

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This guidance applies to meals and snacks served in child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and adult day care centers that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). For information on the CACFP meal patterns and crediting foods for children, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpages. For information on the CACFP meal patterns and crediting foods for adult participants, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpages.



Alternate protein products (APPs) credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns. APPs are food ingredients that may be used alone or in combination with meat, poultry, or seafood. They are processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources and may be dehydrated granules, particles, or flakes. Some examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. APPs may be used in the dry (nonhydrated), partially hydrated, or fully hydrated form.

APPs are generally used as part of a formed meat patty or in a vegetarian patty resembling a meat product. Examples of foods that might contain added APPs include beef patties, beef crumbles, pizza topping, meat loaf, meat sauce, taco filling, burritos, and tuna salad. Processed food items such as vegetarian burgers may contain APP, but the food item itself is not an APP because it contains other ingredients such as seasonings or breading. APPs do not include tofu, surimi, seitan, or tempeh.

Criteria for APPs

APPs must meet the USDA's requirements specified in [appendix A](#) of the CACFP regulations (7 CFR 226). These regulations specify that APPs may credit for part or all the meat/meat alternates requirement only if they meet the three criteria below.

1. The APP must be processed so that some portion of the non-protein constituents of the food is removed. This refers to the manufacturing process for APP. APP must be safe and suitable edible products produced from plant or animal sources.
2. The biological quality of the protein in the APP must be at least 80 percent of casein (milk protein), determined by performing a Protein Digestibility Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS). The PDCAAS is a method of evaluating protein quality.

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3. The APP contains at least 18 percent protein by weight when fully hydrated or formulated. “When hydrated or formulated” refers to a dry APP and the amount of water, fat, oil, colors, flavors, or any other substances that have been added.

Menu planners cannot determine if an APP product meets the required criteria by reading the product’s label. The labeling laws of the USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) require manufacturers to list product ingredients, but percentage labeling is voluntary. For example, a product may list whey protein concentrate and hydrolyzed soy protein in the ingredients, but will not indicate the percentage of these protein ingredients by weight. For more information, review the USDA’s handout, [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products](#).

Required Documentation for APPs

CACFP facilities must obtain manufacturer documentation that the product meets the USDA’s APP criteria. Acceptable documentation includes any of the following:

- Child Nutrition (CN) label;
- product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer; or
- signed letter from a company official attesting that the APP meets the USDA’s requirements.



The manufacturer’s documentation should include information on the percent protein contained in the dry alternate protein product and in the prepared product. For an APP product mix, manufacturers should provide information on the amount by weight of dry APP in the package, hydration instructions, and instructions on how to combine the mix with meat or other meat alternates. A 1-ounce serving of a creditable APP provides 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

Without appropriate documentation, APPs cannot credit in the CACFP.

Additional guidance on documenting the APP requirements is available in the USDA’s [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products \(APP\)](#). For information on CN labels and PFS forms, review the CSDE’s resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the CACFP](#) and [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the CACFP](#), and the USDA’s handout, [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement](#).

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Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Some APP foods may be choking hazards, such as tube-shaped meats like hotdogs, sausage, and meat sticks. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of APP foods to offer in CACFP menus. This consideration is also important for children or adult participants with a disability that requires dietary restrictions. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/AcceptDocumentationCACFP.pdf>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CreditCommercialMMACACFP.pdf>

Crediting Deli Meats in the CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CreditDeliCACFP.pdf>

Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Adult-Day-Care-Centers>

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CreditTofuCACFP.pdf>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Adult-Centers>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Adult-Day-Care-Centers/Documents#MMA>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents#MMA>

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Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Document_Meat_Meat_Alternate.pdf

Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>

Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/ResourcesCACFPMealPattern.pdf>

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Production Formulation Statements (USDA Food Manufacturers/Industry webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/food-manufacturersindustry>

USDA Production Formulation Statements (USDA's Food Manufacturers/Industry webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/food-manufacturersindustry>

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the CACFP:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CNLabelCACFP.pdf>

Using Product Formulation Statements in the CACFP:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/PFScacfp.pdf>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpages, or contact the [CACFP staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/APPRequirementsCACFP.pdf>.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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