

Crediting Legumes 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.



Legumes include cooked dry beans and peas, such as black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), edamame (soybeans), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soybeans, split peas, and white beans. Legumes may credit as either meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or snack. At lunch, the meat/meat alternates component must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other food item. Menu planners must determine in advance how to credit legumes in a meal.

Legumes may credit as the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component in different meals. For example, lentils may credit as the vegetables component at one lunch and as the meat/meat alternates component at another lunch.

If the meal includes two servings of legumes, the menu planner may choose to credit one serving as the vegetables component and one serving as the meat/meat alternates component. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of garbanzo beans in a salad may credit as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of kidney beans in chili may credit as 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component.

Legumes credit as the meat/meat alternates component based on volume. A $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving (4 tablespoons) of legumes credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. The minimum creditable amount of legumes is 1 tablespoon.



Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Crediting Legumes as Vegetables

Foods in the vegetables component credit based on volume (cups), not weight. For example, a ½-cup serving (8 tablespoons) of legumes credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. The minimum creditable amount for the vegetables component is ⅛ cup (2 tablespoons).

The serving refers to the amount of legumes without added ingredients. For example, to credit as ½ cup of the vegetables/fruits component, a serving of baked beans must contain ½ cup of beans, excluding added ingredients such as sauce and pork fat.



Menu planners must round down the amount of legumes to the nearest ⅛ cup (2 tablespoons). For example, a recipe with 2½ tablespoons of kidney beans per serving credits as ⅛ cup of the vegetables component. If the menu item contains less than the full serving of the vegetables component, the meal must include additional vegetables to provide the full serving for each grade group.

Vegetable subgroups for grades K-12 at lunch

The lunch meal pattern for grades K-12 requires weekly amounts of five vegetable subgroups, including legumes. Vegetables offered in amounts less than ⅛ cup do not count toward the lunch menu's daily and weekly vegetable offerings, but must count toward the weekly dietary specifications.

For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) and visit the "Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards for School Meals)" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For information on the vegetable subgroups, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP](#), and Module 10: Vegetables Component 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](#).

The preschool meal patterns do not require dietary specifications or vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends that preschool menus include at least one weekly serving of each vegetable subgroup. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP](#).

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Crediting Legumes as Meat/Meat Alternates

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.

Legumes credit as the meat/meat alternates component based on volume. A ¼-cup serving (4 tablespoons) of legumes credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. The minimum creditable amount is 1 tablespoon.



Menu planners must round down the amount of legumes to the nearest ¼ ounce equivalent. For example, a recipe that contains 2½ tablespoons (0.625 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates) of kidney beans per serving rounds down to 0.5 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. Table 1 shows the meal pattern contribution for different serving sizes of legumes.

Table 1. Crediting legumes as the meat/meat alternates component	
Serving size (volume)	Meal pattern contribution (ounce equivalents)
8 tablespoons (½ cup)	2
7 tablespoons	1¾
6 tablespoons (¾ cup)	1½
5 tablespoons	1¼
4 tablespoons (¼ cup)	1
3 tablespoons	¾
2 tablespoons (⅛ cup)	½
1 tablespoon (⅙ cup)	¼ (minimum creditable amount)

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Roasted or Dried Legumes

Roasted or dried legumes, such as roasted garbanzo beans (chickpeas) and roasted soybeans, may credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or ASP snack.

- **Meat/meat alternates:** Roasted or dried legumes credit as the meat/meat alternates component based on weight (ounces). A 1-ounce serving of roasted or dried legumes credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. At lunch, roasted or dried legumes cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. They must be combined with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement.
- **Vegetables:** Roasted or dried legumes credit as the legumes subgroup of the vegetables component based on volume (cups). For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of roasted or dried legumes credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component (legumes subgroup). Menu planners may credit roasted or dried legumes toward the minimum weekly requirement of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of legumes for grades K-12 at lunch.

The USDA recommends using discretion when offering snack-type legumes (such as individually wrapped soy nuts) as part of reimbursable meals because they may be perceived as snack foods. While these types of products credit in school meals, they may be better suited for meals served off site, such as bagged lunches for field trips. When offering snack-type legumes as either the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, make sure that school menus clearly identify how they contribute to the reimbursable meal or ASP snack.

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer roasted or dried legumes in preschool menus. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Crediting Documentation for Commercial Legume Products

Commercial processed products that contain legumes (such as black bean burritos and vegetarian chili) require documentation stating the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. 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.

For example, to credit a black bean burrito as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of black beans. To credit vegetarian chili as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetable component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of legumes.

Commercial processed legume products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in the meal patterns for school nutrition programs.

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 school nutrition programs.

For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP*. For guidance on how to review a PFS, refer to the USDA's *Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement* and *Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates*.

For additional guidance on documentation for commercial products, visit the CSDE's "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in School Nutrition Programs](#)" and "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus](#)" webpages.

Training on the PFS requirements and how to review a PFS 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*.

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Crediting Legumes in Recipes

Legume-based foods made from scratch (such as lentil soup, bean burritos, and chili) credit based on volume (cups) of legumes per recipe serving. The crediting information depends on whether the menu planner credits legumes as the vegetables component or the meat/meat alternates component. To determine the amount of legumes per serving, the menu planner must determine the total volume (cups) of legumes in the recipe.

- **Vegetables:** The minimum creditable amount of the vegetable component is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. To determine the number of $\frac{1}{8}$ -cup servings of legumes in one serving of the recipe, divide the cups of legumes in one serving of the recipe by 0.125, then round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. Table 2 shows an example of how to calculate the vegetables contribution of legumes in a recipe.
- **Meat/meat alternates:** A $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of legumes provides 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. To determine the ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component in one serving of the recipe, divide the cups of legumes in one serving of the recipe by 0.25, then round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent. Table 3 shows an example of how to calculate the meat/meat alternates contribution of legumes in a recipe.

For assistance with recipe calculations, use the equivalent volume measures in the ICN's *Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster* and the decimal fraction equivalents chart (table 6) in the "Introduction" section of the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG). For information on standardized recipes, visit the "[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Table 2. Determining the vegetables contribution of legumes in a recipe

A recipe provides 50 servings and contains 1 gallon and 1 quart of chickpeas. How many cups of vegetables (legumes subgroup) does the recipe provide per serving?

1. Determine the total cups of legumes in the recipe: Use the ICN’s [Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster](#) to convert larger measurements to cups. Use the decimal fraction equivalents chart (table 6) in the FBG’s “[Introduction](#)” section to convert fractions to decimals.

A **20** cups

1 gallon (16 cups) plus 1 quart (4 cups) of chickpeas
= 20 cups of chickpeas.

2. Number of servings in the recipe:

B **50** servings

3. Determine the cups of legumes per serving: Divide the total cups of legumes (A) by the number of servings in the recipe (B).

C **0.4** cups per serving *

20 cups of chickpeas divided by 50 servings
= 0.4 cup of chickpeas per serving.

* **Note:** If the decimal amount for the cups of legumes per serving (C) converts to an **even multiple of 1/8 cup**, such as 0.5 (1/2) cup, 0.25 (1/4) cup, or 0.125 (1/8) cup, this is the final meal pattern contribution for the legumes subgroup of the vegetables component. **Do not complete steps 4 and 5.**

4. Determine the number of 1/8-cup servings (minimum creditable amount) of legumes in one serving of the recipe: Divide the cups of legumes per serving (C) by 0.125.

D **3.2** servings
of 1/8 cup

0.4 cup of chickpeas per serving divided by 0.125
= 3.2 servings of 1/8 cup.

5. Round down the number in D to nearest 1/8-cup serving. 3.2 servings round down to 3 servings of 1/8 cup (or 3/8 cup). One serving of the recipe contains 3/8 cup of the vegetables component.

E **3** servings
of 1/8 cup

Meal pattern contribution: 3/8 cup of the legumes subgroup

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Table 3. Determining the meat/meat alternates contribution of legumes in a recipe

A recipe provides 50 servings and contains 1 gallon and 1 quart of chickpeas. How many ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component does the recipe provide per serving?

1. Determine the total cups of legumes in the recipe: Use the ICN's [Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster](#) to convert larger measurements to cups. Use the decimal fraction equivalents chart (table 6) in the FBG's "[Introduction](#)" section to convert fractions to decimals.

1 gallon (16 cups) plus 1 quart (4 cups) of chickpeas
= 20 cups of chickpeas.

A 20 cups

2. Number of servings in the recipe:

B 50 servings

3. Determine the cups of legumes per serving: Divide the total cups of legumes (A) by the number of servings in the recipe (B).

20 cups of chickpeas divided by 50 servings
= 0.4 cup of chickpeas per serving.

C 0.4 cups per serving

4. Determine the ounce equivalents of meat/meat alternates per serving: Divide the cups of legumes per serving (C) by 0.25 (1 ounce equivalent = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (0.25) of legumes).

0.4 cups of chickpeas per serving divided by 0.25
= 1.6 ounce equivalents of meat/meat alternates.

D 1.6 ounce equivalents per serving

5. Round down the number in D to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent.

1.6 ounce equivalents rounds down to 1.5 ounce equivalents of meat/meat alternates. One serving of the recipe contains 1.5 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component.

E 1.5 ounce equivalents per serving

Meal pattern contribution: $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Pasta Products Made from Legume Flours

Pasta products made of 100 percent legume flours (such as chickpea flour or lentil flour) may credit as either the vegetables component or the meat/meat alternates component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or ASP snack.

- **Meat/meat alternates:** Crediting pasta products that contain legume flours as the meat/meat alternates component is the same as crediting legumes. A ½-cup serving of cooked pasta made of 100 percent legume flours credits as 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component.



Legume flour pasta must be offered with additional meat/meat alternates, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that meat/meat alternates are in a form that is recognizable to children. The nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs includes the goal of helping children recognize the food groups that contribute to healthy meals and snacks.

- **Vegetables:** Pasta products that contain vegetable flours from one vegetable subgroup credit toward that vegetable subgroup. For example, ½ cup of pasta made of 100 percent red lentil flour credits as ½ cup of the legumes subgroup.

Alternatively, manufacturers and SFAs may credit legume flour pasta using the bean flour yield information on page C-1 of [Appendix C](#) of the FBG, or with appropriate documentation on the manufacturer's product formulation PFS. For more information on PFS forms, refer to "[Crediting Documentation for Commercial Legume Products](#)" in this document.

Signage and staff training for vegetable flour pastas

Nutrition education, including signs in cafeterias and other meal service areas, helps children understand what foods are in their meals and snacks. SFAs must use signs or other nutrition education to indicate that pasta made of vegetable flour is a "vegetable" and not a grain component of the meal. For example, a 100 percent chickpea flour pasta could be labeled as "chickpea pasta" on the menu with a symbol showing it to be part of the vegetables component of the meal.

Menu planners should inform food service staff when meals include pasta made with vegetable flours. Food service staff must understand how the pasta contributes to the reimbursable meal and be able to identify reimbursable meals with offer versus serve (OVS).

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Resources

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

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

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

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

Appendix C: Food Items for Further Processing, Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_FoodItemsForFurtherProcessing_YieldTable.pdf

CACFP Best Practices (USDA):

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

Choking Prevention (CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Crediting Soups in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Soups_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/Documents>

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>

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>

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

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 (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA):

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

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Veg_Subgroups_Fruits_Fillable_508.pdf

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs – Completed Sample for Vegetables (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFSsamplevegetables.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

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP

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

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

USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019 and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>

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

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

Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP (CSDE):

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

Vegetables Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

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

Vegetables Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents#VegetablesK12>

Vegetables Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

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

What's in a Meal Module 10: Vegetables 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>

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>

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP



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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#), [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#), and [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages 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_Legumes_SNP.pdf.

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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

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