

## Reducing Food Waste in Child Nutrition Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) stresses the importance of careful menu planning and production practices in Child Nutrition Programs to reduce food waste and improve consumption of healthy foods. USDA strongly encourages schools to donate leftover foods to appropriate nonprofit institutions provided state or local laws or regulations do not prohibit this practice. Food donation has been a longstanding policy in all Child Nutrition Programs, as clarified in [recent guidance](#) from the Food and Nutrition Service.

### Tips for Reducing Food Waste:

- ✓ Collect excess wholesome food after mealtimes to donate to food pantries.
  - Joining the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Food Recovery Challenge to work with an expert to measure and reduce food waste.
  - [The School Food Share Program Toolkit](#) can help recover and redirect usable food from schools to local food banks.
- ✓ Set up a sharing table for kids to place items they are not going to consume (milk and packaged or pre-portioned items)
  - Contact the local health department to determine which items are allowed on share tables.
  - Prior approval from the local health department is required.
- ✓ Use Offer vs. Serve
- ✓ Let kids self-serve and self-portion
- ✓ Work to ensure kids have ample time to eat
- ✓ Use wholesome excess foods for classroom cooking projects
- ✓ Collaborate with local farmers on composting or food-scrap projects
- ✓ Use techniques listed on [Smarter Lunchrooms Self-Assessment Scorecard](#) to help reduce food waste
- ✓ Compost food waste for school gardens
- ✓ Wasted food audits
- ✓ Recess before lunch

## Resources:

- ✓ [Team Nutrition's Offer vs Serve Posters and Tip Sheets](#)
- ✓ [Washington School Food Share Program Toolkit](#)
- ✓ [School Food Donation Guidelines](#)
- ✓ [U.S. Food Waste Challenge](#)
- ✓ [Action for Healthy Kids – Recess Before Lunch](#)

## Reference:

- ✓ [SP 11-2012, CACFP 05-2015, SFSP 07-2012: Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- ✓ [SP 41-2016, CACFP 13-2016, SFSP 15-2016: The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- ✓ [SP 31-2019, CACFP 14-2019, SFSP 14-2019: Farm Bill Implementation Memo: Donated Traditional Foods and Civil Liability](#)

## Acronym Reference

-NSLP	National School Lunch Program
-SBP	School Breakfast Program
-USDA	United States Department of Agriculture