



## Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

### Redistribution of Returned Food/Share Tables

**Purpose:** To provide guidance on food items approved for redistribution in the cafeteria setting while maintaining food safety protocols to prevent the risk of a foodborne illness

**Scope:** Procedure applies to child nutrition programs that allow approved foods to be returned to a “share table” and utilized for redistribution

**Key Words:** Returned foods, redistribution, share table, cross-contamination, cross-contact, food safety, time and temperature

**Instructions:**

Colorado Retail Food Establishment Rules and Regulations (6 CCR 1010-2) states:

3-418 Re-service

“Once served to a consumer, portions of leftover food shall not be served again except that packaged food, other than potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for safety food), that is still in an unopened package and is still in sound condition, may be \*re-served.”

\***Re-service (redistribution)** refers to the transfer of food that is unused and returned by a consumer after being served or sold in the possession of the consumer, to another person.

USDA Regulation 7 CFR 210.9 (14) and 220.7(8)

Each school food authority (SFA) participating in the NSLP and SBP agrees to “Maintain, in the storage, preparation and service of food, proper sanitation and health standards in conformance with all applicable State and local laws and regulations and must comply with FNS food safety requirements of 7 CFR 210.13, 226.20(1) and 225.16(a).”

**Allowable Food and Beverage Redistribution Practices:**

- Items may be returned to appropriate storage and served to students on the share table at another meal or given to school personnel to serve to students at school
- Foods can be donated to a charitable institution or facility
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be served and claimed for reimbursement during another meal service

**Food and Beverages Allowed for Redistribution:**

Foods that are packaged and do not need refrigeration can be redistributed as long as the packaging is intact. Whole pieces of fruit that can be washed or that have peels can be redistributed as well. If in doubt, the packaging on a potentially hazardous product will almost always indicate if the items need to remain refrigerated at “all times” or “after opening” and thus, not allowed to be redistributed.

Containers, baskets, trays, etc. can be used to capture products that are eligible for redistribution. A separate container should be used to separate the items; such as, ‘Whole fruit’ from ‘packaged items’.

**Food and Beverages Not Allowed for Redistribution:**

Any unpackaged foods, open items, unpackaged items, packaged items that have been opened and resealed, bakery goods, and potentially hazardous foods, when a temperature control mechanism is not in place, cannot be redistributed for human consumption. Thus the product becomes waste.

**Milk**

FNS Instruction 786-6

“To avoid food waste, served milk that is unopened and retrieved for redistribution . . . is permitted if such practice is not contrary to applicable State and local health codes.”

“Application of this policy is to be limited . . . appropriate measures should be taken to assure that increased consumption is encouraged through proper and appealing service, nutrition education, offer vs. serve and other means.”

Milk must be guaranteed to be redistributed only once and not out of temperature control for more than four hours before it is consumed or discarded. A written policy must be approved by the state and local health department with jurisdiction.

Redistribution of unopened cartons of milk is permitted if the following criteria are met. Ensure compliance with your local health department before any procedures are implemented.

1. Milk must be placed in a separate iced/temperature controlled container as the student passes the point of sale
2. Unopened milk can be
  - a. Served to another student as a second milk with their meal through use of a share table
  - b. Stored properly and used for cooking purposes



3. Returned to appropriate storage and donated to a recognized charitable organization
3. Milk must be kept at 41°F or colder and temperature logs must be maintained on unopened containers of milk, temperature logs should be taken every 2 hours or at the end of meal service, if service is less than 2 hours
4. Returned unopened containers of milk shall not be intermixed with fresh milk in storage
5. Expiration date of returned milk shall be monitored and product discarded when expiration date is reached
6. Daily records for use of purchased and recycled milk must be maintained

### Share Tables

A 'share table' is a common practice for food service operations to effectively manage food waste. Share tables can be useful when allowing students who wish to have more food items with their lunch, such as a whole piece of fruit, unopened crackers or non-potentially hazardous prepackage products.

Share tables must follow safe food handling procedures and follow health regulations Food or beverage items on the share table can be utilized in a number of ways, depending on the program's preference and local level discretion.

If implementing share table practices, develop a plan outlining how the SFA will maintain the safety of food served to students.

Required	Best Practice
Comply with all FNS food safety requirements outlined in 7 CFR 210.13, 226.20(1) and 225.16(a)	Notification to parents informing them of the ability of the 'share table'
Comply with all local and State health and food safety codes, including storage of refused items	School board approval-accepting the liability of any food borne illness due to the sharing of food and ensuring that the 'share table' does not conflict with policies and procedures pertaining to food allergies
Ensure policies for saving and sharing food or beverage items are consistent with the local educational agency's HACCP plan	Ask for input from parents and guardians ensuring families are comfortable with their children participating in the share table option.
Receive and maintain approval documentation from the local health department	Keep share table items separated to prevent cross-contamination
Students are prohibited from donating items brought from home	Keep share table items separated to prevent cross-contact and communicate allergy information, if needed



<p>Incorporate standard operating procedures into the school’s food safety plan based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) which defines temperature/food monitoring, supervision, and discard plan to ensure food is safe if shared amongst students</p>	<p>Signage must be posted informing the students of the intent of the share table</p>
<p>Participating schools, institutions and sponsors must maintain records of their daily use of purchased <i>milk and/or other food items</i> which are recycled.</p>	<p>Do not intermix reused items with items that have not yet been prepared and served</p>
<p>Share table items should be monitored to ensure they are discarded at the end of their safe food expiration</p>	

**Monitoring:**

A supervisor or other designated employee must visually observe to ensure that food from the share table or any returned food approved for redistribution is being handled and redistributed correctly.

**Corrective Action:**

Retrain any food service employee not in compliance with the procedures for redistribution of returned foods /share tables. Do not redistribute any food items that have been handled improperly. Ensure all food set aside for redistribution meets proper food safety guidelines and has been approved by your local health department.

**Verification and Record Keeping:**

School nutrition program personnel in conjunction with your local health department will identify what foods can be safely shared or set aside for redistribution. The supervisor or other designated employee will verify that proper procedures for handling returned food are being followed and potentially hazardous cold food that require time and temperature control for safety are held at 41°F or colder.

Participating schools, institutions and sponsors must maintain records of their daily use of recycled items, temperature logs, food safety documentation, and approval from the designated governing body, such as school board and local health department.