

Commissioner's Memo  
10/14/2019

## Minimizing Food Waste

### Memo Information

Memo Number **CNU-20-014**

Memo Date 10/14/2019

Memo Type Regulatory

Unit Child Nutrition

Regulatory Authority §USDA Policy Memo SP-41-2014, USDA Policy Memo SP-11-2012; PL 112-55; Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, Section 9, SP 41-2016, CACFP 13-2016, SFSP 15-2016, Act 602 of 2019.

Response Required NO

Attention Federal Programs; Superintendents; Principals; Technology Coordinators; Test Coordinators; General Business Managers; Teachers; Child Nutrition Directors/Managers

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### Memo Text

The Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Child Nutrition Unit (CNU) recommends the following best practices in minimizing food waste:

- food consumption outside of the foodservice area,
- share tables, and
- food donation.

Districts should develop policies on saving food for later consumption, share tables, and food donation if practiced in their schools.

### **Food consumption outside the food service area**

Meals offered in the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) are intended to be consumed at school in a designated foodservice area during the established meal service period. Due to a limited lunchtime period and increased amount of fruits and vegetables offered as part of the reimbursable meal, some students may want to save items for later consumption. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages this practice as a way to promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables and reduce food wasted. The USDA does not allow food to be given to students to be taken home.

For food safety reasons, this practice should be limited to food items which do not require cooling or heating, such as

- whole fresh fruit,
- packaged baby carrots/celery sticks, and
- packaged chips.

Contact your districts Environmental Health Specialist from the Arkansas Department of Health to ensure the district's proposed policy on saving food for later consumption meets all applicable food safety standards.

### **Share Tables**

USDA Memo SP 41-2016 on the Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs allows the use of share tables and the recycling of food and beverage items in Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs). Share tables allow Programs to reuse food or beverage items in a number of ways:

- Children may retrieve food or beverage items from the share table at no cost.
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be served and claimed for reimbursement during another meal service (i.e., during an afterschool program when leftover from a school lunch); and/or
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be donated to eligible non-profit organizations such as community food banks, homeless shelters or other non-profit charitable organizations (see SP 11-2012, CACFP 05-2012, SFSP 07-2012 [https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/FNS\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/FNS_Guidance.pdf)).

FNS recommends sharing foods and beverages including:

- unopened pre-packaged items (e.g. baby carrots, sliced apples stored in cooling container),
- whole pieces of fruit (e.g. apples or bananas), and
- unopened milk immediately stored in cooling bin at or below 41° F, ([CNU 20-013](#)).

FNS does not recommend sharing foods and beverages including:

- unpackaged items (e.g. salad bowl without a lid),
- packaged items that can be opened and resealed,
- open packages, and
- perishable foods when cooling bin is not available.

CNP operators should prioritize encouraging the consumption of the meal by:

- preparing food in an appealing manner,
- serving food in a convenient manner (providing an option of cut up whole fruit), and
- engaging children through taste tests, student advisory committees, and nutrition education.

Contact your districts Environmental Health Specialist from the Arkansas Department of Health to ensure the district's proposed policy on sharing food meets all applicable food safety standards.

For further information on food safety requirements when re-serving foods please visit <https://www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-protection/fda-food-code>.

## **Food Donation in Child Nutrition Programs**

Program food not consumed may be donated to any food bank or charitable organization which is exempt from tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)). Protections are provided against civil and criminal liability for persons or organizations when making food donations to the extent detailed under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, found in section 22 of the Child Nutrition Act.

Child Nutrition Program policy aims first to limit food waste and unnecessary costs. If a school has leftover food on a frequent basis, menu planning and production practices should be adjusted to reduce leftovers.

However, unforeseen circumstances occasionally result in leftover food. All alternatives permitted by program regulations and State and local health and sanitation codes should be exhausted before discarding food. Options may include:

- using leftovers in subsequent meal services,
- offering share tables, and
- transferring food to other sites.

Where it is not feasible to reuse leftovers, excess food may be donated to an eligible non-profit organization, such as a community food bank, homeless shelter, or other nonprofit charitable organizations.

Let's Glean – Gleaning

Toolkit <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/sites/default/files/misc/USDAGleaningToolkit.pdf>

## STEPS SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHOULD TAKE IF THEY WANT TO DONATE LEFTOVER FOOD TO NONPROFIT FOR GLEANING:

1. Child Nutrition Director should discuss donation of leftovers with Superintendent, obtaining approval before proceeding.
2. Identify a nonprofit “partner” that will accept the leftover food, such as food bank, homeless shelter, etc.
3. Obtain a copy of the organizations 501(c)(3) documentation.
4. Obtain “partners” contact information to call when donation available.
5. Keep records of what, how much and when donations are made. (Use attached Food Donation Documentation Form)
6. Keep records of who picks up the leftovers and have them sign, date and time of pick up. (Food Donation Documentation Form)
7. Child Nutrition Staff signs when they release leftovers to non-profit organization. (Food Donation Documentation Form)
8. Child Nutrition Director should monitor leftover donations, reporting food cost to administration and revising planned production and menus to minimize leftovers.

For further questions, please contact your Area Specialist at 501-324-9502.

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## Attachments

- [SP41-2016\\_CACFP13-2016\\_SFSP15-2016\\_160144.pdf](#)
- [CNU-20-014\\_Minimizing\\_Food\\_Waste\\_160219.pdf](#)