



miOttawa Department of
Public Health

Attn: School Service Director or Designated Representative

School Name
Street Address
City, MI XXXXX

Dear Food Service Director

The Ottawa County Department of Public Health encourages the use of share tables in school cafeterias to reduce waste and reduce food insecurity among students. A share table is a common space in a cafeteria where students can place items they choose not to eat. Students who are still hungry may take items from the table.

A share table can be easily implemented with minimal supervision. The information in this packet is intended to help ensure that food safety standards are met while addressing food waste and insecurities.

If you currently have a share table at your school, please feel free to discuss your procedures with your Environmental Health Specialist to ensure food safety standards are met. Additionally, please review the standards for needing a variance and submit the included variance if you meet the qualifications.

OCDPH recommends school representatives contact their Environmental Health Specialist with any food safety concerns. They are happy to assist directors in ensuring food safety while reducing waste and food insecurity. You are also welcome to contact me directly at (616) 393-5631 or via email at sballard@miottawa.org

Sincerely,

Spencer Ballard REHS

Spencer Ballard, REHS
Environmental Health Supervisor



Share Table Planning Checklist

1. Decide if you would like to have a share table
 - Yes
 - No
2. Decide which students may place items on the table
 - All students
 - Hot lunch students only
3. Determine what food items should be placed on the table
 - 1. Whole fruit with peels (bananas, oranges, etc.)
 - 2. Whole fruit with edible peels (pears, apples, etc.)
 - 3. Sealed, non-potentially hazardous items (chips, cookies, crackers, etc.)
 - 4. Sealed, potentially hazardous items (milk, cheese, yogurt)

Please note that items other than whole fruit and factory-sealed items are not allowed to be placed on the tables. This includes cooked food, open packages, and items portioned in Ziploc bags. Potentially hazardous food may not be placed on the table if it is brought from home
4. Develop a plan for where students will take food from if they are still hungry
 - The share table *this is recommended*
 - The office
 - Another location: _____
5. Decide if food will be kept beyond the breakfast or lunch period
 - Yes – continue to number 6
 - No – skip number 9
6. Determine how food will be kept and served past the breakfast or lunch period
 - Kept for a snack period
 - Kept until the end of the day
 - Other: _____
 - Kept for after school consumption
 - Donated to a local non-profit
7. If food will be kept past the meal period, determine which items will be kept past the meal period. Please select all that apply.
 - 1. Whole fruit with peels (bananas, oranges, etc.)
 - 2. Whole fruit with edible peels (pears, apples, etc.)
 - 3. Sealed, non-potentially hazardous items (chips, cookies, crackers, etc.)
 - 4. Sealed, potentially hazardous items (milk, cheese, yogurt)



8. If you have selected any of the underlined items in question 7, please fill out the Variance Form that is included in this packet.

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9. Decide how information will be disseminated to parents and students.
10. Decide who will be responsible for monitoring the table and how they will monitor it.
11. Set a start date for the share table.
12. Once the table is operational, advertise it consistently for several days or weeks to ensure all students know where the table is and begin using it. Be patient, as it may take many weeks for the students to regularly use the table.

Please do not hesitate to call the Environmental Health Specialist that is assigned to your facility. Their business card is included in this packet.



Guidance for Share Table Monitors

Food that may be shared:

Fruit with edible or non-edible peels



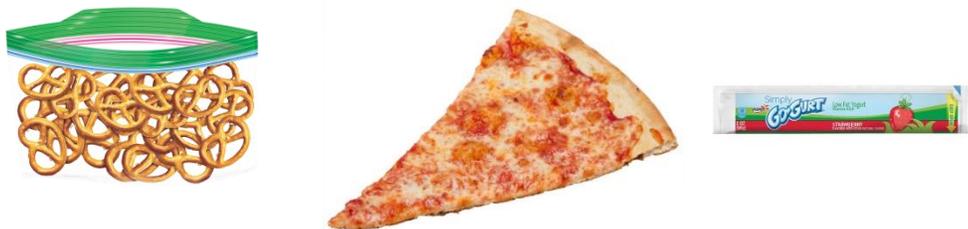
Factory-sealed Potentially Hazardous Food (food that requires refrigeration)



Factory-sealed dry storage food (food that does not require refrigeration)



Food that may not be shared



Food not sealed in factory-sealed bags

Cooked Food

Potentially hazardous food from home



First Steps

Speak with the Food Service Director or Principal about the share table policy that is in place at your school. Once you are familiar with the school requirements, ensure the following monitoring is taking place.

Monitoring requirements

1. Check the table periodically throughout the lunch period for any items that may not be served
2. Immediately discard any items that are not allowed on the share table
3. At the end of the lunch period, discard all food items or follow the approved variance procedure for keeping items.

For Further Questions

1. Your cafeteria employees are knowledgeable in food safety practices. If you have specific questions, they may be able to assist you.
2. Your principal or food service director can provide more details about your share table procedures.
3. The Environmental Health Specialist that is assigned to your school can also provide more guidance about food safety practices.



Do I Need a Variance for My Share Table?

Please review the following statements to determine if a variance should be on file for your share table.

1. Do you keep food from the share table after the meal time in which it was placed on the table?
 - a. Yes – continue to question 2
 - b. No – **no variance needed**
2. What food do you keep after the meal period?
 - a. Fruits with edible peels (apples, pears, etc.) – **variance needed**
 - b. Fruits with non-edible peels (bananas, oranges, etc.) – **no variance needed**
 - c. Non-potentially hazardous items in factory-sealed packages (chips, cookies, etc.) – **no variance needed**
 - d. Potentially hazardous items in factory-sealed packages (string cheese, milk, yogurt) – **variance needed**

If you selected any items that need a variance for re-service, use the following guidance to determine how to complete the “Reason for Request” question on the application.

- **Potentially Hazardous Items in factory-sealed packages** – discuss how items will be time and/or temperature controlled for safety. Your description must be specific to each school. Examples include:
 - Place a cooler that holds below 41°F by the share table for the food to maintain a temperature below 41°F
 - Discard items after 4 hours or less
- **Fruit with edible peels** – discuss how fruit will be protected from contamination or how contamination will be removed from the fruit after it is served to the children. Examples include:
 - Pre-wrap fruit in plastic wrap
 - Purchase fruit that is sealed in packages (for example, apple slices in pre-packaged portions)
 - Rinse fruit in cold water prior to re-serving

Please contact the Ottawa County Department of Public Health at 616-393-5645 if you have questions about completing the variance application.

