



SCHOOLS

FOOD DONATION & SHARE TABLES



Given the fluctuation in the number of students served and student preferences and appetites, it can be challenging to purchase for, plan, and produce just the right amount of food for a school on any given day. This variability can result in a lot of wasted edible food. Fortunately, there are several easy strategies to prevent excess food, recover unwanted unopened food, and recycle food scraps.

As with any other food facility, school kitchens should start with preventing food loss first.

- 1. WEIGH AND TRACK YOUR SURPLUS FOOD** by conducting a student waste audit, set a surplus food reduction goal, and plan accordingly! Visit the EPA Food Recovery Challenge page to sign up for a free tracking tool. Here are a few tips for preventing food loss
 - a. Compare purchasing inventory with student preferences
 - b. Examine production and handling techniques to prevent and reduce preparation waste
 - c. Ensure proper storage techniques
- 2. FEED STUDENTS AND DONATE SURPLUS FOOD** if there is still excess wholesome food after implementing prevention strategies.

SHARE TABLES

Schools are unique in that there is the opportunity to set-up share tables. *A share table is a table in the student common eating area where students can leave their unwanted, unbitten, unopened food and beverage items for other students to take if they would like more food than what was provided.* Share tables can help reduce wasted food and provide students with additional food options.

See this great resource created by Stop Waste on Best Practices for Share Tables.



School Share Tables



WHAT IS A SHARE TABLE?

A share table is a table in the student dining area where students can leave their unwanted, unopened food and beverage items for other students to take if they would like more food

A share table encourages sharing of unwanted food items and helps prevent wholesome food from being thrown away



SETUP IS EASY

- o Baskets, tubs, and boxes can be used to keep foods organized
- o A tub with ice can be used for cold items like milk and bags of cut produce like apple slices or baby carrots
- o Clearly label the food share table with a sign showing examples of acceptable food
- o A Food Share Sign can be downloaded from the website below



HOW SHARE TABLES WORK

- o Students place unwanted, sealed, uneaten items into the collection container
- o If a student is still hungry after finishing his or her meal, they may pick up food items from the share table
- o Staff should monitor the area to ensure that unacceptable items are not left on the table



AFTER MEAL SERVICE

- o Bring all remaining items from the share table into the kitchen to be sorted and stored
- o Remaining items can be donated to needy individuals or to food non-profits such as the local food bank or food pantry
- o **Placer County supports the use of share tables at schools**