

2023 Impact Report



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Vital Support for Veterans

In 2023, the Redwood Empire Food Bank provided food assistance to local veterans, serving 2,100 individuals who have served our nation. Veterans often face unique challenges that can lead to food insecurity, including unemployment, health issues, and family responsibilities.

The food support plays a crucial role in ensuring veterans have access to nutritious meals, reducing the stress of putting food on the table. This assistance allows veterans to focus on rebuilding their lives, pursuing opportunities, and maintaining their health.



Veteran volunteer assisting at a food distribution site at the VA Clinic in South Santa Rosa.



Young participant enjoys a free lunch at one of the Redwood Empire Food Bank's 14 Summer Lunch sites throughout Sonoma County.

Navigating the Hunger Crisis: Reflecting on the Redwood Empire Food Bank's 2023 Initiatives

As we embark on the journey of 2024, it is crucial to reflect on the persistent challenges faced by the Redwood Empire Food Bank throughout 2023 in addressing the escalating hunger crisis within the community. And though the

challenges of the past year persist, the organization remains unwavering in its commitment to the community.

A Persistent Hunger Crisis in 2023

Throughout 2023, the

Redwood Empire Food Bank grappled with the intensifying hunger need in the community. The soaring cost of living and food prices left countless families in dire need. The conclusion of pandemic-era benefits programs saw more families

turning to the food bank for assistance.

Rising Costs Impact Operations

The unrelenting rise in gas and food prices elevated the food bank's operational expenses. Nevertheless, the organization continued to serve an average of 57,000 individuals each month, a number not seen since the peak of the pandemic in mid-2020.

The Ongoing Struggle in 2023

Throughout 2023, thousands of families faced the daunting challenge of securing food for their daily meals. Inflation pushed basic staples out of reach for vulnerable families, creating an urgent need for community support.

A Plea for Generosity in 2023

In the face of rising food prices, the Redwood Empire Food Bank remained committed to providing

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Redwood Empire Food Bank staff and board of directors sign pallets of Clif Bars with well-wishes before being transported to the Maui community during the wildfires.

Redwood Empire Food Bank Stands by Maui Residents Amid Wildfires

As the wildfires raged in Maui, the Redwood Empire Food Bank stepped in to offer much-needed support. The food bank's generous donation of 16 pallets of Clif Bars, accompanied by heartfelt well-wishes from food bank team members, provided hope during challenging times.

Just as the Redwood Empire Food Bank received help during the Sonoma Complex Fire, they reciprocated by extending a helping hand to the residents of Maui. Staff members from Programs, Operations, Finance, and Development, were offered to the Hawaii Food Bank.

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Food line at a Redwood Empire Food Bank distribution site in Bayer Park, Santa Rosa.

Advocating for Hunger Relief in Sonoma County: A Comprehensive Guide

In the picturesque landscapes of Sonoma County, a persistent issue quietly looms—hunger. While this community is renowned for its beauty and prosperity, there are those who face the harsh reality of food insecurity. If you are passionate about making a difference and advocating for hunger relief in Sonoma County, here is a guide to help you get started:

1. Raise Awareness
The first step in advocacy is to inform and engage others. Share statistics and stories about hunger in Sonoma County with your family, friends, and colleagues. Social media, community events, and local meetings can be effective platforms for raising awareness.

Follow @RedwoodEmpireFoodBank on your social channels to collect and share information and stories about hunger. cafoodbanks.org also has a myriad of resources and data on food insecurity in California.

2. Connect with Local Organizations
Sonoma County boasts a network of organizations dedicated to hunger relief. Connect with them to understand the specific needs and challenges in your community. The Redwood Empire Food Bank, for instance, plays a central role in addressing hunger in the region and lists their 150 partners in hunger relief at refb.org/partners.

3. Volunteer Your Time
Consider donating your time to local food banks and hunger relief organizations. Volunteering not only provides direct assistance but also gives you a deeper insight into the issue and the impact of your efforts.

Explore a multitude of volunteer opportunities with the Redwood Empire Food Bank at refb.org/volunteer.

4. Advocate for Policy Change
Advocacy often involves influencing policy decisions.

Attend local government meetings, engage with elected officials, and support legislation aimed at alleviating hunger. Your voice can make a significant impact on shaping the policies that affect your community.

cafoodbanks.org has a Hunger Legislation Tracker that makes it easy to stay on top of current anti-hunger bills.

5. Fundraise
Organize or participate in fundraisers for hunger relief. Whether it is a charity run, a food drive, or an online campaign, fundraising can provide crucial resources to support local initiatives.

For fundraising ideas, visit refb.org/food-funds.

6. Collaborate
Hunger relief is a collective effort. Collaborate with local businesses, schools, and community groups to develop strategies and initiatives that can address the issue effectively.

7. Stay Informed
Keep yourself updated on the latest developments related to hunger relief in Sonoma County. Knowledge is a powerful tool in advocacy, helping you to make informed decisions and proposals.

8. Be a Voice for Those in Need
Perhaps one of the most vital aspects of advocacy is being a voice for those who often go unheard. Share the stories of individuals and families struggling with hunger to inspire change.

Sonoma County is a place of natural beauty, but it is also a community where compassion and dedication can make a profound impact on the lives of those facing hunger. Your advocacy can be the driving force behind ensuring that every resident in this remarkable county has access to the most basic necessity: food.



The Second Helping Society: Leaving a Legacy of Hunger Relief

Many Redwood Empire Food Bank donors make a long-term commitment to helping end hunger by adding the food bank in their estate plans.



Appreciation plaques honoring legacy gift donors adorn the volunteer room wall at the food bank.

The Redwood Empire Food Bank extends its gratitude to those considering joining the Second Helping Society and leaving a legacy that will change lives and inspire hope for years to come.

Our community has the power to create a lasting impact on the lives of individuals and families facing food insecurity right here in Sonoma County.



Scan to learn more:



Donors raise their paddles at the 10th annual Redwood Empire Food Bank Empty Bowls gala.

Empty Bowls 2023: A Tradition of Unity to Help End Hunger

In its 10th year, Empty Bowls 2023 continued a cherished tradition that combines generosity, creativity, and a commitment to the most fundamental of needs: food.

A Storied History
Empty Bowls carries with it a rich history of community support. Year after year, this event has united our community in a shared mission to help End Hunger in Our Community.

Artistry & Generosity
Attendees had the opportunity to view and bid on a stunning array of handmade bowls. These remarkable creations were generously crafted and donated by artists from Sonoma County and the Bay Area.

A Noble Cause
Empty Bowls plays a pivotal role in supporting programs that address food insecurity in Sonoma County. The funds raised during the event went

directly to our community in need.

A Culinary Feast
Empty Bowls is also about savoring delicious food and wine. A family-style dinner, prepared by Park Avenue Catering and acclaimed chef Ari Weiswasser, featured a delectable menu complemented with generously donated local wines and cheese.

Making a Difference
Empty Bowls is more than just an event; it is a powerful symbol of our community's commitment to helping those faced with hunger.

Annual Partner Conference 2023: Collaborating for a Hunger-Free Future



Redwood Empire Food Bank food partners tour the food bank's warehouse during the 2023 Annual Partner Conference.

The Redwood Empire Food Bank hosted its annual Partner Conference in September 2023, bringing together partners from various local human service organizations. The conference showcased innovative strategies and tools to empower partners,

with highlights including a revamped Partner Portal addressing partner needs and strategies for strengthening the network. Attendees also gained insights into the W⁵ Project tool for efficient client participation tracking, and explored retail and grocery recovery initiatives.

Navigating food acquisition was a central theme, with sessions on online ordering tools and optimizing procurement. The conference emphasized the crucial role of partners in the mission to end hunger and encouraged active participation to make a difference in their communities in the ongoing fight against hunger.

Letters to the Editor

I Felt Nourished and Blessed

On Tuesday October 17th, I attended my first food bank visit. I was so welcomed by everyone there, from check-in with Kathy, to every friendly person helping me through the process—with my cane in hand too!

There were so many healthy options, and the food gave me good energy and items beyond my ability to purchase. Every day I felt nourished and blessed.

I know it takes many hands to make this food bank work and it takes many hearts of kind, wonderful people to provide this valuable service.

Thank you all for everything!
Maria L.

Eternally Grateful to the Food Bank

Last January, my kids and I returned to our vacant home in Sonoma County after spending nearly two years in an extremely toxic environment. I didn't have a job, our water was shut off, our propane was empty and we had one small space heater.

By the grace of God, week after week got better and better. Our neighbor offered to turn our water back on, a friend filled our propane, and side work allowed me to purchase a better heater.

We utilized the food bank weekly. We were treated with dignity and kindness every time. There were times that our entire meal was prepared with food from the food bank. We were overcome with gratitude.

Since those cold and rainy days in January, things have changed significantly. I was hired full time with the county parks department, all three of my kids thrived at school, my eldest child was hired for a summer job and has begun saving for a car. We are heavily involved in our church and community and are grateful to be home.

We are eternally grateful to the food bank. I shudder to think of how we would have survived the long winter. Thank you.

Prior to returning, we owned a hugely successful business. When a wildfire destroyed it, we sunk our personal money into rebuilding, but it was determined to be fruitless. We returned to Sonoma County tired, broken, and poor. The kindness and dignity you showed us will be with us forever. I look forward to getting to a place where I can pay forward and donate my time and energy to helping distribute food.

Thank you.
Love, The Furlongs



Redwood Empire Food Bank volunteers prepare for a drive-through food distribution at Shiloh Neighborhood Church in Santa Rosa.

Making a Difference: The Power of Volunteering at the Redwood Empire Food Bank

In the heart of our community, an army of everyday heroes come together to make a remarkable impact. The Redwood Empire Food Bank, a lifeline for those facing hunger, depends on the dedication of volunteers who generously donate their time to make a difference. Today, we invite you to be a part of this powerful force for good.

The Volunteer Force
Did you know that in 2023, a whopping 11,264 volunteers dedicated their time to the Redwood Empire Food Bank? This incredible number speaks volumes about the community's commitment to making a positive change.

Volunteers are the backbone of the food bank, driving its mission to End Hunger in Our Community.

Join the Movement
Volunteering at the Redwood Empire Food Bank is not just about giving back—it is about making a real, tangible difference in the lives of our neighbors. It is an opportunity to connect with your community and be part of something greater than yourself.

Opportunities for You
With six distinct volunteer opportunities, there is a role for everyone:

- **Distribution Site:** Assist in distributing food to people coming for groceries.

- **Warehouse:** Help with sorting, organizing, and packing food.
- **Kitchen:** Contribute to meal preparation and cooking.
- **Food Connections Market:** Be a part of the partner shopping experience.
- **Driver:** Join the team delivering food to different locations.
- **Special Events:** Participate in community events and fundraisers.

Visit refb.org or call 707-523-7900 to learn more about how you can become a vital part of the Redwood Empire Food Bank family. Your time will make a world of difference, helping to build a stronger, more resilient community for all.



Redwood Empire Food Bank's Kitchen Collective volunteers take a short break to smile for a group photo at the Windsor Chili Cook-off where the food bank was the main beneficiary of the event.



Sonoma County family volunteers at the Redwood Empire Food Bank warehouse, packing produce for food distribution sites.



Redwood Empire Food Bank volunteer distributes food to individuals in need at the Vintage at Bennett Valley distribution site in Santa Rosa.

Food Drives: A Year-Round Supplement for Our Community

Food drives play a pivotal role in supporting those facing food insecurity in our community. While such initiatives can have a profound impact on specific occasions, their significance stretches well beyond single events.

Year-Round Impact:
Food drives are not limited to special events. They are a crucial year-round effort that helps keep the shelves of local food banks

stocked. These drives provide a continuous supply of non-perishable items that support families and individuals facing food insecurity.

Moreover, they offer a chance for community members to get involved and make a positive difference. You do not have to wait for a special event to organize a food drive. Anyone can host one, whether at their

workplace, school, or community center.

By participating in or hosting food drives throughout the year, we collectively contribute to ensuring that our neighbors have access to nutritious meals, regardless of the season. It is a way for our community to stand together and ensure that none of our neighbors in need go to bed hungry.

Raising the Bar to Help End Hunger in Our Community

In the realm of community support, 2023 witnessed a stand-out event that left a notable mark on the mission to End Hunger in Our Community. Food From The Bar showcased the impact that collective action can have.

The results were notable. Our local legal community raised over \$200,000, collected more than 1,700 pounds of food, and dedicated 286 hours through volunteerism. This highlights not only their legal prowess but also their commitment to helping create a hunger-free community.

Food From The Bar is a friendly legal challenge organized by the Sonoma County Bar Association and the Redwood Empire Food Bank. This month-long competition between law firms, law schools, and legal services organizations, brings together the legal community with a shared goal: to make a difference in the fight against hunger.

Continued from front cover: Redwood Empire Food Bank Stands by Maui Residents Amid Wildfires



Staff well-wishes adorn the pallets of Cliff Bars being sent to the Maui community.

The Hawaiian team selected two warehouse staff and one driver from the Redwood Empire Food Bank.

David Goodman, Hunger Relief Worker & CEO, aptly described the solidarity within the food banking community, saying:

"One of the unique things about being a food banker is that we don't compete with one another. There are few industries where that is the norm. And it is very cool!"

This spirit of unity exemplifies the power of collective support in times of need.



Redwood Empire Food Bank staff ready to go to work at the Hawaii Food Bank.



Redwood Empire Food Bank participant picks up groceries at the Meadow View Elementary School food distribution site in Santa Rosa.

Fostering Well-Being: A Closer Look at the Redwood Empire Food Bank's Three Strategic Initiatives

With a mission to end hunger and create a resilient community, the Redwood Empire Food Bank offered 3,600 opportunities to access food throughout the year, translating into 300 direct service distributions each month.

To achieve their ambitious goals, the food bank runs multiple programs under three strategic initiatives:

Every Child, Every Day: Fueling Growing Minds
The "Every Child, Every Day" initiative supports at-risk children. In 2023, this program served a staggering 41,100 children, offering a lifeline in the fight against childhood hunger.

With four distinct programs tailored to addressing seasonal meal gaps, the initiative ensures that local families have access to fresh produce, nourishing groceries, and healthy meals. These resources not only help children grow up healthy and strong but also enable them to stay engaged in their school activities.

Senior Security: Caring for Our Elders
For many elderly members in our community, rising healthcare and housing costs make it increasingly challenging to make ends meet. The "Senior Security" initiative aims to provide nutritional stability for our senior neighbors with a consistent source of healthy, fresh food.

In 2023, this program extended its support to 14,700 seniors.

Neighborhood Hunger Network: A Robust Safety Net
The "Neighborhood Hunger Network" is the backbone of the food bank's vast emergency food system. Through wide-reaching hunger relief programs and partnerships, they are able to remove many of the barriers our neighbors face in seeking help, weaving a strong nutritional safety net that is large enough to support our entire community.

In 2023, the three initiatives reached 142,000 individuals with the average person seeking assistance 2.5 times per month. The total value of food distributed reached a staggering \$61,300,000, equivalent to 24,100,000 meals.

Your commitment to these strategic initiatives is making a profound impact, proving that together, we can help End Hunger in Our Community.



Senior participants receive fresh produce at the Santa Rosa Community Health, Dutton Campus distribution site.

Finance News

The Financial Impact of the Redwood Empire Food Bank: Maximizing Every Dollar to Help End Hunger

In the world of finance, making every dollar count is a true art. The Redwood Empire Food Bank has mastered this art, turning each dollar received into a powerful force in the effort to End Hunger in Our Community.

A Solid Financial Foundation
In 2023, the food bank's financial report reveals a well-balanced equation:

Revenue	
Individual donations.....	\$9,944,000
Grants and foundation support.....	\$1,039,000
Corporate contributions	\$1,821,000
Government contracts	\$5,951,000
Other revenue.....	\$2,711,000
Total Revenue	\$21,466,000

Efficient Resource Allocation
The food bank's dedication to making the most of their resources is evident in their expense breakdown. An astounding 95% of their resources are channelled directly into hunger-relief programs, ensuring that the community's needs are met efficiently and effectively. Only 5% is allocated to general operating expenses.

Triple the Impact
One of the most remarkable aspects of the food bank's financial prowess is their ability to stretch every dollar. For every dollar received, they can provide \$3 worth of food. This means that individual donations, grants, corporate contributions, and government contracts, when combined, can have a threefold impact in the fight against hunger.

As the Redwood Empire Food Bank continues to balance the financial scales with remarkable skill, they prove that every dollar, every donation, and every contribution plays a vital role in building a resilient, hunger-free community. It is a financial impact that sets an example for us all: making the most of our resources to make the world a better place.



"We want to create a sustainable environment where every individual has the opportunity to thrive."

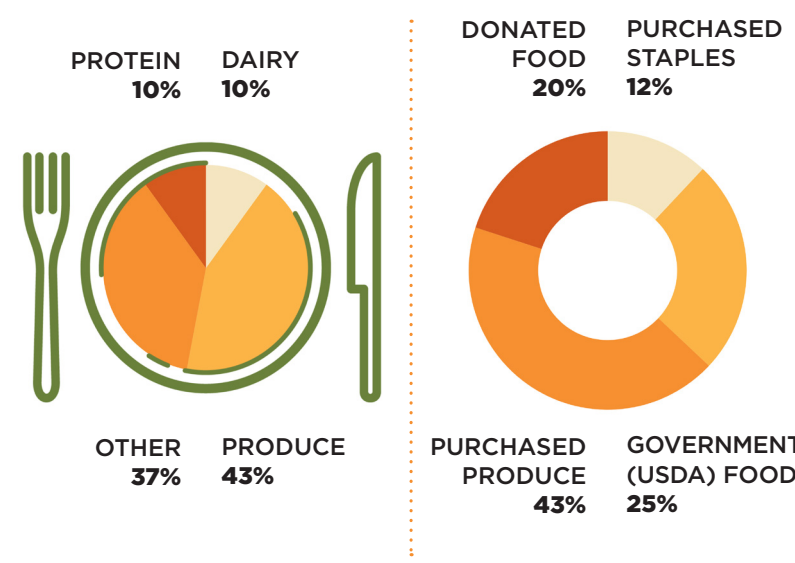
Nourishing Our Community: The Redwood Empire Food Bank's Vital Role in Fulfilling Their Mission to End Hunger

In the heart of our community, the Redwood Empire Food Bank serves as a lifeline, dedicated to fulfilling their mission of Ending Hunger in Our Community. Their goal is to create a sustainable environment where every individual has the opportunity to thrive, thanks to the provision of vital groceries.

A Nutritional Safety Net
At the core of their efforts is the distribution of nutritious food that includes fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy protein, dairy, and essential staple items. These provisions form a nutritional safety net for those at risk of hunger.

Diverse Offerings
The food bank's offerings are as diverse as the community they serve. The chart below shows the offering breakdown provided by the Redwood Empire Food Bank:

Sourcing for Impact
The food bank's resources come from multiple different avenues, all of which play a vital role in providing a well-rounded provision of help:



The Power of Provision
In 2023, the Redwood Empire Food Bank provided an incredible \$61.3 million worth of healthy groceries. This goes far beyond just providing food; it is about building a foundation for healthier, happier lives within our community.



Redwood Empire Food Bank provision of help for recipients the week of December 18, 2023: Carrots, potatoes, onions, canned tomatoes, oranges, pears, blueberries, eggs, chicken, milk, cheese, bread, rice, beans, nuts, and crackers.



Redwood Empire Food Bank Participants: A Diverse and Resilient Community



Continued from front cover: Navigating the Hunger Crisis: Reflecting on the Redwood Empire Food Bank's 2023 Initiatives

healthy food to the community. \$300,000 worth of food distributed.

A Constant Concern: Sourcing Food & Funds
In 2023, the organization's primary concern was sourcing enough food and funds to meet the growing demand. Despite the challenges, community support remained a driving force of hope.

Stretching Every Dollar
For every dollar received, the food bank could distribute three dollars' worth of food, thanks to its commitment to thriftiness and resourcefulness. A great example of this are the donated wine boxes from local wineries that save the organization over \$100,000 annually, equivalent to an extra

Who the Food Bank Served in 2023
Throughout the year, the Redwood Empire Food Bank extended support to individuals facing diverse challenges. It is essential to acknowledge that the beneficiaries, much like you and me, came from various backgrounds, with the majority not being without shelter. They represent a wide spectrum of people grappling with the trials of everyday life.

A Look Ahead with Gratitude
The food bank extends a heartfelt thanks for the community's support, where collective efforts ensure no one goes without a basic necessity like food.

The mission of the Redwood Empire Food Bank centers around its participants, whose voices, experiences, and preferences shape the assistance provided. To navigate the path to Ending Hunger in Our Community, understanding the demographics of those seeking food support is paramount.

Enter the W⁵ Project, a tool focusing on the who, what, where, when, and why of the people served. Implementing

this data collection tool provides the food bank with an opportunity to gain valuable insights, ultimately enhancing the services offered.

This deeper comprehension of the individuals they serve allows the food bank to tailor support, fostering more dignified and personalized interactions. The visual snapshot below encapsulates our community in need.

The Redwood Empire Food Bank places immense value on the trust and feedback of its participants, considering them integral partners in their mission. By cultivating a collaborative relationship, the organization gains valuable insights into the evolving needs and preferences of the community. Through sustained engagement, the food bank strives to forge a stronger, more resilient community, guided by the vision of ending hunger.

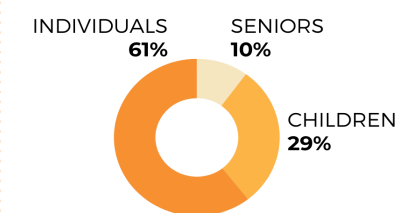
142,000

PEOPLE SERVED



"The food we are given has made a positive impact in our lives, alleviating a lot of stress. And we are treated like real people. Thank you again."

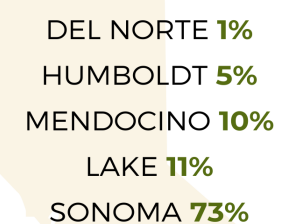
DEMOGRAPHIC



AVG HOUSEHOLD SIZE 3 members



FOOD SUPPORT BY COUNTY



MOST LIKED ITEMS



98% of participants find the Redwood Empire Food Bank staff & volunteers helpful and welcoming.

94% are highly satisfied with food amount and variety. **90%** find nutrition education useful for food recipes.



Business

Redwood Empire Food Bank Participants: A Diverse and Resilient Community

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Community

Raising the Bar to Help End Hunger in Our Community

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REDWOOD EMPIRE
FOOD BANK

2023 Impact Report

A member of FEEDING AMERICA

Food 8



Redwood Empire Food Bank employee serves a fresh On the Spot snack to participants waiting in line for groceries. These snacks are prepared daily by volunteers in the kitchen of the Redwood Empire Food Bank.

What's Cooking in the Kitchen? Redwood Empire Food Bank's On the Spot Nutrition!

In the bustling world of hunger relief, the Redwood Empire Food Bank is always whipping up something exciting to serve our community's unique needs. So, what is cooking in the kitchen? Well, it is the food bank's delightful and nutritious "On the Spot Nutrition" program!

A Dash of Compassion

By the time people turn to the Redwood Empire

Food Bank for help, they have often been enduring persistent hunger for an extended period. To address their acute food needs, the food bank cranked up the heat and launched the On the Spot Nutrition program.

Fresh Ingredients, Quick Relief

Volunteers, armed with fresh donated ingredients, work together to create a range of healthy snacks. These snacks

are designed to offer an immediate boost of nutrition, providing swift relief to the food bank's hungry participants.

Feeding the Line

The magic happens when these nutritious snacks are served on the spot at food distributions. It is an instant pick-me-up for those in need, providing not only sustenance but also a taste of care and compassion.



Redwood Empire Food Bank chef prepares a healthy snack with the help of volunteers in the food bank's community kitchen.

Below are some scrumptious recipes from the Redwood Empire Food Bank's On the Spot Nutrition program.

Carrot Cake Overnight Oats



Directions

1. Mix all of the ingredients together in a bowl and split into two mason jars (or mix directly in the jars).
2. Cover with a lid and set in refrigerator overnight.
3. Enjoy in the morning!

Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 tsp Chia seeds
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- ½ cup grated carrots
- 2 tbsp maple syrup or brown sugar
- 2 ½ cups almond or coconut milk
- 2 tbsp raisins optional
- 2 tbsp toasted flaked or sliced unsweetened coconut
- 2 tbsp toasted crushed or sliced nuts of your choice

Notes

- Adjust almond or coconut milk to taste (2 to 2.5 cups).
- Overnight oats can be stored in the refrigerator for 2-3 days. They can also be frozen for up to 3 months!

Yield: 2 Servings



Green Tomato Pie

Ingredients

- 5 medium green tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tbsp cider vinegar
- 1 ½ cups white sugar
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- 1 (14 ounce) package double-crust pie pastry, thawed

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine tomatoes and

- vinegar in a large bowl.
3. Mix sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and cloves together in a medium bowl. Sprinkle over tomatoes and toss to coat evenly.
4. Press one pie pastry into a 9-inch pie pan. Pour tomato mixture into the pastry. Cut second pie pastry into strips and arrange in a crisscross lattice over the filling.
5. Bake in the preheated oven until bubbly and crust is brown, 30 to 35 minutes.