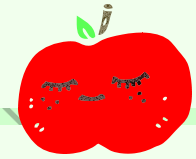
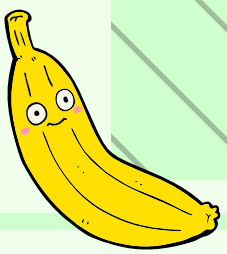
SHARE TABLES

AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO ENHANCE STUDENT FOOD CONSERVATION & REDUCE FOOD WASTE IN K-12 FOOD SERVICE PROGRAMS





Share Tables **are designated stations where children may return whole and/or unopened food or beverage items they choose not to eat. These items are then made available to other children who may want or need another serving during or after the meal service.**

The USDA Food & Nutrition Service (FNS) expressly allows and actively encourages the redistribution of previously served, whole and/or unopened food and beverage items, including milk, in one of three ways:

- Children may take an additional item from the share table - at no cost - to consume immediately in the food service area or later in another location;
- Items left on the share table may be served and claimed for reimbursement during another meal service (i.e., during an afterschool program when leftover from a school lunch); and/or
- Items may be donated to a non-profit organization, such as a community food bank, homeless shelter or other non-profit charitable organization.

Share tables may be used in the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the at-risk afterschool component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program & the Summer Food Service Program.

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food recovery project

additional legal guidance on food conservation & primary source documents available at:
http://law.uark.edu/foodrecovery

Share Tables:
Enhance Student Food Conservation & Reduce Food Waste in K-12 Food Service Programs

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SHARING *makes sense*

Federal dollars allocated to the National School Lunch & Breakfast Programs should remain as closely aligned with their intended beneficiaries - students - as possible.

Creating a closed-loop system for redistributing unopened food items to students within the school community is in keeping with the support that taxpayers offer young people: healthy food to fuel learning!

food safety

Share tables are an effective way to promptly recapture excess food, as well as to ensure that it is properly handled and stored until reservice. As always, Child Nutrition Program (CNP) operators using share tables must follow the safety requirements outlined in 7 CFR 210.13, 220.7, 226.20(l) & 225.16(a). CNPs must also ensure that practices for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with their Local Educational Agency's Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. FDA Food Code § 3-306.14 helpfully addresses food safety considerations when re-serving food.

Share tables must also comply with all applicable local and State health and food safety codes, which may address proper storage of items to be re-served. ***When discussing plans for a share table with the local health department and State agencies (advisable prior to implementation), emphasize that the USDA FNS encourages State agencies to support CNP operators' efforts to increase consumption of nutritious food and minimize food waste through the use of share tables.***

best management practices

MEASURE

- Conduct a student food waste audit
- Analyze results to identify patterns & potential drivers of food waste

PLAN & NUDGE

- Develop a "conservation nudge" education plan that features:
  - good signage
  - water cups
  - a share table
- Helpful messages include:
  - Milk is a healthy *option*, not a requirement
  - Take what you need, eat what you take
  - Feed each other, not landfills!

SHARE

- Encourage hungry students to take another serving of the healthy foods that they enjoy
- Promptly relocate share table surplus to an accessible refrigerator
- Re-serve share table surplus for afternoon snack, delivering food at a time when students tend to lose focus because they are hungry
- Check the surplus fridge periodically (i.e., before weekends & school breaks; donate items that are unlikely to be re-served in a timely manner

ECONOMIZE

- Re-serve surplus items as part of another reimbursable meal

source reduction

Reducing the amount of unconsumed food should be the first priority of CNPs. Share tables are meant to redistribute the limited amount of uneaten food that is inevitable in even the most efficiently operated child nutrition programs. A number of strategies can help CNPs to increase consumption and reduce food waste:

- Serve varied, appealing meals;
- Get youth interested in new foods through taste tests;
- Treat the cafeteria as classroom not a restaurant and teach the importance of nutrition and healthful food choices;
- Serve food at appropriate times and in convenient forms; and
- Elicit and be responsive to student feedback.

reimbursement

Items returned via a share table may be re-served and claimed for reimbursement again. This is because Federal reimbursement is provided for each meal satisfying the meal pattern requirements *served* to participants (rather than on the basis of new food items purchased for the meal). As always, reimbursement requests must include detailed data to justify the claims. CNPs should maintain a record of daily use of purchased milk and food items that are recycled.

CNPs should establish and follow clear guidelines for food components that may and may not be shared or reused as part of a later reimbursable meal.

donation

Creating closed-loop food systems in schools means sharing surplus food with students and student families first. When necessary, outside donation of surplus food is permitted and may be protected from liability under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act. Parent teacher organizations registered as 501(c)(3)s make ideal distribution partners for this excess food because they are well-positioned to serve local students and families.

citations & hyperlinked resources

FNS Instruction *786-6*, *Reimbursement for Recycled Milk and Other Meal Components*

SP 41-2016, CACFP 13-2016, SFSP 15-2016, *The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs*, 6-22-2016

SP 41-2014, *Clarification of the Policy on Food Consumption Outside of Foodservice Area, and the Whole Grain-Rich Requirement*, 4-23-2014

SP 11-2012, CACFP 05-2012, SFSP 07-2012, *Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs*, 2-3-2012

M. Terry, et al., *Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits*, 4-4-2017

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May 2017