

# Comparison of the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

This document summarizes the differences between the federal and state nutrition standards for competitive foods in schools, which include the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Smart Snacks nutrition standards and the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS). The topics are provided in three different comparison charts:

- definitions that apply to the state and federal nutrition standards ([section 1](#));
- nutrition standards for foods, including the specific nutrients and allowable exemptions for certain foods ([section 2](#)); and
- nutrition standards for beverages ([section 3](#)).

Each chart includes the applicable implementation guidance and resources for each topic.

## Contents

Contents .....	1
Overview of Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards .....	2
Overview of Connecticut Nutrition Standards .....	2
Overview of Requirements for Beverages .....	3
Additional State and Federal Laws .....	3
Resources .....	4
Comparison Chart Section 1 – Definitions .....	7
Comparison Chart Section 2 – Nutrition Standards for Foods .....	14
Comparison Chart Section 3 – Nutrition Standards for Beverages .....	31

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

## Overview of Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

The federal Smart Snacks nutrition standards are defined by the USDA's final rule, [\*National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School\*](#) (Federal Register, Vol. 81, No. 146, July 29, 2016). The Smart Snacks nutrition standards apply to all competitive foods and beverages sold to students during the school day, in all areas of the school campus, and in all schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), including public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs).

Smart Snacks began on July 1, 2014, under the [interim final rule](#) (Federal Register, Vol. 78, No. 125, June 28, 2013). The final rule revisions took effect on September 27, 2016. The Smart Snacks requirements are incorporated in the "Competitive food service and standards" section of the NSLP regulations ([7 CFR 210.11](#)).

For more information on Smart Snacks, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Summary of Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards](#), and visit the CSDE's [Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards](#) webpage.

## Overview of Connecticut Nutrition Standards

The CSDE developed the CNS in 2006, as required by [Section 10-215e](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S) in response to the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) requirements of C.G.S. [Section 10-215f](#). HFC requires that the board of education or school governing authority (BOE) for all Connecticut public school districts that participate in the NSLP must vote annually whether they will or will not implement the healthy food option of HFC. Districts that choose this option must follow the CNS for all foods sold separately from reimbursable meals to students on school premises, at all times, and from all sources. The CNS also applies to all foods served in the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). The CNS does not apply to NSLP private schools or RCCIs, which must follow Smart Snacks.

For detailed guidance on the HFC requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Complying with Healthy Food Certification](#) training program and visit the CSDE's [HFC](#) webpage. For more information on the CNS, refer to the CSDE's [Summary of Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) and [Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools](#), and visit the CSDE's [CNS](#) webpage.

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

## Overview of Requirements for Beverages

The state beverage requirements defined by C.G.S. [Section 10-221q](#) and are separate from the CNS. The state beverage requirements apply to all beverages sold to students in public schools at all times, including public schools that do not participate in the NSLP, SBP, or HFC. The state beverage requirements do not apply to private schools or RCCIs. Private schools and RCCIs that participate in the NSLP or SBP must follow Smart Snacks. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Summary Chart of Federal and State Laws for Beverages in Connecticut Public Schools, Private Schools, and Residential Child Care Institutions](#).

Some state beverage requirements are stricter than Smart Snacks and some Smart Snacks beverage requirements are stricter than the state beverage requirements. When these laws differ, the stricter requirements apply. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

For public schools, the stricter provisions of each law are summarized in the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Beverages in Connecticut Public Schools](#). The CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage identifies beverages that comply with the federal and state requirements.

## Additional State and Federal Laws

Other state and federal laws require additional restrictions for selling and giving foods and beverages to students in schools. The CSDE's resources below provide an overview of the state and federal laws for selling and giving foods and beverages to students in each type of school, and how they apply to different sources of competitive foods.

- HFC public schools: [Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#) and [Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#)
- Non-HFC public schools: [Requirements for Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools](#) and [Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools](#)
- Private schools and RCCIs: [Requirements for Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions](#) and [Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions](#)

The resources below provide additional guidance on competitive foods in schools.

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

## Resources

[Allowable Beverages in Connecticut Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/allowable\\_beverages\\_public\\_schools.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/allowable_beverages_public_schools.pdf)

[Beverage Requirements](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/beverage-requirements>

[Competitive Foods in Schools](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/competitive-foods>

[Complying with Healthy Food Certification](#) (CSDE training program):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification/hfc-training-program>

[Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/connecticut-nutrition-standards>

[Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance](#) (CSDE's Connecticut Nutrition Standards webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/connecticut-nutrition-standards/evaluating-foods-for-cns-compliance>

[Final Rule: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the HHFKA of 2010](#) (81 FR 50132):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/fr-072916d>

[Guidance on Evaluating Recipes for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/evaluating\\_recipes\\_cns\\_compliance.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/evaluating_recipes_cns_compliance.pdf)

[Healthy Food Certification](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification>

[Healthy Fundraising](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/resources/healthy\\_fundraising.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/resources/healthy_fundraising.pdf)

[HFC Public Schools](#) (CSDE's Competitive Foods in Schools webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/competitive-foods/hfc-public-schools>

[List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/list-of-acceptable-foods-and-beverages>

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

## [Overview of Connecticut Competitive Foods Regulations](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/overview\\_ct\\_competitive\\_foods\\_regulations.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/overview_ct_competitive_foods_regulations.pdf)

## [Overview of Federal and State Laws for Competitive Foods in Connecticut Public Schools, Private Schools, and Residential Child Care Institutions](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/overview\\_federal\\_state\\_laws\\_competitive\\_foods.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/overview_federal_state_laws_competitive_foods.pdf)

## [Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements\\_competitive\\_foods\\_hfc.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements_competitive_foods_hfc.pdf)

## [Requirements for Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements\\_competitive\\_foods\\_nonhfc.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements_competitive_foods_nonhfc.pdf)

## [Requirements for Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements\\_competitive\\_foods\\_private\\_rcci.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements_competitive_foods_private_rcci.pdf)

## [Resources for Meeting the Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in Schools](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/resources\\_federal\\_state\\_requirements\\_competitive\\_foods.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/resources_federal_state_requirements_competitive_foods.pdf)

## [Smart Snacks in Schools](#) (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards/smartsnacks>

## [Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/smart-snacks-nutrition-standards>

## [Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary\\_chart\\_requirements\\_competitive\\_foods\\_hfc.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary_chart_requirements_competitive_foods_hfc.pdf)

## [Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary\\_chart\\_requirements\\_competitive\\_foods\\_hfc.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary_chart_requirements_competitive_foods_hfc.pdf)

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

[Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary\\_chart\\_requirements\\_competitive\\_foods\\_nonhfc.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary_chart_requirements_competitive_foods_nonhfc.pdf)

[Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summarychart\\_requirements\\_competitive\\_foods\\_private\\_rcci.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summarychart_requirements_competitive_foods_private_rcci.pdf)

[Summary of Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/cns/connecticut\\_nutrition\\_standards\\_summary.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/cns/connecticut_nutrition_standards_summary.pdf)

[Summary of Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards](#) (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary\\_smart\\_snacks\\_nutrition\\_standards.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary_smart_snacks_nutrition_standards.pdf)

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

## Comparison Chart Section 1 – Definitions

Term	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>D1 acceptable grain products</b>	<p>Acceptable grain products must contain 50 percent or more whole grains by weight or have whole grains as the first ingredient. If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be a whole grain.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> This definition is inconsistent with the WGR definition for school meals under the USDA's final rule, <a href="#">Nutrition Standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs</a> (77 FR 4088), which updates the school meals offered under the NSLP and SBP, as required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296). Under the USDA's final rule for meals in the NSLP and SBP, whole grain-rich (WGR) foods must contain 50 percent or more whole grains by weight and any other grain ingredients must be enriched. Products that contain any noncreditable grains at levels of more than two percent of the product formula (¼ ounce equivalent) do not meet this standard. The definition of acceptable grain products in the Smart Snacks final rule does not include these criteria.</p>	<p>Acceptable grain products are WGR. The food item is a WGR grain product that meets the applicable WGR criteria below. For guidance on what foods belong to each grain group (A-I), refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Commercial grain products in groups A-G (e.g., breads, muffins, pancakes, and crackers) and group H (e.g., rice, pasta, quinoa, and cooked breakfast cereals like oatmeal):</b> 1) The product is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H.</li> <li><b>Ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals (group I):</b> 1) The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</li> <li><b>Commercial combination foods containing a grain portion from groups A-I, e.g., pizza crust in pizza, noodles in lasagna, and breading on chicken nuggets:</b> 1) The grain portion is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains in the grain portion cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I.</li> </ol> <p>For more information on the WGR requirements and noncreditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, <a href="#">Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs</a> and <a href="#">When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Term	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>D2 accompaniments</b>	<p>Foods that accompany another food, such as butter, cream cheese, syrup, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and salad dressing. Foods must be evaluated for compliance with Smart Snacks based on the serving with its accompaniments. Examples include hamburger with ketchup and mustard, bagel with cream cheese, waffles with syrup, WGR pasta with butter, salad with dressing, and fruit crisp with whipped cream.</p> <p>For <b>high schools only</b>, accompaniments also include foods (such as milk, cream, and sugar) served with beverages in the Smart Snacks category of low-calorie and no-calorie beverages, e.g., coffee and tea. These beverages must be evaluated for compliance with Smart Snacks based on the serving with its accompaniments, such as coffee with cream and sugar or tea with milk and honey (refer to <a href="#">S24</a> in section 3).</p>	<p>Foods that accompany another food item, such as butter, cream cheese, syrup, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and salad dressing. Foods must be evaluated for compliance with the CNS based on the serving with its accompaniments. Examples include hamburgers with ketchup and mustard, bagels with cream cheese, waffles with syrup, WGR muffins with butter, salads with dressing, and fruit crisps with whipped cream.</p>	State
<b>D3 combination foods</b>	<p>Products that contain two or more components representing two or more of the recommended food groups: fruit, vegetable, dairy, protein, or grains.</p>	<p>Products that contain two or more components representing two or more of the recommended food groups: fruit, vegetable, dairy, protein, or grains. For example, macaroni and cheese contains pasta (grains) and cheese (protein). Combination foods generally cannot be separated (such as pizza or a burrito) or are not intended to be separated (such as a hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich). Combination foods include both entree items (refer to <a href="#">D5</a> in this section) and non-entree combination foods (refer to <a href="#">D6</a> in this section).</p>	Same



## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Term	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>D4 competitive foods</b>	All food and beverages other than meals reimbursed under programs authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 available for sale to students on the school campus during the school day.	<p>Any foods and beverages sold to children anytime on school premises other than meals served through the USDA's school meal programs. Competitive food sales include, but are not limited to, <i>cafeteria a la carte sales, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers</i>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) requires that the CNS applies to all foods sold separately from reimbursable meals <b>at all times</b>, not just during the school day. Therefore, the state HFC statute supersedes the "school day" timeframe of Smart Snacks.</p> <p><b>Section 10-215e. Nutrition standards for food that is not part of lunch or breakfast program.</b> Not later than August 1, 2006, and January 1 of each year thereafter, the Department of Education shall publish a set of nutrition standards for food items offered for sale to students at schools. Such standards shall not apply to food sold as part of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program unless such items are purchased separately from a school lunch or breakfast that is reimbursable under such program.</p>	State

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Term	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>D5 entree items</b>	<p>An item that includes only the following three categories of food items intended as the main dish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a combination food of meat or meat alternate and WGR food;</li> <li>a combination food of vegetable or fruit and meat or meat alternate; or</li> <li>a meat or meat alternate alone, except for yogurt, low-fat or reduced fat cheese, nuts, seeds, and nut or seed butters and meat snacks; or</li> <li>WGR grain-only breakfast entrees served in the SBP.</li> </ul> <p><b>WGR grain-only breakfast entrees:</b> A school food authority is permitted to determine which WGR grain-only breakfast entrees are entree items for breakfasts offered as part of the SBP. Allowable breakfast entrees are subject to the entree exemptions on the day of and the day after service in the SBP. Such entree items also may be served at lunch in the NSLP on the day of or the day after service in the SBP (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in section 2). For more information, refer to <a href="#">USDA Memo SP 35-2014: Grain Entrees Related to the Smart Snacks in School Standards</a>.</p>	<p>For the CNS, entree items include only three categories of main dish food items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a combination food of meat/meat alternate and WGR food, e.g., breakfast egg sandwich on whole-wheat English muffin, turkey wrap on whole-wheat tortilla, pizza with WGR crust, hamburger on whole-grain bun and bean burrito with whole-corn tortilla;</li> <li>a combination food of vegetable/fruit and meat/meat alternate, e.g., chef's salad with turkey, cheese and hard-boiled egg, fruit and cheese platter, yogurt and fruit parfait, school-made yogurt and fruit/vegetable smoothies, baked potato with chili and chicken vegetable stir-fry; and</li> <li>a meat/meat alternate alone (e.g., sausage patty, hard-boiled egg, grilled chicken), excluding yogurt, cheese, nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, and meat snacks, e.g., beef jerky and meat sticks. These foods must comply with the CNS for the snacks category (refer to <a href="#">S4</a> in section 2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> The CNS entree definition does <b>not</b> include grain-only breakfast items. All grain-only products must comply with the CNS for the snacks category. They are <b>not</b> eligible for the exemption for entrées sold a la carte during the meal service on the same day that they are planned and sold as part of a reimbursable meal (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in section 2). For more information, refer to <a href="#">CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 29-14: Federal and State Requirements for Grain-Only Entrees (Smart Snacks versus Connecticut Nutrition Standards)</a>.</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Term	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>D6 non-entree combination foods</b>	No definition	<p>Products that do not meet the definition of entree items but that contain two or more components representing two or more of the recommended food groups: fruits, vegetables, dairy, protein, or grains. This category addresses nutrient-rich combination foods that do not meet the entree definition, such as peanut butter with carrot sticks and hummus dip with vegetables. These foods either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>do not meet the main dish criteria for entree items (refer to <a href="#">D5 in this section</a>); or</li> <li>do not provide the minimum meal pattern requirements for meat/meat alternates and grains together, or meat/meat alternates alone.</li> </ul>	Not applicable
<b>D7 paired exempt food</b>	<p><b>paired exempt foods:</b> Foods that when packaged together and sold with other products (without added ingredients) retain their individually designated exemption for total fat, saturated fat, and sugar. For example, peanut butter is exempt from the total fat and saturated fat requirements. When it is paired with a vegetable or fruit, such as celery or apples, the paired snack retains the total fat and saturated fat exemptions and may be served if they meet the calorie and sodium limits. For more information, refer to <a href="#">USDA Memo SP 63-2014: Smart Snacks Standards for Exempt Foods when Paired Together</a>.</p>	<p>The CNS does <b>not</b> allow paired exemptions. For more information, refer to <a href="#">CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 59-14: Smart Snacks Standards for Exempt Foods when Paired Together</a>.</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Term	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>D8 sales</b>	<p>The exchange of a determined amount of money or its equivalent (such as coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items) for foods and beverages. Sales also include programs and activities that charge a fee that includes the cost of foods and beverages provided to students, and activities that suggest a student donation in exchange for foods and beverages.</p> <p>Sales do not include coupons and similar items (such as food rewards) that are given to students free of any charge or contribution and can be exchanged for foods and beverages.</p>	<p>The exchange of a determined amount of money or its equivalent (such as coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items) for foods and beverages. Sales also include programs and activities that charge a fee that includes the cost of foods and beverages provided to students, and activities that suggest a student donation in exchange for foods and beverages.</p> <p>Sales include coupons and similar items (such as food rewards) that are given to students free of any charge or contribution and can be exchanged for foods and beverages.</p>	State
<b>D9 school day</b>	<p>The period from the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day.</p>	<p>The regular school day is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> "School day" is used only for the purposes of <b>food exemptions</b> because C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-215f</a> (HFC) requires the CNS to apply to all food sales <b>at all times</b>, except for the allowed food exemptions (refer to "<a href="#">Food exemptions</a>" under S2 in section 2). Therefore, the state HFC statute supersedes the "school day" timeframe of Smart Snacks.</p>	Same

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Term	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>D10 school campus</b>	All areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the school that are accessible to students during the school day.	<p><b>School premises:</b> All areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the local and regional board of education, the regional vocational-technical school system and the governing authority district or school.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-215f</a> (HFC) requires that the CNS applies to all food items made available for sale to students in public schools under the jurisdiction of the local and regional board of education, the regional vocational-technical school system, and the governing authority district or school, “<b>at all times</b>, and from all sources,” not just during the school day (refer to <a href="#">D9</a> in this section). Therefore, the state HFC statute supersedes the “school day” timeframe of Smart Snacks.</p>	State
<b>D11 sweeteners</b>	No definition	Ingredients that are used to sweeten foods and beverages. Sweeteners include <b>nutritive sweeteners</b> that contain calories (such as sugars, syrups, and fruit juice concentrate); <b>nonnutritive sweeteners</b> that do not contain calories, including <i>artificial nonnutritive sweeteners</i> (such as acesulfame potassium (Ace-K), advantame, aspartame, neotame, saccharin, and sucralose) and <i>plant-based nonnutritive sweeteners</i> (such as stevia, monk fruit, and thaumatin); and <b>sugar alcohols</b> that are low in calories (such as sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, maltitol syrup, lactitol, erythritol, isomalt, and hydrogenated starch hydrolysates (HSH)).	Not applicable
<b>D12 bean dip</b>	A spread made from ground pulses (beans, peas, and/or lentils) with one or more of the following optional ingredients: ground nut/seed butter (such as tahini [ground sesame] or peanut butter; vegetable oil (such as olive oil, canola oil, soybean oil); seasoning (such as salt, citric acid); vegetables and juice for flavor (such as olives, roasted peppers, garlic, lemon juice); and for manufactured bean dip, ingredients necessary as preservatives and/or to maintain freshness.	Same	Not applicable

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

## Comparison Chart Section 2 – Nutrition Standards for Foods

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S1 Who must comply</b>	The Smart Snacks nutrition standards apply to all schools that participate in the NSLP and SBP, including public schools, private schools, and RCCIs.	<p>The CNS applies only to all <b>public schools</b> that have certified for the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification (HFC). This is indicated on each public school district's annual <i>Healthy Food Certification Statement, Addendum to Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs (ED-099)</i>, submitted to the CSDE by July 1 of each year. <b>Private schools and RCCIs are not eligible to participate in HFC under C.G.S. Section 10-215f.</b></p> <p><b>Note:</b> HFC eligibility is legislated by state statute. The C.G.S. apply only to public schools. Under C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-215f</a>, HFC applies only to each local and regional board of education, the regional vocational-technical school system, and the governing authority for each state charter school, interdistrict magnet school, and endowed academy that participates in the NSLP.</p>	Not applicable

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S2 Timeframe</b>	The Smart Snacks nutrition standards apply to all foods sold (a) outside the school meal programs; (b) on the school campus; and (c) at any time during the school day.	<p>The CNS applies to all offered for sale to students on school premises <b>at all times</b>, in all schools, and from all sources, including school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, fundraising activities, and any other sources of food sales on school premises.</p> <p><b>Food exemptions:</b> Foods that do not meet the CNS can only be sold to students on school premises if the BOE votes to allow (as indicated in section 3 of the annual online HFC Statement (Addendum to Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs (ED-099)) and the sales meet three criteria: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day (refer to <a href="#">D9</a> in section 1) or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the foods are not sold from a vending machine or school store.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An “<b>event</b>” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and school debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not.</li> <li>“<b>Location</b>” means where the event is being held. For example, cookies could be sold on the side of the soccer field during a soccer game but cannot be sold in the school cafeteria while a game is played on the soccer field.</li> </ul> <p>For information on the HFC fundraiser requirements, refer to <a href="#">S6</a> in this section.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> This timeframe is legislated by state statute. C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-215f</a> requires that the CNS applies to all foods sold separately from reimbursable meals <b>at all times</b> not just during the school day (refer to <a href="#">D9</a> in section 1). Therefore, the state statute supersedes the Smart Snacks timeframe.</p>	State
<b>S3 Additional funding</b>	None	C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-215b</a> requires that districts that choose the healthy food option of HFC receive an additional 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free, and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year.	Not applicable

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S4 Food categories</b>	<p>The final rule groups competitive foods into the following three categories: 1) entree items (sold only a la carte); 2) side dishes; and 3) beverages. To be allowed for sale to students, a competitive food item must meet at least one of the three general standards (refer to "General standards for competitive foods" in <a href="#">S8</a>) and all competitive foods nutrient standards.</p> <p>All foods are evaluated for compliance with the competitive food standards based on the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p>	<p>The CNS groups competitive foods into the following six categories: 1) snacks; 2) entree items (sold only a la carte); 3) non-entree combination foods; 4) fruits and vegetables; 5) cooked grains; and 6) soups. To be allowed for sale to students, a competitive food item must meet at least one of the three general standards (refer to "General standards for competitive foods" in <a href="#">S8</a>) and all nutrient standards for the specific food category.</p> <p>All foods are evaluated for compliance with the CNS based on the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The CNS applies only to foods. The requirements for beverages are separate from the CNS and are legislated through C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-221q</a>. Some state beverage requirements are different from Smart Snacks. When the laws differ, the stricter requirements apply (refer to <a href="#">S24</a> in section 3).</p>	Not applicable
<b>S5 Portion size</b>	<p>The nutrient standards apply to the item as packaged or served, including any accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1). The individual serving size or package cannot exceed 350 calories for entrees or 200 calories for all other foods.</p>	<p>The nutrient standards apply to the item as packaged or served, including any accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1). The individual serving size or package cannot exceed 350 calories for entrees or 200 calories for all other foods.</p>	Same



## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S6 Fundraisers</b>	<p>The USDA allows a special exemption for foods and beverages that do not meet the Smart Snacks nutrition standards, but that are sold for the purpose of conducting infrequent school-sponsored fundraisers. Such exempt fundraisers must not occur more often than the frequency specified by the state agency. Exempted fundraiser foods or beverages cannot be sold in competition with school meals in the food serving area during the meal service.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The state agency (CSDE) does not allow exemptions for fundraisers. Therefore, all fundraisers sold during the school day must meet Smart Snacks.</p>	<p>The CNS applies to <b>all food items</b> sold to students separately from reimbursable meals at <b>all times</b> and from <b>all sources</b>, including <b>all fundraising activities on school premises</b>, regardless of whether they are sponsored by the school or an outside group. The CNS also applies if students deliver money to school for the food items and picking up the food items at school. This constitutes selling food to students on school premises. For fundraisers to comply with <a href="#">Section 10-215f</a>, students may bring the orders and money to school, but parents or other adults must pick up the food items instead of students.</p> <p><b>Exemption criteria:</b> Foods that do not comply with the CNS cannot be sold to students on school premises unless the BOE has voted to allow exemptions and the sales meet the following exemption criteria of the state HFC statute: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day (refer to <a href="#">D9</a> in section 1) or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the foods are not sold from a vending machine or school store.</p> <p>The following resources provide more information on the fundraiser requirements for HFC schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Complying with Healthy Food Certification Module 6: Fundraisers</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Healthy Fundraising</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Requirements for Food and Beverage Fundraisers in HFC Public Schools</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sample Fundraiser Form for Healthy Food Certification</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Fundraiser compliance is legislated by state statute. C.G.S. Section 10-215f requires that the CNS applies to <b>all foods</b> sold separately from reimbursable meals at <b>all times</b> and from <b>all sources</b>, including “any fundraising activities on school premises, whether or not school sponsored.” Therefore, the state statute supersedes Smart Snacks.</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S7 Career centers and culinary arts programs</b>	<p>The USDA is willing to consider each situation on a case-by-case basis and provide a waiver where appropriate. State agencies are advised to contact their FNS Regional Office as situations arise.</p> <p>For more information, refer to <a href="#">USDA Memo SP 40-2014: Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards and Culinary Education Programs</a> and the CSDE's resources, <a href="#">Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Culinary Programs in Non-HFC Public Schools</a> and <a href="#">Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Culinary Programs in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions</a>.</p>	<p>The CNS applies to <b>all food items</b> sold to students separately from reimbursable meals at <b>all times</b> and from <b>all sources</b>, including all foods sold to students as part of culinary programs.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> These requirements are legislated by state statute. C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-215f</a> requires that the CNS applies to <b>all foods</b> sold separately from reimbursable meals at <b>all times</b> and from <b>all sources</b>. Foods sold to students in career centers and culinary arts programs must follow the CNS. Therefore, the state statute supersedes the Smart Snacks waiver for career centers and culinary arts programs.</p> <p>For more information, refer to <a href="#">CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 31-14: Federal and State Requirements for Culinary Education Programs (Smart Snacks versus Connecticut Nutrition Standards)</a> and the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Culinary Programs in HFC Public Schools</a>.</p>	State

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S8 General standards for competitive foods</b>	<p>To be allowable, a competitive food item must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. meet all of the proposed competitive food nutrient standards; <b>and</b></li> <li>2. be a grain product that contains 50% or more whole grains by weight or have whole grains as the first ingredient *; <b>or</b></li> <li>3. have as the first ingredient* one of the non-grain main food groups: fruits, vegetables, dairy, or protein foods (meat, beans, poultry, seafood, eggs, nuts, seeds, etc.); <b>or</b></li> <li>4. be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup fruit and/or vegetable.</li> </ol> <p>* If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be one of the above.</p>	<p>To be allowable, a competitive food item must meet <b>all</b> nutrient standards and <b>at least one</b> of the following three criteria:</p> <p><b>WGR foods:</b> The food item is a WGR grain product that meets the applicable WGR criteria below. For guidance on what foods belong to each grain group (A-I), refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Commercial grain products in groups A-G (e.g., breads, muffins, pancakes, and crackers) and group H (e.g., rice, pasta, quinoa, and cooked breakfast cereals like oatmeal):</b> 1) The product is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H.</li> <li>2. <b>Ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals (group I):</b> 1) The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</li> <li>3. <b>Commercial combination foods containing a grain portion from groups A-I, e.g., pizza crust in pizza, noodles in lasagna, and breading on chicken nuggets:</b> 1) The grain portion is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains in the grain portion cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I.</li> </ol> <p>For more information on the WGR requirements and noncreditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, <a href="#">Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs</a> and <a href="#">When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S8</b> <b>General standards for competitive foods,</b> <i>continued</i>	<p><b>Exemptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fresh fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water are exempt from all nutrient standards.</li> <li>Canned and frozen fruits with no added ingredients except water, or are packed in 100% juice, extra light syrup, or light syrup are exempt from all nutrient standards.</li> </ul> <p>Low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats are exempt from all nutrient standards.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Food Groups:</b> The food item has one of the following food groups as the first ingredient: fruits, vegetables, dairy or protein foods, e.g., meat, beans, poultry, seafood, eggs, nuts, and seeds. If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be a fruit, vegetable, whole grain, dairy, or protein food.</li> <li><b>Combination Foods:</b> The food item is a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable.</li> </ol> <p><b>Exemptions:</b></p> <p>The following foods are exempt from the general standards and all nutrient standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water;</li> <li>canned fruits with no added ingredients except water or that are packed in 100 percent juice, extra light syrup or light syrup, all without added nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes (refer to <a href="#">S20</a> in this section)); and</li> <li>low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats are exempt from all nutrient standards.</li> </ul> <p>All other food products are not exempt and must meet at least one of the general standards and all nutrient standards for the specific food category (refer to <a href="#">S4</a> in this section).</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S9 NSLP/SBP entree items sold a la carte</b>	Any entree item offered as part of the NSLP or SBP is exempt from all competitive food standards if it is sold as a competitive food on the day of service or the day after service in the lunch or breakfast program. Exempt entrees that are sold as competitive food must be offered in the same or smaller portion sizes as the NSLP and SBP, and with the same accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).	<p>Entree items that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the same day that they are planned and served as part of a reimbursable school meal are exempt from all nutrient standards if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are the same or smaller portion size as the NSLP and SBP;</li> <li>• have the same accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1); and</li> <li>• do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D10</a> in section 1), sugar alcohols (refer to <a href="#">D10</a> in section 1), or chemically altered fat substitutes (refer to <a href="#">S21</a> in this section).</li> </ul> <p>This exemption provision applies <b>only to entree items that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the same day</b> that they are planned and sold as part of a reimbursable meal. It does not apply to any other meal items that are also sold a la carte such as fruits, vegetables, soups, breads, rice, and pasta. All other non-entree meal items that are sold a la carte are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards. For example, french fries that are part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless they comply with the CNS for the fruits and vegetables category. Muffins that are part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless they comply with the CNS for the snacks category.</p>	State
<b>S10 Sugar-free chewing gum</b>	Sugar-free chewing gum is exempt from all competitive food standards.	All gum (including sugar-free) is prohibited.	State

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S11 Grain items</b>	<p>Acceptable grain items must include 50 percent or more whole grains by weight, or have whole grains as the first ingredient.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> This is inconsistent with the definition of WGR foods under the NSLP and SBP regulations. For the NSLP and SBP meal patterns, WGR products must contain at least 50 percent whole grains and any remaining grains must be enriched (refer to <a href="#">D1</a> in section 1).</p>	<p>The food item is a WGR grain product that meets the applicable WGR criteria below. For guidance on what foods belong to each grain group (A-I), refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Commercial grain products in groups A-G (e.g., breads, muffins, pancakes, and crackers) and group H (e.g., rice, pasta, quinoa, and cooked breakfast cereals like oatmeal):</b> 1) The product is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H.</li> <li><b>Ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals (group I):</b> 1) The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</li> <li><b>Commercial combination foods containing a grain portion from groups A-I, e.g., pizza crust in pizza, noodles in lasagna, and breading on chicken nuggets:</b> 1) The grain portion is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains in the grain portion cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I.</li> </ol> <p>For more information on the WGR requirements and noncreditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, <a href="#">Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs</a> and <a href="#">When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs</a>.</p>	State

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S12 Total fat</b>	<p>Acceptable food items must have no more than 35 percent of calories from total fat as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Exemptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced fat cheese (including part-skim mozzarella) is exempt from the total fat standard.</li> <li>• Nuts and seeds and nut/seed butters are exempt from the total fat standard.</li> <li>• Products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added nutritive sweeteners or fats are exempt from the total fat standard.</li> <li>• Seafood with no added fat is exempt from the total fat standard.</li> <li>• Whole eggs with no added fat are exempt from the total fat standard.</li> <li>• Bean dips are exempt from the total fat standard. This exemption applies to products marketed as hummus, and bean dips made from any variety of beans, peas, or lentils.</li> </ul> <p>Combination products other than paired exempt foods are not exempt and must meet all the nutrient standards.</p>	<p>No more than 35 percent of calories from total fat as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1). No chemically altered fat substitutes (refer to <a href="#">S20</a> in this section).</p> <p><b>Exemptions:</b></p> <p>The following foods are exempt from the fat standard but cannot contain chemically altered fat substitutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low-fat or reduced fat 100 percent natural cheese (including part-skim mozzarella);</li> <li>• nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters; and</li> <li>• products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1) or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes);</li> <li>• seafood with no added fat (including chemically altered fat substitutes);</li> <li>• whole eggs with no added fat; and</li> <li>• bean dips (including products marketed as hummus and bean dips made from any variety of beans, peas, or lentils).</li> </ul> <p>All other foods are not exempt and must meet the fat standard. The fat exemption does not apply to combination foods (e.g., macaroni and cheese, peanut butter sandwich, and trail mix) or foods containing cheese, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and dried fruit as ingredients, e.g., peanut butter cookies, pecan cookies, granola bars with nuts, cranberry walnut muffin, cheese crackers, cheese sauce, peanut butter crackers, and sesame seed crackers.</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entrees that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the <b>same day</b> that they are sold as part of reimbursable meals are exempt from all nutrient standards if they meet the entree exemption criteria (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S13</b> <b>Saturated fat</b>	<p>Acceptable food items must have less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Exemptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced fat cheese (including part-skim mozzarella) is exempt from the saturated fat standard.</li> <li>Nuts and seeds and nut/seed butters are exempt from the saturated fat standard.</li> <li>Products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added nutritive sweeteners or fats are exempt from the saturated fat standard.</li> <li>Whole eggs with no added fat are exempt from the total fat standard.</li> </ul> <p>Combination products other than paired exempt foods are not exempt and must meet all the nutrient standards.</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entree items served as an NSLP or SBP entrees are exempt from all competitive food standards if they are sold a la carte on the <b>day of or day after</b> service in the program meal (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	<p>Less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Exemptions:</b></p> <p>The following foods are exempt from the saturated fat standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>low-fat or reduced fat 100 percent natural cheese (including part-skim mozzarella);</li> <li>nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters;</li> </ul> <p>products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1) or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes (refer to <a href="#">S20</a>)); and</p> <p>whole eggs with no added fat.</p> <p>All other foods are not exempt and must meet the fat standard. The fat exemption does not apply to combination foods (e.g., macaroni and cheese, peanut butter sandwich, and trail mix) or foods containing cheese, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, or dried fruit as ingredients. Examples include peanut butter cookies, pecan cookies, granola bars with nuts, cranberry walnut muffin, cheese crackers, cheese sauce, peanut butter crackers, and sesame seed crackers.</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entrees that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the <b>same day</b> that they are sold as part of reimbursable meals are exempt from all nutrient standards if they meet the entree exemption criteria (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	State



# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S14 Sugars</b>	<p>Acceptable food items must have no more than 35 percent of weight from total sugar as served.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Breakfast cereals (RTE and cooked, e.g., oatmeal):</b> <i>Effective July 1, 2025:</i> No more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.</li> <li><b>Yogurt:</b> <i>Effective July 1, 2025:</i> No more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.</li> </ul> <p><b>Exemptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dried whole fruits or vegetables; dried whole fruit or vegetable pieces; and dehydrated fruits or vegetables with no added nutritive sweeteners are exempt from the sugar standard.</li> </ul> <p>Dried whole fruits, or pieces, with nutritive sweeteners that are required for processing and/or palatability purposes (i.e., cranberries, tart cherries, or blueberries) are exempt from the sugar standard.</p>	<p><b>All foods except yogurt, pudding, smoothies, fruits and vegetables and non-entree combination foods:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Breakfast cereals (RTE and cooked, e.g., oatmeal):</b> <i>Effective July 1, 2025:</i> No more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.</li> <li><b>Smoothies:</b> No more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce for smoothies made with low-fat yogurt and/or other low-fat dairy alternatives and/or fruit and/or 100 percent juice. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1). Portion size is limited to no more than 8 fluid ounces for elementary schools and 12 fluid ounces for middle and high schools. <i>Effective July 1, 2025:</i> No more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1). Portion size is limited to no more than 8 fluid ounces for elementary schools and 12 fluid ounces for middle and high schools.</li> <li><b>Yogurt and pudding:</b> No more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1). <i>Effective July 1, 2025:</i> No more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.</li> <li><b>Fruits and vegetables:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).</li> </ul> <p><b>Non-entree combination foods:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S14</b> <b>Sugars,</b> <i>continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Products consisting of only exempt dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added nutritive sweeteners or fats are exempt from the sugar standard.</li> </ul> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entree items served as an NSLP or SBP entrees are exempt from all competitive food standards if they are sold a la carte on the <b>day of or day after</b> service in the program meal (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	<p><b>Exemptions:</b>  The following foods are exempt from the standard for sugars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dried whole fruits or vegetables, dried whole fruit or vegetable pieces, and dehydrated fruits or vegetables, all without added sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1) or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes (refer to <a href="#">S21</a> in this section);</li> <li>products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1) or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes (refer to <a href="#">S21</a> in this section);</li> <li>frozen desserts containing only 100 percent juice or fruit and no added sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).</li> </ul> <p>All other products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entrees that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the <b>same day</b> that they are sold as part of reimbursable meals are exempt from all nutrient standards if they meet the entree exemption criteria (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S15 Sodium</b>	<p><b>Snack items and side dishes sold a la carte:</b> No more than 200 milligrams of sodium per item as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Entree items sold a la carte:</b> No more than 480 milligrams of sodium per item as served, including any added accompaniments.</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entree items served as an NSLP or SBP entrees are exempt from all competitive food standards if they are sold a la carte on the <b>day of or day after</b> service in the program meal (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	<p><b>All foods except entrees:</b> No more than 200 milligrams of sodium per item as served, including any added accompaniments.</p> <p><b>Entree items sold a la carte:</b> No more than 480 milligrams of sodium per item as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entrees that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the <b>same day</b> that they are sold as part of reimbursable meals are exempt from all nutrient standards if they meet the exemption criteria (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	Same

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S16 Calories</b>	<p><b>Snack items and side dishes sold a la carte:</b> No more than 200 calories per item as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Entree items sold a la carte:</b> No more than 350 calories per item as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entree items served as an NSLP or SBP entrees are exempt from all competitive food standards if they are sold a la carte on the <b>day of or day after</b> service in the program meal (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	<p><b>All foods except entrees:</b> No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Entree items sold a la carte:</b> No more than 350 calories as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).</p> <p><b>Entree exemptions:</b> Entrees that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the <b>same day</b> that they are sold as part of reimbursable meals are exempt from all nutrient standards if they meet the exemption criteria (refer to <a href="#">S9</a> in this section).</p>	Same
<b>S17 Accompaniments</b>	Use of accompaniments is limited when competitive food is sold to students in school. The accompaniment must be included in the nutrient profile as part of the food item served and meet all proposed standards (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).	All accompaniments (e.g., condiments) must be included in the nutrient profile as part of the food item served and meet all nutrient standards (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1).	Same

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S18 Caffeine</b>	<p><b>Elementary and middle School:</b> Foods and beverages must be caffeine-free except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine substances.</p> <p><b>High school:</b> Foods and beverages may contain caffeine.</p>	<p>No caffeine for all grade levels, except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances. Foods and beverages with trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine and related substances (such as chocolate chip cookies and coffee yogurt) are allowed if the product otherwise complies with the CNS.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-221q</a> prohibits any caffeinated beverages in public schools and therefore supersedes the caffeine standard under the final rule.</p>	State
<b>S19 Nonnutritive sweeteners</b>	No standard	<p>No artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.</p> <p>The CNS advocates whole or minimally processed foods that are naturally nutrient rich and low in added sugars. Therefore, the CNS does not allow reducing sugars through the use of any nonnutritive sweeteners (artificial or natural) or sugar alcohols. For more information on the state nutrition standards committee's rationale for this standard, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools</a>.</p>	State
<b>S20 Chemically altered fat substitutes</b>	No standard	<p>No chemically altered fat substitutes.</p> <p>The CNS advocates whole or minimally processed foods that are naturally nutrient rich and low in fat. Therefore, the CNS does not allow reducing fat with chemically altered fat substitutes such as olestra (Olean®) and microparticulated whey protein concentrate (Simplese®). For information on the state nutrition standards committee's rationale for this standard, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools</a>.</p>	State

## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	CNS	Stricter?
<b>S21 Fortification</b>	No standard	<p>No significantly fortified products except for naturally nutrient-rich foods fortified with nutrients at levels based on scientifically documented health needs.</p> <p>The CNS promotes the consumption of needed nutrients through naturally nutrient-rich healthy food choices, not through fortified products that would otherwise have little nutritional value. The CSDE does not approve any significantly fortified products for use in schools unless they are already nutrient-rich products that are fortified with nutrients at levels based on scientifically documented health needs, such as milk fortified with vitamins A and D, breakfast cereals fortified with iron, orange juice fortified with calcium, soy beverages fortified with calcium, and grain products fortified with folic acid. For information on the state nutrition standards committee's rationale for this standard, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools</a>.</p>	State
<b>S22 Supplementation</b>	No standard	<p>No nutrition supplements, e.g., amino acids, extracts and herbs or other botanicals.</p> <p>The CSDE does not approve beverage or food products containing nutrition supplements such as amino acids (e.g., taurine, glutamine, lysine and arginine), extracts (e.g., green tea extract and gotu kola extract) and herbs or other botanicals (e.g., ginseng and ginkgo biloba). Note: Products may contain the following ingredients when used for color or flavor only: vegetable and fruit extracts such as pomegranate extract, beet extract, and red cabbage extract; and <a href="#">Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved food colors</a> from natural sources such as spirulina and turmeric extract.</p> <p>For information on the state nutrition standards committee's rationale for this standard, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools</a>.</p>	State

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

## Comparison Chart Section 3 – Nutrition Standards for Beverages

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	State Beverage Statute	Stricter?
<b>S23 Beverages</b>	<p><b>Elementary and Middle School</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Water, plain, with or without carbonation (no portion size limit)</li> <li>2. Milk, low-fat or fat-free, unflavored or unflavored, including nutritionally equivalent milk alternatives permitted by the school meal requirements (≤8 fl oz)</li> <li>3. 100% fruit or vegetable juice, with or without carbonation (≤8 fl oz)</li> <li>4. 100 percent fruit and/or vegetable juice diluted with water, with or without carbonation and with no added sweeteners (≤8 fl oz)</li> </ol> <p><b>Note:</b> Public schools (HFC and non-HFC) must comply with the Smart Snacks beverage standards and the stricter provisions of the additional state beverage requirements indicated in the "State Beverages Statute" column.</p>	<p>The requirements for beverages are separate from the CNS and are legislated through C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-221q</a>. The state statute allows the five categories of beverages below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Milk (flavored or plain) with no more than 4 grams of sugar per ounce and no artificial sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).</li> <li>2. Nondairy milks such as soy or rice milk, which may be flavored but cannot contain artificial sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce, 35 percent of calories from fat per portion, and 10 <i>percent of calories from saturated fat per portion</i>.</li> <li>3. 100 percent fruit juice, vegetable juice or combination of such juices, containing no added sugars, sweeteners, or artificial sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).</li> <li>4. Beverages that contain only water and fruit or vegetable juice, with no added sugars, sweeteners, or artificial sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).These beverages must also meet the requirements specified in the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Requirements for Beverages Containing Water and Juice</a>.</li> <li>5. Water, plain or flavored with no added sugars, sweeteners, artificial sweeteners (refer to <a href="#">D11</a> in section 1).</li> </ol> <p>Portion sizes of allowable beverages are limited to no more than 12 ounces, except for water.</p>	<p>The Smart Snacks beverage requirements are stricter in some areas and the state beverage requirements are stricter in others.</p>

# Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	State Beverage Statute	Stricter?
<b>S23</b> <b>Beverages,</b> <i>continued</i>	<b>High School</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Water, plain, with or without carbonation (no portion size limit)</li> <li>2. Milk, low-fat or fat-free, unflavored or unflavored, including nutritionally equivalent milk alternatives permitted by the school meal requirements (no more 12 fl oz) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flavored milk in school meals and afterschool snacks: No more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces.</li> <li>• Flavored milk sold as a competitive food in middle and high schools: No more than 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. 100% fruit or vegetable juice, with or without carbonation (no more than 12 fl oz)</li> <li>4. 100% percent fruit and/or vegetable juice diluted with water, with or without carbonation and with no added sweeteners (no more than 12 fl oz)</li> <li>5. <b>High school only:</b> Water, flavored, calorie free, with or without carbonation (no more than 20 fl oz)</li> <li>6. <b>High school only:</b> Low-calorie beverages, with or without caffeine and/or carbonation; including calorie free flavored water: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low calorie: Less than 5 calories per 8 fluid ounces or no more than 10 calories per 20 fluid ounces (no more than 12 fl oz)</li> <li>• Low calorie: No more than 40 calories per 8 fluid ounces or no more than 60 calories per 12 fluid ounces (no more 12 fl oz)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>The state beverage requirements apply at all times, not just during the school day.</p> <p><b>Beverage exemptions:</b> Beverages that do not meet the requirements of state statute cannot be sold to students on school premises unless BOE votes to allow exemptions and the sales meet three criteria: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day (refer to <a href="#">D9</a> in section 1) or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store.</p> <p>An “<b>event</b>” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and school debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not.</p> <p>“<b>Location</b>” means where the event is being held. For example, lemonade could be sold at the baseball field during a baseball game but cannot be sold in the school cafeteria while a baseball game is played on the baseball field.</p>	



## Comparison of the CNS and the USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

Criteria	USDA's Smart Snacks	State Beverage Statute	Stricter?
<b>S23 Beverages,</b> <i>continued</i>	<p>Low-calorie beverages are evaluated for compliance with the calorie limits based on the amount of the beverage item as served, including any added accompaniments (refer to <a href="#">D2</a> in section 1). Examples include coffee with milk or cream and sugar; tea with milk and honey; and hot chocolate with milk and marshmallows.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Public schools (HFC and non-HFC) must comply with the Smart Snacks beverage standards and the stricter provisions of the additional state beverage requirements indicated in the "State Beverages Statute" column.</p>	<p><b>Note:</b> Some state beverage requirements are different from Smart Snacks. <b>Schools must follow whichever requirements are stricter.</b> In addition to the federal requirements, all public schools must meet the additional requirements of C.G.S. <a href="#">Section 10-221q</a> (refer to "Additional state requirements for public schools" in the left column).</p> <p>For more information on the beverage requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, <a href="#">Allowable Beverages for Connecticut Public Schools</a>, and visit the CSDE's <a href="#">Beverage Requirements</a> webpage.</p>	

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Healthy Food Certification](#) webpage, [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) webpage, and [Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards](#) webpage or contact the [HFC Coordinator](#) 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/compfoods/comparison\\_chart\\_connecticut\\_nutrition\\_standards\\_and\\_smart\\_snacks.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/comparison_chart_connecticut_nutrition_standards_and_smart_snacks.pdf).



# Summary Chart of Federal State Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools

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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; or
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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