



Casas por Cristo  
short term missions

# Food Guide

## A guide to buying, transporting, and preparing food in México

If you're reading this, it's likely that you have the responsibility of trying to feed your hungry crew. We understand the magnitude of this task. To lessen the burden we have provided information and tips to help you better prepare for your upcoming trip.

### Border Relations

There are no limitations on what you are allowed to take into México. However, if you are pulled over by the Mexican Border Guards, and they ask about the food you are transporting, tell them that it is solely for the use of your team.

It is prohibited to bring meat, fruit and vegetables back into the U.S. once you have taken them into México. Feel free to leave these and other food and/or cooking supplies with the family you are building for.

When traveling into México, it is a good idea to put your cold food items in ice chests. Sometimes crossing the border and arriving at your host church can take several hours. Packing refrigerator items in an ice chest can keep them cool until you unload.

### Church Amenities

While most of the host churches in México have refrigerators, their capacity and condition may vary. As with all things, it is important to have a backup plan. Be prepared to use ice chests if the refrigerator is broken, too small, or of poor quality. You may purchase purified ice at many local stores in México.

Most host churches are equipped with a stove that has operational burners. You will need to bring matches to light them. The ovens are usually not operational. As with the refrigerator, their capacity and condition will vary. Many teams bring grills and propane powered stovetops as a backup.

### Cooking Specifics

The propane stoves used in México do not burn as hot as the stoves you are accustomed to. For most items, especially for boiling water, two smaller pots are better than one large pot.

You will be responsible for all of your cooking and eating needs. We recommend using disposable items as much as possible to save time and energy.

### Water

For your time in México you will need water for drinking (plan on having one gallon of water per day per person), cooking, and clean-up.

We recommend using five gallon water jugs for easy refill. You can purchase five-gallon jugs in Texas and transport them into México. (You will be charged a deposit fee, but will be reimbursed when you return the jugs.) You may refill these jugs in local stores in México for anywhere between \$3 and \$5. Rest assured the water is purified and safe to drink. Many teams also bring cases of bottled water for easy access.

### Recommended Packing List

Pots / pans	Crock pot
Cups	Dishrags / sponges
Can opener	Cleaning supplies
Matches	Grill
Plates	Dish soap
Hot pads	Bleach
Roaster pan	Cutting board
Bowls	Napkins
Strainer	Drying towels
Sharp knife	Hand soap / disinfectant
Paper towels	Ice chests /drink coolers
Baby wipes	Eating utensils
Sandwich baggies	Trash bags
Cooking and serving utensils	Sharpies

These items may be brought with you or purchased in El Paso before you cross the border. Feel free to leave these items with the family you are building for.

### Fall, Winter and Spring Meal Schedules

During the Fall, Winter and Spring months your team should plan on eating lunch at the worksite and breakfast and dinner at the church.

### Summer Meal Schedule

During the summer, your team may choose between two schedule options. Your first choice is to work from approximately 7 AM to noon and again from 3:30 PM until 8 PM each day. You will go back to your church for a "siesta" and have your big meal of the day at the noon hour. On this schedule you

should expect to eat all of your meals at the church. This break time should be used to get out of the sun, take naps, and relax.

Your second choice during the summer months is to work from 6 AM to 2 PM each day. With this schedule, you will need to take snacks and a light lunch to the worksite. Plan to eat your dinner or big meal of the day at the church. This schedule will allow you to rest in the afternoon and evening.

### **Breakfast Tips**

Keep breakfast simple. Cereal, muffins, fruit, and breakfast bars can be laid out in advance for team members to help themselves. This allows for minimal clean-up.

### **Lunch Tips**

Have each member prepare their own sandwich before they leave for the worksite. Have them label their sandwich bag with their name. Take all sandwiches to the worksite and bring chips, fruit, and cookies to the worksite for each team member to choose from. Don't forget the drinks!!

### **Snack Tips**

Sometimes at the worksite you are able to take a break as a team. This is an excellent opportunity to have a small snack. However, sometimes the schedule does not allow everyone to take a break at the same time, so be flexible. Granola bars, breakfast bars, crackers and cheese, water, and Gatorade are all good snack choices.

### **Dinner Tips**

As soon as the group returns from the worksite, have the kitchen crew start preparing the meal. At the end of a long day, it is always nice to eat a hot meal. However, you don't want to make it so elaborate that the team has to wait for hours to eat.

### **Kitchen Duty**

It is a good idea to make a schedule for Kitchen Duty before you head to México. Assign two or three team members to help with every meal. You can have one crew help with preparation and one crew help with clean-up.

### **Washing Dishes**

You may use unpurified water to wash dishes if you add bleach or boil the water. Either action will kill any bacteria in the water.

### **Buying Food / Supplies in El Paso**

If you need to purchase additional food or supplies when you reach El Paso, we recommend Sam's Club, and Wal-Mart for Del Rio. Many of your local Sam's Clubs will allow you to provide a list of items which they will then fax to the Sam's Club here in El Paso.

For orders of \$250 or more, they will gather your items and have them ready for pick-up at the front of the store. You will still need to scan your items, but you will save time finding the needed supplies. Make sure you tell them that you would like your order to be compiled at the Sam's Club at 7001 Gateway Blvd. West, (915) 771-0004. There is also a Wal-Mart Super Center within walking distance of this Sam's Club.

### **Meal Ideas**

<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Dinner</b>
Fruit	Bread	Grilled Hamburgers
Cereal	Peanut Butter	Grilled Hotdogs
Bagels	Jelly	Stew
Honey Buns	Lunch Meat	Chili
Eggs	Pretzels	Spaghetti
Breakfast Burritos	Chips	Macaroni and Cheese
Breakfast Bars	Fruit	Grilled Cheese
Instant Oatmeal	Cookies	Taco Salad
Milk	Gatorade	Chicken noodle casserole
Juice	Water	Tacos
		Grilled Chicken
	<b>Snacks</b>	Quesadillas
	Cookies	Brisket (pre-made)
	Pretzels	Frito Chile Pie
	Nuts	Soup
	Granola Bars	

### **Additional Food Ideas**

Bread	Hotdog Buns	Chips
Taco Chips	Salsa	Peanut Butter
Jelly	Oatmeal	Cereal
Spaghetti Sauce	Gatorade	Lemonade
Granola Bars	Cookies	Pretzels
Carrots	Lettuce	Tomato
Eggs	Milk	Lunch Meat
Cheese	Bagels	Cream Cheese
Mayonnaise	Mustard	Ketchup
Pickles	Salt/Pepper	Eggs
Parmesan	Fruit	Coffee
Hot Chocolate		

### **Final Words**

A good rule of thumb is to budget \$25 per person for meals for the week. As mentioned several times in this guide, you may leave any extra items for the family you are serving, as anything will be greatly appreciated. The most important piece of advice we can offer is to make lists and plan ahead. If you are driving, many of the meals can be cooked in advance and frozen. Remember to be flexible and always have a back up plan. Please feel free call us with any questions at 800.819.8014.