

## The Gift of Food

Who *hasn't* been under the spell of food? Just the smell of it can kindle a blaze of memories. And food itself – with its rituals that revolve around love, family and tradition – is one of the world's most powerful symbols. No wonder family members enjoy bringing gifts of food into our homes.

At Extendicare, we don't want that to stop. But we do want to stop the disappointments that sometimes occur when guests bring the wrong kind of food.

At the centre of Extendicare's very strict food policy is one simple fact: our resident's health puts many of them at extremely high risk for food-borne illness. Dangerous micro-biological organisms that grow in food can multiply incredibly quickly...from 100 to 100 million in four hours. Yet it may take only 100 of those organisms to give someone who is elderly and frail a very serious illness, or even cause death.

That's why we go to great lengths to follow careful procedures in the way we handle food...and why we take staff education on sanitation and safety so seriously. You see, the nursing home is responsible for making sure the food provided to residents is safe. And you wouldn't believe the innocent-seeming foods that are not, in fact, safe. Every time food enters our front door that has not been purchased by the dietary department, the facility loses some of its control.

Yet every one of us understands that a long-term care centre is also a home – and staff rejoice when they see families and residents enjoying a meal together. We ask just two things: that you notify the charge nurse when you bring gifts of food to a resident (sometimes guests don't know what diet restrictions may apply), and that you work with us to follow what our guidelines say is safe and not safe.

### Gifts of Food for the Resident

High-protein and dairy foods are high-risk; for example, meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk and cream. Examples of food that hide high-risk ingredients are puddings, meringue, pie fillings and sandwiches with mayonnaise. Please avoid these.

Also, we recommend you bring just enough food to be consumed during your visit. Storing food in the fridge may create problems when it's not dated or when no one in the facility is responsible for it.

### Gifts of Food for the Program or Recreation Department

Residents have enjoyed many wonderful special events thanks to the generosity of family members. The Activity or Recreation Department welcomes these items: fresh fruits and vegetables (except mushrooms); rhubarb; home-canned jams and jellies with good seals; and cakes, cookies, pastries or dessert items (baked or unbaked) that do not contain raw eggs or raw dairy products such as meringues, milk or cream.

Note: The Dietary Department cannot accept food donations, with one exception: seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables that have been locally grown – except mushrooms, which are difficult to clean properly.

Thank you for your understanding. We know that *you* know that our residents' health and safety lies behind every one of these "rules and regulations."