

**THIS FAQ HAS BEEN REPLACED BY
AN UPDATED VERSION**

LA Community Fridges How To Get Involved

FAQ

I want to help stock the fridges with food, how do I do that?

Anybody can donate food! You don't have to be connected to our group or another organization, individual and community donations are always welcome. Always come to the fridge with masks and gloves to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Anything from fresh produce, pre-prepared meals, canned goods, non perishable items, fruits and veggies grown in yards and gardens, we will accept. Drinks such as bottled water are always in high demand. We will accept staple food items such as milk, eggs, and bread as they are also always in demand. We are trying to stick with more plant based foods as we are worried about maintaining and guaranteeing the food safety of donated meat products, especially uncooked meat. However, folks in NYC say that their fridges have very high turnover and nothing is ever left unclaimed for longer than 1-2 days.

We are also accepting non-food donations such as hand sanitizer, PPE, baking soda, pet supplies, and baby formula.

If you are donating a meal that has been cooked/prepared by a human, please make sure whoever prepared it has strictly followed food safety and cleanliness [guidelines](#), such as using disposable gloves, in order to prevent the spread of diseases such as COVID-19. We also encourage labelling these meals with the ingredients used to make it so that people with allergies are aware of what's in them.

When considering the packaging of food items, we prefer that meals are packaged individually or as single servings. It is difficult for those without access to a kitchen to store and cook with food donated in bulk. For example, if your restaurant has leftover salsa to donate, please package them in individual single servings when possible rather than in one large bulk container.

When stocking fridges we ask that you put the newest items in the back and the older items near the front so that we are following the first-in-first-out rule. Dating food items is helpful but not necessary as the turnover rate may be pretty fast. However, we do encourage labelling foods that were prepared in a home or by a business with ingredients that were used in case of allergies.

When donating produce, please clean or wash the produce with running water (& a produce-friendly wash if you have one) before donating when possible. Although it is best practice to wash any produce you might eat yourself, it cannot be assumed that all community members have easy access to kitchens and running water, and we want to do the best we can to minimize risk of passing on infections.

Additionally, it is good practice to always bring cleaning and sanitizing products when visiting a fridge. Although most fridges have a cleaning schedule set up and maintained by volunteers, unexpected spills and messes can always appear between these scheduled cleaning times. If time permits in your schedule, always try to clean up any messes you come across, throw away any trash, keep the shelves looking organized, and generally leave the fridge better than you found it. :)

When you visit a fridge to stock it or grab food for yourself, it would help us out if you could let us know how it's doing! We use [this form](#) to keep track of what's in stock, what fridges need cleaning, and other needs. This link can also be accessed via QR codes posted to the outside of fridges.

For more detailed food donation guidelines and requests for specific donations at each fridge, check out [this document](#).

I want to set up a fridge in my neighborhood. How do I get started?

We've created a printable [checklist](#) that breaks down the tasks involved in setting up a fridge. Anybody can set up a fridge in their neighborhood in any city, not just within Los Angeles or LA County.

First and foremost, we recommend forming a team! Get together local community members who might be interested in helping to maintain your fridge over a sustained period of time. Try

to include locals who are born and raised in your neighborhood and existing community organizers because they tend to be people who know their community needs best.

Next, start to look for a location. When looking for a host location, always consult the community first to see if this is a location all will feel welcome at. You should get permission from the owner or property manager of the location. The host should be just as enthusiastic about a free fridge as you are! There is more information about selecting a host in the checklist and in the next section below.

Although you don't have to be associated with our group in order to start your own fridge, we are here to help offer support and resources if you'd like to work with us. We are currently working on a mission and value statement so see if the values of your future fridge will align with ours. We have also compiled a [pdf](#) of information from our NYC friends on how they set their fridges up and what to consider.

How do I know if a location/business is a good fit to host a fridge?

When scouting out a good home for the fridge, get in touch with the owner or property manager directly and ask for their permission. It is important when selecting a host that they are fully and enthusiastically on board from the start as this helps ensure the fridge's existence will not be challenged, or worse, forced to be taken down. Things to consider when looking for a location are:

1. Is there a business or residence that is willing to host the fridge and provide a reliable electricity hookup for the fridge?
2. Will this spot get lots of foot traffic or is it difficult to get to?
3. Will the fridge be blocking a large part of the sidewalk or will there still be plenty of space for pedestrians to walk by?
4. Is the fridge in a location where volunteers can get to it easily to stock it, maintain it, and check up on it?
5. If the potential host is a business, is it long standing within the community and has a good reputation for being welcoming to all community members?
 - a. We always include unhoused residents as a neighborhood's community members, a host should be willing to allow all folks to access the fridge at all times without worrying how their business will "appear" to customers.
6. If the host is a business, who are the business owners? How are they involved in the community and what is their role in the community?
 - a. Although a community fridge is not meant to be used as a means to increase traffic to a store and gain good PR, we assume that it can lead to a slight increase in business to that store. Therefore, we try to prioritize hosts that are BIPOC-owned stores and are not gentrifying the neighborhood they reside in. This also helps ensure that all community members feel welcome to access a

fridge, for it seems like gentrifying businesses, although usually acting in good faith and mean no harm, can unknowingly create an environment that feels unwelcome to long standing community residents.

7. If the host business is a store that sells food or are nearby any grocery stores, do those businesses accept EBT (electronic benefits transfer) for the SNAP program?

There is an example script/template for how to ask for permission [here](#).

You can contact us at lacommunityfoodshare@gmail.com or connect with us on Slack to get help with acquiring a fridge, connecting with other volunteers in your area, and help transporting the fridge.

I know a business who has food to donate. How do I get them involved?

We are looking for businesses such as grocery stores, cafes, restaurants, bodegas, and market stands to donate any unused food on a regular basis. If you have a personal connection with a business who is willing to donate or you are a business owner, you can contact us to set up a regular donation schedule for the community fridge closest to you.

- If you think a business might be a good fit for a fridge but haven't reached out, list it [here](#), and feel free to start a new neighborhood tab if necessary.
- If you want to reach out to businesses yourself via phone or email, we have created an example [script](#) of what you could say to ask for donations.
- Here is some [legal info](#) from the state of California that can be passed on to businesses regarding food donations.
- If you have reached out to a business for donations, please list them on [this database](#) so we can keep track of who has already been contacted.
- Once a business has agreed to donate, update [this](#) sheet, and feel free to create a new area/neighborhood tab if necessary.

Where are the fridges located?

View a map of all active fridge locations [here](#).

If there is no fridge in your neighborhood and you want to take the lead to help set one up, please get in contact with us at lacommunityfoodshare@gmail.com and we can connect you with our network of volunteers, or you can join the Slack at the link in the first section.

I have a car/van/truck, how do I help out with transportation?

We will always need volunteers with reliable transportation to be willing to stock fridges on a regular basis. If a business wants to donate, you may be asked to go pick up the donated items and deliver them to the fridge.

We are also looking for help from people who drive larger vehicles such as trucks and vans to transport fridges. When we are able to secure a new fridge, we will need someone to come pick it up and then drop it off once we secure a location for the fridge.

More info about transportation needs are on the Slack channel #transportation.

I want to get involved helping to stock, maintain, clean, and deliver donations to existing fridges. How do I get in touch?

We have recently created a Slack for any interested community members in joining! This is the best way to get in contact with others in your neighborhood and view our resources. You can join the Slack at this link:

https://join.slack.com/t/lacommunityfridge/shared_invite/zt-fx6ck9uv-WxoQsLuedLesb0sHxF2_Wg

In our Slack, we have “channels” (open group chats) organized by fridge location or by topic. Some channels we encourage you to join to get started are:

- #onboarding - for new members to ask questions about anything community fridge related
- #slack-questions - to ask any questions about how to use and navigate the Slack platform
- #food-safety - for resources and to ask questions about food safety, health, hygiene, sanitization
- #food-donations - for coordinating efforts on reaching out to businesses donating food and sorting out logistics on dropping off food to fridges

I can't provide food, a fridge, time or transport but I still want to help. Can I donate money?

We currently have no plans to take monetary donations. Our mission is to provide food to the community and everything is donated and volunteer run. For now, if money is how you can help, consider donating to one of these organizations as an alternative:

- Ktown For All (<https://ktownforall.org>)
- Mutual Aid LA (<https://www.mutualaidla.org>)
- Los Angeles Community Action Network (<https://cangress.org>)
- Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (<http://www.ccedla.org/>)

Free Fridge Locations

[View all fridge locations on Google Maps](#)