

Crediting Deli Meats in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods for grades K-12, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages. For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods for preschoolers, visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Quantities for the meat/meat alternates component are indicated as ounce equivalents in the NSLP meal pattern for grades K-12; and as ounces in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12, and the NSLP and ASP meal patterns for preschoolers. The amount that credits as 1 ounce equivalent or 1 ounce of meat/meat alternates is the same. This document refers to ounce equivalents for simplicity.



Deli meats (such as turkey, chicken, ham, roast beef, salami, and bologna) credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the meal patterns for school nutrition programs. School food authorities (SFAs) must ensure that the serving of deli meat provides the amount of the meat/meat alternates component being credited. The serving of deli meat that provides 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component depends on the product’s ingredients. These servings varies greatly between different brands and types of deli meats.

- **100 percent meat:** Products that are 100 percent meat without added liquids (e.g., water or broth), binders, and extenders credit on an ounce-per-ounce basis (actual serving weight). For example, 1 ounce of deli meat that is 100 percent meat credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component.
- **Added liquids, binders, and extenders:** Products that contain added liquids, binders, and extenders credit based on the percentage of meat in the product formula. A 1-ounce serving of these products does **not** credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. The crediting depends on the amount of meat per serving, excluding added ingredients. For example, to credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, one brand of deli meat might require 1.6 ounces, while another brand might require 2.3 ounces.

Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP

Required Crediting Documentation

SFAs must obtain appropriate crediting documentation for all deli meats that contain added liquids, binders, and extenders. Acceptable documentation includes 1) an original Child Nutrition (CN) label from the product carton, or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or 2) a product formulation statement (PFS) signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the amount of the meat/meat alternates component contained in one serving of the product.

SFAs must obtain a PFS for all commercial processed products that are not CN labeled. Crediting documentation must be maintained on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the SFSP.

For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program, Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP](#), and the USDA's resources, [Product Formulation Statement \(Product Analysis\) for Meat/Meat Alternate Products](#) and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). For additional guidance, visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products in School Nutrition Programs" and "Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus" sections of the CSDE's school nutrition programs webpages.

Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

Liquids, Binders, and Extenders

Products with added liquids, binders, and extenders cannot credit as the meat/meat alternates component without a CN label or PFS that states the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. Menu planners must review product labels and ingredients to determine if commercial products contain added liquids, binders, and extenders. The ingredients statements below show examples of turkey breast products that contain added liquid, binders, and extenders.

- Ingredients: Turkey breast, *water*, *modified cornstarch*, contains less than 2% of sodium lactate, salt, sugar, sodium phosphates, *carrageenan*, natural flavor, sodium diacetate, potassium chloride, sodium ascorbate, sodium nitrite, caramel color.
- Ingredients: Turkey breast meat, *turkey broth*, contains 2% or less salt, sugar, *carrageenan*, sodium phosphate, sodium acetate, sodium diacetate, flavoring.

Table 1 lists some examples of ingredients that are binders and extenders.

Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP

Table 1. Examples of binders and extenders ¹

Agar-agar	Modified food starch
Algin (a mixture of sodium alginate, calcium carbonate and calcium gluconate/lactic acid)	Reduced lactose whey
Bread	Reduced minerals
Calcium-reduced dried skim milk	Sodium caseinate
Carrageenan	Soy flour (APP) ²
Carboxymethyl cellulose (cellulose gum)	Soy protein concentrate (APP) ²
Cereal	Starchy vegetable flour
Dried milk	Tapioca dextrin
Dry or dried whey	Vegetable starch
Enzyme (rennet) treated calcium-reduced dried skim milk and calcium lactate	Wheat gluten
Gums, vegetable	Whey
Isolated soy protein (APP) ²	Whey protein concentrate (APP) ²
Locust bean gum	Xanthan gum
Methyl cellulose	

¹ Binders and extenders are defined by the USDA's regulations for the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) (9 CFR 318.7).

² Products may contain these ingredients if they meet the USDA's requirements for alternate protein products (APPs). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP](#).



Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP

Developing Recipes for Deli Meats

Different brands and types of deli meat credit differently. To ensure proper crediting, SFAs should develop standardized recipes for menu items that contain deli meats, such as sandwiches and other entrees.

These standardized recipes should indicate the deli meat's contribution to the meat/meat alternates component based on a specific weight of a specific brand. For ease of portioning, the weight of the deli meat in the recipe should be rounded up to the nearest measure. For example, the recipe should list 1.2 ounces as 1.25 ounces and 1.6 ounces as 1.75 ounces.

If a SFA makes the same food item using different brands of deli meats that credit differently, the standardized recipe should include the specific weight of each brand. For example, if a school makes a turkey sandwich using either ABC brand turkey breast or XYZ brand turkey breast, the standardized recipe should include the required weight of ABC brand and the required weight of XYZ brand. Alternatively, the SFA could develop a separate standardized turkey sandwich recipe for each brand of deli meat.

For information on standardized recipes, visit the [“Crediting Foods Made from Scratch”](#) section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpages.



Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP

Comparing Cost

The deli product with the lowest cost per pound might not be the least expensive. SFAs should consider the cost per ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component instead of the cost per ounce of meat. This provides a more accurate reflection of the product's cost in school meals. Table 2 shows a sample cost comparison.

Table 2. Cost comparison of sample deli meats				
Food Item	Price per pound	Price per ounce	Amount to provide 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates ¹	Cost of 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates
Sample product A: Deli meat with liquids, binders, or extenders	\$4.99	\$.31	1.7 ounces ²	\$.53
Sample product B: Deli meat without liquids, binders, or extenders	\$6.99	\$.44	1 ounce	\$.44

¹ Products with added liquids, binders, and extenders require a CN label or PFS to document the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program* and *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*.

² This information would be obtained from the product's PFS.

Sample product A (deli meat with liquids, binders, or extenders) costs \$2 less per pound than sample product B (deli meat without liquids, binders, or extenders). However, when the SFA compares the cost based on 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, a serving of sample product A costs 53 cents and a serving of sample product B costs 44 cents. Sample product A requires almost twice the weight of sample product B to provide 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component because of the added liquids, binders, and extenders.



Determining the cost per ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates helps SFAs decide if the required meal pattern serving for a specific brand of deli meat is reasonable and cost effective.

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Large chunks or cubes of deli meats are choking hazards. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding how to offer deli meats in school menus and modify foods and menus as appropriate. For additional guidance, visit the “[Choking Prevention](#)” section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Accepting_Proccsed_Product_Documentation_SNP.pdf

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASP_Handbook.pdf

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CN_Labeling_Program.pdf

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Commercial_MMA_SNP.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#MMA>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents#MMAK12>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#MMA>

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Menu_Planning_Guide_Preschool.pdf

Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Meats/Meat Alternates (M/MA) in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/APP_Requirements_SNP.pdf

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Resources_Preschool_Meal_Patterns.pdf

Resources for the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/Resources_School_Meal_Patterns_grades_K-12.pdf

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Standardized_Recipe_Form_Schools.docx

Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/#StandardizedRecipes>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Product_Formulation_Statements.pdf

What's in a Meal Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials>

What's in a Meal Module 8: Meat/Meat Alternates Component: (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials>

Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP



For more information, refer to the CSDE's guides, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12* and *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Deli_SNP.pdf.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email louis.todisco@ct.gov.