

Community Garden Gleaning Initiatives

Gleaning (recovering surplus produce for hungry people) plays an important role in reducing food waste and fighting hunger and poverty. To help maintain the quality and safety of these foods, it's important to ensure proper precautions are taken.

Foodborne Illness

Most foodborne illness is caused by bacteria. Symptoms of foodborne illness may include an upset stomach, fever, cramps, diarrhea or nausea. Some people, like infants, the elderly, and those with underlying health problems are more susceptible to foodborne illness.

It can be difficult to tell if food will cause foodborne illness, since the food poisoning bacteria does not make foods look, taste or smell different. Bacteria will grow quickly under the following conditions:

- In temperatures between 4 and 60 °C.
- When moisture is present.
- When bacteria has enough time to reproduce.
- In foods that are high in protein (milk and dairy products, meat, fish, poultry, eggs).
- Bacteria may also survive on fruits and vegetables.

Because produce is often served without cooking, it is essential to remove possible contamination and prevent bacteria from growing. The following tips can help to support the safe handling of gleaned foods:

- Be aware of the conditions above and handle food appropriately.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before handling food or equipment.
- Always wash produce thoroughly before preparation and/or consumption.
- Store washed produce in a clean container in a refrigerator.
- Avoid storing washed and unwashed food together.
- Use washed produce promptly.
- Clean and sanitize counters and cutting boards when working with different foods.
- Avoid touching your face and hair when working with food.

Receiving and Storing Gleaned Produce

- Whenever possible, plan with the donor to receive food.
- Make space in the fridge or freezer to receive food. Also, ensure the space is separate from any raw meats and poultry to avoid cross-contamination.
- Use the “first in, first out” method and rotate food so the newest food is at the back.
- Clean all surfaces that you will be using when the food arrives.
- Evaluate the food:
 - Is it discoloured? Mouldy? Does it have a sour odour?
 - Has anything leaked on the food from another container?
 - Is the food the correct temperature?
- Discard rotten fruit and cut out any bruised or damaged areas.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.**

For More Detailed Information Please See:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Food Safety Facts for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/specif/fruvege.shtml>

HealthLink BC File59b: Food Safety for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile59b.stm>

HealthLink BC File 76: Foods to Avoid for People at Risk

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile76.stm>

Or contact Interior Health, Public Health Division

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