

Crediting Nuts and Seeds 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.



Nuts and seeds and their butters credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns. Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit.



Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts. However, fresh soybeans (edamame) are legumes and credit as the vegetables component. For more information, review the CSDE’s resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP](#).

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Nuts, seeds, chunky peanut butter, and chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters are choking hazards. Consider children’s age and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer these foods in CACFP menus. This consideration is also important for children with a disability that requires dietary restrictions.

Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include grinding or finely chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds before adding to prepared foods; and using only creamy nut or seed butters and spreading them 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.

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Breakfast

The CACFP breakfast meal patterns do not require the meat/meat alternates component. CACFP facilities may substitute foods from the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. A 1-ounce serving of nuts or seeds offered as a grain substitute credits as one serving of the grains component. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, [Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#).

Lunch and Supper

At lunch and supper, nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component for each age group. Menu planners must combine nuts and seeds with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement. For example, the CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 6-12 requires 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component. A lunch or supper for this age group cannot contain more than 1 ounce of nuts or seeds. The menu planner must include 1 ounce of another meat/meat alternate, such as ½ cup of yogurt, 1 ounce of lean meat or cheese, ¼ cup of cottage cheese, ¼ cup of cooked dried beans and peas (legumes), or half of a large egg.

Snack

CACFP facilities may serve the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) as one of the two required snack components in the CACFP meal patterns. Nuts and seeds may credit as the full serving of the meat/meat alternates component at snack.

Crediting Nut and Seed Butters

Creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter credits if it meets the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for peanut butter ([21 CFR 164.150](#)), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nut or seed butters in CACFP menus. Use only creamy peanut butter (not chunky) and spread thinly to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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The serving for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons of a nut or seed butter credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

The required volume measure (tablespoons) for nut and seed butters is not the same as weight (ounces); a 1-ounce serving of peanut butter does not provide 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Nut and seed butters that are portioned by weight instead of volume must use the appropriate weight conversion in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG). The FBG indicates that 1.1 ounces of nut or seed butters credit as 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of the meat/meat alternates component. Table 1 indicates the meat/meat alternates contribution of nut and seed butters.

Table 1. Serving size for nut and seed butters			
Meal pattern serving size of meat/meat alternates	Tablespoons ¹	Scoop (disher) size ²	Weight equivalent ³
1/4 ounce (minimum creditable amount)	1/2	Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)	0.275 ounces
1/2 ounce	1	Closest is No. 60 (3 1/4 teaspoons)	0.55 ounces
3/4 ounce	1 1/2	Closest is No. 40 (1 2/3 tablespoons)	0.825 ounces
1 ounce	2	No. 30 (2 tablespoons)	1.1 ounces
1 1/2 ounces	3	Closest is No. 20 (3 1/3 tablespoons)	1.65 ounces
2 ounces	4	No. 16 (1/4 cup)	1.2 ounces
¹ One tablespoon equals 3 teaspoons. ² Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) <i>Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster</i> . ³ Weight equivalents are from the USDA's <i>Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs</i> .			

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Considerations for serving size

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the required serving of nut and seed butters for CACFP meals and snacks. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich. For example, the lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 6-12, ages 13-18 in at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters, and adult day care center participants requires 4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) of peanut butter to credit as 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component. This is a large amount for two slices of bread.



The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing with another meat/meat alternate to provide the full-required serving. For example, a lunch menu could provide the 2 ounces of meat/meat alternates from a sandwich containing 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce of meat/meat alternates) served with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt (1 ounce of meat/meat alternates). Another option is providing the required 4 tablespoons of peanut butter in three half-sandwiches that each contain 4 teaspoons of peanut butter.

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 Commercial Meat/Meat Alternates in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

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>

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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

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

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-and-meat-alternates-breakfast>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

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/PFSacfp.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/CACFPCreditNuts.pdf>.

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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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