

## Summary of Connecticut Nutrition Standards for School Years 2020-21 and 2021-22

This document summarizes the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) publication, *Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools*, for school years 2020-21 and 2021-22 (July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2022). The Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) is based on current nutrition science and national health recommendations from the 2020-2025 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, and national health organizations such as the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine.

The CNS focuses on moderating calories, limiting fat, saturated fat, sodium, and sugars; eliminating trans fat; and increasing consumption of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and legumes. The CNS exceeds the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Smart Snacks nutrition standards for competitive foods in the final rule, *National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the HHSFKA of 2010*.

The CNS addresses all foods sold to students on school premises separately from reimbursable school meals in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Public schools that choose the healthy food option of [Healthy Food Certification \(HFC\)](#) under [Section 10-215f](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S) must follow the CNS for all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals, at all times and from all sources. This includes, but is not limited to, a la carte sales in the cafeteria, vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and any other sources of food sales to students on school premises. Foods that comply with the CNS are listed on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage](#), which includes brand-specific lists of commercial food products that comply with the CNS and beverages that comply with the state beverage requirements of C.G.S. [Section 10-221q](#).

In HFC schools, foods that do not comply with the CNS cannot be sold unless the local board of education or governing authority votes to allow exemptions, and the following conditions are met:

- the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend;
- the sale is at the location of the event; and
- the foods are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

An "event" 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. The "school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held, and must be the same place as the food sales. For example, foods can be sold on the side of the soccer field during a soccer game, but not in the school cafeteria while a game is played on the soccer field.

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Table 8 provides some key definitions for the CNS. For a complete glossary, review the CSDE’s publication, *Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools*.

### Nutrition Standards for Foods

The CNS includes six categories of competitive foods: snacks (table 2); entrees sold only a la carte (table 3); non-entree combination foods (table 4); fruits and vegetables (table 5); cooked grains (table 6); and soups (table 7). To be allowed for sale to students, a competitive food item must meet at least one general standard (refer to table 1) and all nutrient standards for the specific food category to which it belongs (refer to tables 2 through 7). Some food categories have exemptions for specific nutrient-rich food items that are naturally higher in fat (such as reduced-fat cheese, seafood, nuts, seeds, and whole eggs) or sugars (such as dried fruit). These foods are listed in the “Exemptions” column for each food category.

Two categories of foods and beverages are not allowed regardless of whether they meet the CNS or the requirements of the state beverage statute. These include significantly fortified products (except for naturally nutrient-rich foods fortified with nutrients at levels based on scientifically documented health needs, such as milk fortified with vitamins A and D), and products containing nutrition supplements, e.g., amino acids, extracts, herbs, or other botanicals.

The CNS applies to the amount of the food **as served**, including any added accompaniments such as butter, margarine, cream cheese, jelly, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, relish, salad dressing, sauce, and gravy. When a food includes an accompaniment (such as a bagel with cream cheese or pancakes with syrup), the nutrition information for both items must be added together prior to reviewing the serving for CNS compliance.



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**Table 1. General Standards of the CNS**

General Standards	Exemptions
<p>The food item meets at least one of the following three criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Whole grain-rich (WGR) foods:</b> The food item is a grain product that meets the three requirements below.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product contains at least 50 percent whole grains by weight or has a whole grain as the first ingredient, excluding water. If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be a whole grain.</li> <li>• Any remaining grain ingredients are enriched.</li> <li>• Any noncreditable grains (such as bran, germ, and modified food starch) are less than 2 percent of the product formula. To comply with this limit, the combined total of all noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams for groups A-G (baked goods) or 6.99 grams for group H (cereal grains) and group I (ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals) of the USDA’s ounce equivalents chart. For more information, review the CSDE’s resource, <a href="#"><i>Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP</i></a>.</li> </ul> <p>For more information on the WGR requirements and noncreditable grains, review the CSDE’s guide, <a href="#"><i>Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12</i></a>.</p> </li> <li>2. <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>3. <b>Combination foods:</b> The food item is a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable per serving.</li> </ol>	<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 artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); 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 of the nutrient standards for the specific food category.</p>

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**Table 2. Snacks**

This category includes snack foods such as chips, crackers, popcorn, rice cakes, hard pretzels, pita chips, snack mix, breakfast cereals (e.g., cold ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals and cooked hot cereals such as oatmeal), trail mix, nuts and seeds, peanut butter and other nut/seed butters, meat snacks (e.g., jerky and meat sticks), cookies, cereal bars, granola bars, bakery items (e.g., pastries, toaster pastries, muffins, waffles, pancakes, French toast, soft pretzels, and rolls), frozen desserts, ice cream (including ice cream novelties), cheese, pudding, yogurt, and smoothies made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice. These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, cream cheese, syrup, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing.



### Nutrient Standards

- **Calories:** No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Total fat:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Saturated fat:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Trans fat:** All products must be 100 percent trans fat free, including any added accompaniments. Labels must indicate zero trans fat as served and the ingredients statement cannot contain any partially hydrogenated oils.

### Exemptions

#### Exemption 1: fat and saturated fat

The following foods are exempt from the fat and saturated fat standards, but cannot contain chemically altered fat substitutes:

- low-fat or reduced fat 100 percent natural cheese (including part-skim mozzarella);
- nuts, seeds, and nut and seed butters;
- products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes);
- seafood with no added fat (exempt from total fat standard but not saturated fat standard); and
- whole eggs with no added fat.

All other snack products are not exempt and must meet all

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**Table 2. Snacks, *continued***

Nutrient Standards	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sugars:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments. No artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice):</b> No more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce. No artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols. 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 artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Sodium:</b> No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Caffeine:</b> No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.</li> </ul>	<p>nutrient standards. The fat exemption does not apply to foods containing cheese, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and dried fruit as an <b>ingredient</b>, 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. These foods must meet the fat and saturated fat standards for the snacks category.</p> <p><b>Exemption 2: sugars</b></p> <p>The following foods are exempt from the sugars standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners (including artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols), or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and</li> <li>• frozen desserts containing only 100 percent juice and/or fruit and no added sweeteners including artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols.</li> </ul> <p>All other snack products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.</p>

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**Table 3. Entrees (sold only a la carte)**

Entrees include three categories of main dish food items:

- 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;
- 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
- a **meat/meat alternate alone** (e.g., sausage patty, hard-boiled egg, and 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 standards for the snacks category (refer to table 1).



**Note:** The entree standards apply *only* to entree items that are *sold only a la carte*, i.e., entrees that are not part of a reimbursable meal. 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 reimbursable school meals are exempt from all nutrient standards if they meet the criteria in exemption 1 below.

These standards apply to the amount of the entree as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, cream cheese, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing.

Nutrient Standards	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Calories:</b> No more than 350 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Total fat:</b> No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Exemption 1: entrees as part of reimbursable meals</b></p> <p>Entree items that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the <b>same day</b> that they are planned and served as part of reimbursable school meals are exempt from the standards if they are the same or smaller portion size as the NSLP and SBP;</p>

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**Table 3. Entrees (sold only a la carte), *continued***

Nutrient Standards	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Saturated fat:</b> Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Trans fat:</b> All products must be 100 percent trans fat free, including any added accompaniments. Labels must indicate zero trans fat as served and the ingredients statement cannot contain any partially hydrogenated oils.</li> <li>• <b>Sugars:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments. No artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.</li> <li>• <b>Sodium:</b> No more than 480 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments</li> <li>• <b>Caffeine:</b> No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.</li> </ul>	<p>have the same accompaniments; meet the trans fat standard; and do not contain artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, or chemically altered fat substitutes.</p> <p><b>This exemption applies ONLY to entree items that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the SAME DAY that they are planned and sold as part of a reimbursable meal.</b> 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.</p> <p><b>All other non-entree meal items that are sold a la carte are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.</b> For example, french fries that are part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless they comply with the standards for fruits and vegetables (refer to table 5). Muffins that are part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless they comply with the standards for snacks (refer to table 1).</p> <p><b>Exemption 2: fat</b></p> <p>The following entrees are exempt from the fat standard but not the saturated fat or trans fat standards: seafood with no added fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes). All other entrees are not exempt, and must meet all nutrient standards unless they meet exemption 1 above.</p>

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**Table 4. Non-entree combination foods**

This category includes nutrient-rich combination foods that are not entrees, such as WGR vegetable egg rolls, carrot sticks with peanut butter, and vegetables with hummus dip. Foods in this category either do not meet the main dish entree criteria or do not provide the minimum meal pattern requirements for meat/meat alternates and grains together, or meat/meat alternates alone. **Note:** Products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds are evaluated under the snacks category (refer to table 2).



These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, sour cream, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing

Nutrient Standards	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Calories:</b> No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Total fat:</b> No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.</li> <li>• <b>Saturated fat:</b> Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Trans fat:</b> All products must be 100 percent trans fat free, including any added accompaniments. Labels must indicate zero trans fat as served and the ingredients statement cannot contain any partially hydrogenated oils.</li> <li>• <b>Sugars:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight including any added accompaniments. No artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.</li> <li>• <b>Sodium:</b> No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Caffeine:</b> No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.</li> </ul>	None



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**Table 5. Fruits and vegetables**

This category includes fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits (including fruit snacks that are 100 percent fruit) and vegetables. **Note:** Products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds are evaluated under the snacks category (refer to table 2).

These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, sour cream, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing.



### Nutrient Standards

- **Calories:** No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Total fat:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Saturated fat:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Trans fat:** All products must be 100 percent trans fat free, including any added accompaniments. Labels must indicate zero trans fat as served and the ingredients statement cannot contain any partially hydrogenated oils.
- **Sugars:** No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight as served, including any added accompaniments. No artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.
- **Sodium:** No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.

### Exemptions

**Exemption 1: All nutrient standards**

The following fruit and vegetable products are exempt from all nutrient standards:

- Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water.
- 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 artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols, and no added fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes).
- Low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats are exempt from all nutrient standards.

All other fruit and vegetable products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.

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**Table 5. Fruits and vegetables, *continued***

Nutrient Standards	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Caffeine:</b> No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Exemption 2: Sugars</b></p> <p>The following fruit and vegetable products are exempt from the sugars standard:</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 (including artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols).</li> </ul> <p>All other fruit and vegetable products are not exempt, and must meet all nutrient standards unless they meet exemption 1 above.</p>

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**Table 6. Non-entree combination foods**

This category includes all cooked grains such as rice, pasta, and quinoa, except for cooked breakfast cereals like oatmeal, which are in the snacks category (refer to table 2). These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, oil, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing.



Nutrient Standards	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Whole grain-rich:</b> Cooked grains must be WGR, i.e., the food meets the following requirements: 1) the product contains at least 50 percent whole grains by weight or has a whole grain as the first ingredient, excluding water (If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be a whole grain); 2) any remaining grain ingredients are enriched; and 3) the combined total of all noncreditable grains is less than 2 percent of the product formula, i.e., cannot exceed 6.99 grams. For more information on the WGR requirements and noncreditable grains, review the CSDE’s resource, <a href="#">Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Calories:</b> No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Total fat:</b> No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.</li> <li>• <b>Saturated fat:</b> Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Trans fat:</b> All products must be 100 percent trans fat free, including any added accompaniments. Labels must indicate zero trans fat as served and the ingredients statement cannot contain any partially hydrogenated oils.</li> <li>• <b>Sugars:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Sodium:</b> No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Caffeine:</b> No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.</li> </ul>	<p>None</p>

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**Table 7. Soups**

This category includes all soups, e.g., ready-to-serve, canned, frozen and rehydrated. These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as sour cream, grated cheese, or croutons.



Nutrient Standards	Exemptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Calories:</b> No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Total fat:</b> No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.</li> <li>• <b>Saturated fat:</b> Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Trans fat:</b> All products must be 100 percent trans fat free, including any added accompaniments. Labels must indicate zero trans fat as served and the ingredients statement cannot contain any partially hydrogenated oils.</li> <li>• <b>Sugars:</b> No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Sodium:</b> No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.</li> <li>• <b>Caffeine:</b> No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.</li> </ul>	<p>None</p>

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**Table 8. Definitions** <sup>1</sup>

**a la carte sales:** Foods and beverages that are sold separately from reimbursable meals in the USDA’s school nutrition programs. Also known as “competitive foods.”

**artificial sweeteners:** Ingredients with few or no calories used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. Common artificial sweeteners include acesulfame potassium (Acesulfame-K), aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal), neotame, saccharin, sucralose (Splenda), and tagatose. These nonnutritive sweeteners are calorie-free except for aspartame, which is very low in calories.

**chemically altered fat substitutes:** Compounds made by chemically manipulating food products to mimic the texture and flavor of fat while providing fewer calories and less metabolizable fat. Examples include Olestra, Olean, and Simplese.

**combination foods:** Products that contain two or more components representing two or more of the recommended food groups: fruit, vegetable, dairy, protein, or grains. Many combination foods also meet the definition for entrees, e.g., pizza, lasagna, and hamburger on a whole-grain bun.

**competitive foods:** Any foods and beverages that are available for sale to students anytime on school premises, other than meals served through the USDA’s school nutrition programs. Competitive food sales include, but are not limited to, cafeteria a la carte sales, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers. Sales of competitive foods include any activity during which currency, tokens, tickets, or similar items are exchanged for foods or beverages.

**entrees:** A food item that is one of the following three categories of main dish food items: 1) 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; 2) a combination food of vegetable/fruit and meat/meat alternate, e.g., chef’s salad with turkey, cheese and egg, fruit and cheese platter, yogurt and fruit parfaits, school-made yogurt and fruit smoothies, baked potato with chili, and chicken vegetable stir-fry; and 3) a meat/meat alternate alone (e.g., sausage patty, egg, and grilled chicken), excluding yogurt, low-fat or reduced fat cheese, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and meat snacks, e.g., jerky and meat sticks.

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**Table 8. Definitions** <sup>1</sup>, *continued*

**nonnutritive sweeteners:** Ingredients with no calories used to sweeten foods and beverages. Nonnutritive sweeteners include artificial sweeteners such as acesulfame-potassium, neotame, saccharin, and sucralose and “natural” sweeteners such as stevia, e.g., Rebiana, Rebaudioside A, Truvia, PureVia, and SweetLeaf.

**portion size:** The amount of the item as packaged or served. The individual serving size or package cannot exceed 480 calories for entrees or 200 calories for all other foods.

**reimbursable school meal:** A meal that meets the meal pattern requirements of the USDA’s National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP).

**school day:** The period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. For example, if school ends at 3:00 p.m., the school day is from midnight to 3:30 p.m. Summer school programs operated by the school governing authority are part of the regular school day.

**school premises:** All areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the local or regional board of education, the regional vocational-technical school system, or the governing authority district or school.

**sugar alcohols (polyols):** A type of carbohydrate used as a sugar substitute to sweeten foods and beverages. Sugar alcohols are incompletely absorbed and metabolized by the body and contribute fewer calories than most sugars. They also perform other functions such as adding bulk and texture to foods. Common sugar alcohols include sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, maltitol syrup, lactitol, erythritol, isomalt, and hydrogenated starch hydrolysates (HSH). Products with sugar alcohols are often labeled “sugar free.”

**total sugars:** All sources of sugars including naturally occurring sugars (e.g., fruits, vegetables and milk) and added sugars (e.g., brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup).

<sup>1</sup> For more definitions, refer to the glossary in the CSDE’s publication, [\*Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools\*](#).

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## Better Choice Recommendations

The Better Choice Recommendations are additional recommendations beyond the CNS requirements. They are listed in the green and white columns on the right of each list on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. The Better Choice Recommendations are not required, but help schools identify foods that are even better choices. Foods that meet these recommendations are often less processed and more nutrient-rich. The Better Choice Recommendations vary for each food category, but generally include no artificial flavors or colors; no high fructose corn syrup; at least 2.5 grams of fiber (a “good” source of fiber as defined by the Food and Drug Administration); and 100 percent whole grain (applies only to products containing grains). The CSDE strongly encourages schools to choose foods that meet these recommendations.

## Beverages

The requirements for beverages allowed for sale to students in public schools are separate from the CNS. The beverage requirements are defined by C.G.S. [Section 10-221q](#), and apply to all public schools, regardless of whether the district participates in HFC or the NSLP. Some state beverage requirements are stricter than the Smart Snacks beverage standards. Schools must follow whichever requirements are stricter. For more information on the beverage requirements, review the CSDE's resources, [Allowable Beverages in Connecticut Public Schools](#) and [Guide to Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#), and visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

## Resources

Beverage Requirements (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Beverage-Requirements>

Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Connecticut-Nutrition-Standards>

Guide to Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/Competitive\\_Foods\\_Guide\\_HFC.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/Competitive_Foods_Guide_HFC.pdf)

Healthy Food Certification (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Healthy-Food-Certification>

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List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/List-of-Acceptable-Foods-and-Beverages>

Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/WGRRRequirementSNPgradesK-12.pdf>

Presentation: Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Connecticut-Nutrition-Standards/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/HFC/CNS/Connecticut\\_Nutrition\\_Standards\\_Presentation.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Connecticut-Nutrition-Standards/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/HFC/CNS/Connecticut_Nutrition_Standards_Presentation.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)

Summary Chart: 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).



For more information, visit the CSDE's [HFC](#) and [CNS](#) webpages, or contact the [HFC Coordinator](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841

This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/HFC/CNS/Connecticut\\_Nutrition\\_Standards\\_Summary.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/HFC/CNS/Connecticut_Nutrition_Standards_Summary.pdf).

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