

# **Louisiana Fit Kids**

## **State Update**

**January 14, 2026**

**Ray Allen**

**Cathy Carmichael**



## Agenda



Website Updates

Professional Standards Tracking

Louisiana FIT Mitt + Events,  
Activities and Training Opportunities

Team Nutrition

Share Tables





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## Louisiana F.I.T. Mitt

### Hot news you can use!

**No. 1 January 6, 2026**

Fit Mitt is an e-newsletter produced by Louisiana Fit Kids designed to help Louisiana School Nutrition Professional stay **Focus**, **Informed** and **Trained** as we work together to provide nutritious and delicious meals for students. This e-newsletter is for all school nutrition staff including managers, technicians and administrators.

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**Focus**

Explore the **Food Trends Guide for SY 2025–2026: Flavor Forward!** The Institute of Child Nutrition and NextGen Network created this guide to highlight the latest industry recipe trends and innovative flavors inspiring school nutrition programs nationwide.

Dive in and bring bold new ideas to school menus:  
<https://nextgennetwork.servecdigitalize.com/Flavor-Forward>

Richland Parish Schools' salsa recipe is featured on page 9 — an excellent example of local innovation and creativity in school nutrition.

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**Informed**

Showcase your summer meal program and apply to win a 2025 Turnip the Beet Award from the USDA: <https://www.louisianafitkids.com/Home/TurnipTheBeet>

The Turnip the Beet Award, presented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), recognizes outstanding summer meal program sponsors across the nation who offer high-quality meals that are appetizing, appealing, and nutritious during the summer months.

**Trained**

Register for the **Louisiana Team Nutrition Leadership Institute!** This three-day training is designed for managers and other rising stars in School Nutrition.

**Dates and Locations:**

- February 24–26, 2026 – LSU, Baton Rouge, Register [here](#).
- March 3–5, 2026 – Louisiana Tech, Ruston, Register [here](#).

Instructional segments include:

- Knife skills and accurate measuring
- Preparing foods for just-in-time service
- Work simplification and scheduling
- Effective use of equipment
- Quality food preparation and safety
- Merchandising, marketing, and nutrition education best practices
- Condiments, garnishes, and nutrition education best practices

The program embodies a teach-it-forward philosophy, enabling attendees to share their new skills with other school nutrition professionals at the district or school level. The teach-it-forward model is based on four fundamental principles of learning: knowledge transfer, demonstration, practice, and feedback — also known as know, show, do, and coach.

Do you have a suggestion or topic you'd like to include in the Fit Mitt? Send an email to: [louisianafitkids@pbrc.edu](mailto:louisianafitkids@pbrc.edu).



**Louisiana Fit Kids**  
 Child Nutrition Programs for a Healthier Louisiana

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.  
<https://www.louisianafitkids.com>

## Louisiana Tray of the Week Campaign (2025–2026)

### What Is the Tray of the Week Campaign?

The Louisiana Tray of the Week Campaign is a year-long initiative celebrating high-quality school meals and the dedicated work of School Nutrition Professionals across the state.

The campaign promotes excellence and inclusivity for all programs—regardless of size, location, or social media presence. Schools and districts across Louisiana are invited to participate.

Each week, the Louisiana Fit Kids Team will highlight at least one school meal tray served within the past 1–4 weeks.

Selected schools receive a **Louisiana Tray of the Week Certificate**. At the end of the school year, top trays will be chosen by a panel of School Nutrition leaders for special recognition.



### Where to View the Winners?

Selected trays are featured on Louisiana Fit Kids' social media platforms:



Featured images may also appear on the Louisiana Fit Kids website in our **Weekly Winners Gallery**, as well as on official Louisiana Department of Education platforms.

### When Are Submissions Accepted?

The tray of the week campaign runs throughout the 2025–2026 school year:



*Photo Credit: East Feliciana Public Schools*

### Submission Criteria

Submit your tray by emailing [louisianafitkids@pbrc.edu](mailto:louisianafitkids@pbrc.edu). Meal photo submissions must meet the following criteria:

- ▶ Clearly show all required components to meet USDA National School Breakfast and Lunch Patterns (i.e., Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Meat/Meat Alternate, and Fluid milk, if applicable).
- ▶ Include a brief description of the menu items.
- ▶ State the name of the school where the meal was served.
- ▶ Include the date the meal was served.
- ▶ Ensure meals are attractively plated and clearly photographed.
- ▶ Accurately reflect what students selected or could select:
  - Use appropriate student portion sizes.



### Louisiana Tray of the Week - Lagniappe



**A note from Ms. Angela.....**

Today, I drove over to Platt Elementary to have lunch with my granddaughter, who's in 2nd grade. It was my first time visiting Platt. Because it was my granddaughter's birthday, I decided to have lunch with her. It was taco day at Platt. I just wanted to share with you that the food was delicious!

Platt Elementary  
Bossier Schools  
Child Nutrition  
Program

Hope you have a great school year!  
Thank you for all you do!

 ZCS Child Nutrition  
November 11 at 7:18 AM 

From tray to triumph! ZCS Child Nutrition Staff just served up a win as Louisiana Tray of the Week! Their daily dedication to delicious, district-proud meals keeps our students fueled and smiling. #ZCS #ZacharySchools #ZacharyForward #LouisianaLunchLeaders #TrayOfTheWeek #NutritionChampions



**Louisiana Tray of the Week**  
Week of October 20, 2025

Zachary Elementary  
Zachary Community  
School District



**LEAD LIKE A  
Z  
MUSTANG**



### Louisiana Tray of the Week (2025-2026) Winners Gallery

All graphics are available for download by right clicking on the image and saving it to your computer. Click on the picture thumbnail to preview an enlarged version.



**Louisiana Tray of the Week**  
East Feliciana Public Schools  
Child Nutrition Program  
Week 1 Winner  
East Feliciana High School - East Feliciana Public Schools



**Louisiana Tray of the Week**  
Pointe Coupee Parish Schools  
Child Nutrition Program  
Week 2 Winner  
Valverda Elementary School - Pointe Coupee Parish Schools



**Louisiana Tray of the Week**  
Bogalusa City Schools  
Child Nutrition Program  
Week 3 Winner  
Byrd Avenue Primary School - Bogalusa City Schools



**Week 21 Winner**  
Winner TBA



**Louisiana Tray of the Week**  
Elizabeth High School - Allen Parish Schools  
Week 4 Winner



**Louisiana Tray of the Week**  
Immaculate Conception School - School Food and Nutrition Services of New Orleans, Inc.  
Week 5 Winner



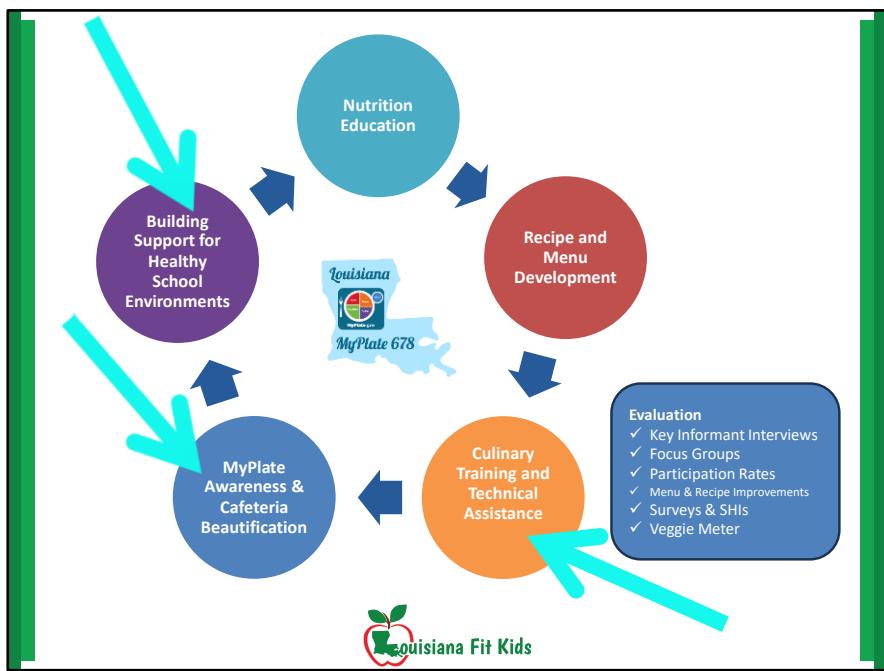
**Louisiana Tray of the Week**  
Negreet School Complex - Bienville Parish Child Nutrition and Franklin Primary School - Washington Parish Child Nutrition  
Week 6 Winner



**Week 24 Winner**  
Winner TBA









## Louisiana Team Nutrition Leadership Institute



- 3-day training for managers and other rising leaders in school nutrition
- Hands-on culinary & leadership skills
- Recipes, scratch cooking & efficiency tips

Baton Rouge · LSU

Ruston · Louisiana Tech

February 24–26, 2026

March 3–5, 2026

Registration is open! Each session is limited to 30 people. All participants will be required to attend all three days.





## HOW IT STARTED.....

## Cafeteria Beautification

### The WELL Building Standard

WELL measures attributes of buildings that impact occupant health by looking at seven factors, or Concepts.

### The Seven Concepts of the WELL Building Standard®

Louisiana Team  
Nutrition partner  
→

**LSU | College of Art + Design**



- The Nourishment features of the WELL Building Standard focus on promoting healthy eating behaviors by ensuring access to nutritious food and fostering environments that support informed and mindful food choices. These features address key factors such as:
  - Increased access to fruits, vegetables, and whole foods
  - Limiting unhealthy food options, such as highly processed or sugary items
  - Nutritional transparency, including clear food labeling and portion control guidance
  - Encouraging mindful eating behaviors through intentional design strategies
  - Providing hydration stations to promote water consumption

















## PREVENTING WASTE



Schools should make every effort to plan appropriately to minimize leftovers

- Operations
- Merchandising, marketing, presentation
- Policy changes

Share tables are just one piece of the food waste puzzle!

[PRESENTER NOTES]: Modify or remove for staff/volunteer training.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: Food waste can be managed from many different angles. Appropriate planning, marketing, and policy updates can all help! We don't have time to go into all of these today, but here are some examples:

Operational issues

- Storage
- Ordering

Staff cooking skills, equipment availability

- Batch cooking
- Seasoning

Merchandising, marketing, presentation

- Is the meal palatable and attractive?
- Are you promoting the menu with taste tests, sample plates, social media posts, etc.?

Policy

- Offer versus Serve gives students the ability to decline certain meal components
- A chaotic and noisy environment can cause distraction and less time to eat. This could be improved with lunchroom monitor training; recess before lunch (also increases appetite and therefore consumption)

Share tables are just one piece of the food waste puzzle, but an important one.

## Food waste statistics



In the U.S., 19-45% of school meals are discarded annually.



School food waste creates about 1.9 million metric tons of greenhouse gases per year.



Production of food used in school meal programs uses 20.9 billion gallons of water every year.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: When food is thrown away, we also waste the resources used to produce it. School food waste creates about 1.9 million metric tons of greenhouse gases and uses 20.9 billion gallons of water every year. Over time, food waste contributes to environmental issues like climate change, poor air quality, and more.



## **WHAT IS A SHARE TABLE?**

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A “share table” is a location where uneaten food items taken by students during meal service can be collected and redistributed.

**[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]:** A “share table” is a location where uneaten food items taken by students during meal service can be collected and redistributed. This gives nutritious foods another chance to be eaten rather than thrown away.

## SHARE TABLE EXAMPLES

.....

A share table does not need to be a table!



[PRESENTER NOTES]: Modify or remove for staff/volunteer training.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: A share table does not need to be an actual table! Here are examples of different ways schools have used equipment to set up their share tables, carts, bins, etc.

## Are share tables allowed in Louisiana?

**YES!**

- USDA regulations allow the use of share tables in school meals programs
- The Louisiana Sanitary Code prohibits the re-service of food once it has been served to a consumer.
- However, in an attempt to assist with controlling food waste, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) has indicated that **child nutrition program operators who wish to institute a share table** at a school may submit a proposed plan to LDH for review and receive a variance.



## SHARE TABLES HAVE MANY BENEFITS!

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Reinforce  
community  
values



Extra  
servings  
for hungry  
students



Maximize  
funds and  
reduce  
costs



Fewer  
custodian  
trips to the  
trash

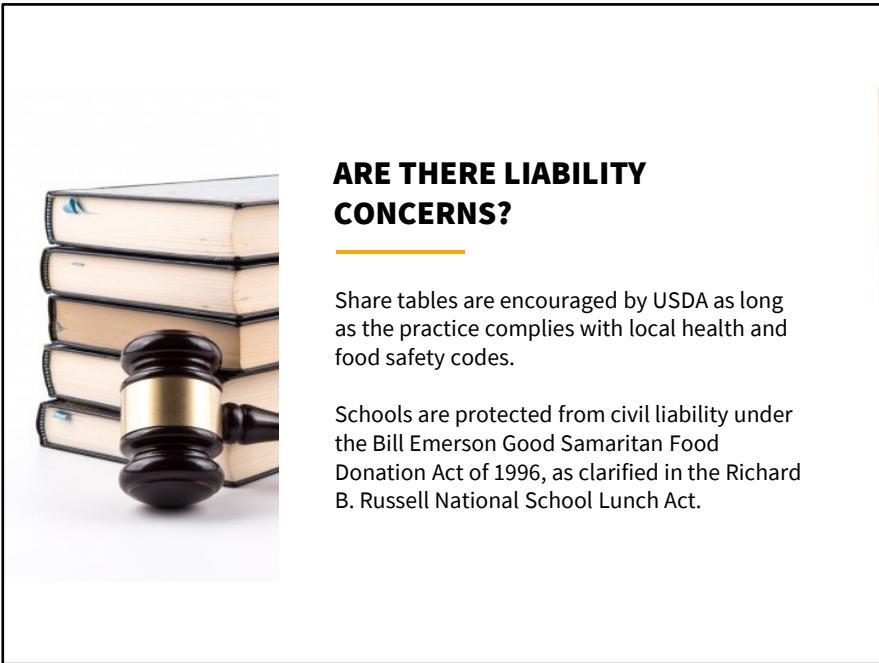


Decreases  
environmental  
impact

[PRESENTER NOTES]: Modify script as needed for staff/volunteer audience. If you have completed an Unopened Items Assessment, include results to show the share table's potential in reducing food waste and saving food costs.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: Naturally, you're here today because you are interested in share tables and think a share table may benefit your school. You probably already know that share tables help decrease food waste, but there are other benefits, too:

- Share tables reinforce community values like courtesy, kindness, and respect
- Provide extra servings to hungry students at no additional cost
- Child nutrition program dollars are maximized when more food is eaten and less is waste. Food costs may also be reduced when eligible items are re-serviced.
- Less food in the trash means fewer custodian trips to the dumpster
- Over time, generating less waste decreases the environmental footprint of the program



## ARE THERE LIABILITY CONCERNS?

Share tables are encouraged by USDA as long as the practice complies with local health and food safety codes.

Schools are protected from civil liability under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996, as clarified in the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

[PRESENTER NOTES]: Remove slide for staff/volunteer training.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: Sometimes schools and local health departments are hesitant about share tables because they don't know if they are allowed, or if there might be liability concerns.

Share tables are encouraged by USDA as long as the practice complies with local health and food safety codes. Schools are protected from civil liability under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996, as clarified in the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.



## **WHAT FOODS ARE ACCEPTABLE FOR THE SHARE TABLE?**

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Acceptable foods are allowed per USDA guidance. However, your local health department may have stricter rules and/or food safety requirements.

[PRESENTER NOTES]: Modify or remove for staff/volunteer training.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: In the next couple of slides we're going to review foods and beverages that are "acceptable." Keep in mind that these "acceptable" items are allowed per USDA guidance. However, your local health department may have stricter rules and may not allow all of these items. Or, they may only allow them with certain food safety measures in place.



## ACCEPTABLE

- Whole fruits with inedible peels
- Whole fruits with edible skin
- Packaged non-perishable items
- Packaged perishable items (TCS foods)

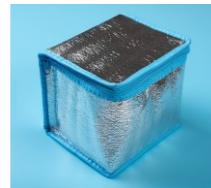
[PRESENTER NOTES]: You may wish to refer participants to the handout “What Foods and Beverages Can Go on a Share Table?” for more examples. If using for staff/volunteer training, modify to only include items that you will collect at your share table.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: Acceptable items (remember, this is per USDA guidance) include:

- Whole fruits with inedible peels (bananas, oranges, etc.)
- Whole fruits with edible skin/peels (apples, peaches, etc.)
- Packaged non-perishable items (breakfast bars, applesauce, cereal, etc.)
- Packaged cold items (milk, sliced/cut fruits and vegetables in sealed packages, yogurt, etc.)
- Packaged hot items (omelet, grilled cheese, etc.)

## **TCS FOODS**

Time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods must be kept at the proper temperatures:



- Dairy items
- Pre-washed, sliced/cut fruits and vegetables in sealed packages
- Packaged hot items

[PRESENTER NOTES]: Modify/remove to only include items that you will collect at your share table.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: Certain foods and beverages need extra care taken for food safety. Time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods must be kept at the proper temperatures. These include cold items like milk and yogurt, as well as sliced/cut fruits and vegetables in sealed packages. Packaged hot items are also TCS foods, but these are less commonly collected on share tables.

You will need to check with your health department to see if they will allow these items to be collected. If yes, you will also need to establish how food safety will be managed with time or temperature controls.

## FRUITS WITH EDIBLE SKIN

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Must be washed before they can be redistributed, or they may be wrapped:

- Apples, pears, peaches, etc.



[PRESENTER NOTES]: Modify as needed for staff/volunteer training.

[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: Fruits with edible skin also need extra food safety measures when collected on share tables. There may be a higher risk of illness passing from one student to another because they do not have the extra layer of protection provided by an inedible peel or a wrapper. If they are allowed on the share table, they should be washed before they are re-served or made available on the share table. Another option is to wrap or bag them prior to service.

## **NOT ACCEPTABLE**

- Opened items
- Items in re-sealable packaging
- Items served without a lid or top
- Foods served directly on the tray
- Items brought from home



[SUGGESTED SCRIPT]: What CAN'T go on a share table?

- Any items that have been opened
- Items in re-sealable packaging
- Items served without a lid or top
- Foods served directly on the tray
- Items brought from home

Even if items from home are packaged, they are not allowed.

		 CEREAL
		
 PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY FROM HOME		 PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY



APPLE



PEACH



PEAR



APPLE SLICES



BANANA



ORANGE SLICES  
PARTLY REMOVED



APPLE SLICES  
IN A CUP,  
RESEALABLE  
CONTAINER



ORANGE SLICES  
IN A CUP,  
RESEALABLE  
CONTAINER



MANDARIN  
ORANGE  
CUP



#### Foods Typically Allowed

- **Whole Fruit and Packaged Items**

- Banana
- Breakfast bar
- Mandarin orange cup
- Marinara cup
- Peanut butter and jelly, packaged
- Salsa cup
- Single-serving cereal bowl or box
- Whole-grain muffin
- 100 percent juice box

- **Utensils and condiments**

- Marinara cup



#### Foods Not Allowed

- Burger, served directly on tray
- Chips from home
- Fruit cup, resealable container
- Milk with resealable top
- Orange, peel partly removed
- Orange slices, served directly on the tray
- Pudding cup, opened
- Peanut butter and jelly from home
- Salad, served in open bowl



**Foods with More Safety Restrictions:** All types of share table items must be approved by the local health department, but these have additional food safety requirements.

- **Whole Fruits with Edible Skin**

- Apple
- Peach
- Pear

- **Hot Items**

- Cheese omelet, packaged

- **Cold Items**

- Apple slices
- Baby carrots, sealed in bag
- Milk carton
- String cheese
- Yogurt

# FOOD SHARE

Uneaten, Unopened items only



On September 16, 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a 50-percent reduction by 2030 (USDA News Release No. 15-001). In Louisiana, there are many points at which food loss and waste occurs, and can help reduce the amount of waste in school nutrition programs.

**Reducing Food Waste**

- School Breakfast
- Smart Snacks
- Summer Meals
- Team Nutrition
- Unpaid Meal Charges

**Reducing School Food Waste**

On September 16, 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a 50-percent reduction by 2030 (USDA News Release No. 15-001). In Louisiana, there are many points at which food loss and waste occurs, and can help reduce the amount of waste in school nutrition programs.

**Reducing School Food Waste**

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the United States' first-ever national food waste reduction goal, calling for a 50 percent reduction by 2030. This is a significant step forward in addressing food waste in schools and households. Luckily, there are proven strategies that are simple and cost-effective to implement.

**Share Table Toolkit for Schools**

**Share Table Toolkit for Schools (PDF)**

**Share Table Toolkit for Schools Resources**

**Share Tables**

A share table is a place where students can place uneaten food and drink that they choose not to eat or drink. Students drop off unwanted food and drink on the **Share Table** immediately after leaving the serving line.

**USDA** While USDA regulations allow the use of share tables in school meals programs, from USDA Memo CD-15-2015, The Use of Share Tables in CMBs, or

Home About ▾ **Resources** ▾ Training Interactive Tools ▾ Professional Standards  Catherine

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### Offer Versus Serve

Food service operations with increased implementation of **Offer Versus Serve** (OVS) goals: (1) reduce food waste in CNPs; the foods they want to consume. OVS components during a breakfast, lunch, or dinner meal that can be declined at each CNP the agency operates. While OVS is required for lunch in the National School Lunch Program, it is optional for all other grade levels.



The USDA has developed **Offer Versus Serve National School Lunch Program Posters and Tip Sheets** that are intended to educate students in selecting a reimbursable lunch under Offer Versus Serve. Teachers and school food service professionals will find these posters help students more quickly select the foods in the lunch line that make up a reimbursable meal.



### Reducing Food Waste

Research  
School Breakfast  
Smart Snacks  
Summer Meals  
Team Nutrition  
Unpaid Meal Charges

When it comes to share tables, it is imperative that proper food safety and sanitation procedures are followed and that School Food Authorities work closely with the State Department of Health to make sure an approved sharing plan is in place. Allowing share tables in a safe manner, reduce food waste and allow additional nutrition opportunities!

### Louisiana Share Table Guidelines

 SFA applicants will need to submit a variance request to the State Department of Health for the parameters under which they will conduct share tables. Submit your requests to the local LDH Environmental Health Sanitarian Supervisor. In order for consideration of the variance, the plan must include information from the [Guide to Share Tables](#) from the Louisiana Department of Health.

▶ [Louisiana School Food Share Table Request Form](#)  
▶ [Example Share Table Request Form](#)

### How are Louisiana Schools Helping to Reduce Food Waste?

 Learn more about the [New Share Carts in Calcasieu Parish](#). Share carts at LeBlieu Settlement Elementary School are a great way of reducing food waste and minimizing childhood food waste.

### Reducing Food Waste Resources

 The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs

## Louisiana School Food Share Table Request Form



This document is based on the contents of the Louisiana Department of Health's Guide to Share Tables. Submit this request to your parish LDH sanitarian.

1. Name of Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

2. LDH Permit Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Food Service Operator: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Operating Days/Times: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Source of Food Being Served: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Employee/ Volunteer Monitor: \_\_\_\_\_ *An employee of the food service or an adult volunteer shall monitor the share table at all times. The plan must state who that person is.*

Name of Employee or Volunteer Monitor: \_\_\_\_\_

Visit the [Louisiana Fit Kids Reducing School Food Waste Page](#) for More Information

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June 2024

**6. Share Table** The share table must be located so that participants move from the food receiving line Location & directly past the share table. The diner must place the unwanted food items there  
**Line Drawing:** before starting to eat.

**Line Drawing:** Include a line drawing of the serving line, dining area and the share table. After completing the line drawing, you may upload it to this document by clicking on the box below and locating the drawing in your files.



**7. Allowed Items:** Items allowed for share table service include pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous items as identified in the Code. Other acceptable items include individually packaged by a manufacturer choices or those with a removable peel. This includes un-opened juice or milk, pudding, manufacturer sealed fruit cups, and whole fruit such as oranges or bananas that require peeling before consuming.

**8. Holding Time and Temperature Control:** LDH recommends holding time and temperature control for safety foods in a way that maintains temperature control. A small refrigerator or ice sheets/packs may be used. No wet ice allowed.

**9. Discarding** Once the meal shift is over, discard all food requiring time and temperature control for Foods: safety.

**10. Written Plan:** Retain the written plan on site for reference by the participants and the LDH staff Inspectors.

**Written Plan:**

**11. Additional Requests:** Make any other additional requests in writing. They will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## Follow Louisiana Fit Kids on Social Media!



Send Cathy photos! [cathy.carmichael@pbrc.edu](mailto:cathy.carmichael@pbrc.edu)  
Text me: 916-502-3172

