

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate 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 for children and crediting foods, 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 adult meal patterns and crediting foods, visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpages.



To credit as the meat/meat alternates component in CACFP meals and snacks, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli) require documentation stating the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. This documentation must be:

- an original Child Nutrition (CN) label from the product carton or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or
- a product formulation statement (PFS) signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the total weight of meat/meat alternates contained in one serving of the product.



For example, to credit a commercial breaded chicken patty as 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, the product’s CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 ounces of cooked chicken. Commercial products cannot credit as the meat/meat alternates component without this documentation.

Commercial products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in the CACFP meal patterns.

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](#). For additional guidance, visit the [“Crediting Commercial Processed Products in CACFP Child Care Programs”](#) or

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP

“[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#)” sections of the CSDE’s CACFP webpages.

The terms “protein” and “meat/meat alternate” are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. The USDA’s meal patterns require a specific amount of the meat/meat alternates component, not a specific amount of protein. Menu planners cannot use the grams of protein per serving listed on the Nutrition Facts label to determine the amount of the meat/meat alternates component in a product.

Serving Size

The amount of the meat/meat alternates component refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish without added liquid, binders, and extenders (review the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Deli Meats in the CACFP](#));
- 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended);
- 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food/spread, or cheese substitute (low-fat recommended);
- ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes), e.g., kidney beans, chick peas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas (review the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Legumes in the CACFP](#));
- ½ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, and sunflower seed butter (review the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the CACFP](#));
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts (review the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the CACFP](#));
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs ingredients (tempeh products with other ingredients require a CN label or PFS);
- 3 ounces of surimi (alternate crediting amounts must be documented with a PFS);
- ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (review the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the CACFP](#)); and
- 1 ounce of alternate protein product (APP) that meets the USDA’s APP requirements (review the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the CACFP](#)).

One-quarter (¼) ounce equivalent is the smallest amount that credits toward the meat/meat alternates component. If a menu item provides less than the full-required serving of the meat/meat

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP

alternates component, the menu planner must include an additional meat/meat alternate to meet the full-required serving for each age group.

Requirement for Recognizable Meat/Meat Alternates

The USDA requires that meat/meat alternates must be recognizable (visible) to credit toward the meat/meat alternates component. For example, CACFP facilities cannot credit peanut butter in a muffin or smoothie; soft tofu blended in a soup; or pureed beans in a muffin. The intent for this requirement is to ensure that participants can easily identify the foods in CACFP menus. The nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs includes the goal of helping participants recognize the food groups that contribute to healthy meals and snacks.

The USDA allows an exception to this requirement for yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies; and pasta made with 100 percent legume flours. Yogurt blended in smoothies credits as the meat/meat alternates component. Other meat/meat alternates, such as peanut butter, cannot credit when served in smoothies. For more information, review the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Smoothies in the CACFP](#).



CACFP facilities may credit pasta made with 100 percent legume flours as the meat/meat alternates component. The pasta must be offered with additional meat/meat alternates, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more information, review the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Legumes in the CACFP](#).

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of meat/meat alternate foods to offer in CACFP menus. This consideration is also important for children or adult participants with a disability that requires dietary restrictions.

Examples of meat/meat alternates that may cause choking include nuts and seeds, e.g., peanuts, almonds and sunflower or pumpkin seeds; chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters; tough meat or large chunks of meat; fish with bones; tube-shaped meats such as hotdogs and sausage; and large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cutting tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces; removing all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving; grinding up tough meats and poultry; chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grinding before adding to prepared foods; and spreading nut and seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers). For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP

For more information on the meat/meat alternates component, visit the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Child Care Programs](#)” or “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#)” sections of the CSDE’s CACFP webpages.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

Choking Prevention (CSDE’s Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

Crediting Deli Meats in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

Crediting Legumes in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

Crediting Smoothies in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

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>

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>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

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 Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>

USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Webinar: Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/additional-meat-meat-alternate-tempeh-and-surimi>

USDA Webinar: Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products>

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

Using Product Formulation Statements in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP



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/CreditCommercialMMACACFP.pdf>.

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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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