



REPACKAGING BULK FOOD PRODUCTS POLICY

Pantries occasionally repackage root vegetables such as onions, carrots or potatoes, which can be affordable in bulk, and safely re-bagged in smaller quantities. But most other repackaging introduces health risks that accelerate without proper training. Repackaging puts the responsibility on you to label the repackaged food appropriately. It requires a protected, sanitary space and equipment. Anyone considering repackaging for public consumption should take an on-line food handling course at <https://wisconsin.foodhandlerclasses.com> and get food handler certification. At minimum, repackaging should be supervised by a certified food handler.

Take care that you don't repackage ANY food your pantry receives from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) or from the Feeding America network's food banks; these programs prohibit repackaging of ALL foods they supply.

Consider that repackaging exposes your pantry to liability; *the TEFAP liability waiver does not protect your pantry's repackaged food, so, you may need additional insurance. Check your policy before you risk repackaging. And make sure your board of directors is informed; members may need additional Directors and Officers Liability Insurance to cover them in the event that someone becomes ill.*

Facility and equipment

A clean room will be set aside for repackaging. Appropriately **clean and sanitize** all work surfaces prior to repack. Repeat this process between all product changeovers, and once every 8 hours for shelf-stable foods, and once every 4 hours for foods requiring temperature control.

- Ensure that the temperature of the room is suitable for the food being repacked.
- Hand wash stations must be operational and stocked with soap and paper towels, and a policy must be in place to ensure that staff and volunteers wash their hands.
- All equipment and material used for repackaging must be food-safe.

- Packaging material must be new, clean, and food-safe.
- Prior to use, any surfaces such as table-tops that will come into contact with food during repackaging **must be cleaned and sanitized**. Repeat cleaning and sanitation between all product changeovers and whenever the facility is cleaned and sanitized.
- At the end of repackaging, all cleaned and sanitized equipment must be stored, covered, and in a manner to prevent contamination.
- The facility and equipment must be sanitized with a quaternary ammonium compound at the end of the activity. Sanitation during the repack should be with a dilute chlorine solution (1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water).

Personnel

- All staff/volunteers involved in repackaging will comply with **food safety requirements**: hair restraints and gloves will be worn; clothing/aprons will be clean; hands will be clean prior to gloving; and no jewelry can be visible. Individuals will abstain from eating, drinking and smoking around food.
- Gloves will be worn. Gloves will be changed between tasks. Gloves will be removed when leaving the clean room and new gloves put on upon return.
- Anyone involved in repackaging must have a signed health policy document on file.

Food

- Food must be handled to **prevent contamination, and temperature must be maintained**.
- Repackaging material must be food-safe and acceptable for the food product.
- The label for the repacked product must include:
 - Common name of the product
 - Name and place of manufacturer, packer or distributor

- Net quantity of contents in the repackaged item
- Common or usual name of all ingredients.
The presence of allergens must be noted.

Keep a copy of the original product label (bulk package) with your records in the event of a recall.

- A **permanent record** must be kept of all food that is repacked. The record must include both a sample label from the original (bulk) food and the repacked food, number of units packed and date distributed. Time/temperature records must be kept for perishable foods that are repackaged.

Fresh produce

- Repackaging of bulk fresh produce is allowed (no license is required) and should take place in a clean facility and using new, clean and food-safe packaging material. Statements outlined in this policy covering facility/equipment/personnel should be followed.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables must be handled properly to prevent contamination.
- Many fresh fruits and vegetables can be safely stored at room temperature for 2 to 3 days; fresh-cut produce (pre-packaged) must be kept cold.
- Food pantries should not peel, cut, slice or otherwise prepare fresh produce—it should be distributed intact.

Tips for repackaging food

- Direct donations from local retailers or food processors can provide much-needed food items for your pantry. While these items may be repackaged, it is almost NEVER a good idea for a food pantry to do so. Here are some tips to help ensure that repackaging is done safely:
- Contact local grocery stores and food retailers that manufacture food. Ask them to partner with you and repackaging food for you.
- Contact a local butcher shop or grocery store with a meat counter for help, especially when working with meat. These businesses will

have expertise in thawing large packages or subdividing meat into smaller lots.

- Work with your donor to see if they can provide the food item in more guest-appropriate packaging. Your donor may not be aware of the needs of those you are serving and may welcome the chance to better serve those in need.
- Contact your local food bank. Many larger food banks have everything in place to safely repackage bulk foods. Your local food bank may be able to work directly with the donor to repackage and distribute needed food items. This way, you will be extending the reach of your pantry by helping others outside your network.

Safe handling while thawing*

There are times when large packages of meat may be received that need to be partially thawed so that they can be distributed (intact) to households. There are two approved methods for thawing food such as this:

- Meat items may be partially thawed in the refrigerator so that packages can be separated for distribution. Refrigerator thawing will take several hours to several days, so plan ahead. Meat must be placed on a tray or other precautions taken so that meat juice does not contaminate other foods.
- Meat may be partially thawed at room temperature as long as the temperature of the room does not exceed 50°F.
- Meat may be partially thawed in cool water in a sink. The water must be changed every 30 minutes and thawing must be stopped **as soon as the packages can be separated.**

Signed: _____
Food Pantry representative

Date: _____

* Check your program rules. Neither TEFAP nor Feeding America Food Banks allow pantries to thaw the frozen foods they supply.