



What is a Share Table?

Share Tables are tables in student common eating areas where students can take their unwanted pre-packaged, non-perishable foods. These items will then be available for other students to take as additional portions. The California Department of Education created a guidance document regarding "Sharing Tables".

Dept. of Education Document (2008) - cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/mbcnp032018.asp



What foods are permissible on a Share Table?

All pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous food products (pre-packaged cookies or crackers) where the packaging is not intended to be consumed and fruits (whole bananas or oranges) that do NOT require washing or wiping down, are permissible on a Share Table. "Pre-packaged" food items where the "packaging" is natural and is intended to be consumed (whole apples, pears, etc.) that have been handled by students and placed on a Share Table, must be re-washed before being offered for consumption. These items should be carefully inspected to ensure that they are not cut, punctured, or that the skin is not otherwise compromised before it is placed on the Share Table or reserved for students.

Unopened individual containers of commercially processed dairy products (yogurt, string cheese, milk, etc.) that have been kept under temperature control CAN be donated. If they are put on ice right away, they can go on the Share Table for other students who might want them. An example of temperature control may include a large container of ice where the unopened milk cartons can be placed for other students to take. When not held under temperature control, they may be maintained under "Time as a Public Health Control". Participating schools must have and maintain written procedures that are strictly followed per Cal Code Section 114000.



Supervision of Share Tables

Share Tables must be supervised by a responsible person who is educated on food safety principles. The responsible person overseeing the Share Tables at middle and high schools may be students who volunteer for the task. This person will be responsible for ensuring that only allowable foods are placed on the share tables. Also, they will be responsible for ensuring that fruits with edible flesh, such as apples and pears, are placed into separate bins from the other pre-packaged foods and fruits so that they will be sent back to the kitchen for washing before re-serving to the students.

Monitoring and Food Safety at Share Tables

Due to the short time limitations of the lunch period, food safety concerns are reduced. Schools can elect to address food safety concerns by either maintaining temperature control throughout the “life” of the food product or choosing to use the time-temperature relationship using short time durations under ambient temperatures instead of stricter temperature controls. Both options are discussed below and can be used to fit a school’s needs.

Strict Temperature Control

Unopened containers of dairy products must be maintained under proper refrigeration at or below 45°F. As long as the food products are immediately returned to strict temperature control after service (such as ice baths on the share table), the unopened dairy products may be offered on the share tables for those who want them. Bins with ice may be provided for the Share Table to maintain the dairy products at 45°F or below.



Time as a Public Health Control

Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC) relies on precise timing to maintain food safety, rather than relying on temperature control. Color-coded coolers or food bins may be used as a tool to maintain and track the time that dairy products have been in ambient temperature. Care must be taken to incorporate the length of time of the lunch service when the dairy products may have been out at ambient temperature when first served to a student. The schools will be responsible for providing procedures and time marking to reflect the proper implementation of TPHC as required under Cal Code Section 114000.