

**SHARING TABLES** are an effort to reduce the amount of wasted food and encourage the consumption of food served at schools. Children can place unconsumed food and beverage items they choose not to eat or drink on the table. This provides other children the opportunity to take additional helpings of food or beverages at no extra cost. Use these guidelines to help your school start a sharing table program. The Vermont Department of Health can help you plan your program.

## Sharing Table Checklist

- The table should be close to the cashier or wherever students exit the food service line.
- The sharing table must be monitored by any employee other than the cashier.
- Food or beverages that must be under temperature control (e.g., milk, cut fruit) must be placed in a small refrigerator, cooler or ice bath.
- Recovered food and beverages should be clearly labeled and not mixed with unsold foods.

## Food Safety Checklist

- Students should place their unwanted food onto the sharing table before sitting down to eat. This will prevent any potential contamination.
- The monitor should identify any food, beverage, or condiment to make sure it has not been contaminated (e.g., opened, partially eaten, etc.) and the original packaging is in sound condition.
- Unused food should be donated rather than thrown away. USDA regulations allow donations, such as packaged foods, whole fruits and vegetables, and milk nearing expiration, to 501c3 non-profit organizations.
- Students may not be allowed to put items brought from home on the sharing table.

## Questions?

### Starting a Food Sharing Table Program and Food Safety

Contact the Vermont Department of Health, Food and Lodging Program at 802-863-7221 or visit [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov)

### Vermont's Universal Recycling and Composting Initiative

Contact the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Solid Waste Management Program at 802-828-1138 or visit [www.recycle.vt.gov](http://www.recycle.vt.gov)

### School Meals Program

Contact the Vermont Agency of Education, Child Nutrition Programs at 802-828-1626 or [education.vermont.gov/nutrition](http://education.vermont.gov/nutrition)



- Develop Standard Operating Procedures in the school's Food Safety HACCP Plan.

## Allowable Products

- Non-temperature-controlled, pre-packaged products like food bars, drinks, crackers and cereal packs
- Wrapped fruit and vegetables or fruit with a thick skin, like bananas and oranges
- Temperature-controlled, pre-packaged products like cheese and milk as long as they are placed in a cooler, refrigerator, or ice bath

## Best Practices

- Use Sharing Tables in combination with Offer Versus Serve and careful portion control to combat excess waste on trays.
- For more information about Offer Versus Serve, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/guidance-and-resources](http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/guidance-and-resources) or call the Vermont Agency of Education, Child Nutrition Programs at 802-828-1626.
- Other ways to minimize wasted food include:
  - Marketing the sharing table program
  - Increasing food choices
  - Changing food presentation
  - Allowing appropriate time for meals
  - Implementing recess before lunch

