

“Why We Should all Donate to the CSNN Holistic Food Drive”

Poverty is a real issue in Canada and food banks are supporting people across the country that simply don't have options to look elsewhere. Last year at this time, over 35% of the people accessing food banks were children. We have the power to make a difference and it's as easy as picking up an extra item or two at the grocery store and donating to the CSNN Holistic Food Drive.

More often than not, typical food donations are full of sugar, salt or almost always highly processed. While donating food of any kind is generous and welcome, we have the knowledge and power to donate foods that are more nutritious options so we can not only help feed our communities, but nourish them as well. Everyone deserves to have quality food.

Just because a family needs help from a food bank doesn't mean they shouldn't have access to organic or non-GMO food items. Below is a list of foods that we can all collect and donate to our local CSNN Holistic Food Drive.

Think about your own pantry and the staples you consistently buy. Items such as beans and legumes, grains, flours, nut and seed butters, and snack foods are excellent options.

Rice is an economical and easy staple to buy, but why not donate barley, bulgur, einkorn, or farro? Increase the nutrient dense quality of the food by purchasing kamut, amaranth, millet, or oats. Easy to cook, and full of fibre and nutrients.

My favourite grain is quinoa. As a complete protein, you're not only giving a breakfast option or dinner side dish, you're giving an easy and nourishing grain that can be a meal all on its own. Plus quinoa can be found everywhere nowadays!

Pasta is an excellent donation as it's easy to transport and easy to cook. Look to alternatives such as lentil, spelt, or gluten-free options such as brown rice pasta. More fibre means less really is more! A smaller portion can be just as filling as a bigger portion of white (and nutritiously void) pasta.

Beans and legumes are an economical and delicious food bank item. Whether you pick dried beans or canned; beans such as black beans, pinto, lima, kidney, navy, or chickpeas are an excellent source of protein, fibre, and many vitamins and minerals. And don't forget lentils! If choosing canned, look for BPA-free.

The same goes for flour donations. Look to alternatives to increase the nutrition and fibre intake (See a theme?). Flours such as brown rice flour, buckwheat flour, or spelt flour are great options. Remember that some members of the community have allergies or intolerances to certain foods, and providing options for them at the food bank can be an unexpected and welcome surprise.

Most of us have the luxury of eating real, whole foods that are fresh from a farm. But we also know the convenience and nutrition of certain canned items. Why not donate something you would eat yourself? I always have a few cans of diced tomatoes or jarred tomato sauce in my cupboard. Again, we want to avoid BPA and added sugars, but canned tuna, salmon, olives and vegetables packed in water can be as close to fresh as some people can afford these days. I like to donate oils as well such as avocado oil, coconut oil, or ghee.

When donating to the CSNN Holistic Food Drive, don't forget about some of the most nutrient dense foods we can offer-nuts and seeds! Whether you offer unseasoned, raw nuts such as almonds, and cashews, or grab a jar of all natural nut butter or tahini instead, you're providing protein, fibre, vitamins, and minerals in one easily accessible food. Seeds in their whole form can be naturally full of calcium, magnesium, iron, and healthy fats, so feel free to pick up an extra bag or jar.

Other items to look for when donating are quick and easy snack foods that are allergen-friendly or gluten-free. Brown rice cakes, spelt pretzels, roasted chickpea or lentil snacks, or even organic popcorn are delicious whole grain options. Organic spices are an often overlooked item and can make the world of difference when cooking on budget.

We can make a difference nationally and in our local communities. Helping people discover how they can increase their own health doesn't stop in the clinic. True health should be attainable for everyone, and this is an easy step we can all take to help.

You can find your local CSNN Holistic Food Drive and more information online at csnn.ca/celebrate-holistic-nutrition.

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