO ENCOURAGE

These guidelines are based on Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System (HER). HER's approach to estimate the nutritional contributions of food to food pantries' inventories is by dividing products into eleven (11) different categories. Historically, food pantries have been equipped with shelf-stable, highly processed foods that may not meet nutrition standards or guidelines. Because food pantries are essential for food insecure persons, the intent is to send a positive message focusing on foods more widely accepted as contributing to good health. These are also outlined in USDA's MyPlate and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. In accordance to all of these guidelines, aim to donate and follow the recommended dietary guidelines of the following foods below when appropriate and possible:



Fruits and Vegetables

- Fresh produce: They are rich in nutrients and low in calories. Include a variety of colors.
- Frozen: Packed with nothing added.
- Canned: In water, 100% juice, or light syrup for fruit; no added salt or low-sodium for vegetables (less than 230 mg).

Whole Grains

- 100% whole grains: Such as rolled oats, barley, wild rice, and brown rice.
- Whole grain-rich bread, pasta, and tortillas: Containing whole grain as the first ingredient.
- Whole grain-rich cereals: Containing whole grain as the first ingredient.

Protein Foods

- Meat, poultry, seafood, and beans: Low-fat (less than 2 grams), low-sodium (less than 230 mg).
- Eggs
- Nuts and seeds: No salt added or low-sodium (less than 230 mg), including spreads such as peanut butter.
- Beans and lentils: If canned, no added salt or low-sodium (less than 230 mg).

Dairy

- Plain milk and yogurt: Low-fat (1%) or skim/non-fat milk and yogurt, unflavored/unsweetened.
- Flavored yogurt: Flavored low-fat (1%) or skim/non-fat yogurt.
- Cheese: Reduced fat or low-fat (less than 3 grams), low-sodium (less than 230 mg).

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Non-Dairy Alternatives

- Plant-based milk and yogurt: Low-fat (1%) or skim/not-fat milk and yogurt.
- Plant-based cheese: Reduced fat or low-fat (less than 2 grams), low-sodium (less than 230 mg).

Beverages

- Water
- 100% Juice products: No added sugars.
- Soda: No added sugars.
- Sport drinks: No added sugars, No added sodium.

Mixed Dishes

- Frozen meals, soups, macaroni and cheese, boxed meals, etc.: Low-fat (less than 3 grams), low-sodium (less than 480 mg), low-added sugars (less than 6 grams).

Processed and Packaged Snacks

- Chips, crackers, granola bars, snack bars, and popcorn: Low-fat (2 grams or less), low-sodium. (140 mg or less), low-added sugars (6 grams or less).

Desserts

- Ice cream, frozen yogurt, chocolate, cookies, cakes, pastries, snack cakes, baked goods, cake mixes, etc.: Not recommended.

Condiments and Cooking Staples

- Spices, oil, butter, plant-based spreads, flour, salad dressings, seasonings, sugar, salt, etc.: These types of foods do not have a ranking or a recommendation.

Miscellaneous Products

- Nutritional supplements and baby food: These types of foods do not have a ranking or a recommendation.

A copy of the HER recommendation chart has been included for reference on the following page.

Table 1: Nutrition Guidelines for Ranking Charitable Food

Food Category*	Example Products	Choose Often			Choose Sometimes			Choose Rarely		
		Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**
Fruits and Vegetables	Fresh, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables, frozen broccoli with cheese sauce, apple sauce, tomato sauce, 100% juice, 100% fruit popsicle	≤ 2 g	≤230 mg	0 g	All 100% juice and plain dried fruit			≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
					≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	1-11 g			
Grains	Bread, rice, pasta, grains with seasoning mixes	First ingredient must be whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
		≤ 2 g	≤ 230 mg	≤ 6 g						
Protein	Animal (beef, pork, poultry, sausage, deli meats, hot dogs, eggs) and plant proteins (nuts, seeds, veggie burgers, soy, beans, peanut butter)	≤ 2 g	≤ 230 mg	≤ 6 g	2.5-4.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Dairy	Milk, cheese, yogurt	≤ 3 g	≤ 230 mg	0 g	3.5-6 g	231-479 mg	1-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Non-Dairy Alternatives	All plant-based milks, yogurts and cheeses	≤ 2 g	≤ 230 mg	≤ 6 g	≥2.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Beverages	Water, soda, coffee, tea, sports drinks, non-100% juice products	0 g	0 mg	0 g	0 g	1-140 mg	1-11 g	≥1 g	≥141 mg	≥12 g
Mixed Dishes	Frozen meals, soups, stews, macaroni and cheese	≤ 3 g	≤ 480 mg	≤ 6 g	3.5-6 g	481-599 mg	7-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥600 mg	≥12 g
Processed and Packaged Snacks	Chips (including potato, corn, and other vegetable chips), crackers, granola and other bars, popcorn	None			If a grain is the first ingredient, it must be a whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g	≥141mg	≥7 g
					0-2 g	0-140 mg	0-6 g			
Desserts	Ice cream, frozen yogurt, chocolate, cookies, cakes, pastries, snack cakes, baked goods, cake mixes	None			None			All desserts		
Condiments and Cooking Staples	Spices, oil, butter, plant-based spreads, flour, salad dressing, jarred sauces (except tomato sauce), seasoning, salt, sugar	Not ranked								
Miscellaneous Products	Nutritional supplements, baby food	Not ranked								

* Definitions of food product categories are included in the text.

**Use the added sugar value when available on the Nutrition Facts Label. If it is not available, use the total sugar value. The thresholds are the same for all categories except fruits and vegetables and dairy. For both fruits and vegetables and dairy, total sugar thresholds are ≤ 12 grams for the “choose often” tier, 13 to 23 grams for the “choose sometimes tier,” and ≥24 grams for the “choose rarely” tier.

*** The threshold for saturated fat is the same for the “choose sometimes” and “choose rarely” categories. All saturated fat values ≥2.5 grams should be ranked as “choose sometimes.” The overall ranking is based on the lowest tier of any nutrient. Thus, a grain with 3 grams of saturated fat (“choose sometimes”), 300 milligrams of sodium (“choose sometimes”), and 13 grams of added sugar (“choose rarely”) would fall into the “choose rarely” tier, while a grain with 3 grams of saturated fat (“choose sometimes”), 300 milligrams of sodium (“choose sometimes”), and 10 grams of added sugar (“choose sometimes”) would fall into the “choose sometimes” tier.

FOODS TO REDUCE

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends limiting foods and beverages that contribute mostly “discretionary” calories from added fats and sugars. These foods are high in calories and low in nutrients. ***This section does not apply to fresh produce or canned fruits in juice.*** To improve the health outcomes of our community, we aim to limit donating the following types of foods and beverages when appropriate and possible:

Savory snack foods including, but not limited to:

- Chips: Corn, potato, puffed cheese, tortilla (***Does not include lower/reduced fat or baked.***)
- Crackers: ***Does not include lower/reduced fat, or baked, or whole grain.***
- French fries
- Onion rings
- Pork rings

Sweet snack foods and desserts including, but not limited to:

Bars	Ice Cream
Cakes	Fruit Snacks
Candy	Muffins
Chocolate	Pastries
Cookies	Pies
Donuts	Popsicles
Frozen Desserts	Pudding

Sugar sweetened beverages including, but not limited to:

- Energy drinks: Regular energy drinks (not including diet) containing excess caffeine or other stimulants to increase energy or mental alertness.
- Fruit drinks: Fruit flavored drinks that are not 100% juice. Examples include coconut water with added sugars, fruit flavored drink with added sugars, water with added sugars, fruit nectars, fruit punch, and fruit smoothies with added sugars.
- Sodas: Regular soft drinks (not including diet), sugar cane beverages, and sugar-sweetened carbonated water.
- Sports drinks: Regular sport drinks (not including diet) primarily used for electrolyte replacement in athletes.
- Sweetened coffees: Examples include blended iced coffee drinks, café mocha, pre-sweetened powdered coffee mix, and pre-sweetened ready-to-drink coffee.
- Sweetened teas: Pre-sweetened ready-to-drink teas and pre-sweetened tea mix.
- Sweetened shakes and smoothies: Ready-to-drink milkshakes and eggnog. ***Does not include meal replacement and balance nutrition drinks.***

FOODS NOT INCLUDED

Many types of foods typically donated tend to be high in added salt, sugar, and/or fat and are therefore less healthful than the HER recommendations. However, some may contain important nutrients and have the ability to provide our communities with quick and easy meals. If available and within budget, choose a low-fat or low-sodium option. Examples of these foods include, but are not limited to:

- Snack packs of nuts, yogurt snacks, and trail mix
- Canned soups and canned meals such as beef stew and chili
- Frozen meals and prepared foods such as pizza
- Shelf-stable packaged meals such as macaroni and cheese, hamburger helper, and instant mashed potatoes
- Condiments including mayonnaise, salad dressing, pickles relish, gravy, sugar, and syrups



Resources and References:

- Dietary guidelines for Americans. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. (n.d.). <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>
- Eat healthy with myplate. MyPlate U.S. Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). <https://www.myplate.gov/>
- Schwartz, M., Levi, R., Lott, M., Arm, K., & Seligman, H. (2020). Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Healthy Eating Research. https://healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/her-food-bank_FINAL.pdf