

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This guidance applies to meals and snacks 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.



The USDA's CN Labeling Program is a voluntary federal labeling program for the Child Nutrition Programs, including the School Breakfast Program (SBP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Food manufacturers have the option to include a standardized food crediting statement on their product labels, which the USDA approves prior to use. Manufacturers participating in the CN Labeling Program must have quality control procedures and inspection oversight that meet USDA's requirements.

The USDA does not require that manufacturers make CN-labeled products or that institutions participating in the Child Nutrition Programs purchase foods with CN labels. Purchasing decisions are at the discretion of the local school or institution. If a CN labeled product is required, the institution must clearly state this information in their purchasing specifications.

Eligible Products

CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component of the USDA's meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. Examples include beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions.



CN labels will usually indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products. For example, CN-labeled pizza may list contributions to the meat/meat alternates, grains, and vegetables components; and CN-labeled breaded chicken nuggets may list contributions to the meat/meat alternates and grains components.

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Benefits of Using CN-labeled Products

A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. CN labeling provides a warranty that the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements, as printed on the label.

Considerations for CN-labeled Products

A CN label does not indicate that the product is healthier, more nutritious, or of a higher quality than a similar non-CN labeled product. The CN crediting statement declares the quantities of the creditable food items in a processed food that can be used to meet the meal pattern requirements. While a CN labeled product is guaranteed to contain a certain quantity of food, it does not indicate that the quality of the food is any different than a non-CN labeled food. Additionally, it a CN label does not indicate that the product is safer to eat, or free of pathogens or allergens.

Identifying CN Labels

The CN label is found on the product packaging and will contain the following:

- the CN logo, which is a distinct border;
- the meal pattern contribution statement;
- a six-digit product identification number, which is assigned by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of the USDA;
- the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) authorization statement;
- the month and year of AMS approval; and
- other required label features, including product name, inspection legend, ingredient statement, signature/address line, and net weight.

Table 1 shows an example of a CN label.



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Table 1. Sample CN Label

CN Label

1 Chicken Stir-Fry Bowl

Ingredient Statement:

2 Chicken, brown rice, broccoli, red peppers, carrots, onions, water, olive oil, soy sauce, spices.

3 CN

XXXXXX


Each 4.5 oz Chicken Stir-Fry Bowl provides 1.5 oz eq meat, 1.0 oz eq grains, ¼ cup dark green vegetable, ¼ cup red/orange vegetable, and ⅛ cup other vegetable for Child Nutrition Meal Pattern Requirements. (Use of this logo and statement authorized by the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA 09/16).

CN

Net Wt.: 18 pounds

4

Chicken Wok Company
1234 Kluck Street • Poultry, PA 1235



1 Product Name

2 Ingredient Statement

3 CN Logo

4 Inspection Legend

The CN Logo is the box with "CN" on each side, surrounding the meal pattern contribution statement. It is one of the four integral parts of a label (product name, ingredient statement, CN Logo, and inspection legend). All four parts must be on the product carton for the CN label to be valid.

CN-labeled products list the grains component in ounce equivalents, which are not required in the CACFP meal patterns until October 1, 2021. However, CACFP facilities may use the ounce equivalents information on CN-labeled products to document compliance with the CACFP whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement, because an ounce equivalent of the grains component is slightly more than the current CACFP serving sizes. For more information, review the CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP](#).

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Acceptable Documentation

Acceptable and valid documentation for a CN label includes 1) the original CN label from the product carton; or 2) a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton. CN labels that are photocopied or photographed must be visible and legible.

CN labels with a watermark

Manufacturers may use a CN label with a watermark when the CN logo and contribution statement are on product information other than the actual product carton. Manufacturers may provide a watermarked CN label during the bidding process. A watermarked CN label is acceptable documentation for the Administrative Review of the Child Nutrition Programs when it is attached to a Bill of Lading (invoice) containing the product name. Original CN labels on product cartons will not have a watermark.

Table 2 shows an example of a watermarked CN label. For more information, review [USDA Memo SP 11-2015 \(v2\)](#), [CACFP 10-2015](#) and [SFSP 13-2015: CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation](#).

Table 2. Sample CN Label with a watermark



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For additional guidance on accepting product documentation, review the CSDE's resources, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP*, and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the SFSP*; and the USDA's policy memos SP 11-2015 (v2), CACFP 10-2015 and SFSP 13-2015: *CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation*, and SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015 and SFSP 12-2015: *Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement*.

Authorized CN Labels and Manufacturers

The AMS publishes a list of manufacturers approved for CN labels and a list of products with CN labels. These lists are updated monthly. For more information, visit the USDA's [Authorized Labels and Manufacturers](#) webpage.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

Appendix C: The USDA Child Nutrition Labeling Program (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Appendix_C.pdf

Authorized Manufacturers and Labels (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/usdausdc-authorized-labels-and-manufacturers>

CN Labeling (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/child-nutrition-cn-labeling-program>

Crediting Commercial Processed Products in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

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

Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

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>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

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

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

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

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

Presentation: CN Labels and Product Formulation Statements (USDA):

<https://theicn.org/resources/930/march-2016/109876/manufacturers-product-formulation-statement-pfs03-31-16.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 11-2015 (v2), CACFP 10-2015 and SFSP 13-2015: CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn-labels-copied-watermark-acceptable-documentation>

USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015 and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/administrative-review-process-regarding-child-nutrition-cn-label-watermarked-cn-label-and>

Whole Grain-rich Criteria for the CACFP:

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

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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