Promoting Healthy Foods: 
Food Placement and Presentation

The way foods are placed and presented greatly influences participants’ selection. The easier a healthy food is to access, the more likely one is to eat it. Techniques such as prominent placement, good visibility and favorable lighting, and the appearance of abundance, highlight healthy food options for more frequent selection.

□ Place healthy foods towards the front of a pantry or food line. These foods include:
  - Fresh produce
  - Bulk unprocessed items like oats, dried beans, and rice
  - Whole grains (like brown rice or barely), and 100% whole wheat versions of pastas and breads
  - Frozen or canned fruits and vegetables
  - Protein sources including nuts and other legumes, eggs, poultry, lean meats, canned fish

□ Separate healthier options from standard varieties. When placing canned/packaged foods on pantry shelves or along the food line, take note of those that have: low or reduced sodium; no sugar added; 100% whole wheat or whole grain ingredients; no hydrogenated oils or trans-fats; fewest total ingredients. Bring these foods to the front and top of bins, first or in front of standard items on shelves, or placed side-by-side with healthy item first.

□ Put the same foods and similar looking canned or frozen varieties together for easy identification.

□ Place highly processed packaged items and other indulgent treats last in the food line, at the very top or bottom of shelves, or in the back of other items to decrease visibility.

□ Design Food Bank layout and the arrangement of food to promote healthy choices
  - Ensure there is adequate lighting in your facility for optimal visibility of healthy foods.
  - Arrange foods (including bins or crates) in a visually appealing manner.
  - If using food bins for canned goods: remove certain foods from bins, such as canned vegetables, fruits, or beans, and place on line tables for increased visibility and accessibility.
  - Angle food bins or crates downward to prevent the lip from obstructing a participants’ view.
  - Remove any rotting produce or severely damaged cans and boxes from bins or shelves.
  - Keep food bins, shelves, or tables full and well-stocked to promote abundance.

□ Utilize labeling to clarify food items and create demand for healthier options
  - Highlight important nutritional qualities with the use of representative icons for: important nutrients, health properties, and cooking methods. Using food labels and icons is an easy, universal way to communicate to participants about their food choices.
  - Labels should be reserved for easily identifiable whole, healthy foods. Call attention to the nutritive value of healthy foods as defined above.

For more information about starting or developing your farm-to-food bank initiative, please email growingconnections@northwestharvest.org, or contact Laura Titzer at 206.923.7423