

Orcas Island Food Bank

Nutrition Policy

Introduction

The Orcas Island Food Bank is committed to promoting the health and well-being of the individuals and families we serve. Our nutrition philosophy guides our efforts to provide high-quality, nutritious food options to our community that align with the current best evidence for optimizing health outcomes through diet while also supporting our island farms when possible. We acknowledge the connection between food and the health of individuals, families, communities, and the local agricultural and natural environments. Our nutrition policy is designed to foster balance and symbiotic relationships among these interconnected systems.

In addition to positively impacting the health of our clientele, we recognize that nourishment is intimately intertwined with family and cultural traditions, that the kitchen is the heart of most homes, and that joyfully sharing meals is intrinsic to the love language in many cultures. To that end, we prioritize equitable access to dietary offerings that enrich lives, cultivate joy, and reflect the time-honored values and traditions of the many cultures woven into our Orcas community.

Nutrition Guidelines

We endorse the [Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines](#) (HER) to promote heart-healthy and nutritionally balanced eating habits among our customers. We prioritize offering foods in the “choose often” category of the HER nutrition guidelines, which are low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars. We focus our food distribution efforts on providing whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins such as nuts, legumes, lean meats, eggs, dairy, and foods that are minimally processed and contain heart-healthy fats.

We strive to offer culturally familiar foods from each of these food groups to meet the needs and preferences of our diverse community. Our food distribution efforts will be guided by evidence-based nutritional guidelines, as referenced in the addendum. We aim to provide a balanced combination of food groups, with an emphasis on encouraging our customers to fill half of their plate with fruits and vegetables, a quarter with grains (preferably whole grains), and a quarter with lean proteins.

Nutrition Commitments

Our nutrition goals and commitments will allow us to demonstrate the work we are doing to support our community by providing nutritious foods that meet the needs of our community members. The goals listed below aim to address the primary findings from the most recent customer surveys, which include our desire for fresh fruits and vegetables, protein, and eggs.

1. In January 2025, OIFB increased the overall inventory of fruits and vegetables. By December 2025, we aim to expand this inventory even further.
2. In January 2025, OIFB increased the amount of produce purchased. By December 2025, OIFB aims to continue this growth. Expanding our produce purchasing allows us to make the best use of our limited financial resources by focusing on nutrient-dense and culturally relevant foods that our shoppers most value.
3. OIFB commits to educating our donors and collaborators about the most needed protein foods in order to increase donations of these items. In addition, OIFB will ensure that protein foods are available and that we offer both animal and vegetarian options at all times.

4. OIFB will share nutrition education handouts, including recipes that offer easy methods to prepare nutritious produce from the food bank. Handouts will be provided in both English and Spanish and additional languages upon request.
5. OIFB will survey our customers at least once each year to identify their food preferences, cultural food needs, and diet-related health conditions. We will use the results of these surveys to inform our nutrition commitments. We will honor feedback from our customers and stakeholders to continuously improve our nutrition services and programs.

Food Sourcing

We are committed to supporting San Juan Islands and Washington State agriculture with an emphasis on local and regional growers. By partnering with local suppliers and participating in programs such as Farm to Food Pantry, we aim to increase access to fresh, nutritious foods while supporting our local economy.

Donated Foods

We will offer donors a guide that includes a list of the foods we most need based on our customer survey, which will be updated regularly to reflect needs. The guide will encourage donations of foods that also align with our nutrition policy as described above and include the list of preferred foods and the foods that are not preferred.

Purchased Foods

With our food purchasing budget, we will purchase foods that align with our nutrition philosophy and guidelines and support the health of our community. These will include the items below, listed in order of priority based on customer requests from our most recent survey:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Proteins
- Dairy products
- Non-dairy alternatives
- Whole grains

We will continue our practice of not purchasing beverages containing caffeine or added sugars. This will allow us to spend more of our funding on the items we need most. This also allows us to make the best use of funding to purchase items that may be less widely accessible to our customers elsewhere or are less available via donations.

Community Partnerships

The OIFB encourages nutritious eating habits in our community through outreach programs and community partnership. We collaborate on food education with San Juan County SNAP Education, WSDA, the Partnership for Food Safety Education, UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County, Indigenous Food Network MN, Kwiaht, WSU San Juan County Extension and Food Systems Program, and Opportunity Council.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Our nutrition policy is provided to all volunteers and staff members when they begin at the OIFB. Team members are provided a copy of this policy in their volunteer and staff handbook.

'This policy was approved by our Board of Directors November 24, 2025 and became part of our organizational policies and procedures.

Staff will develop updates based on customer survey feedback, with support and guidance from the Nutrition Committee.

Conclusion

At Orcas Island Food Bank, we believe that access to nutritious food is a fundamental right that contributes to the overall health and vitality of our community. By adhering to the principles outlined in this nutrition policy, we are dedicated to promoting positive dietary habits, supporting local agriculture, and fostering a culture of wellness for all those we serve.

REFERENCES

<https://oldwayspt.org/explore-heritage-diets/latin-american-heritage-diet/>

<https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-eating-plate-vs-usda-myplate/#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Department%20of%20Agriculture's,comes%20to%20basic%20nutrition%20advice>

<https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>

[KWIÁHT - Center for the Historical Ecology of the Salish Sea](#)

<https://sjiagguild.com/sjc-food-system/>

[Indigenous Food Network MN | Minneapolis MN | Facebook](#)