

Interfaith Food Ministry Client Survey

Survey Results

*Prepared for the Interfaith Food Ministry Nutrition Policy Committee
March 14, 2016*

Report prepared as part of Nevada County Public Health's Nutrition Education & Obesity Prevention Program*



NEVADA COUNTY
Public Health

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**This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education, known in California as CalFresh. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.CaChampionsForChange.net.*

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Summary of 2016 IFM Client Survey Results

Purpose

The survey was designed to collect data on how clients use Interfaith Food Ministry's (IFM) food pantry, their dietary requirements and their opinions on how IFM offerings meet those requirements. This survey was funded by the Nevada County Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention program.

Demographics

- Sixty-eight surveys completed by IFM clients during the week of February 15, 2016.
- Seven key informant phone interviews completed during the week of February 22, 2016.
- Two-thirds of respondents are women, 32% are seniors and 82% are feeding a family with the food from IFM.

Using the Pantry

- Respondents have been using the pantry for wide ranges of times, from a month (it being their first visit) to over ten years.
- Most respondents (64%) come to IFM at least monthly.
- 60% also use the Nevada County Food Bank's distribution at least once a year.
- 97% of respondents are "very satisfied" with service by staff.

Food Use and Preferences

- Most respondents (80%) report that their favorite healthy foods are fresh fruits and vegetables.
- The foods most likely to be used in respondents' homes are: bread (55%), fruit (53%), vegetables (41%), organic (16%). When asked what is the item most likely to be used in your home, more than a quarter of respondents (27%) simply answered that they "use everything."
- Overwhelmingly, respondents report that these three types of foods are least important to their families: Bakery items (cakes, cookies) (78%), snacks (72%), and soda and sweetened drinks (91%).
- The item least likely to be used is dried beans. Respondents report they don't know how to cook them.
- Nearly half of respondents (45%) wrote in that they wish that IFM offered more meat.

Suggestions

- 40% of respondents just thanked IFM for their help when answering this question.
- A majority of respondents who made suggestions about improving IFM's offerings suggested that they receive too much food that is expired, stored too long to be used or moldy.

Full Survey Results and Discussion

Purpose of Survey

As a joint project of Interfaith Food Ministry and Nevada County Public Health's NEOP program, this paper survey was designed to collect data on how clients use Interfaith Food Ministry's food pantry, their dietary requirements and their perspective on how Interfaith's (IFM) offerings meet those requirements. Funded by the Public Health Department's NEOP program, the results are intended to assist in the design of IFM's Nutrition Policy.

Data Collection

Sixty-eight surveys were completed over the course of two days. Due to the compressed timeline for this study, we were unable to survey a larger portion of clients, however the response rate for those surveyed was fantastic. The survey was distributed during the week of February 15, 2016 at the Wednesday and Friday distribution days. Clients were offered a paper survey to complete. If they wished, they could include their name and phone number for a follow-up phone interview. The researcher compiled the results from the paper survey and completed seven key informant interviews with IFM clients. Of those that completed a paper survey, nearly half offered their name and number for a follow-up phone interview. All respondents who included their phone numbers were called. Seven key informant interviews were completed by phone during the week of February 22, 2016. Paper survey results were entered into and analyzed using the survey analysis program Survey Monkey. The survey questions and collection guidelines are attached in the Appendix. Key informant interviews probed on a respondent's paper survey responses.

Demographics

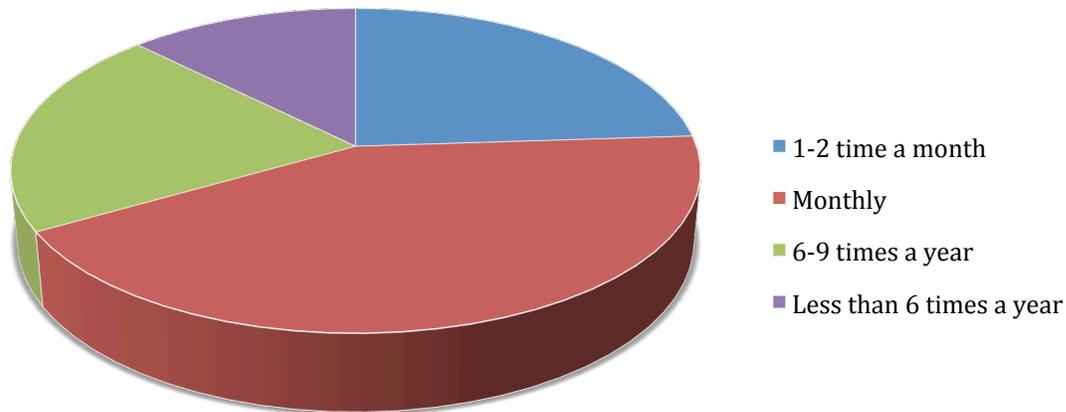
Most of the survey respondents are women (67%) and six of the seven key informants are women. Nearly one-third of respondents are 65 years or older, and a strong majority (82%) are feeding a family with the food provided by IFM.

The survey has the respondents to note whether any members of the respondent's household are currently diagnosed with diabetes, pre-diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, Celiac's and/or cancer. Of those, clients were most likely to report that a household member was diagnosed with diabetes (24%), high blood pressure (21%), or cancer (12%).

Using the Pantry

Respondents have used IFM for a wide range of times, from this being their first visit, to a few months, to over ten years. Most respondents (64%) come to IFM at least once a month, and most (60%), also use the Nevada County Food Bank's distribution at least once a year, although typically not as often as IFM.

Frequency of visits



On the whole, respondents are very pleased and very grateful for the services and products IFM provides. Survey respondents wrote in comments like, “thanks to all the volunteers!!!” and “They are so nice!” Another reported, “The staff is warm and friendly, they’re great.” When asked for suggestions for improving the offerings of IFM, 22% of those who responded simply thanked IFM. In addition, when asked to rate the service by staff, nearly every respondent said they are “very satisfied.” One informant said, when describing what it’s like to pick up food, “It’s always a very positive, there’s positive vibe or energy level in the building. I don’t every sense any kind of negativism.” Another said, “I just want to say thank you, thank you a lot.” A third reported, “they are just super great, just super helpful.” One respondent wrote, “I’m just so thankful for all that you do—64 and on a limited income, helping my daughter and her special needs son—thank you, thank you.”

The respondents also offered a few suggestions that would improve the quality of service for them. The first type of suggestion focused on the wait time. A few respondents from the Wednesday pick-up noted that wait times are quite long and sometimes they can’t make the pick-up because they don’t get enough time off to wait in the line for their distribution. One noted respondent explained that they often have to take two trips to the car, one with bread and one with the other goods. However, when they return through the “exit” doors to get the second load, they are “scolded” by staff. But they feel guilty using the main entry door, because then they have to get back in line or cut past other clients.

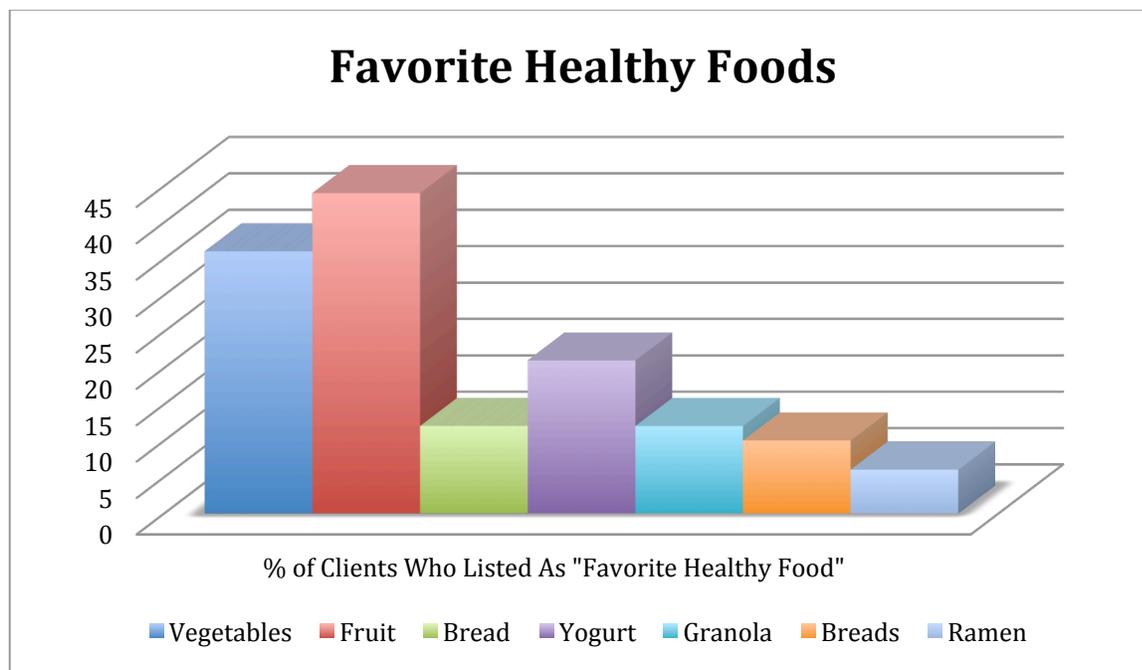
Food Use and Preferences

The survey strongly suggests that for the most part, and perhaps with the exception of dried beans and expired foods, many clients use all the food in their distribution. The key informant interviews suggest that clients are often creative and diligent about figuring out ways to use up

unfamiliar ingredients. In addition, informants report that those foods that clients don't use are often given away to a friend who will use them (this seems to be true primarily for dried beans).

The survey strongly suggests that the services IFM provides are essential to their clientele. For example, respondents report that a large portion of their monthly food allotment comes from IFM. Of the key informants' interviews, five of seven reported that 80% or more of their food each month is provided by IFM. The other two informants interviewed reported that more than 50% is from IFM.

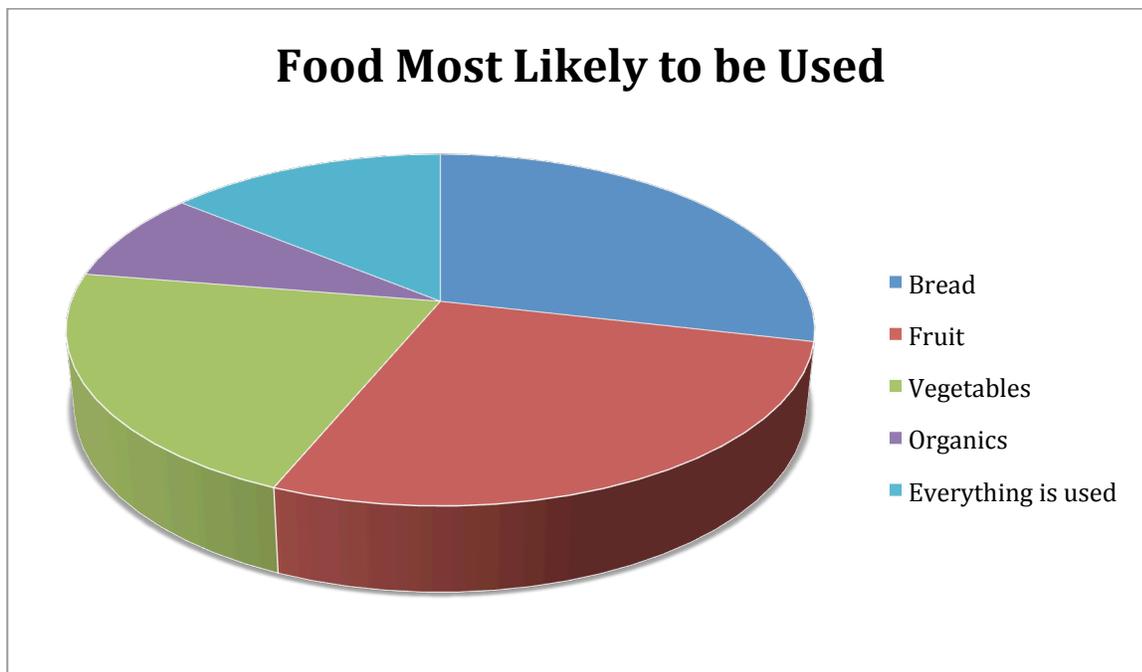
The survey asked respondents to discuss their favorite foods and then, what foods. Clients report that their favorite foods typically include fresh fruit, meats, fresh vegetables, eggs, organic foods and cereal. They report their favorite healthy foods include fresh fruit, fresh vegetables (and specifically, salads), yogurt and granola. Most (80%) reported the fruits or vegetables were their favorite food. One informant said, "The fresh fruits and the fresh vegetables, the more the merrier." Another reported, "I loved the day they had granola. I put mine in jars, I use it with cereals and to make cookies." Two informants commented that they had noticed more organic has been available, which pleased them. One said, "I've noticed a lot more organic, which is fantastic."



* Because many respondents listed more than one food in answer to this question, the responses total to more than 100%.

When asked about what foods from IFM’s distribution are most likely to be used in their home, meat, fruits and vegetables were by far the top three answers. Starches are also important to clients, including breads, rice, and oats. One informant reported, “If you do come across more sandwich breads, we could use them, and bagels, we always like the bagels if we can get them.” Dairy, including milk, yogurt and kefir, is also valued by clients. One respondent wrote, “We could really use more milk. One gallon of milk for three people.”

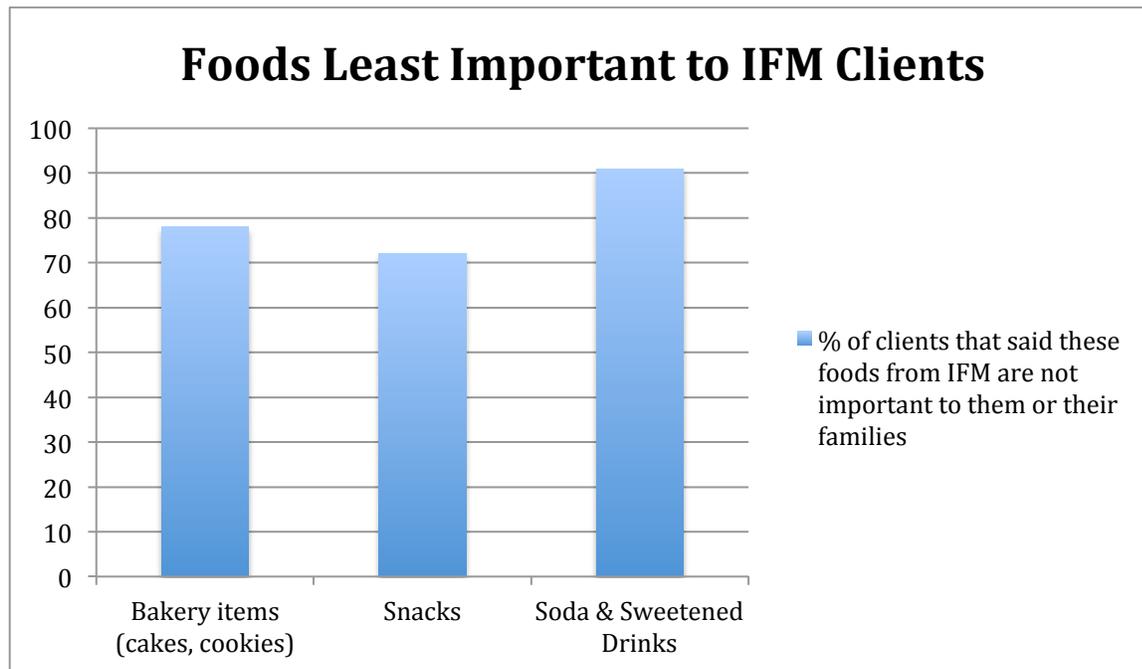
The foods most likely to be used in respondents’ homes are: bread (55%), fruit (53%), vegetables (41%), and organic foods (16%). When asked what is the item most likely to be used in your home, more than a quarter of respondents (27%) simply answered that they “use everything.”



Respondents had had strong agreement over which foods from IFM are least important to them. Overwhelmingly, respondents report that these three types of foods are least important to their families: Bakery items (cakes, cookies) (78%), snacks (72%), and soda and sweetened drinks (91%)[†]. No respondents responded that they wished IFM offered more of these three types of items. One informant explained, “The kids like the soda and stuff, they do like the cakes and cupcakes, but I typically I don’t buy those things. Those are definitely a treat for kids when we get them.” One respondent wrote, “[offer] less sugary foods, more whole foods.” Another wrote, “more healthy food, no junk food.” Another said, “I’ve always had a very deep passion for foods. It upsets me so much when I see people taking sweets and cake and white

[†] Respondents ranked each item separately, not comparatively, therefore the totals add up to more than 100%.

bread and so much white bread! They're going to ruin their health." A third explained, "There's lots of desserts, too. And I do love those desserts but I know I shouldn't be eating them."



The item least likely to be used is dried beans. When asked specifically about dried beans, informants report they don't know how to cook them. One informant explained, "I don't really use the dried beans. We did use them this last week. You know, I just didn't grow up with them so it's not a pattern for us. I did make 'em one day and I burned the pan. But I'm getting better." Another said, "I don't really like getting the dried beans. I've had some from other people that are delicious. But I don't really know what to do with them. I'm not interested in them. If I wanted to cook them, I would look it up on the internet. But I don't really care."

Another informant included a suggestion,

"There are just, sometimes you get vegetables or beans or whatever that you have no idea what they are or what to do with them. They're usually at the bottom of bag. You just don't know until you empty the bag. What if they had a little slip of paper that told us what to do with it? Or what it was. I mean, sometimes I don't even know. And I'm pretty good at that stuff."

Survey respondents were asked what they wish IFM offered but doesn't. Although the question was open-ended, nearly half of respondents (45%) wrote in that they wish that IFM offered more meat, including a few suggestions of frozen meat or canned fish. One informant said, "More canned meat might be really good, canned chicken. Even clams and fish. It's very easy to make burgers out of tuna." Another said, "I hate to complain, I mean it's really not a complaint, they're so great, but sometimes, I mean, usually my bag is always a little shy on meat." Another informant discussed hoping for more whole wheat breads, saying "Let's have more wheat

bread. Let's have rye." Other suggestions include more cheese, more fresh fruit, and more fruits and vegetables. Two informants mentioned they would rather receive broth than soups, which are often poor quality. Broth would allow them to make their own soups. One said, "The broths are a great idea, maybe a little more broth."

Client Suggestions

Both the survey and the key informant interviews allowed clients to make suggestions about IFM distribution efficacy or food offerings. As noted above, clients are extremely grateful for the services IFM provides, and 22% of respondents simply thanked IFM for their help when answering this question. For example, one client wrote, "it's free—we are lucky to have food—how can you improve on that? 😊"

However, although this question was open-ended, majority of respondents who made a suggestion, noted that they receive too much food that is expired, stored too long to be used or moldy. One informant explained, "What I think is happening is the grocery stores, they just donate day-old things and so they're just cleaning off their shelves... It does concern me though, I spend quite a bit of time going through things, pulling things out that are expired or that they're fresh any longer. Sometimes they're way, way past usable. Sometimes they've been held in storage too long." Another wrote, "lots of fruits and veggies are already spoiled and moldy- so fresher would be nice." Another suggested, "fresher veggies." Another wrote, "check old products more often." Another wrote, "Less expired or moldy food." Finally, another client suggested, "please have volunteers look at dates more often. Sometimes items are really old (moldy)."

Two informants and one survey respondent suggested that bags include "meal kits," so they would better know how to use the ingredients. One wrote, "maybe you could have a dinner 'kit' or a recipe to use with foods given." Another suggested, what if there were noodles and canned chicken and cream of whatever soup and a little slip that had a thing for noodle casserole or something. That might be great."



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Appendix

The Interfaith Food Ministry's Client Survey

Share your ideas so we can serve you better! Thank you for your help.

1. **Would you be willing to participate in a brief phone interview about your ideas on Interfaith Food Ministry's food pantry?** YES NO



If yes, please provide your name and phone number:

If no, please continue to Question 2

2. **How many people (including yourself) in your household?**

3. **What are the ages of people in your household (including yourself)?**

4. **Over the course of a year, how often do you use this food pantry?**

- 1-2 times a month Monthly
 6-9 times a year Less than 6 times a year

5. **How long have you used Interfaith's food pantry?** _____

6. **How often do you also use the Nevada County Food Bank?**

- Monthly 6-9 times a year
 Less than 6 times a year Never

7. **What are your favorite foods?**

8. **What are your favorite healthy foods?**

9. **What food from Interfaith is most likely to get used in your home?**

10. **What food from Interfaith is least likely to get used in your home?**

11. **What foods do you wish Interfaith offered but doesn't?**

12. What are the special dietary needs that apply to anyone in your household? (check all that apply)

- No special dietary needs Low salt / low fat Diabetic
 Pregnant / breastfeeding Gluten-free Vegan
 Vegetarian Other: _____

13. Are any members of your household currently diagnosed with...? (check all that apply)

- Heart disease Diabetes Pre-diabetes
 High cholesterol High blood pressure Celiac disease
 Cancer

14. How satisfied are you with each of these items at Interfaith Food Ministry...?

	<i>1 – Very satisfied</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4 - Very dissatisfied</i>
Service by staff				
Overall selection of foods				
Overall quality of foods				
Quantity of food				
Selection of healthy foods				
Selection of foods that your family enjoys eating				
Food that meet your nutritional and dietary needs				

15. Thinking about all the food consumed in your household, how important is Interfaith as a source for each food type?

	<i>1 - Very important</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4 – Not at all important</i>
Meats (including fish)				
Beans				
Dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt)				
Dry goods (bread, pasta, rice, cereal)				
Fresh fruits				
Fresh vegetables				
Condiments, baking supplies, etc.				
Bakery items (cakes, cookies)				
Snacks				
Soda and sweetened drinks				

16. Please list one idea for improving the offerings at Interfaith Food Ministry.

Thank you! This survey is a partnership between Interfaith and Nevada County Public Health's NEOP program.



Guidelines for Collecting *Interfaith Client Input Surveys*

Overall Goal: Neutrality!

The most important aspect in collecting survey responses is to limit your impact on the responses. Neutrality is key. Do your best to allow respondents to interpret the questions in their own way and to answer the questions without the collector's judgment. These guidelines are suggestions to help the survey collector maintain neutrality.

How to Prepare Surveys:

- Each survey should be on a clipboard with an attached pen.
- A stack of a few clipboards, ready to go with surveys and pens, means that more than one person can be taking the survey at a time.

How to Approach a Respondent:

- Keys: Don't suggest what the survey is about. Instead, suggest it won't take much time. For instance, say, "Interfaith is gathering client input! Would you be willing to take a quick survey?"

If They Agree:

- Thank them!
- Hand them the clipboard, ready to go. That means, a clean survey and a pen.
- **Do no offer to read the questions unless they request help. Don't complete the survey for them unless they ask for the help.**
- Step away from them, so they have some privacy to complete the survey.

When They Finish:

- Thank them again. Say something like, "Interfaith really appreciates you taking the time to give us your ideas."
- Remove their survey from the clipboard and move it to the completed folder/pile. If possible, the completed surveys should be out of sight, a closed box or a closed folder.