

(Provided to Sponsors 07/29/2016)

CNS Update: The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs

USDA recently released [SP41, CACFP13, SFSP15-2016, The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs](#). Using “share tables” is a strategy to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods and reduce food waste in Child Nutrition Programs.

“Share tables” are tables or stations where children may return whole food or beverage items they choose not to eat, if it is in compliance with local and State health and food safety codes. These food and beverage items are then available to other children who may want additional servings. If a sponsor has leftover or unusable foods on a frequent basis, menu planning and production practices should be adjusted to reduce leftovers or unusable foods.

Share tables allow food or beverage items to be reused in a number of ways:

- Children may take an additional helping from the share table at no cost
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be served during another meal service
- Food or beverage items may be donated to a non-profit organization, such as a food bank

Sponsors must follow the food safety requirements outlined in the regulations as well as local and State health and food safety codes. Sponsors should check with their local health departments regarding local requirements.

The USDA guidance outlines the following steps when establishing share tables:

1. Follow Federal, State, and local health and food safety requirements
2. Establish clear guidelines for food components that may or may not be shared or reused as part of a later reimbursable meal
3. If sharing items that require cooling is permissible under local and State laws, establish strict food safety guidelines to prevent the risk of foodborne illness
4. Supervise the share table at all times to ensure compliance with food safety requirements
5. Ensure children and families understand the purpose and food safety requirements of the share table

Sponsors that use share tables or are considering their use should carefully review the entire [SP41, CACFP13, SFSP15-2016](#) memorandum.

Please direct questions to your assigned program specialist.



OSPI CHILD NUTRITON assists school districts and other institutions in providing quality nutrition programs that promote life-long healthful living while providing nutritious meals each day that prepare children for learning.

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