



Alabama State Department of Education

Child Nutrition – School Programs

Share Table and Donations Guidance

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) permits the use of share tables in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Afterschool Snack Program (ASSP). Share tables are designated areas where students may return unopened, whole food or beverage items they choose not to consume. These items can then be taken by other students who want additional servings.

Permitted Uses of Share Table Items

- Students may take additional servings from the Share Table at no cost.
- Shelf-stable items may be saved and served again during another meal service([see USDA Memo: SP 41-2016](#)).
- Items may be donated to a nonprofit organization ([See USDA Memo: SP 11-2012](#) and [ALSDE Memo: Alabama Act 2019-526](#)).

Food Safety Requirements

To ensure food safety, School Food Authorities (SFAs) must:

- Develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) as part of their HACCP plan (Click [HERE](#) for sample SOP).
- Ensure Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods are not re-served as part of reimbursable meals.
- Use coolers or refrigerators to store TCS foods temporarily, discarding or donating them by the end of the day.
- Implement a “time as a public health control” procedure to discard TCS foods within four hours of original service.

Note: Unopened, packaged non-TCS foods may be returned to the kitchen but must be stored separately from unserved inventory.

Supervision

- Share tables must be supervised at all times.
- Supervisors ensure only safe, unopened, and intact items are placed on the table.
- If cooling bins are used, supervisors must monitor time and temperature.

Local health departments may impose additional requirements. SFAs should consult the local health department before implementing share tables or programs for donating food.

Record Keeping Requirements

Records should clearly state whether “Share Table” items were donated or discarded, along with the corresponding daily production records.

Important Reminder

SFAs must continue to plan and prepare meals with the intent of serving one complete meal per child. While occasional leftovers are acceptable, proactive steps should be taken to minimize food waste.



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What Can and Cannot Be Shared

Items that can be shared and re-served	Items that can be shared but must be discarded at the end of service	Items that cannot be shared
• Pre-packaged items (e.g., crackers, cereal, granola bars, chips, canned fruit cups) • Whole fruits with inedible or wrapped edible peels (e.g., bananas, oranges, wrapped apples) • Shelf-stable beverages (e.g., aseptic juice/milk boxes, bottled water)	• TCS foods (e.g., string cheese, sliced apples, baby carrots, yogurt, deli meat) • TCS beverages (e.g., milk cartons, refrigerated juices)	• Opened items (e.g., opened milk, bananas, carrots) • Resealable or unsealed containers (e.g., zip-top bags, soufflé cups, clamshell salads) • Unpackaged TCS foods (e.g., pizza slices, hot vegetables) without proper temperature/time control