

Swarthmore College Food Recovery Fridge Initiative: How-To Guide

Welcome to the Swarthmore College Food Recovery Fridge Initiative! The food recovery refrigerator represents an innovative commitment to zero waste by 2035. The project began in the 2023-24 academic year by President's Sustainability Research Fellow, Saumya Raj '25, and Associate Director of Sustainability, Clare Hyre, this project marks a significant step towards sustainable campus living. The idea was born from a critical observation: leftover food from catered events often went to waste, while many students were hungry, especially during late-night hours. By introducing a designated refrigerator the program is designed to bridge this gap, allowing for the safe collection and redistribution of unused edible food from events. This initiative addresses immediate issues of waste and hunger and fosters a broader cultural shift towards sustainability and resourcefulness within the College community.

The Food Recovery Fridge is open daily, except on holidays and breaks, when it will be closed.

This is a shared community resource. Please read this guide to learn how you can participate and get the most out of it.

After the Event (For Event Organizers)

1. Transferring Your Leftovers:

- a. If you have leftover food that is in good condition and safe to eat (i.e. has not been left out for more than 4 hours and is in a condition that you would eat), bring it to the Food Recovery Fridge, located in the lobby outside Science Center 199.
 - i. There is a rolling cart near the fridge you can use to move your food from the event to the fridge. Please be sure to return the cart after use.
- b. Transferring food to the fridge :**
 - i. Utilize trays or takeout containers to move food from the original serving dish to a smaller dish. Use tongs or serving utensils to remove the food. If you are bringing a boxed lunch or food that is already in a secure container, you do not need to transfer it to another tray.
 - ii. Once the food is transferred, leave any Dining Services trays in the established area near the fridge. The food recovery team will remove the trays daily and return them to Dining Services.
 - iii. Place dirty serving utensils or tongs into the container labeled dirty.
- c. Reminder about trays for the fridge :**
 - i. Utilize clean trays or place food in takeout containers. If the container does not have a lid, use the plastic wrap kept with the cleaning supplies to

tightly secure the food. Use gloves and serving utensils (or tongs) while handling food and be conscious of contaminants.

- ii. Please wear gloves when handling the food and transferring it into the food Food Recovery Fridge.

2. Labeling The Items:

- a. We are utilizing a simple system of writing details on labels provided next to the refrigerator.
- b. Please include the following information:
 - i. Name of Caterer (if known)
 - ii. Date and time of event
 - iii. Type of food and ingredients (include if there are known allergens)
 1. If possible:
 - a. Label (v) for vegan (veg) for vegetarian, kosher or halal
 - iv. Fill out any other areas of the label you are able.
- c. Attach the label securely to the tray or container in a visible area.

3. Addressing Food Safety Concerns:

- a. If any of the food has been kept outside for more than 4 hours, please do not place it in the refrigerator. Additionally, if there are any items that you feel do not look acceptable, do not place them in the refrigerator. Instead, place any food scraps into the compost along with other compostable products.
- b. If the container does not have a lid, use the plastic wrap kept with the cleaning supplies to tightly secure the food. Please use gloves, serving utensils or tongs, and utensils while handling food, and be conscious of contaminants.
- c. If the food has known allergens or is vegan, kosher, or halal please note this on the label.

4. Clean-Up:

- a. If, during the process of transferring leftovers to the refrigerator, you or your team spill any food or make a mess, cleaning supplies are conveniently located near the refrigerator for your use. If you for some reason create a major spill or mess please do your best to clean it up, and email foodrecovery@swarthmore.edu to notify someone from the food recovery team of the situation.

5. Handling Waste :

- a. If you create any waste while utilizing the Food Recovery Fridge please place the waste into appropriate waste streams. Food waste and compostable products (takeout containers, utensils, gloves, and wrap) can all go into the compost. Any

#1, #2, or #5 packaging goes into the recycling, and all other items go into the trash.

Picking up Food (For Fridge Users)

1. Taking Food:

- a. Put on gloves and then take the tray out of the fridge. Place it on the table.
- b. Check the label for information about the food, including potential allergens. If you have any allergies, are vegan, vegetarian, keep kosher, or halal we can not ensure this fridge will be free of allergens, or that the food inside the fridge will be vegan, vegetarian, or meet kosher or halal requirements.
- c. After removing the plastic wrap, take food from the tray and place it into the takeout container using tongs or serving utensils. Feel free to take the amount of food that you will eat, but be mindful that the fridge is open for the entire community so only take what you need.
- d. Practice good hygiene by using gloves and serving utensils when handling food. Only use as many take-out containers and compostable utensils as you need.
- e. Once you've selected all the food you want please re-cover the food with plastic wrap. Make sure the label is intact, if necessary replace the label with a fresh one. Place the tray back into the fridge so it will be available for the next person.

2. Judgment and Risks:

- a. Use your best judgment when taking food. By participating, you accept the risks associated with consuming leftover food. These guidelines indicate that no food placed in the fridge will have been left out for more than 4 hours. If any food is unlabeled please do not eat the food. The items in this fridge may not be viable to anyone who has major allergens or needs vegan, vegetarian, or strictly Halal or Kosher foods. Please keep this in mind when deciding to select items from the fridge to eat.

3. Cleaning Up After Yourself:

- a. If you drop any food or spill something near the refrigerator, please clean up after yourself immediately. Cleaning supplies (napkins and cleaning spray) are located next to the fridge for use but please do not take anything for your personal use. If you cause a serious spill please email foodrecovery@swarthmore.edu to notify someone from the food recovery team.

4. Handling Waste:

- b. If you create any waste while utilizing the Food Recovery Fridge please waste into appropriate waste streams. Food waste and compostable products (takeout

containers, utensils, gloves, and wrap) can all go into the compost. Any #1, #2, or #5 packaging goes into the recycling, and all other items go into the trash.

By participating in this food recovery initiative, you are helping reduce food waste on campus and supporting the Swarthmore community. Every small effort counts towards our bigger goal of zero waste and carbon neutrality by 2035. If you have any questions or concerns you can email the team at foodrecovery@swarthmore.edu!

Refrigerator Usage Protocols

FAQs

- *What is the food recovery refrigerator?*

The food recovery refrigerator is an initiative aimed at reducing food waste on campus and achieving the College's zero waste goals. Located in the lobby outside of Science Center 199, this refrigerator allows for the safe storage and redistribution of leftover food from catered events across campus.
- *Who can use it?*

The refrigerator is accessible to every single Swarthmore College student, faculty, or staff. Whether you're looking to contribute leftover food from an event you organized or seeking a quick snack, the refrigerator is a community resource designed for your benefit.
- *How do you know what you can take?*

Each item in the refrigerator is labeled with details about the food, including the type of food, any known allergens, and the date and time it was originally served. This information helps you make informed decisions about what you can safely take based on your dietary needs and preferences. No food that has been left out for over 4 hours will be served, and any food that has been in the fridge beyond 3 days will be removed and composted. The items in this fridge may not be viable to anyone who has major allergens or needs vegan, vegetarian, or strictly Hallal/Kosher food so please use at your own discretion and carefully check the ingredients.
- *What is the process for taking food?*
 1. Check the label: Please read the label for details about the food.
 2. Put on gloves and utilize the utensils provided next to the refrigerator to handle the food you would like to take with you.
 3. Take the tray with the food you want to eat out of the fridge.
 4. Place the food tray onto the table, and use serving utensils or tongs to place food into a takeout container.

5. Wrap up the tray with wrap, re-wrap if the wrap is no longer secure. Re-label if necessary.
 6. Clean up after yourself. Use cleaning supplies to clean up any messes you create. Place dirty tongs into a container labeled “dirty”.
 7. Be considerate: Take only what you intend to eat to ensure there is enough for others. If you are taking food for others, be thoughtful about taking the appropriate quantities.
- *Can I drop food off and what is the process?*
Yes, you can contribute leftover food from catered events. See the first part of this document for more detailed instructions on the process of dropping off food.
 - *How do I know where food came from?*
All food items placed in the refrigerator must be labeled with the following
 - Caterer (if known)
 - Type of food
 - Ingredients (any known allergens)
 - Date and time of the event it came from or is being placed in the fridge.

This transparency ensures you can make informed decisions and understand the source of the food consumed. If any of the food is not labeled or doesn't have clear information, do not consume the food. All food in the fridge will be monitored and any food that doesn't meet Swarthmore's health and safety standards will be removed.

- *Who do I contact with questions?*
If you notice any cleanliness or maintenance issues you need help addressing, please report them to Tim Smith, Retail Manager, or Clare Hyre, Associate Director of Sustainability via foodrecovery@swarthmore.edu. Prompt reporting helps us maintain a safe and welcoming space for everyone. For additional information about this initiative, feel free to visit our [website](#).
- *What are the maintenance and safety protocols?*
Tim Smith from the college Dining Services team will maintain the refrigerator, along with Green Advisors and Office of Sustainability Staff. They will clean the fridge daily and dispose of old food to ensure safety and cleanliness. The refrigerator and its contents will be monitored according to the [FDA guidelines](#) and [PA Food Code](#) to maintain high standards of food safety. All staff working on the initiative will receive a ServSafe training led by Chef Thomas Ramsey, of the Dining Services Team.

By following these guidelines and participating in the Food Recovery Refrigerator initiative, you're contributing to a more sustainable campus and helping reduce food waste. Thank you for your support and participation! If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to foodrecovery@swarthmore.edu