

# School Nutrition Program At-A-Glance

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## Topic: Share Tables

### Overview

“Share Tables” are tables or bins after the point of service that offer a place for students to place food items they do not intend to eat that may be shared with other students in the meal service area. Using this strategy helps to reduce food waste. School Food Authorities who would like to use share tables should work in collaboration with their local health department to ensure all local food safety regulations are followed.

### Requirements:

- ✓ Share tables are intended for students participating in the meal service.
- ✓ Share tables should be available only during scheduled meal service times.
- ✓ Post clear signage to designate the share table area, such as [StopWaste’s free share table sign](#).

### Food Safety

- ✓ Share tables must always comply with local and State health and food safety codes.
- ✓ Share tables must be monitored to ensure food safety.
- ✓ Organizations utilizing share tables must have a written procedure in place outlining HACCP practices for any food items placed on the share table.

### Allowable Use of Share Table Items

- ✓ Food or beverage items on share tables may be reused in the following ways:
  - Students may take an additional serving of food and/or beverage items from the share table during the meal service at no cost
  - Food or beverage items on the share table may be reserved and served during a subsequent meal service
  - Items on the share table may be donated to non-profit organizations, see USDA Memo [SP 11-2012 Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs](#)

### Unallowable Use of Share Table Items

- ✓ Food or beverage items on share tables may **not** be:
  - Served in the line for the same meal service
  - Taken home
  - Provided to students as a snack outside of meal service times
  - Offered to adults
  - Taken by staff to be available in classrooms

**Additional Information**

Please refer to the chart below for items that are appropriate and not appropriate for share tables.

<b>Appropriate for Share Tables</b>	<b>NOT Appropriate for Share Tables</b>
Unopened shelf-stable items such as crackers, cereal bars, juice boxes, etc.	Unpacked items such as a sandwich
Whole fruit such as apples or bananas	Packaged items that can be opened and closed (resealed)
Unopened pre-packaged items, such as a bag of baby carrots or sliced apples	Open items, such as an opened bag of baby carrots or sliced apples
Unopened milk, unopened yogurt, etc., with a temperature control mechanism in place	Perishable foods, when a temperature control mechanism is not in place

**Food Safety Considerations**

- ✓ Your organization's share table policy must take into consideration how foods will be kept at safe temperatures.
- ✓ Note expiration dates on packaged foods to avoid re-serving expired foods.
- ✓ Keep re-used items separate from items that have not yet been prepared and served
- ✓ It is recommended to re-use a food item only once. If your organization decides to re-use an item more than once, decide on a policy and be consistent with it. For example, mark the food package to indicate the item has already been served once.
- ✓ Work with administrators and consider pausing the share table when the school is experiencing a high number of students with GI illness or other infectious diseases such as norovirus.

**Positioning of the Share Table**

Share tables must be clearly beyond the point of service to ensure that full reimbursable meals can be counted before foods are placed on the tables. Ensure that signage clearly indicates the location of the share table to students and staff.

**Helpful Resources:**

[USDA Reducing Food Waste Webpage](#)  
[Share Table Toolkit](#)  
[Oregon School Food Share Program Guide](#)

**Regulatory Reference:**

[7 CFR 210.13](#)  
[FNS Instruction 786-6](#)  
[Oregon Food Code](#) 3-306.14(B)(1) and (2), 3-801.11(H)  
[SP 11-2012](#)  
[SP 41-2016](#)

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