

How to build and maintain cooperations with stores?

Cooperations with stores, restaurants and every kind of business that handles food are the core component of foodsaving. They are built on personal contact and trust and never involve money.

Which store to approach?

Every business that handles food can be approached and asked for a cooperation. Be it a supermarket, a restaurant, a canteen, stands at farmer's markets, a farm, a food wholesale, a street food stand or whatever you can think of or find in your area. It is useful though, to answer some questions before choosing a business:

- Is the location reachable for enough Foodsavers?
- Will the amounts of food that can be saved from this store be eaten? (Only contact wholesales if you are able to handle huge quantities!)
- Will the kind of food that can be saved from this store be eaten? (For example don't save sausages if you are only surrounded by strict vegans.)

Also, some criteria classify businesses as more likely to cooperate. Stores that

- sell organic food should be open to environmentalist topics.
- are run by their proprietor have complete freedom to decide.
- employ nice people are easier to communicate with.

Like always, these are just vague guidelines to give you some kind of orientation in case you have no idea where to start. If you already have a store in mind, and it happens to not fit above-mentioned categories, no worries - just go ahead!

How to initiate the contact?

Always try to talk in person to the person in charge. The key to success is confidence: You have a very good reason to ask for cooperation! Just be prepared and then you can convey it! It is useful to bring some printed background information on food waste in general and positive press regarding already existing cooperations. It also can be a good idea to first call the store and set a date for the meeting since it can make you appear more professional, but this - as always - depends on the store and the general circumstances: Is it rather bourgeois and puts emphasis on being professional and organized? Then adapt to this setting and be as organized and professional as you can, to please the manager and staff! Is it more relaxed and wants to be seen as chill and cool? Then be chill and cool yourself and they'll like you!

What to bring:

- Confidence!
- Knowledge about the topic of food waste
- Printout of 'Benefits for cooperating Stores'
- Printout of 'Background information'
- Additional info material concerning your initiative

How to convince the store to participate?

As a general tip: Just assume that nobody wants to senselessly waste perfectly fine food, because it mostly is true! Throwing away goods in totally acceptable state hurts the people who have to do it, so the employees are on your side most of the time anyways. For the higher-ups, who maybe don't need to face the direct act of wasting, you can always take the detour to talk about money. Every ingredient and product that gets thrown away costs the business money, so why just waste it? On top of that, disposal of garbage is expensive, too! If the store decides to cooperate with you, they can even save money, because you take away a good part of what would have been waste before. Also, if the store wants you to, you can tell everyone that they participate and how amazing this is! That this progressive business understands its role in modern society and doesn't shy away from taking responsibility to help stop the waste (or something like that...).

How to maintain the cooperation?

You got a store to cooperate, congratulations! From now on, just be nice, reliable and do what you told them you would, so that they keep liking you and your initiative.

To make sure every pick-up gets carried out as planned you need to properly organize your foodsaving group, send enough people to take everything offered in one go and be able to substitute short-term pick-up cancellations.

Tasks to fulfill:

- Make sure every agreed-on pick-up gets carried out
- Make sure every Foodsaver knows how to behave at the store

Ways to succeed:

- Have a clear list of who picks up when
- Have good communication in the whole team
- Maybe choose one or more so-called Store Coordinators to keep the overview
- Maybe set behavioural standards like the ones in 'Professionalism for Foodsavers'
- Let new Foodsavers accompany experienced ones in the beginning

Keep in mind

Like everything you learn from text, this also is just an opinion on how things like this could be handled. If you think you know better, just follow your gut and go ahead! We didn't plan on restricting people in any way! The sole purpose of these pages is to provide information on how this topic can be approached, based loosely on the experiences of German foodsharing and/or some of its members.

Professionalism for foodsavers

Foodsavers are to behave in a nice and polite way when interacting with employees of stores. To get more clarity on what this actually means, please consult the following lists.

No-Gos

A Foodsaver behaves unprofessional when s(he)

- shows up late or not at all to a pick-up (s)he had signed up for.
- shows up for a pick-up (s)he had *not* signed up for.
- doesn't take all the food the store provided for the pick-up.
- takes food the store did *not* provide for the pick-up.
- leaves the location of the pick-up in a messy state.
- shows up at a pick-up smelly, drunk or drugged.
- brings pets to a pick-up.
- behaves so unpleasantly noisy that clients of the store start paying attention.
- tries to greedily get the best and/or most food for her/himself.
- makes uncalled-for comments about the amount of food, that can be picked up.
- starts discussions about who gets what while still in the store.

How a pick-up is supposed to take place instead

After pointing out the worst mistakes above, we'd now like to give some constructive advice on how to establish the most pleasant atmosphere possible while dealing with employees of stores.

- We are friendly, polite and work efficiently.
- We are silent and don't take much time.
- We abide by the rules and wishes of the store.
- We wait for each other in front of the store and enter together.
- We bring our own bags and boxes to transport the food.
- We tidy up the location of the pick-up as good as we can.
- We have good communication in the pick-up team to know about possible special circumstances.
- We cancel a pick-up at least 24h before it is supposed to take place, if need may be. If that does for some reason not work out, we independently find a replacement.

While at a pick-up, saving food is our main job and goal and any other interest of ours is not important. We do not try to promote our world-view, belief system or any other agenda that may also be something dear to us, at the same time as saving food. Professionalism in general simply boils down to that: Following only one agenda and ignoring anything that could be distracting and keeping the professional from doing the job.