

Share Food Safely

Guidelines for Pierce County Schools

A **share table** or **box** is a great way to put uneaten food to good use and avoid waste. To get started, choose a location in your cafeteria or classroom where students can leave food they don't want for other students to grab.

Make sure food is safe to share.

Shelf-stable food

- Should have an unopened package.
- Must not be partially eaten.

Fresh, whole fruits and vegetables

- Always OK if it has an inedible peel.
 - Like oranges, bananas.
- Wash first if it has an edible peel.
 - Like apples.

Prepared foods

- Must prepare and package at school, not at home.
 - Like peanut butter and jelly sandwich, muffins.
- Don't allow food that must be kept hot or cold for safety.
 - Like salads, deli sandwiches, burritos.

Perishable food

- Must be commercially sealed.
 - Like milk, yogurt, or cheese sticks.
- You don't need to refrigerate food while on offer but it must be claimed within 4 hours. Discard after.
- If you refrigerate or keep food cold in an ice bath the entire time, you may offer it again.

Avoid food waste!

Encourage students to take uneaten food back home.

If your share area has leftover food that's still safe, consider giving it to:

- Before and after school activities.
- Students and their families, through a backpack program.
- Charitable organizations like food banks, shelters, or soup kitchens.

Questions?

Call Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 649-1417.



- Cartons of milk, packaged cheese, yogurt cups and tubes stored below 41°F.
- Pre-packaged dry goods like granola bars, muffins, dried fruits, and nuts.
- Pre-packaged fruit slices or applesauce.
- Whole fruits and vegetables with an inedible peel or a washed and intact peel or outer skin.
- Sealed bottles of water, cartons of juice, or other beverages.



- Food that's hot or previously heated.
- Refrigerated items you brought from home.
- Homemade food.
- Partially eaten food.

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Pierce County School Cafeterias

Tips for Setting Up a School Food Share Table

Familiarize yourself with the *Share Food Safely Guidelines for Pierce County Schools* on the previous page.

Create a plan for managing food for the share table or box. Make sure both custodial and kitchen staff know the plan.

- Think about common food items likely to be shared.
- Decide whether you will provide refrigeration or an “ice bath” for perishable foods.

Clearly label the food share table or box. You can create your own or use the signs included.

- Place share table or box where students can easily see it during meals. Like before the garbage, recycling, and compost at the waste sorting station.
- After meals, move share table or box to a highly visible spot where students can grab a snack in between classes, on their way out of school, at after school programs, etc.

Work with staff to create a plan to educate students on how to use the share table or box. Include what items can be shared during meal service.

- Possibly include older students or a green team/environmental club to help.

Assign a staff member and/or a team of students to help students use the share table or box during meal service.

- Remind students to take food if they are still hungry after meals.
- You may not need monitors after the first few weeks.

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