



Food for People, Inc.
The Food Bank for Humboldt County
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Choice Pantry Fact Sheet

Food for People switched to a Choice Pantry model of food distribution beginning October of 2009. Up until then, Food for People operated like most traditional food pantries, providing clients with pre-packaged food boxes holding a predetermined allotment of items. In contrast, and as the name suggests, *choice* pantries allow a certain level of selection regarding what food items clients, or *shoppers*, receive. They are often also referred to as “supermarket-style pantries” because they are designed to mirror a more traditional shopping experience.

Choice pantries typically have shelving units similar to what one would see in a grocery store, shopping carts that can be maneuvered through the shopping area and a checkout system that closely resembles the checkout aisle at a grocery store. Food for People’s goal is to create a comfortable, familiar, and dignified shopping experience. Shoppers will be able to choose foods that meet their families’ dietary or cultural needs, with no unwanted food going to waste. The choice pantry model will also open up new opportunities for nutrition education.

Benefits of the choice pantry model

- ***Increased respect:*** Offering clients a variety of choice provides a more meaningful service that allows shoppers to tailor their selections based on preferences and cultural or dietary needs.
- ***Increased dignity:*** An atmosphere of participation and choice lends dignity to a process that is difficult and humbling for many of our neighbors and friends.
- ***Refined means of food acquisition:*** Tracking which food items are in highest demand and which items are left on the shelf helps Food for People to adjust USDA commodity orders and focus food drives accordingly.
- ***Increased efficiency:*** Shoppers will leave only with what they have chosen. This creates a more efficient use of limited resources that will not be wasted or given away. In addition, Food for People is switching to reusable bags for shopping and will kick off this transition by providing shoppers with a free reusable bag on their first visit to the new Choice Pantry. Food for People welcomes donations of clean reusable cloth bags to pass on to our shoppers for the future, since it is likely that shoppers will need several.
- ***A shopping experience based on balanced nutrition:*** The Rainbow of Choice point system will guide shoppers as they select types and quantities of food, and will be used in the same manner as prices and money would be used at a grocery store. The point system is based on the USDA MyPyramid Food Guidance System to teach shoppers about nutrition as they make selections for an appropriate balance of foods from each food group. This point system will also create rewarding opportunities for food bank volunteers to learn and promote key nutrition concepts.
- ***Increased opportunity for nutrition education:*** Cooking demonstrations, taste tests and free recipe cards featuring available fresh produce and Choice Pantry shelf items will introduce shoppers to healthy ideas and cooking tips for good nutrition. Just like in a traditional supermarket, shoppers can decide whether they would like to select the ingredients to recreate these healthy recipes.

What else has changed at Food for People?

- **Extended shopping hours:** A choice pantry requires a slower pace and reducing or eliminating crowding and waiting time. With this comes the benefit of serving folks in a more calm and personal environment. Food for People has increased its number of shopping days and hours.
- **Pre-scheduled appointments:** Allowing appointments to be made in advance allows a household to plan ahead for a time that works best with its schedule, and allows us to take more time with each household.

How to access Food for People's Choice Pantry:

- **Call Food for People for an appointment:** Shoppers can call to make a pre-scheduled appointment for the shopping day and time that works best for them. Food for People starts taking appointments for the entire week beginning every Monday. Shoppers can call any day of the week to schedule an appointment.
- **Hours for the Choice Pantry:**
Tuesdays: 10 am – 3 pm
Wednesdays: 10 am – 3 pm
Thursdays: (2nd and 4th Thursdays only) 10 am – 4 pm
Fridays: 10 am – 4 pm
- **Income Guidelines:**

Household Size	Monthly Household Income
1	\$1,458.75
2	\$1,966.25
3	\$2,473.75
4	\$2,981.25
5	\$3,488.75
6	\$3,996.25
7	\$4,503.75
8	\$5,011.25
9	\$5,518.75
10	\$6,026.25
Over 10	Add \$507.50 each

For more information about the Choice Pantry, please contact Deborah Waxman, Director of Programs at Food for People (707) 445-3166 ext. 314 or via email at dwaxman@foodforpeople.org