

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Donations: The Gift That Keeps on Giving**

Fall is here and the holidays are approaching. This time of year, many people begin to think about donating to their local food pantry. Food donations are always welcome, and giving makes the giver and receiver both feel good.

Londa Nwadike, Kansas State University Food Safety Specialist notes donated items should be something that recipients would be happy to bring home to their families. Food donations should be shelf-stable, non-perishable commercially processed goods. Nwadike encourages consumers to be sure the product is not past the ‘best by’ or ‘used by’ date. Be sure to check the expiration dates prior to donating food.

For example, the expiration date of infant formula is regulated at the federal level. Infant formula has a set expiration date and should not be donated or used if past that date as the nutritional quality of the product may be diminished and affect the health of the child.

Aside from the expiration date determining the diminished nutritional quality of items, you can visually tell that items are unsafe if the can is showing signs of rust, or is dented or bulging. Other unsafe food items to avoid donating include home-preserved foods, repackaged foods, and foods that require prior refrigeration.

Desired food donations can come from all food groups. Healthier choices could include:

- Low-fat dairy – canned evaporated milk
- Lean protein – canned tuna or chicken in water
- Whole grains – whole wheat or whole grain pasta
- Vegetables – low or no sodium canned vegetables
- Fruits – fruits packed in fruit juice or water

Other ideas for donated foods could be gluten free foods or allergy free foods for those with special dietary needs.

Keep in mind that not all donations need to be food. Many pantries accept non-food items such as toilet paper, feminine products, baby diapers and wipes, and even pet foods. No matter what you do this year, make the holidays special by putting some thought into your donations. Donating to food pantries makes the giver feel good knowing they are providing food for others during this holiday season.

For more information about nutrition, food safety and health topics please contact Holly Miner at [haminer@ksu.edu](mailto:haminer@ksu.edu) or call 620-331-2690.

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