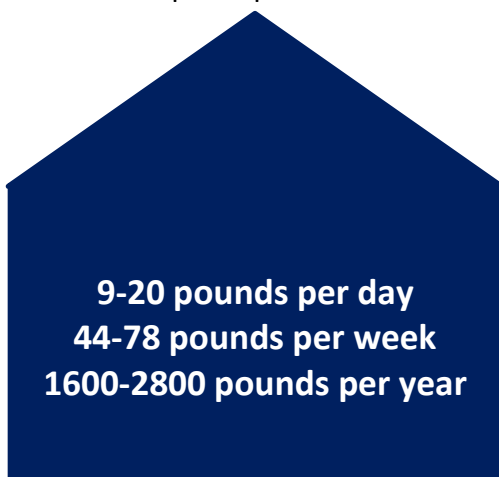




The RI Department of Education, RI Department of Health, and the USDA support the recovery for donation of unopened commercially packaged food and whole fruits from school meals in Rhode Island. This can be done through the use of “share tables” or donation of these foods to a non-profit agency that serves people in need. “Share tables” are stations where children may return wholesome and safe food or beverage items they choose not to eat. These food and beverage items are then available to other children who may want additional servings at no extra cost, or they can be donated to soup kitchens or local foods pantries in Rhode Island.

How much recoverable food are we throwing away?

The amount of recoverable food varies from school to school because schools have different ages of students and different levels of participation in school meal programs.



Pounds Recovered in a School with 400 Students

44 pounds per week can equal 200 separate food items, which is about 37 meals per week^{1,2}.

¹ Donation meals are calculated as 1.2 pounds per meal.

² USDA, “What We Eat In America,” Agriculture Research Service, 2014.

What can we do with the recovered food?

For food donation, work with your partnering food rescue organization to determine what they can take and to create a schedule for pickup.

- The MEANS database can be used to locate a partnering food pantry or soup kitchen (www.meansdatabase.com)
- A list of agencies accepting food donations can be found at the RI Department of Health website (<http://arcg.is/1nWPP4>)
- For best practices and success stories, look under food donation at the foodSCAPE website (www.foodSCAPEri.org)





What can be left on a “Share Table” or saved for donation?

Allowable Foods	Unallowable Foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unopened commercially packaged items that must be stored at or below 41°F. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bagged baby carrots and sliced apples ○ Carton of milk, yogurt, and cheese sticks • Unopened commercially packaged items that do not need temperature control for safety, such as a bag of pretzels or granola bar. • Whole pieces of fruit with a peel, such as bananas or oranges. • Whole pieces of fruit with an edible peel, such as apples and pears, if wrapped or rewashed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food not provided by School Meal Programs (e.g., foods brought from home). • Perishable foods that have not been kept at 41°F or lower or that must be held hot. • Opened or unpackaged food items, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An opened bag of baby carrots ○ A salad bowl without a lid ○ Whole fruit with an edible peel if not wrapped (place unwrapped fruit in a bin until they have been rewashed and thoroughly dried). • Packaged items that can be opened and re-sealed.

BEST PRACTICES FOR FOOD SAFETY



- Monitor the table to ensure that unallowable foods are not put on the share table and allowable foods are handled to prevent any potential contamination (e.g., original packaging is not opened, etc.).
- Ensure perishable foods, which require temperature control for safety, are stored at or below 41°F. This can be done by providing an insulated bin, such as a cooler, filled with ice or frozen gel packs.
 - Monitor and record the temperature inside the cooler to verify that food is being maintained at safe temperatures.
- Be familiar with safe food-handling practices. *For more information, see “causes and prevention of foodborne illness” in the resource list below.*
 - Practice good personal hygiene.
 - Clean and sanitize food collection containers, as appropriate.
- Display signage outlining share table “rules.”

Resources for additional information:

1. Causes and Prevention of Foodborne Illness: <https://web.uri.edu/foodsafety/cause-and-prevention-of-foodborne-illness/>
2. Conference for Food Protection *Comprehensive Guidelines for Food Recovery Programs*: www.foodprotect.org/guides
3. Federal and Rhode Island laws protect you from liability when you donate food in good faith. For information on the Good Samaritan laws go to <https://web.uri.edu/foodsafety/food-safety-conferences/>
4. The USDA guidance for food recovery: The Use of Share Tables in Child Nutrition Programs. www.fns.usda.gov/use-share-tables-child-nutrition-programs