



What to Do with Leftover Meals

Good menu planning includes ordering and preparing enough meals for each child that attends the summer site, but also not having too much leftover food on a frequent basis. Leftover meals may result in food waste and unnecessary food costs. This section provides tips on how to reduce, re-use or recycle leftover meals to avoid food waste and unnecessary food costs.

Reduce

To make sure the right number of meals are ordered and prepared, sponsors should regularly monitor and compare site reports on the number of children that attend the site with the number of meals served. It is important to order and prepare enough meals to serve all the children that attend while not making too much food. If a site has leftover food, sponsors should immediately adjust their food orders to better reflect the number of children served.

Re-Use or Recycle

When a site has leftover food, sponsors should use all alternatives permitted by the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) regulations and State and local health and sanitation codes before discarding leftover food. A few options may include:

Transfer meals: Extra meals can be transferred from a site with extra meals to another site with a shortage. Make sure this is allowed by your local health code first. Transferred meals to children may only be claimed for reimbursement if the meals are served within the approved site meal cap.

Seconds: After all the children attending the site have received one meal, sponsors may serve and claim reimbursement for second servings of complete meals of up to 2% of the number of first meals served to children, from each meal type, for all sites, during a claiming period.

Share Table: Sponsors may create a “share table” or stations where children may return whole items they choose not to eat. Make sure this is in compliance with your State and local health and safety codes first. The food items returned to the table or station are then available for other children to take it if they want more food. Serving meal components that are easily “recyclable” can make it easier to have a share table. For example, if milk is served in individual cartons, a child can return an unopened milk carton to the share table. Complete food items and non-perishable foods that are left on the share table at the end of meal service



may be stored for another meal service time. All recycled food items must be stored in accordance with local health codes and must be documented.

Donations: When it is not possible to reuse leftover food or store food, sponsors should consider donating the leftover food to non-profit organizations working to address hunger in the community, such as homeless shelters, food banks and food pantries. Sponsors may also choose to send leftover meals or food home with children. Donated meals and meals sent home with children may not be claimed for reimbursement. However, donating food helps avoid unnecessary waste and can save on expensive disposal and storage costs. Additionally, by collaborating with other hunger organizations, sponsors can expand the reach of these important programs and build networks to better serve the community

USDA Resources

Regulations and Policies

- **SFSP Regulations, 7 CFR 225**
<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=ff728867ade2326e899b384a997eb643&n=pt7.4.225&r=PART&ty=HTML>
- **Meal Service Requirements, SP 13-2015 (v.2), SFSP 05-2015 (v.2), *Summer Meal Programs Meal Service Requirements Revised Q&As- Revised*, January 12, 2015**
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/summer-meal-programs-meal-service-requirements-qas-revised>
- **Food Donations, SP 11-2012, SFSP 07-2012, *Guidance on the Food Donation Program in Child Nutrition Programs*, February 3, 2012**
http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/FNS_Guidance.pdf

Handbooks and Other Tools

- **Administrative Guide for Sponsors**
This guide provides useful information on how to operate a summer site, including what to do with leftover meals.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/AdminGuideSponsors.pdf>
- **Innovative Strategies: Meal Service Issues**
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Meals.pdf>



Summer Meals Toolkit

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- **Let's Glean!**

As a result of USDA's Food Recovery and Gleaning Initiative the "Let's Glean" toolkit was developed as a resource guide on food recovery programs for businesses, community-based organizations, private citizens, and public officials. It suggests some of food recovery activities.

http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda_gleaning_toolkit.pdf

Toolkit pages

- **How to Establish Meal Service Times**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SMT-MealServiceTimes.pdf>

- **How to Use Offer Versus Serve**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SMT-OfferVersusServe.pdf>

- **Family Style Meals: A New Way to Teach Healthy Habits**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SMT-FamilyStyleMeals.pdf>

- **Serving Adults: What You Need to Know**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SMT-AdultMeals.pdf>

- **Successfully Operating a Congregate Feeding Site**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/sfsp/SMT-CongregateFeeding.pdf>

Additional Information

Sponsors and the general public should contact the appropriate State agency for additional guidance. State agencies should contact their FNS Regional Office for additional guidance.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

USDA and its recipient institutions share responsibility for compliance and oversight to ensure good stewardship of Federal Funds.



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