Sharing and No Thank You Table Toolkit

For Schools Participating in the School Nutrition Programs

# Definitions

* A **sharing table** is a designated table for food and beverage items that students do not intend to consume. Students may pick up items from the sharing table during the meal period. Items must be pre-packaged and unopened. Throughout meal service, the designated food handler(s) or trained supervising adult(s) must monitor the sharing table, inspect items for wholesomeness, and document items that are leftover. The table should not be located immediately after the point of service.
* A **no thank you table** is a designated table placed after the point of service for food and beverage items that students do not intend to consume. Students may not pick up items from this table during the meal period. At the end of meal service, the designated food handler(s) or trained supervising adult(s) must inspect the items for wholesomeness and document items that are leftover.

# Background

During the last few years, sharing tables and no thank you tables have emerged as innovative strategies to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods and to reduce food waste in Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs). In 2016, [USDA memorandum SP 41-2016](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/sp-41-2016.pdf) was released to address how sharing tables may be utilized in CNP. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s (DPI) School Nutrition Team (SNT) released a follow-up [memorandum](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/snt-mail-101116.pdf) to outline ways CNP operators can reduce food waste, including through the use of sharing or no thank you tables. Currently, both sharing tables and no thank you tables are permitted in Wisconsin and do not require approval from the DPI SNT. However, there are considerations for School Food Authorities (SFAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to address and regulations that must be followed to safely and responsibly implement each type of table.

# Purpose

These tables are intended to be one of many strategies SFAs could utilize to reduce food waste in CNPs. The primary strategies are source reduction, reducing the volume of surplus food generated, and successful menu planning. CNP operators are encouraged to promote meal consumption and to decrease food waste through multiple strategies, such as:

* encouraging students to consume the meals,
* careful menu planning,
* utilizing Offer versus Serve (OVS),
* marketing,
* implementing [Smarter Lunchroom](https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/) techniques,
* examining plate waste,
* taste testing and obtaining student input,
* allowing sufficient time for students to consume meals or snacks,
* scheduling recess before lunch, and
* exercising active managerial control.

# Administrative Considerations

The following are considerations for discussion among school staff and district administration prior to implementation of either of these tables:

* SFA should be making a conscientious effort to be a good steward of federal and state funding and USDA Foods received for the CNPs.
* OVS should be effectively implemented. This includes training and supervising food handlers, informing students they may turn down up to two components at lunch and one food item at breakfast, and providing age-appropriate signage.
* The legal entity (e.g., school board, administrator) should state, in writing, that sharing tables or no thank you tables are allowed at specified schools, and they accept liability in the event of foodborne illness or injury.
* Parents and guardians should be informed in writing of the SFA’s sharing or no thank you table policies so they can discuss with their children. Of particular importance is communicating the potential risk for cross-contact of allergens on the table.
* Sharing tables and no thank you tables should have appropriate signage so they are not mistaken as part of the regular meal service.
* Food on sharing or no thank you tables is not for adults (e.g., food service staff, aides, teachers).
* The food safety plan for the specific schools where sharing or no thank you tables are allowed must include a corresponding standard operating procedure (SOP). Please work with the sanitarian and/or local regulatory authority before, during, and after the development of the SOP. Any changes required by the sanitarian must be made.

# Allowable Food and Beverage Items

* Items on sharing or no thank you tables are limited to school meal or snack components. Food items brought from home cannot be put on the sharing or no thank you tables.
* Only unopened, pre-packaged items and whole fruits or vegetables are allowed.
* Whole fruits and vegetables with edible peels must be washed and wrapped for meal service.
* Food items packaged on-site, that are not commercially packaged, may not be placed on sharing or no thank you tables.
* If refrigerated foods, such as time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods and foods refrigerated for quality (e.g., juice, packaged baby carrots, packaged apple slices) will be allowed, then these items should be collected into temperature control during meal service. For example, milk should be collected into a cooling bin equipped to maintain a temperature of 41° F or below.

# Wholesome\* Items Left on the Tables

Wholesome items left on the tables may be:

* given away to students during the same meal period (sharing tables only),
* given away to students later during the school day or during a subsequent school day
* returned to the kitchen and re-served in CNP during another meal service (non-TCS items only),
* given to the school nurse for students with medications or complaints of hunger,
* donated to a non-profit organization, such as a community food bank, homeless shelter, or other non-profit charitable organization, or
* composted.

\*“Wholesome” must be defined by each school as part of the site-specific SOP and food safety plan.

# Restrictions

* Sharing or no thank you tables are appropriate for children in first grade and up. Preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten students are considered a highly susceptible population at greater risk for foodborne illness.
* Only non-time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food items may be re-served in CNP. TCS foods cannot be re-served in CNP. TCS foods include milk, cheese, and yogurt, among many other food items. Please reference the [Wisconsin Food Code](http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/atcp/055/75_.pdf) for a detailed definition of TCS foods.
* Food safety decisions surrounding sharing and no thank you tables are at the discretion of the sanitarian and/or local regulatory authority. Implementation may vary across the state.

# Food Safety Plan

The food safety plan for the specific schools where sharing or no thank you tables are allowed must include a corresponding SOP. Please work with the sanitarian and/or local regulatory authority before, during, and after the development of the SOP. Any changes required by the sanitarian must be made. The SOP must include:

* a description of the designated table, counter, cart, or space where students will place unconsumed breakfast, lunch, or afterschool snack components they do not intend to eat or drink,
* a description of where the table will be located,
* a listing of school meal or afterschool snack items allowed on the sharing table or no thank you table,
* instructions for the designated food handler or trained supervising adult charged with supervision of the sharing table,
* a definition of wholesomeness to be used by the designated food handler or trained supervising adult when inspecting items,
* monitoring procedures, including logging of recovered food items,
* handling procedures for items recovered from the table, and
* instructions for the food handler or trained supervising adult responsible for disposal of any items remaining on the table at the conclusion of meal service.

NOTE: The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is not obligated, liable, or responsible for any action or inaction taken by the SFA.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q1**: **Do I need special approval to start a table?**

**A1**: DPI SNT approval is not needed to start a sharing or no thank you table. However, the legal entity should pre-approve the implementation of such tables and state in writing that it accepts liability in the event of foodborne illness or injury. Additionally, the SFA should collaborate with the local regulatory authority (e.g., health department, local sanitarian) before, during, and after implementation of the table. The local regulatory authority should approve the school’s SOP prior to implementation to ensure compliance with all local and state health and food safety codes.

**Q2: We have breakfast in the classroom. Some teachers have bins in their classrooms that they use to collect unopened, pre-packaged, shelf-stable breakfast items students do not want to give out later for snack. Is this allowed?**

A2: Maybe. This practice would be considered a sharing or no thank you table. For this reason, this practice would need to approved by the legal entity and be operated in accordance with an SOP that is approved by the local regulatory authority. The teachers would also need training on the SOP to ensure compliance with the specified food safety practices.

**Q3: If we take the temperature of unopened cartons of milk left on the sharing table at the end of service and they are at or below 41°F, can we return them to the cooler and serve them the next day for breakfast or lunch?**

A3: No. Milk is considered a TCS food and thus cannot be re-served in the CNP, regardless of its temperature at the end of meal service. However, during the meal period, students could take these milks from the sharing table to enjoy with their meals.

**Q4: We want to donate the items left on the table at the end of meal service to a local food bank. Can we do this?**

A4: Yes, this is an option. CNP operators may donate food to eligible local food banks or charitable organizations if certain requirements are met. For more information, please review the DPI SNT [Guidance for Donating Food resource](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/guidance-for-donating-food.docx).

**Q5: We want to give away the items left on the table to some of our lower income students that have a long bus ride home after school as a snack. Is this allowable?**

A5: No. Using these items only for a specific group of lower income students on a long bus ride after school is not allowable. Wholesome items left on the table should be made available to all students, regardless of income. Instead, students could choose to pick up foods from the sharing table during meal service and save them to eat after school, if the SFA permits students to take food out of the cafeteria. Sharing and no thank you tables are intended to encourage consumption of nutritious foods and reduce food waste, rather than generate excess food to support an afterschool snack for some students. If the SFA wishes to provide its students with food after school hours, the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) may be an option. In the ASP, students can receive nutritious, reimbursable snacks while participating in afterschool enrichment activities. For more information about the ASP, please visit the [ASP webpage](https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/programs/afterschool-snack).

**Q6: There are a few teachers in our school that want to take food from the sharing table back to their classrooms as extra snacks for their students. Is this allowed?**

A6: No. It would not be fair or equitable to allow a few specific teachers to have the opportunity to take leftover food from the table back to their classroom. This would result in only students in those teachers’ classrooms having access to the extra food items. Instead, students could choose to pick up foods from the sharing table during meal service and save it for themselves to eat later, if the SFA permits students to take food out of the cafeteria. Please note that it is not recommended to allow students to take any TCS food items (such as milk or cheese) out of the cafeteria.

**Q7: We have a sharing table in our cafeteria. Can we restrict sharing table access to only the students that took a reimbursable school meal that day?**

A7: No. All students should have the opportunity to take items from the sharing table if they would like, regardless of whether or not they took a reimbursable meal. Students that bring their meal from home cannot place items from their meal on the sharing table, but they should be allowed to take items other students left on the sharing table.

# Sharing or No Thank You Tables Standard Operating Procedure

**Purpose:** To ensure sharing or no thank you tables are safely implemented and monitored to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

**Procedures:**

Table Logistics

* Food safety decisions surrounding sharing and no thank you tables are at the discretion of the local regulatory authority. Implementation may vary across the state.
* This site will be operating (**check one):**

Sharing table

No thank you table

* The grades that will have access to the table are **(specify**):
  + NOTE: Sharing or no thank you tables are appropriate for students in first grade and up. Preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten students are considered a highly susceptible population at greater risk for foodborne illness and should not be allowed to utilize sharing or no thank you tables.
  + NOTE: Food on sharing or no thank you tables is not for adults and should not be taken by adults on behalf of students (e.g., food service staff, aides, teachers, custodians).
* The table will be operated during the following meal periods **(check all that apply):**

School Breakfast Program

National School Lunch Program

Afterschool Snack Program

Other **(specify)**:

* The table will be located **(specify**):
  + NOTE: Tables should not be located immediately after the point of service.
  + NOTE: Tables should be located away from sites of potential cross-contamination. Sites of potential cross-contamination may include near garbage cans, tray return window, custodial closets, or mop buckets.
* There must be a table supervisor (i.e., designated food handler or trained supervising adult) monitoring the table during the entire meal service. For a no thank you table, the table supervisor must ensure students do not take any items off the table to consume and must inspect the items for wholesomeness at the end of meal service. For a sharing table, the table supervisor must ensure students are using the table appropriately and must inspect all items for wholesomeness throughout meal service. The person(s) that will be the designated table supervisor(s) will be **(specify):**
  + NOTE: The table supervisor should be an adult that has been trained on this SOP and table requirements.

Allowable Food and Beverage Items

* As a best practice, TCS foods and foods refrigerated for quality (e.g., juice, packaged baby carrots, packaged apple slices) should be collected into temperature control during meal service. For example, milk and juice will be collected into a cooling bin equipped to maintain a temperature of 41° F or below.
* Portioned food items that are not commercially packaged may not be placed on sharing or no thank you tables. For example, if food handlers portion out canned fruit from a #10 can into individual covered containers, these items could not be placed on the tables because they are not commercially packaged.
* Items on the sharing or no thank you table are limited to school meal or snack components. Food items brought from home are excluded.
* The following items will be allowed for students to place on the sharing or no thank you table (**check all that apply**):

Unopened pre-packaged items, including:

Milk (TCS)

Cheese sticks (TCS)

Yogurt (TCS)

Juice

Crackers or other packaged snack type products

Commercially packaged fruits and vegetables (e.g., apple slices, baby carrots)

Whole fruits or vegetables with an inedible peel (e.g., bananas, oranges)

Washed and wrapped whole fruit or vegetables with an edible peel (e.g., apples, pears)

Other **(specify)**:

Wholesome Items Left on the Table

* “Wholesome” must be defined by the school as part of this SOP. The definition of “wholesome” will be **(describe):**
* Wholesome items left on the table will be **(check all that apply)**:

Returned to the kitchen and re-served in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP)

* + - NOTE: Only non-TCS foods may be re-served in CNP. TCS foods include milk, cheese, and yogurt (among many other food items)—these items may not be re-served in CNP.

Given away to students during the same meal period (sharing tables only)

Given away to students later during the school day or during a subsequent school day

Given to the school nurse for students with medications or complaints of hunger

Donated to eligible local food bank or charitable organization, in accordance with a separate SOP for donating foods

Composted

* If applicable, there must be detailed procedures established for saving, storing, and re-serving items left on the table at the end of the meal period. These procedures will be **(describe):**

Staff Responsibilities

* Person in charge will:
  + Provide training to person(s) responsible for monitoring the table including how to identify acceptable food and beverage items, how to control contamination of the table, and how to protect students with allergies.
  + Develop and post signage that communicates table procedures and acceptable food and beverage items.
* Food handlers will:
  + Prepare food amounts as directed on production records, recipes, and SOPs.
  + Follow all personal hygiene SOPs throughout food preparation and service.
  + Encourage students to select a variety of foods in compliance with program regulations, including Offer versus Serve (OVS).
* Teachers and other school employees with cafeteria supervision duties will:
  + Encourage students to take only foods they intend to eat, with the understanding of what constitutes a reimbursable meal.
  + Inform students of the table in a manner that does not pressure the students to donate items from their meal.
  + Ensure students do not bully or pressure other students to donate items from their meal.
* School administrators will:
  + Follow best practices in scheduling meal periods to allow adequate time for students to consume their meals.
  + Communicate with the local educational agency (LEA) or other legal entity, such as the school board, to ensure sharing or no thank you table policies comply with school/district policies.
  + Communicate with parents and other stakeholders about the sharing or no thank you tables.

**Monitoring and Recordkeeping:**

* Sharing tables must be monitored by a designated table supervisor throughout the entire meal service to ensure students use it appropriately and that items placed on the table are wholesome.
* No thank you tables must be monitored by a designated table supervisor at the end of meal service to ensure collected items are wholesome.
* Food items on the table at the end of meal service will be recorded on a food recovery log by a designated individual. The log will be maintained to inform menu planning and purchasing, as well as to identify commonly wasted foods.
* Maintain documentation supporting that food handlers and other relevant staff members (such as cafeteria aides) have been trained on the contents of this SOP.
* Monitor table contributions, tray waste, and production records to assess waste, identify less popular menu items, and adapt menus accordingly.

**Corrective Action:**

* Provide guidance to students or adults observed misusing the sharing or no thank you table.
* Retrain the designated table supervisors if monitoring efforts appear inadequate.
* Discard any opened, damaged, disallowed, or otherwise questionable food items placed on the table.
* Adhere to all guidance and corrective action steps requested by the local regulatory authority pertaining to the sharing or no thank you tables.
* Additional/Alternative Corrective Action **(describe):**

# References

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “Guide to Develop Sharing Table SOP.” Food Safety: HACCP School Foodservice. Accessed October 17, 2019. https://iastate.box.com/s/ald4tb842xui8pv72155r5oef5yq00vc.

United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. “Memorandum SP 41-2016, CACFP 13-2016, SFSP 15-2016: The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs.” FNS Documents and Resources. June 22, 2016. Accessed October 17, 2019. https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP41\_CACFP13\_SFSP15\_2016os.pdf.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction School Nutrition Team. “Reducing Food Waste in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.” Wisconsin School Food Safety. October, 2016. Accessed October 17, 2019. https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/snt-mail-101116.pdf.

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. “Wisconsin Food Code.” Wisconsin State Legislature. August 2016. Accessed October 17, 2019. http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\_code/atcp/055/75.

*Please contact one of the* [*DPI SNT Food Safety Specialists*](mailto:https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/directory) *with any additional questions regarding sharing or no thank you tables.*

# Sharing/No Thank You Table Food Recovery Log

**Instructions:** Use this log to track food and beverages left on the sharing or no thank you table at the end of meal service daily. Record the school name and dates of the week covered by the log. List all items that are allowed to be placed on the table. At the end of meal service daily, count the number of each item remaining on the table. The designated food handler(s) or trained supervising adult(s) must check all leftover items for wholesomeness, complete the log, and initial. Any items that are unallowable, opened, or damaged must be discarded. Record what is done with the leftovers each day (e.g., discarded, saved for re-service, donated, etc.).

**School:**

**Week:**

| **Food/ Beverage Item** | **Monday leftovers** | **Initials** | **Tuesday leftovers** | **Initials** | **Wednesday leftovers** | **Initials** | **Thursday leftovers** | **Initials** | **Friday leftovers** | **Initials** | **Total Leftovers** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ex. crackers | 3 save  2 discard | AZ | 5 save  7 discard | AZ | 7 save  2 discard | AZ | 5 discard | AZ | 0 | AZ | 31 | Discarded open items, gave saved crackers to school nurse |
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