

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### Which fruit items are accepted in the green bin?

Fruit that is whole (not sliced) with either edible (e.g. apples) or non-edible peels (e.g. oranges, bananas) is accepted in the green bin. Fruit with edible peels must be washed before they can be consumed by another student. Unopened packaged sliced fruit should be put in the blue cold bin.

### Can cold foods be put back in the refrigerator if there are leftovers after all meal periods?

Food safety guidelines allow cold food to be outside temperature control for up to four hours. Any food that exceeds four hours must be discarded.

### Which laws allow for schools to share food?

Visit [smchealth.org/sharetable](https://smchealth.org/sharetable) to find links to applicable legislation.

### Can I donate leftover food to another organization?

Please contact Emilie Dirck at [edirck@smcgov.org](mailto:edirck@smcgov.org) or call (650) 464-7079 to learn more about the Safe Surplus Food Donation Program.

## WHAT IS A SHARE TABLE?

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Share tables are set up in meal rooms or other communal eating areas to allow students to safely take or leave sealed, unopened, and uneaten cafeteria food or beverages.

## WHY HOST ONE?

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Approximately 40% of edible food in the United States ends up in landfills instead of on our plates. Uneaten food wastes money, water, fossil fuels, and other resources that contribute to climate change. Share tables provide a way for schools to be part of the solution.

- Reduce the amount of resources wasted that are required to produce food and beverages.
- Prevent food from going to landfills and emitting methane.
- Encourage conversations about conservation and environmental stewardship.
- Provide food for students that may want another serving.

SAN MATEO COUNTY'S

# School Share Table Guide

For more information and questions please contact:

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[smchealth.org/sharetable](https://smchealth.org/sharetable)





## SHARE TABLE STEPS

### SET UP

- Put the share table near a waste-sorting station in a spot that is accessible and visible.
- Place four color-coded bins on the table for hot food, cold food, shelf-stable food, and condiments and utensils.
- Add color-coded signs with images of acceptable items to help students sort and select their food items.

### DURING MEAL

- Yard monitors, custodial or school staff, and student champions help other students sort items based on food type and food safety rules.
- Students leave and take food from the share table bins during the meal period.
- Shelf-stable food not taken during a meal period may be left for the next meal period on that day.

### CLEAN UP

- Kitchen staff sort and put away items based on safe temperature and handling rules.
- Shelf-stable food and fruit with peels are safe to redistribute during after school programs, or in the front office, if school allows.
- The bins and table are cleaned and sanitized for the next meal period.

## FOOD SAFETY

School staff play a crucial role in making sure food stays safe by monitoring the bins periodically during the meal period, encouraging participation, helping students sort their shareable food items, putting the bins out daily, and making sure they stay clean. Staff are also important in ensuring students with allergies select appropriate food.

### SAFE SHARE TABLE FOOD

- School cafeteria food only.
- Hot, cold, and shelf-stable food that is sealed with original packaging only (e.g. milk).
- Fruit with peels (e.g. oranges).
- Sliced fruit in sealed packaging.

### UNSAFE SHARE TABLE FOOD

- Food from home is NOT allowed.
- Bitten, opened, or unsealed food.
- Loose items (e.g. spinach from a salad bar).
- Food left outside of safe temperature zones for 4 hours or longer.

Food Type	Examples of Acceptable Items	Safe Temperature Zone	Time Allowed Outside of Safe Temp. Zone	Best Practices for Food Beyond Time Allowed Outside of Safe Temp. Zone
Hot Food	Hamburgers, chicken patties, pizza, corn dogs	Keep at or above 135°F	4 hours	Compost food inside containers or discard in trash
Cold Food	Yogurt, milk, cheese, hummus, WOW butter sandwich	Keep at or below 41°F	4 hours	Compost food inside containers or discard in trash
Shelf-Stable Food	Packaged crackers, packaged gummies, oranges, bananas	Fruit with peels must be washed	-	After cleaning, safe to reuse for next meal period or after school programs
Utensils and Condiments	Ketchup, mustard, jam, utensils	-	-	Safe to reuse for next meal period