

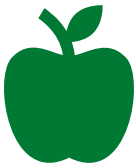
Share Table Guidance

Share tables are an effort to reduce wasted food and encourage students to eat food served at their school. If a student doesn't want an item from their reimbursable meal, they can put the unopened food or drink on a share table for other students to take at no extra cost. Share tables typically include a refrigerator or a bin with ice or ice packs. Use these guidelines to help your school start a share table.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact FoodLodging@vermont.gov or call 802-863-7221.



Share Table Checklist



- ☐ Put the share table or refrigerator in a place students can access after they exit the food service line.
- ☐ Make sure food service staff monitor the share table or refrigerator.
- ☐ Place food or beverages that must be under temperature control (like milk or cut fruit) in a small fridge, cooler or bin with an ice bath.
- ☐ Clearly label recovered food and beverages, and do not mix them with unsold food.

Food Safety Checklist



- ☐ Encourage students to place unwanted food onto the share table before sitting down to eat to prevent any potential contamination.
- ☐ Only items from the cafeteria can go on the share table.
- ☐ Show monitors how to check that food and beverages are not contaminated and that original packaging is intact.
- ☐ Donate unused food to a nonprofit organization. USDA regulations allow donations like pre-packaged foods, whole fruits, vegetables and milk.
- ☐ Develop standard operating procedures for share tables in your school's food safety Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan. We recommend [this procedure from LunchBox](#).

Allowable Products



- ☐ Pre-packaged products that do not need to be kept cold, like granola bars, dried fruit, nuts, seeds and cereal packs.
- ☐ Pre-packaged products that do need to be kept cold, like cheese sticks, yogurt and milk, must be placed in a cooler, refrigerator or ice bath.
- ☐ Wrapped fruit and vegetables, or unwrapped fruit that has a thick skin, like bananas and oranges.

Best Practices



- ☐ Use share tables in combination with [Offer versus Serve](#) guidance to minimize wasted food.
- ☐ Promote share tables
- ☐ Train students on share tables
- ☐ Other strategies to minimize food waste include:
 - Increasing food choices
 - Changing food presentation
 - Allowing at least 20 minutes for mealtime
 - Having recess before lunch
 - Read the [USDA's guidance on reducing food waste in K-12 schools](#) to learn more.
 - Read the [USDA's guidance on the use of share tables in child nutrition programs](#) to learn more.

Questions?

- For help with starting a share table program and food safety, contact the [Health Department's Food and Lodging Program](#) at 802-863-7221 or FoodLodging@vermont.gov.
- For questions about donating or composting food, contact the [Agency of Natural Resource's Solid Waste Management Program](#) at 802-828-1138.
- For questions about the School Meals Program, contact the [Agency of Education's Child Nutrition Programs](#) at 802-595-2923.