

Compiled Full Service Grocery Store Interviews

Use of wholesale distributors

All of the grocery stores in the county have a primary wholesale distributor that they work with. These are listed in Appendix C4 along with the grocers contact information. All of the grocery stores use smaller vendors for particular items including bread, beer, pop, chips, pizza, produce, meat, and newspapers. The grocery stores are able to use their primary whole distributor because it is fast and convenient. Products maybe order electronically or scanned on the shelf and delivered within a couple of days. Most grocery stores receive a delivery once or twice and week from their primary wholesale distributor. Other wholesale vendors including those who deliver chips stop at the store on a regular basis and either ask the grocer how many and what products to deliver or monitor the number of products on the shelf and stock them as needed.

Flexibility in purchasing products from local producers and/or other vendors

All of the grocery stores in Waushara County may purchase products from local producers and/or other vendors. For the grocery stores affiliated with a regional or national grocery store chain, new products must be okayed by their corporate office.

Buying products from local producers

All of the grocery stores buy products from local producers. In some instances, the local products are available through the wholesale distributors they use. The reasons why the grocery stores purchase from local producers is that they want to help the people who patronize their business, local produce are good products, better quality, and fresh. Purchasing local products makes the store look good. Local products that are purchased include fruits and vegetables, honey, mustard, and jam. Some local products may be turned away because of concerns about the producer following food safety laws and regulations.

Guidelines regarding the sales of specialty items produced by local businesses

Specialty items produced by local businesses must meet the rules established and regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Wisconsin regulated by Tri-County Health Inspector. Proof of insurance may also be required. For grocery stores affiliated with a regional or national grocery store chain, the corporate office checks to ensure that the local producer of specialty items complies with health and safety guidelines and has adequate of insurance.

Do requirements differ for sale of locally grown fresh produce raised by homeowners and those raised by a business?

Produce from homeowners must meet the same guidelines as produce provided by a business. They grocery store has the same liability and food safety concerns no matter what the source of fresh produce. It can be hard to buy from homeowners because they do not have the volume and the consistent quality as someone in the business of growing and selling produce. All of the grocery stores buy from local businesses; sometimes they need to buy from multiple farms because one does not have the volume needed.

Interested in exploring the idea of participation in a local food network where local grocery stores could purchase wholesale food items at a discount by coordinating purchasing with other local grocery stores

There was mixed interest in the idea of coordinating purchasing from a local food networked with other local grocery stores. Most were skeptical about the process working; 20% rejected the idea; 80% express some interest if more details were available and there was some assurance that the idea would work. Those affiliated with a regional or national grocery store chain were interested, but did not believe they would be able to participate because approval would need to be obtained from the corporate office.

What currently happens to day old bakery and expired food items?

For some local grocery stores the items are given to the food pantry. Most grocery stores (80%) said they give old bakery to the food pantries, although one grocery store does not because the Tri-County Health Inspector told them to through expired bakery in the garbage. Some non-perishables (canned or boxed items for example) are marketed down when they are close to their expiration date and sold in a value basket. In most cases, outdated non-perishable items can be returned to the wholesaler for credit. All of the grocery stores take advantage of returning items for credit. Some grocery stores do not like to donate outdated non-perishables as it reflects on the store. In the case of the grocery stores affiliated with a regional or national grocery store chain, the non-perishable items that are returned for credit are redistributed by the corporations reclamation department by either selling the items to second hand stores (dent and bent stores), distributing the items to food banks used by the local food pantries, selling them other businesses to produce alternate products, or by other means. Nothing is wasted. The wholesale distributors of the other grocery stores likely redistribute the returned non-perishable items in a similar fashion.

Possible of the local grocery store donating or redistributing old bakery and expired food items to others in the community

All of the grocery stores in Waushara County work with and support a local food pantry or multiple local food pantries. They may not do so by donating old bakery or expired food, but they do so in other ways including participating in food drives, accepting vouchers from select food pantries, donating non-expired food items, promoting food pantry fundraising activities, provide storage in times of need, donating cash, and other ways. The universal concern the local grocery store have with donating expired food items is liability.

What would help you continue to successfully operate your store in this community?

Population and job growth in the area would help continue to make the local grocery stores successful. More growth means more customers, because more people move to the area and if more people are employed at well paying jobs, they will buy more.

Assistance with advertising in the area would help continue to make the local grocery stores successful.

Encouraging people to shop locally instead of traveling 20 to 80 miles would help continue to make the local grocery stores successful.

How might Waushara Food Connections assist you in this effort?

The local grocery stores are willing to work with Waushara Food Connections. Some suggests for specific assistance included advertising to shop locally, offering insurance to grocery store employees, and holding a brat fry to bring people into the local grocery store, which also could raise money for local food needs.