

# Foodfirst

**Moving the Community from Hunger into Health**  
**Winter 2024**

**FOOD SOURCING  
VOLUNTEERING**  
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**INTENTIONAL  
FOOD  
SOURCING**  
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## **Nourishing our Neighbors**

Through intentional food sourcing, we are enhancing community well-being by prioritizing nutrient-dense options that honor cultural preferences and emphasize fresh produce, fostering an inclusive food environment.



**ONLY ONE IN TEN AMERICAN ADULTS GET ENOUGH FRUIT OR VEGETABLES EACH DAY.**

Donate today at: [FoodbankSBC.org/Donate](https://FoodbankSBC.org/Donate)



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Only one in ten American adults get enough fruit or vegetables each day. This challenge is only exacerbated for neighbors grappling with low incomes, who face even greater barriers to accessing wholesome foods. At the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, we understand the critical importance of providing nutritious, wholesome, culturally important food to our neighbors. Our team works diligently to reduce barriers to food access while also intentionally sourcing nutritious food, with an emphasis on fresh produce.

Despite environmental challenges and the impact of rising inflation, our commitment to sourcing nutrient-dense pantry staples and fresh produce remains unwavering. Through strategic food sourcing operations, our dedicated team secures an abundance of nutritious food that is neighbor-preferred and culturally ubiquitous. Partnering with local growers, grocery stores, the California Association of Food Banks, and other distributors allows us to access a wide range of food options, ensuring that we can meet diverse dietary and cultural preferences, while also diverting food from the landfill.

As we move forward, we will continue to adapt and evolve our practices to better meet the changing needs of our community. By working together, we can ensure that everyone has access to the nourishment they prefer and need, supporting individual and community well-being.

With gratitude,

Erik Talkin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Foodbank of Santa Barbara County

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH FOOD SOURCING AT THE FOODBANK...

### Grocery Rescue Co-Pilot

Ride along with a Foodbank staff member to pick up donated food items that would otherwise go to waste from local grocery stores. Assist with loading and unloading donated food at the Foodbank Warehouse. Volunteer shifts are available in North and South County!

### Donation Sorting Assistant

Help sort and qualify food that has been donated to the Foodbank by stores, food drives or individuals. This position is recurring, requiring a commitment of 3 hours once a week at the Santa Maria Warehouse.

### Backyard Bounty

Donate produce from your farm or garden, or help gather leftover produce from local growers that otherwise would go to waste.

**To learn more about how to get involved, please visit**

[foodbanksbc.org/give-help/volunteer](https://foodbanksbc.org/give-help/volunteer)





# THE VITAL ROLE OF INTENTIONAL FOOD SOURCING

Real, Whole Food is at the center of all the work we do at the Foodbank.

We know that ending hunger and transforming the health of our community is greatly impacted not only by the amount of food, but most by the quality of food distributed. For the last decade, we have been taking steps to leave behind the old food bank model, which was focused on food volume rather than quality, with lines of people waiting for heavy bags of canned and boxed food. The FBSBC team has worked hard to transition our focus to quality over volume, sourcing nutrient-dense, culturally ubiquitous food with an emphasis on fresh produce.



Consuming fresh produce and culturally relevant foods not only improves our physical health, but our mental and social well-being as well. Fresh fruits and vegetables are packed with essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that contribute to a robust immune system, reduce the risk of chronic disease, and support mental well-being. In addition to nourishing our physical bodies, food serves as a profound expression of culture, traditions, and history. The inclusion of culturally significant foods enhances not only the nutritional value of meals but also

the holistic health of individuals, serving as a connection to heritage, supporting personal identity, and strengthening community inclusion. Meals eaten around a table, surrounded by loved ones and conversation, improve our quality of life and our connection to the food we eat.

In addition to prioritizing the quality of the food we are distributing, the Foodbank strives to help reduce food waste and improve sustainability through our food sourcing initiatives. In the United States, an astounding 35% of all food is wasted. Thanks to partnerships with the California Association of Food Banks, local agricultural distributors, individual donors, and grocery stores, the Foodbank can intentionally source quality foods to distribute to our neighbors and partners while also reducing food waste.

In an average year, the Foodbank distributes over 10 million pounds of food to neighbors. In 2023, a quarter of the food we distributed came from Grocery Rescue, and nearly a third came from donations, including food drives, Backyard Bounty, and grower donations.

This past year, the Foodbank received grant funds from Feeding America to hire a Food Donor Relations Manager, Nelly Guerra, who manages food sourcing initiatives through stewardship of food donors and Grocery Rescue partners. Through these collaborations, Nelly ensures we are sourcing foods that will be eaten and enjoyed instead of going to waste.

Nelly shares with us that “an important part of combating hunger in America is [figuring out] how to get surplus food to those in need. Often food retail stores, restaurants, large manufacturers, or even local donors are unaware of food recovery organizations that are ready to get ahold of surplus food. Through relationship-building with local and national donors we can source fresh produce and shelf-stable foods for our community...Purchasing also allows our Foodbank to address specific needs when it comes to helping those with culturally or medically particular diets.”

Thanks to the dedication of Nelly and our Operations and Program staff, the Foodbank is able to provide our neighbors with nutritious food, while also redirecting food waste from the landfill.

## CELEBRATING SEASONAL PRODUCE

Carrots and celery grow abundantly in spring and are rich with important antioxidants, dietary fiber, and vitamins A and K. Enjoy the following recipe highlighting this seasonal produce from our Teens Love Cooking program.

### Lentil Soup

**Serves: 6 | Time: 60 minutes**

#### Ingredients

2 Tbsp olive oil  
1 cup chopped onions  
½ cup chopped carrots  
½ cup chopped celery  
1 lb lentils  
1 cup chopped tomatoes  
2 quarts chicken broth  
½ tsp cumin  
Salt to taste

#### Instructions

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Once hot, add the onion, carrot, celery, and salt to taste. Cook until soft, 6 or 7 minutes.
2. Add the lentils, tomatoes, chicken broth, and cumin. Stir to combine. Increase heat to high and bring to a boil. Then reduce, cover, and simmer for 35 minutes.
3. Once done, top with cilantro or cheese of your choice. Enjoy!



## STAR VOLUNTEER: RON LOVELL NORTH COUNTY



After 20 years of volunteering with the Foodbank, Ron Lovell is laying down his ladle to retire. For 12 years, Ron donated soup from the restaurant he managed to Santa Maria Empty Bowls. After these 12 years of donating soup, Ron went on to volunteer his time as the Kitchen Manager for Santa Maria Empty Bowls for another 8 years. Ron has served as not only the manager but the soul of the kitchen; he will be deeply missed. Ron's favorite part of volunteering was when the kitchen ran smoothly, and he got to "go table to table and talk with some great people."



Ron, we are deeply grateful for your invaluable service to our community and the Foodbank; we will miss you!

## STAR VOLUNTEER: EMILY HOUSE SOUTH COUNTY



A little over a year ago Emily House was looking for a way to volunteer her time to give back to her community when she learned about the Foodbank's volunteer opportunities. Emily now volunteers at many different Foodbank programs, but some of her favorites are assisting with home deliveries and pre-packs where she enjoys connecting with the community and other volunteers. Thank you, Emily, for your incredible dedication and support.

## HUNGER HEROES CORPORATE SHOWDOWN 2023

**Making a collective impact!** Beyond a competition, the Hunger Heroes Corporate Showdown is a united effort among businesses to tackle food insecurity in our community.

Concluding in December, the 2023 Hunger Heroes competitors collectively **raised \$61,840, donated 2,407 pounds of food, and volunteered a total of 67 hours!**

Congratulations to Raytheon for winning this year, and a big **thank you to all of the participating companies for your incredible contributions!**

## HARVEST HEROES MONTHLY GIVING CLUB:

### JOIN THE HARVEST HEROES CLUB!

#### Every meal matters.

Your commitment to supporting our community makes a world of difference. Join the Foodbank's Harvest Heroes Club and be a hero all year round.

#### To join...

email **Leana Orsua** at [lorsua@foodbanksbc.org](mailto:lorsua@foodbanksbc.org) or visit **[foodbanksbc.org/HarvestHeroes](https://foodbanksbc.org/HarvestHeroes)**.

## Foodbank of Santa Barbara County

**Donate • Volunteer • Get Help**

(805) 967-5741 • [www.FoodbankSBC.org](https://www.FoodbankSBC.org)

For senior food delivery, help with CalFresh applications and other immediate information, call (805) 357-5761.

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