

# Sample Snack Menus for Centers and Family Day Care Homes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

**Program Year 2025-26 (October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026)**

This document provides guidance and sample snack menus for ages 3-5 in child care centers, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and family day care homes that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). These sample menus are based on the CACFP meal patterns for children, including the updates required by the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).

For information on the CACFP meal patterns for children, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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## Overview of Snack Meal Pattern Requirements

The CACFP snack meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires the minimum serving of any two of the five meal components, including ½ cup of unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk; ½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) of meats/meat alternates; ½ cup of vegetables; ½ cup of fruits; and ½ oz eq of grains. Only one of the two snack components may be a creditable beverage such as milk or juice.

Each meal component must provide at least the minimum meal pattern serving. CACFP menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. Serve nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to children's nutrition needs.

Menu planners should consider the meal pattern requirements and recommendations below when planning CACFP menus. For guidance on crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

### Meats/meat alternates (MMA) component

- The serving size of MMA refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products (such as combination entrees, deli meats, hot dogs, and sausages) require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- Nut and seed butters credit by volume (tablespoons) not weight. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 2 grams of added sugars per ounce). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving only lean meats, nuts, and beans, peas, and lentils; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese.

For more information, visit the "[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

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## Fruits component and vegetables component

- Dried fruits credit as twice the volume served. For example,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of raisins credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the fruits component.
- Raw leafy greens such as lettuce or spinach credit as half the volume served. For example,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of raw leafy greens credits as  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the vegetables component.
- Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. The juice limit includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies. Before planning juice at snack, make sure that the other daily meals and snacks do not contain juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juices in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.

For more information, visit the “[Fruits](#)” section and the “[Vegetables](#)” section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

## Grains component

- At least one serving of grains per day must be whole grain-rich (WGR). The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. To meet the CACFP WGR criteria, foods must contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients must be enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit “[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)” in the “Grains” section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
- To credit as the required oz eq, the serving of grain products and recipes must provide either: 1) the required serving weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) in the USDA's Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)); or 2) the minimum creditable grains per serving (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Calculation Methods for Grains Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). For more information, visit “[Serving Requirements](#)” in the “Grains”

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section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

- Grain-based desserts do not credit. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers) are allowed but the CSDE recommends limiting them to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's [Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage
- Breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified and cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

For more information, visit the "[Grains](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

### **Milk component**

- The CACFP meal patterns for ages 3-5 require unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk.
- Only one of the two meal components at snack may be a creditable beverage, such as milk or juice.

For more information, visit the "[Milk](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

### **Noncreditable foods**

Noncreditable foods cannot be served in place of the required meal components. Examples of noncreditable foods include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

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## Required Crediting Documentation

CACFP facilities must be able to document that CACFP menus provide the minimum portion of each required meal component. Menu planners must use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine how foods credit and the amount that provides the required meal pattern serving.

Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. The USDA requires that CACFP facilities must verify PFS forms for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and snacks. For information on crediting documentation for processed foods, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. For information on standardized recipes, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Recipe Standardization Guide for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "[Standardized Recipes](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products, of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

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## Sample Snack Menus

This document contains ten sample snack menus. The servings in each menu provide at least the minimum requirements of the CACFP meal patterns for children and are indicated in parentheses after each menu item. Servings may be adjusted as appropriate for other ages.

The CSDE's sample menus are intended for informational purposes and do not guarantee compliance with the CACFP meal patterns for children. Crediting information for local child care menus will vary depending on the types of foods purchased by the CACFP facility, and the recipes and preparation techniques used by CACFP staff. CACFP facilities are responsible for ensuring that their menus meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and maintaining appropriate crediting documentation on file (refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" in this document).

## Sample Snack Menus for Centers and Family Day Care Homes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

### Week 1

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1				Orange slices (½ cup)	Enriched corn muffin (1 ounce)	
2		Yogurt and fruit parfait: Low-fat vanilla yogurt with ≤ 2 grams of added sugars per ounce (¼ cup)		Sliced strawberries (¼ cup)  Blueberries (¼ cup)		Whole-grain granola (1 tablespoon)
3			Cucumber slices (½ cup)		Whole-grain crackers (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	Low-fat dip (1 tablespoon)
4			Vegetable soup with ½ cup vegetables	Cantaloupe chunks (½ cup)		
5		Ham (½ ounce) and cheese (¼ ounce) roll-up			Whole-corn tortilla (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	Shredded lettuce (⅛ c)  Mustard (1 teaspoon) or low-fat mayonnaise (1 teaspoon)

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### Week 2

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1		Diced turkey (¾ ounce)	Tossed salad: Lettuce (½ cup) with tomatoes and cucumbers (¼ cup)			Enriched croutons (¼ ounce)  Low-fat dressing (1 tablespoon)
2			Sliced avocado (½ cup)		Whole- wheat toast (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	
3		Sunflower butter (1 tablespoon)		Apple slices (½ cup)		
4		Hummus pita pocket: chickpeas (⅓ cup)			Whole- wheat pita half (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	Shredded carrots (1 tablespoon)
5			Diced cucumbers (¼ cup)  Grated carrots (¼ cup)		Enriched pretzels (½ ounce)	Low-fat dip (1 tablespoon)

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### Week 3

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1				Mixed berries (½ cup)	Soft whole-grain pretzel (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	
2		Low-fat cottage cheese (⅛ cup)		Canned apricots in juice (½ cup)		
3		Tortilla wrap: Refried beans (⅛ cup)			Whole-grain tortilla (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	Diced tomato (⅛ cup) Shredded cheese (1 tablespoon)
4			Carrot-pineapple-raisin salad: Shredded carrots (½ cup)			Crushed pineapple (⅛ cup) Raisins (1 teaspoon)
5			Roasted cauliflower bites (½ cup)	Honeydew melon (½ cup)		Low-fat dip (1 tablespoon)

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### Week 4

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1		Part-skim Mozzarella cheese stick (½ ounce)		Red grapes (½ cup)		
2		Ants on a log: Peanut butter (1 tablespoon)	Carrot sticks, thinly sliced (¼ cup)  Celery sticks, thinly sliced (¼ cup)			Raisins (1 tablespoon)
3			Corn and black bean salad (½ cup)		Whole-grain pita chips (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	
4		Pasta veggie salad: Ham (¾ ounce)			Enriched rotini pasta (¼ cup)	Diced vegetables: Carrots, broccoli, and tomatoes (¼ cup)
5				Sliced kiwi (½ cup)	Whole-grain cornbread (1 ounce) <b>WGR</b>	

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### Week 5

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1		Hummus (⅓ cup chickpeas)	Zucchini sticks, thinly sliced (¼ cup)  Pepper strips, thinly sliced (¼ cup)			
2		Peanut butter (1 tablespoon)	Carrot sticks, thinly sliced (½ cup)			
3				Diced papaya (½ cup)	Trail mix (cereal, pretzels, dried fruit): Whole-grain cereal rounds with ≤ 6 grams added sugars per dry ounce (¼ cup) <b>WGR</b> and enriched pretzels (¼ ounce)	Dried fruit (½ tablespoon)
4		Fruit and yogurt smoothie: Yogurt with ≤ 2 grams of added sugars per ounce (¼ cup)		Pureed strawberries (½ cup)		
5				Sliced green grapes (½ cup)	Brown rice cakes (½ ounce)	

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### Week 6

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1			Jicama sticks, thinly sliced (¼ cup) Zucchini sticks, thinly sliced (¼ cup)		Enriched bread sticks (½ ounce)	Low-fat Ranch dressing (1 tablespoon)
2			Marinated broccoli florets (½ cup)	Plums (½ cup)		
3		Low-fat Greek yogurt with ≤ 2 grams of added sugars per ounce (¼ cup)		Fruit salad: oranges, bananas, sliced grapes, pineapple (½ cup)		
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (½ cup)				Whole-wheat bagel (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	Almond butter (1 tablespoon)
5		Tuna salad (½ ounce tuna)			Whole-grain crackers (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	

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### Week 7

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1				Watermelon chunks (½ cup)	Enriched soft pretzel (½ ounce)	
2		Low-fat cottage cheese (⅛ cup)			Whole- grain puffed cereal with ≤ 6 grams added sugars per dry ounce (¾ cup) <b>WGR</b>	
3	Unflavored low-fat milk (½ cup)				Enriched pumpkin cranberry muffin (1 ounce)	
4		Shredded low-fat cheese (½ ounce)	Garden salad: Lettuce (½ cup), tomatoes, cucumbers, and carrots (¼ cup)			Low-fat Italian dressing (2 teaspoons)
5		Berry-peach yogurt parfait: Low-fat yogurt with ≤ 2 grams of added sugars per ounce (¼ cup)		Seasonal berries (¼ cup)  Diced peaches (¼ cup)		Crumbled graham crackers (1 tablespoon)

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### Week 8

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1		Low-fat cheese (½ ounce)			Whole-wheat pita bread triangles (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	Vegetable salsa (⅛ cup)
2			Lentil salad (⅛ c) with diced tomatoes (⅛ c) and shredded carrots (⅛ c)	Pineapple chunks (½ cup)		
3			Marinated diced cucumber-tomato salad (½ cup)		Whole-grain roll (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	
4				Strawberry shortcake: Sliced strawberries (½ cup)	Enriched biscuit (½ ounce)	Whipped cream (1 tablespoon)
5		Chicken salad (½ ounce cooked chicken)			Whole-grain crackers (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	

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### Week 9

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1				Pineapple slices (½ cup)	Whole- grain bagel (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	Light cream cheese (½ tablespoon)
2			Marinated chickpea salad (½ cup)		Enriched pretzels (½ ounce)	
3				Sliced kiwi (½ cup)	Whole- grain puffed cereal with ≤ 6 grams added sugars per dry ounce (¾ cup) <b>WGR</b>	
4		Almond butter (1 tablespoon)		Frozen banana (½ cup)		
5		Herbed cottage cheese (⅙ cup)	Celery sticks, thinly sliced, and cucumber slices (½ cup)			

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### Week 10

Day	Milk ½ cup	MMA ½ oz eq	Vegetables ½ cup	Fruits ½ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1		Hard-boiled egg (½ large)			Whole- grain roll (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	
2			Diced cherry tomatoes (½ cup)	Diced pears (½ cup)		
3			Refried beans (¾ cup)  Salsa (⅓ cup)		Whole-corn tortilla chips (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (½ cup)		Broccoli florets (¼ cup)  Red pepper strips, thinly sliced (¼ cup)			Low-fat Ranch dip (1 tablespoon)
5		Peanut butter (1 tablespoon)			Whole- wheat bagel (½ ounce) <b>WGR</b>	

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## Resources

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>

Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting\\_summary\\_charts\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_cacfp.pdf)

Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers (Institute of Child Nutrition):

<https://theicn.org/resources/1575/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers/118740/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers.pdf>

Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Menu Planning (CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/menu-planning>

Menu Planning Basics: A Guide for CACFP Operators in Child Care (Institute of Child Nutrition):

<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/menu-planning-basics-cacfp>

Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/recipes-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources\\_cacfp\\_meal\\_patterns.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf)

Serving Snacks in the CACFP (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-snacks-cacfp>

Snack Inspiration (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction):

[https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/snack\\_inspiration.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/snack_inspiration.pdf)

Snacks ("Menu Planning" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/menu-planning#Snacks>

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For more information visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/menu\\_cacfp\\_snack.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/menu_cacfp_snack.pdf).

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2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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