

## Houston Food Bank Food Storage Requirements

1. **Store food in a secure room, preventing the entry of bugs and rodents.** Check the walls, ceiling, shelf connections, and around windows and doors. Seal all gaps, holes, and cracks install a strip on the bottom of the pantry door to seal out bugs and rodents.
2. **Store all food on non-porous, easily sanitized surfaces.** Food may not be stored on bare wood, rusty metal, or shelf liner. Paint shelves with light colored, oil-based enamel paint. Re-painting may be needed once a year, depending on how much your pantry is used. The paint seals the wood or metal, and makes it easier to wash off during weekly cleaning.
3. **Store food properly.** Do not re-package **any** products except for rice and beans. Only use plastic zip-lock bags not paper bags. The use of pallets for food storage is not recommended; consider building a platform instead. Rice and beans may be kept in a tightly lidded 'trash' container on the platform. The bottom shelf or platform should be 6" off the floor, and food product may not be stored closer than 4" to the wall or 2' from the ceiling.
4. **Check incoming food to see that it is in good condition.** Discard bloated, dented, or rusty cans. Also discard containers that leak or do not have labels. **Expired or out-of-date baby food and formula must be discarded immediately.** Leave enough room on the shelves so that you can move product around for cleaning purposes. Use oldest product first.
5. **Store non-food items separately from food.** Never store non-food items above or mingled with food products. Some common non-food items are hazardous.
6. **Keep pantry clean.** All food storage areas should be checked and cleaned every time the pantry is used. Post specific cleaning tasks that are to be completed at the end of every shift. Floors and shelving can be sanitized with a solution of one teaspoon of bleach combined with a quart of water. Wipe out refrigerators/freezers as soon as spills occur. Use pest control materials that are safe to use around food.
7. **Store non-perishables at safe temperatures.** Food should be protected from extreme heat and humidity. Proper ventilation is between 75° and 80° Fahrenheit, which is the ideal range for non-perishable products.
8. **Store perishables at safe temperatures.** Keep temperature gauges in all refrigeration equipment. Using TDHS temperature chart, record the date and temperature of each unit once every other day, late Friday and early Monday, if there are no operations on the weekend. Safe temperatures in a refrigerator range from 34° to 40° Fahrenheit, in a freezer 0° Fahrenheit or less.
9. **All USDA grain products must be refrigerated from May through September to deter contamination by pest invasion.** Grain products such as flour or corn meal should be kept refrigerated during warmer months to deter the invasion of pests.
10. **Food and other products from HFB are for the clients of the approved program only.** The pantry, food storage area, refrigerators, and freezers containing product from HFB are to be kept locked and separated from all other agencies and programs.