



Food Banks: What They Really Need

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Food banks need food; after all, that statement is in the title. However, do food banks need all types of food? Many people do not realize that although food banks are in great need of food, they do have certain foods in mind that would bolster their message or even just help them achieve a certain goal. While that may seem obscure, food banks are not grocery stores. It is important to recognize that while such places do welcome donations and victuals, some items are more cherished than others.

One important way to make sure a donation is welcome is to check the website of the targeted food bank. This idea is outlined in an article on *Today's Parent*, which explains some of the common items that food banks need. A few of the “general list” items that most food banks need includes: “Dry pasta, Jars of pasta sauce, Canned fish and meat (salmon, tuna, ham, turkey—pop-top cans are best), Canned vegetables and fruit, Milk (fresh, canned, or powdered), Peanut butter, and Canned beans.” With just these few examples, there is a recognizable pattern between these items. This is that all of these foods can be readily preserved and saved for when they are actually needed; this eliminates waste and allows food banks to store such items instead of needing to use them before they expire. The article also continues to highlight an important point that few people donating realize. This is that, “... many food bank clients struggle with health issues like diabetes, so high-fibre, low-sugar, whole-grain fresh foods are better than high-sodium or processed foods, whenever

possible.” While it may seem beneficial to donate sweets or high-calorie snacks, people must also consider the health issues and precautions that many people who rely on food banks have. It is always better to donate a healthy option rather than one that has the potential to ruin the health of the individual getting the food item.

Buzzfeed supports the idea of healthy options, as explained in an interview with Food Bank For New York City. In the interview, the representative from the Food Bank explains how, “... food banks in New York and around the country are looking for healthy options to make sure individuals and families who need assistance are getting nutritious meals,”. Although most people do recognize that healthy options are always the preferred option, it is important to outline why. These healthy options can help improve stamina, energy levels, and even contribute to a better sleeping schedule. On the other hand, sweets and saturated foods decrease stamina and cause people to stay up later; contributing to erratic sleep schedules and health issues of people who need to control their intake of sugar.

Overall, the importance of healthy food being donated is obvious. As described by the California Association of Food Banks, “While alleviating hunger remains [their] primary focus, the[y] ... recognize the critical importance of improving nutrition. With diet-related illnesses skyrocketing, food banks understand that it’s not enough to simply provide hungry people with calories.” Because of crucial messages like this, people looking to donate to food banks should understand the necessity and overall importance of donating healthy items. Without such guidance, people would not learn to appreciate the individuals they are helping or get the feeling they are benefitting both the people who eat from food banks and those who run them.

Resources

<https://www.todayparent.com/family/parenting/food-banks-need/>

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/ryankincaid/canned-food-drive>

<http://www.cafoodbanks.org/nutrition>