

Sharing Table Fact Sheet

Basics

- The Indiana State Department of Health and Indiana Department of Education have collaborated on guidance for implementing sharing tables at school.
- In an effort to reduce the amount of food waste and encourage the consumption of food served, many school food service operations have established sharing tables. Children can place unconsumed food and beverage items that they choose not to eat or drink on the table, providing other children the opportunity to take additional helpings of food or beverages at no extra cost.

Best Practices

- If the school is not already implementing Offer vs. Serve (OvS), this is the best way to combat excess waste on trays. Under OvS students are given the ability to decline components.
- Offer multiple choices within components. Students are more likely to find something that they will want to eat.
- Prepare food in ways that enhances their appeal - season for ultimate flavor, scratch cook more often, batch cook so food is fresh and appetizing, ensure food is served at proper temperatures.
- Allow appropriate time to eat and space meals so they are not too close to one another.
- Implement recess before lunch, so children can work up an even larger appetite.
- Review production records to help forecast amounts to prepare and document leftovers so overproduction is not prevalent.

Procedure

- Before implementing a sharing table, make sure to discuss these plans with your local health department.
- Figure out the location of the sharing table - ideally the table should be close to the cashier or wherever students exit the food service line.
- The sharing table must be monitored by any employee other than the cashier.
- If time is used as a public health control, schools have a 4 hour period where students can share and schools can resell unopened milk, cheese sticks, and other temperature controlled food or beverages. Schools cannot donate these foods and beverages if using time as a public health control.
- Only food or beverages that do not require temperature control, or have been maintained in temperature control, may be collected for resale or recovery. Collected food and beverages should be clearly labeled in a container or box marked for resale or recovered food for donation and not mixed with unsold foods.

Food Safety

- Students are allowed to drop off their unwanted food on the sharing table or in the designated fridge/coolers at any point during the lunch service. However only temperature controlled food dropped off immediately after leaving the serving line can be donated to food recovery groups.
- The monitor should identify any food, beverage, or condiment to make sure it has not been contaminated (e.g. opened, partially consumed, etc.) and the original packaging is in sound condition.
- Discard sharing table items that require temperature control and have been in possession of the consumer at the end of the last meal service or within 4 hours of service.
- Students may not be allowed to donate items brought from home.
- Develop a Standard Operating Plan (SOP) in the school's Food Safety HACCP Plan. Click [here](#) for an example.

Allowable Products

- Non-temperature controlled pre-packaged products like food bars, drinks, crackers and cereal packs.
- Wrapped fruit and vegetables or fruit with an inedible skin, like bananas and oranges.
- Temperature controlled pre-packaged products like cheese and milk as long as they are placed in a cooler, refrigerator or ice bath or are consumed within the same lunch period (no more than 4 hours).