

SHARING TABLES

- 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.

Basics

- 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.
- Students can share unopened milk, cheese sticks, and other food or beverages that must be under temperature control if time is used as a public health control and the food is shared within 4 hours.
- Food or beverages sold cannot be collected for resale. Recovered food and beverages should be clearly labeled in a container or box marked food recovery 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.
- If not donating leftovers, discard sharing table items 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.

Allowable Products

- Non-temperature controlled pre-packaged products like food bars, drinks, crackers and cereal packs.
- Wrapped fruit and vegetables or fruit with a thick 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).

Best Practices

- If the school is not already implementing Offer vs. Serve, this will be the best way to combat excess waste on trays.
- Contact the State or your Field Consultant to learn more about the requirements of Offer vs. Serve.
- Other ways to minimize food waste include:
 - Program marketing
 - Increasing food choices
 - Changing food presentation
 - Allowing appropriate time for meals
 - Implementing recess before lunch