

Meeting Neighbor Food Needs and Preferences: Spotlight on Culturally Connected Foods

At Connecticut Foodshare, we strive to meet neighbor food needs and preferences. In our many neighbor engagement activities over the past few years, we've heard repeatedly that neighbors are looking for nutritious food; fresh food like produce, protein, dairy; foods that meet dietary or health needs; and foods they know how to cook. Neighbors also noted that they are looking for foods they are familiar with and connected to their culture.

Connecticut Foodshare defines **culturally connected food** as food that specific cultures, populations, or communities have a connection to, and foods that are important to cultures and traditions of different cultures.

Below is the list of food items Connecticut Foodshare defines as culturally connected. This list is based on a survey of over 500 pantry guests during summer 2025 at 17 randomly selected food pantries in the agency partner network. Food pantry guests were asked to identify their culture as part of this survey. They were then asked about food preferences for different food categories. This list will be used to inform Connecticut Foodshare's procurement strategies to meet neighbor food needs and preferences.

Food items below are grouped by food category. These items reflect a top preference identified by at least half of the cultures represented in the food pantry guest survey. In Network Hub, you can view the "Culturally Connected" label when shopping.

Meat & Meat Alternatives	Flour	Vegetables	Fruits
Beef *	All-purpose flour *	Carrots *	Apples *
Chicken *	Masa flour	Lettuce *	Bananas *
Fish *	Rye flour	Onions *	Grapes
Lamb	Semolina/durum flour	Peppers *	Oranges
Pork		Broccoli	Strawberries
Turkey		Corn	
Beans/ Lentils/ Peas	Grains	Garlic	Spices
Black beans *	Oats *	Green beans	Basil *
Chickpeas/ garbanzo beans *	Pasta *	Okra	Oregano *
Pinto beans *	White rice *	Peas	Parsley *
	Brown rice	Potatoes	Pepper *
	Jasmine rice	Red peppers	Salt *
	Whole-grain pasta	Spinach	Cilantro
		Tomatoes	Garlic
			Rosemary

Note: An asterisk (*) signifies this item was ranked the highest in that category by neighbors representing a majority of cultures identified in the survey.