

To: Authorized Representatives of Child Nutrition Programs
National School Lunch
National School Breakfast

From: Child and Adult Nutrition Services

Date: August 17, 2017

Subject: Share Tables

Memo Number: SNP 230-1

The purpose of this memo is to provide insight and guidance about the use of "Share Tables" in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

This information should be shared with the person(s) that determines reimbursable meals, and the person(s) that handles serving meals and providing a healthy eating environment. Questions about this memo can be referred to a SD Dept. of Education Child and Adult Nutrition Services staff member.

Guidance was recently revised to allow School Food Authorities (SFA's) to use share tables to help limit food waste in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. FNS Instruction 786-6 and USDA Food and Nutrition Service memo SP 41-2016 updates this guidance.

Using "share tables" is one strategy to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods and reduce food waste in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and the at-risk afterschool CACFP. As a reminder, all program operators must plan, prepare, and order food with the goal of providing one meal per child at each meal service. If a school, CACFP institution, or SFSP sponsor has leftover or unusable foods on a frequent basis, menu planning and production practices should be adjusted to reduce leftovers or unusable foods.

For various reasons, children may not always want to consume certain food or beverage items included in their meal. "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.

Share tables allow food or beverage items to be reused in a number of ways, depending on the Program's preference:

- Children may take an additional helping of a food or beverage item from the share table at no cost
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be served and claimed for reimbursement during another meal service (i.e., during an afterschool program when leftover from a school lunch)
- Food or beverage items may be donated to a non-profit organization, such as a community food bank, homeless shelter or other non-profit charitable organization (see SP 11-2012, CACFP 05-2012, SFSP 07-2012, Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs, http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP11_CACFP05_SFSP07-2012os.pdf)
- Allows milk (when the milk carton is unopened and the proper temperature is maintained) and other meal components that are served to be retrieved for re-service if such a practice is permitted under local and State health and food safety codes

When using a share table, the SFA must be able to claim the reimbursable meal at the point of service even if a child then puts one or more of the meal components on the share table. When food items are left on the share table at the end of the meal service, that food can be used in later meals that are claimed for reimbursement.

Specific foods listed below can be placed on a share table that is located after the point of service where the meal count is taken. It is a best practice to have the students place acceptable food on the share table before they sit down to eat. If that is not possible and students bring food to the share table after they have sat down to eat, kitchen staff must inspect each food item before returning it to the kitchen for re-use to see if it was opened, partially eaten, or damaged. Any opened, partially eaten, or damaged food should go in the trash bin.

Food Safety Requirements for Share Tables:

Using a share table, the SFA must follow the food safety requirements, including all applicable local and State health and food safety codes to ensure their use of share tables does not violate any of those codes. It is important to keep in mind that local and State health and food safety codes may be more restrictive than the FNS requirements, or may place specific limitations on which food or beverage items may be reused. To ensure compliance with food safety requirements, the SFA should discuss plans for a share table with their local health department and State agency prior to implementation. Further, schools must ensure that their policies for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with the SFA's Food Safety Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan.