Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers

in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

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Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

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About this Guide

This guide contains information and guidance on planning menus to meet the USDA's meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. The preschool meal patterns are defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA final rules below.

- Final Rule (81 FR 24347): *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (April 25, 2016): https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/25/2016-09412/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act

- Final Rule Correction (81 FR 75671): *CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (November 1, 2016): https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act

- Final Rule (84 FR 50287): *Delayed Implementation of Grains Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* (September 25, 2019): https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/25/2019-20808/delayed-implementation-of-grains-ounce-equivalents-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program

The USDA provides additional guidance on the meal pattern requirements through the policy memos on the USDA's FNS Documents & Resources webpage.

The contents of this guide are subject to change. The CSDE will update this guide as the USDA issues additional policies and guidance regarding the preschool meal patterns. Please check the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage for the most current version. For more information, contact Susan S. Fiore, M.S., R.D., Nutrition Education Coordinator, at susan.fiore@ct.gov or 860-807-2075.

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USDA Nationwide Waivers for COVID-19

Pursuant to the COVID-19 Child Nutrition Response Act (H.R. 6201, Title II), and the exceptional circumstances of the current COVID-19 public health emergency, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has established a variety of nationwide waivers to support access to nutritious meals, while enforcing recommendations from public health experts with regard to social distancing measures. For more information, visit the "Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Operation of Child Nutrition Programs during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreaks webpage.

School food authorities (SFAs) must apply to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to implement any of the current USDA waivers. If a SFA has received approval from the CSDE to implement any of the national waiver provisions, these approvals supersede the applicable requirements in this guide. For more information, visit the CSDE's Operation of Child Nutrition Programs during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreaks webpage.

For information on the Preschool meal pattern flexibilities for 2021-22, refer to "Meal Pattern Flexibilities during COVID-19" in section 1.

CSDE Contact Information

For questions regarding the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and ASP, please contact the school nutrition programs staff in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education.

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For information on the Special Milk Program (SMP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), visit the CSDE's Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

APPs	alternate protein products
AR	Administrative Review
ASP	Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CN	Child Nutrition
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
FBG	*Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (USDA)
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FDP	Food Distribution Program
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
FR	Federal Register
HHFKA	Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296)
ICN	Institute of Child Nutrition
LEA	local educational agency
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OVS	offer versus serve
PFS	product formulation statement
RCCI	residential child care institution
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SSO	Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP
SFA	school food authority
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WGR	whole grain-rich
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

1 — Preschool Meal Patterns

The meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children. The preschool and CACFP meal patterns are defined by the USDA's final rule, *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (81 FR 24348), released on April 25, 2016, and the final rule corrections (81 FR 75671), released on November 1, 2016. The updated meal pattern requirements took effect on October 1, 2017, and the requirement for grains ounce equivalents began October 1, 2021.

The USDA updated the preschool meal patterns to better align with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, as required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010. The updated preschool meal patterns require more whole grains and a greater variety of vegetables and fruits; and reduce the amount of added sugars and solid fats in meals. They also better align with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and other Child Nutrition Programs.

The goal of the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs is to improve and maintain children's health and nutrition while promoting the development of good eating habits. The preschool meal patterns are designed to meet children's needs for calories and key nutrients. To receive reimbursement for meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers, school food authorities (SFAs) must provide the required food components in the appropriate serving for each age group.

Age Groups

The two age groups for the preschool meal patterns include ages 1-2 and ages 3-4. When a 5-year-old is in preschool or a 4-year-old is in kindergarten, SFAs may serve the appropriate meal pattern for that grade. For example, if a 5-year-old is in preschool, the preschool meal patterns apply. If a 4-year-old is in kindergarten, the meal patterns for grades K-5 apply. For information on the meal patterns for grades K-5, visit the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12

The meal patterns for preschoolers and grades K-12 have different requirements. SFAs must consider these requirements when making menu planning and purchasing decisions for school meals and ASP snacks served to both groups. When SFAs serve the same foods to preschoolers and grades K-12, these foods must comply with whichever meal pattern requirements are stricter. The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- The meal patterns for grades K-12 have stricter WGR criteria than the meal patterns for preschoolers. Therefore, grain foods (excluding grain-based desserts) served to both groups must comply with the WGR criteria for grades K-12. Grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to "Grain-based desserts" in section 3.

- The preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for yogurt and breakfast cereals, but the meal patterns for grades K-12 do not. Therefore, yogurt and breakfast cereals served to both groups must comply with the preschool sugar limits.

For more information on the differences between the meal patterns for preschoolers and grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP* and *Comparison of ASP Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12*.

Preschoolers and grades K-5 eating together in the NSLP and SBP

SFAs that serve meals to preschoolers and grades K-5 in the same service area at the same time may choose to 1) follow the grade-appropriate meal patterns for each age group (i.e., use the preschool meal patterns for ages 1-4 and the K-5 meal pattern for grades K-5); or 2) serve the K-5 meal pattern to both groups.

SFAs must follow the preschool meal patterns when meals are served to preschoolers in a different area or at a different time than K-5 students. The USDA allows the option to serve the K-5 meal pattern to preschoolers only when preschoolers are co-mingled with K-5 students during the meal service. The USDA strongly encourages schools to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals to preschoolers and grades K-5 that best address their nutritional needs. For more information, refer to USDA Memo SP 37-2017*: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers.*

Preschoolers and grades K-12 eating together in the ASP

SFAs that serve ASP snacks to preschoolers and grades K-12 in the same service area at the same time may choose to 1) follow the grade-appropriate ASP meal pattern for each grade group (i.e., use the ASP preschool meal pattern for ages 1-4 and the K-12 ASP meal pattern for grades K-12); or 2) serve the K-12 ASP meal pattern to both grade groups.

SFAs must follow the ASP preschool meal pattern when ASP snacks are served to preschoolers in a different area or at a different time than K-12 students. The USDA allows the option to serve the K-12 ASP meal pattern to preschoolers only when preschoolers are co-mingled with K-12 students during the ASP snack service.

> The preschool meal patterns provide the amounts and types of foods that most children need for healthy growth and development. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate snacks to preschoolers and older students to best address their nutritional needs.

For more information, refer to USDA Memo SP 37-2017: *Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers.*

Reimbursable Meals

The preschool meal patterns consist of minimum daily servings of food components for each age group. Meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers are eligible for USDA reimbursement when they contain the minimum serving of each required food component.

Food components and food items

A food component is one of the five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates. Table 1-1 summarizes the required servings of each food component in the preschool meal patterns.

Menu items contribute to the food components. A menu item is any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk; and may contribute to one or more food components. For example, a hamburger (meat/meat alternates component) on a whole-grain bun (grains component) is one menu item that contributes to two food components.

Each component has specific crediting requirements. All foods (commercial products, foods made from scratch by the SFA, and foods prepared by vendors) must meet these requirements to credit as a component of reimbursable meals and snacks. For more information on the crediting requirements, refer to section 3.

Table 1-1. Required components for the preschool meal patterns

Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
Three food servings [1] • One serving of milk • One serving of vegetables, fruits, or both • One serving of grains [2]	**Five food servings** [1] • One serving of milk • One serving of meat/meat alternates • One serving of vegetables [3] • One serving of fruits • One serving of grains	**Choose two of five food servings** [1, 4] • One serving of milk • One serving of meat/meat alternates • One serving of vegetables • One serving of fruits • One serving of grains

[1] A serving is the specified amount for each age group in the preschool meal patterns.
[2] Meat/meat alternates may substitute for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. For more information, refer to "Meat/meat alternates at breakfast" in section 3.
[3] Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at lunch. If the meal includes two servings of vegetables, they must be two different kinds. For more information, refer to "Substituting vegetables for fruits at lunch" in section 3.
[4] Snack must include two of the five components.

Additional foods

Preschool menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. However, menu planners should consider the appropriateness of additional foods based on the nutrition needs of each age group. Preschoolers have small appetites and might not consume the nutritious meal components if the preschool menu includes additional foods.

When preschool menus include additional foods, the CSDE encourages SFAS to choose nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to the nutrition needs of each age group. Examples include vegetables; fruits; whole grains; low-fat and nonfat milk products; legumes; and lean meats, fish, poultry.

Some additional foods do not credit toward the preschool meal patterns and cannot be served, or should be served only in moderation. For more information, refer to "Noncreditable Foods" in section 3.

Nutrition Standards

Unlike the meal patterns for grades K-12, the preschool meal patterns do not include weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards) for calories, saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium. However, the preschool meal patterns require nutrition standards for some specific foods, including sugar limits for yogurt and breakfast cereals, and a minimum protein requirement for tofu. For more information, refer to "Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt," "Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals," and "Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products" in section 3. The preschool meal patterns also prohibit deep-fat drying foods on site.

Offer versus Serve

Offer versus serve (OVS) is an optional approach to menu planning and meal service that allows children in grades K-12 to decline some of the foods offered in a reimbursable meal. The USDA does not allow OVS for preschool meals in the NSLP and SBP, or preschool snacks in the ASP.

Preschool Meal Patterns

The following pages include the preschool meal patterns for breakfast (table 1-2), lunch (table 1-3), and snack (table 1-4). Handouts of the preschool meal patterns are available on the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Table 1-2. Preschool breakfast meal pattern		
Food components [1]	**Ages 1-2**	**Ages 3-4**
Milk, fluid [2] Age 1: Unflavored whole milk Ages 2-4: Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or unflavored fat-free milk	4 fluid ounces (fl oz) (½ cup)	6 fl oz (¾ cup)
Vegetables, fruits, or portions of both [3, 4, 5]	¼ cup	½ cup
Grains [7, 8, 9, 10] Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) [10]	½ oz eq [10]
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal [11], cereal grain [12], or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold) [11]		
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup
◀ **Refer below for important menu planning notes** ▶		

Menu planning notes for breakfast

1 Breakfast must include the minimum serving of all three components. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program*, *Product Formulation Statements*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP;* and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

2 Flavored milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "Milk Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Table 1-2. Preschool breakfast meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for breakfast, *continued*

[3] The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables (PFS required), and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of lettuce credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends that preschool menus include at least one serving per week of each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes), starchy, and other). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP*, and visit the "Vegetables Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[4] Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. Juice includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.

[5] The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, canned fruit, dried fruit, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Serve canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. The creditable serving of canned fruit in 100 percent juice may include the juice but cannot include water or syrup. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information, visit the "Fruits Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[6] Grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains. Creditable grains for the preschool meal patterns include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. For information on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, *How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP,* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Grains Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[7] At least one serving per day must be WGR. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. For the preschool meal patterns only, WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP, Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Whole Grain-rich Requirement" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Table 1-2. Preschool breakfast meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for breakfast, *continued*

[8] Grain-based desserts cannot credit. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers such as graham crackers and animal crackers are not grain-based desserts. However, the CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all preschool meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP.

[9] Meat/meat alternates may substitute for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component substitutes for 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast, and the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[10] Ounce equivalents apply effective October 1, 2021. Grains must meet the required weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP,* and visit the "Ounce Equivalents" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[11] Breakfast cereals cannot contain more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource*, Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

[12] Examples of cereal grains include amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat.

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern		
Food components [1]	**Ages 1-2**	**Ages 3-4**
Milk, fluid [2] Age 1: Unflavored whole milk Ages 2-4: Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or unflavored fat-free milk	4 fluid ounces (½ cup)	6 fluid ounces (¾ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternates [3]		
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 ounce	1½ ounces
Surimi [4]	3 ounces	4.4 ounces
Tofu, soy products, tempeh, or alternate protein products (APPs) [5]	1 ounce	1½ ounces
Cheese	1 ounce	1½ ounces
Cottage cheese	¼ cup	⅜ cup
Egg, large	½	¾
Cooked dry beans or peas [6]	¼ cup	⅜ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut or seed butters	2 tablespoons	3 tablespoons
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds [7]	½ ounce = 50%	¾ ounce = 50%
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened [8]	4 ounces or ½ cup	6 ounces or ¾ cup
Vegetables [9, 10]	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Fruits [10, 11, 12]	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Grains [13, 14, 15, 16] Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) [16]	½ oz eq [16]
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal [17], cereal grain [18], or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold) [17]		
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup

◀ Refer to next page for important menu planning notes ▶

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for lunch

1 Lunch must include the minimum serving of all five components. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program*, *Product Formulation Statements*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP;* and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

2 Flavored milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "Milk Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

3 The meat/meat alternates component must be served in a main dish, or a main dish and one other food item. A serving is the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products require a CN label or PFS to credit. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP*. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese. For more information, visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

4 Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A CN label or manufacturer's PFS is required to credit surimi differently.

5 APPs must meet the requirements in appendix A of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Tofu must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP*. A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component if the product's ingredients include only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. Tempeh products that contain other ingredients require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information.

6 Legumes (cooked dry beans and peas) credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, but not both in the same meal. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP*.

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for lunch, *continued*

[7] Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component at lunch/supper. They must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to meet the total requirement. **Note:** Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food, and are ground or finely chopped. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP*.

[8] Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

[9] The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables (PFS required), and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of lettuce credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends that preschool menus include at least one serving per week of each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes), starchy, and other). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP*, and visit the "Vegetables Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[10] Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. Juice includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.

[11] Vegetables can substitute for the entire fruits component at lunch. If lunch includes two servings of vegetables, they must be different kinds.

[12] The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, canned fruit, dried fruit, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Serve canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. The creditable serving of canned fruit in 100 percent juice may include the juice but cannot include water or syrup. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information, visit the "Fruits Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for lunch, *continued*

[13] Grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains. Creditable grains for the preschool meal patterns include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. For information on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, *How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP,* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Grains Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[14] At least one serving per day must be WGR. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. For the preschool meal patterns only, WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP, Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Whole Grain-rich Requirement" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[15] Grain-based desserts cannot credit. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers such as graham crackers and animal crackers are not grain-based desserts. However, the CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all preschool meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP.

[16] Ounce equivalents apply effective October 1, 2021. Grains must meet the required weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP,* and visit the "Ounce Equivalents" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[17] Breakfast cereals cannot contain more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource*, Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

[18] Examples of cereal grains include amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat.

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern		
Serve any two of the following five components (must be two different components) [1, 2]	**Ages 1-2**	**Ages 3-4**
Milk, fluid [3] Age 1: Unflavored whole milk Ages 2-4: Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or unflavored fat-free milk	4 fluid ounces (½ cup)	4 fluid ounces (½ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternates		
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	½ ounce	½ ounce
Surimi [4]	2 ounces	2 ounces
Tofu, soy products, tempeh, or alternate protein products (APPs) [5]	½ ounce	½ ounce
Cheese	½ ounce	½ ounce
Cottage cheese	⅛ cup	⅛ cup
Egg, large	½	½
Cooked dry beans or peas [6]	⅛ cup	⅛ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut or seed butters	1 tablespoon	1 tablespoon
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds [7]	½ ounce	½ ounce
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened [8]	2 ounces or ¼ cup	2 ounces or ¼ cup
Vegetables [10, 11]	½ cup	½ cup
Fruits [11, 12]	½ cup	½ cup
Grains [13, 14, 15, 16] Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) [16]	½ oz eq [16]
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal [17], cereal grain [18], or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold) [17]	¼ cup	¼ cup
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup

◀ Refer to next page for important menu planning notes ▶

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for snack

[1] Snack must include the minimum serving of two of the five components. Only one of the two components may be a creditable beverage, such as milk or juice. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required snack components. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program*, *Product Formulation Statements*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP;* and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[2] In addition to meeting the ASP meal pattern requirements, ASP snacks in public schools that choose the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification (HFC) under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS). For more information, visit the CSDE's HFC, CNS, and List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpages.

[3] Flavored milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "Milk Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[4] A serving is the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products require a CN label or PFS to credit. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP*. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese. For more information, visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[5] Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A CN label or manufacturer's PFS is required to credit surimi differently.

[6] APPs must meet the requirements in appendix A of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Tofu must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP*. A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component if the product's ingredients include only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar,

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for snack, *continued*

seasonings, and herbs. Tempeh products that contain other ingredients require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information.

[7] Legumes (cooked dry beans and peas) credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, but not both in the same snack. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP*.

[8] Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. **Note:** Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food, and are ground or finely chopped. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP*.

[9] Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

[10] The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables (PFS required), and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of lettuce credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends that preschool menus include at least one serving per week of each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes), starchy, and other). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP*, and visit the "Vegetables Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[11] Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. Juice includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.

[12] The fruits component includes fresh fruit, frozen fruit, canned fruit, dried fruit, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Serve canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup. The creditable serving of canned fruit in 100 percent juice may include the juice but cannot include water or syrup. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information, visit the "Fruits Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern, *continued*

Menu planning notes for snack, *continued*

[13] Grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains. Creditable grains for the preschool meal patterns include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. For information on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, *How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP,* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Grains Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[14] At least one serving per day must be WGR. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. For the preschool meal patterns only, WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP, Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*; and visit the "Whole Grain-rich Requirement" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[15] Grain-based desserts cannot credit. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers such as graham crackers and animal crackers are not grain-based desserts. However, the CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all preschool meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP.

[16] Ounce equivalents apply effective October 1, 2021. Grains must meet the required weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP,* or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP,* and visit the "Ounce Equivalents" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

[17] Breakfast cereals cannot contain more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

[18] Examples of cereal grains include amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat.

Overview of Preschool Meal Pattern Requirements

This section summarizes the requirements for the preschool meal patterns. For information on the required records for documenting meal pattern compliance, refer to section 2. For detailed guidance on the crediting requirements for each food component, refer to section 3.

Breakfast

- **Required components:** Breakfasts must include one serving of the milk component; one serving of vegetables, fruits, or both; and one serving of the grains component. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity for each age group in the preschool breakfast meal pattern (refer to table 1-2 in this section).

- **Breakfast cereals:** SFAs must document whether cooked and RTE breakfast cereals are WGR, enriched, or fortified. This information may be listed on the preschool menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all cereals served in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to "Required Documentation for Grains" in "Part B: WGR Requirement" of section 3.

- **Cereal with milk:** The menu must list the specific type of cereal as one component (e.g., "whole-grain granola") and the specific type of fluid milk as another (e.g., "unflavored low-fat milk"). "Cereal with milk" does not indicate that the breakfast menu provides the required amount of cereal or the required amount and appropriate type of milk.

- **Juice and fruit:** SFAs must document the specific types of juices and fruits served. For example, indicate "orange juice" instead of "juice," and "banana or diced peaches" instead of "fresh fruit choice." This information may be listed on the preschool menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all types of juices and fruits served in preschool meals and ASP snacks.

- **Juice limit:** If the breakfast menu credits juice as the vegetables and fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at lunch, supper, or snack. For more information, refer to "Juice limit" in section 3.

- **Substituting meat/meat alternates for grains:** The meat/meat alternates component may substitute for the **entire** grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. A ½-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component substitutes for ½ ounce equivalent of the grains component. For more information, refer to "Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast" in section 3.

- **Water availability:** SFAs must make water available during the meal service but cannot offer water in place of the required food components. For more information, refer to "Water Availability" in section 4.

Lunch

- **Required components:** Lunches must include one serving of the milk component, one serving of the meat/meat alternates component, one serving of the vegetables component, one serving of the fruits component (or vegetable substitutions), and one serving of the grains component. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity in the preschool lunch meal pattern (refer to table 1-3 in this section).

- **Substituting vegetables for fruits:** The vegetables component may substitute for the fruits component at any lunch. Lunch menus must include one serving of the vegetables component and one serving of the fruits component, or two different servings of the vegetables component. For more information, refer to "Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch" in section 3.

- **Vegetables and fruits:** SFAs must document the specific types of vegetables and fruits served. For example, indicate "garden salad with lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, and tomatoes" instead of "salad," and "fresh fruit salad (apples, oranges, bananas, and strawberries)" instead of "fruit salad." This information may be listed on the preschool menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all types of vegetables and fruits served in preschool meals and ASP snacks.

- **Water availability:** SFAs must make water available during the meal service but cannot offer water in place of the required food components. For more information, refer to "Water Availability" in section 4.

Snack

- **Required components:** Snacks must include two of the five components. A snack that contains two foods from the same component is not reimbursable, e.g., orange juice (fruits component) and applesauce (fruits component). However, a snack that contains orange juice (fruits component) and carrot sticks (vegetables component) is reimbursable because it contains two different components. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity in the ASP preschool meal pattern (refer to table 1-4 in this section).

- **Best practice for vegetables and fruits**: Snack menus should include a vegetable or fruit as often as possible. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends making at least one of the two required snack components a vegetable or fruit.

- **Beverage limit:** If the snack menu includes a creditable beverage (milk or juice), the other snack component cannot be a beverage. The snack menu cannot include juice when milk is the only other snack component.

- **Offering milk with yogurt:** If the snack menu includes milk, the other snack component should not be yogurt. The CSDE recommends this practice to increase nutrient variety.

- **Offering more than two food items:** If the snack menu includes more than two different food items, at least two food items must meet the required food components and servings. An example is a snack that contains yogurt (meat/meat alternates component), strawberries (fruits component), and granola (grains component). The snack menu or other documentation must clearly indicate which items contribute to the ASP preschool meal pattern, and the offered serving size.

- **Offering a noncreditable food:** A snack menu that includes a noncreditable food must also contain the minimum required serving of at least two components. For example, a snack of strawberry gelatin (noncreditable food), whole-grain crackers (grains component), and unflavored low-fat milk (milk component) contains three food items, but only two components. To be reimbursable, this snack menu must provide the minimum serving of both milk and crackers.

- **Water availability:** SFAs must make water available during the snack service but cannot offer water in place of the required food components. Water should be offered as a beverage when the snack menu does not include milk or juice. For more information, refer to "Water Availability" in section 4.

For additional guidance, visit the USDA's Serving Snacks in the CACFP webpage.

Meal pattern documentation

SFAs must maintain appropriate documentation to indicate that preschool meals and ASP snacks meet the meal pattern and crediting requirements.

- **Menu:** All sites must have a written menu to document that preschool meals and ASP snacks provide the required components and quantities for each age group. For more information, refer to "Menus" in section 2.

- **Production records:** SFAs must have daily production records on file for all preschool meals and ASP snacks. The production record must list all meal components and menu items, including all meal choices, food components, types of milk, leftovers, substitutions, and all other food items such as condiments and other noncreditable foods. For more information, refer to "Production Records" in section 2.

- **Commercial foods:** Child Nutrition (CN) labels or production formulation statement (PFS) forms must be on file to document the meal pattern contribution of all commercial foods served in preschool menus, such as entrees, grains, and vegetables and fruits with added ingredients, e.g., coleslaw, potato salad, and carrot-raisin salad. CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component. However, they usually indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products, such as grains, vegetables, and fruits. For more information, refer to "Child Nutrition (CN) Labels" and "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2.

- **Foods made from scratch:** SFAs must maintain recipes on file to document the meal pattern contribution of all foods prepared from scratch. Vendors that prepare foods for SFAs must also be able to document the preschool meal pattern contribution of their recipes. Examples of foods prepared from recipes include entrees, grains (such as pancakes, muffins, and breads), and vegetables and fruits with added ingredients, e.g., coleslaw, potato salad, and carrot-raisin salad. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" in section 2.

- **Alternate protein products (APPs):** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that APPs meet the requirements in appendix A of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). For more information, refer to "Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)" in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP*.

- **Breakfast cereals:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that all breakfast cereals meet the preschool sugar limit (no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce) and that compliance was determined using one of the USDA's three allowable methods. For more information, refer to "Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals" in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

- **Tofu and tofu products:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that tofu and tofu products contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). For more information, refer to "Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products" in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP.*

- **WGR foods:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that WGR foods were identified using one of the USDA's six allowable methods for determining compliance with the WGR criteria. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*. **Note:** The NSLP and SBP meal patterns have different WGR criteria for preschoolers and grades K-12. Grain foods (excluding grain-based desserts) that meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 will meet the preschool WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain-based desserts" and "WGR requirement" in section 3.

- **Yogurt:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that all yogurt and soy yogurt products meet the preschool sugar limit (no more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce). For more information, refer to "Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt" in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs

Schools and institutions participating in the school nutrition programs must comply with the federal nondiscrimination laws and requirements for meal modifications for children with special dietary needs. These requirements are summarized below. For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs*, and visit the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Children with a disability

The USDA requires reasonable meal modifications on a case-by-case basis for children whose disability restricts their diet, based on a medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority. "Case-by-case basis" means that the meal modifications are specific to the individual medical condition and dietary needs of each child.

The Connecticut State Department of Public Health defines a recognized medical authority as a state-licensed health care professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law. This includes licensed physicians (doctors of medicine or osteopathy), physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN). The CSDE's medical statements and accompanying instructions and guidance are available in the "Medical Statements for School Nutrition Programs" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Children without a disability

The USDA allows, but does not require, meal modifications for children whose special dietary needs do not constitute a disability. Examples of optional modifications include requests related to religious or moral convictions, general health concerns, and personal food preferences, such as parents who prefer that their children eat a gluten-free diet or organic foods because they believe it is healthier. SFAs may choose to make these accommodations on a case-by-case basis. Meal modifications for preschoolers without disabilities must comply with the preschool meal patterns.

Choking Prevention for Young Children

Children younger than age 4 are at the highest risk of choking. SFAs should consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what foods to offer in preschool menus. This consideration is especially important when serving young children or children with a disability. Serve foods in the appropriate sizes, shapes, and textures to reduce choking risks. Avoid serving foods that are as wide around as a nickel, which is about the size of a young child's throat. For additional guidance, visit the "Choking Prevention" section of the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Foods that are choking risks

While nearly any food can cause choking in children, foods that are the same size and shape as a child's airway pose the greatest risk. For example, peanuts may block the lower airway. A chunk of hot dog or a whole grape may completely block the upper airway. Foods likely to cause choking come in many shapes, sizes, and textures. These include foods that are round, tube-shaped, small, hard, thick, sticky, smooth, slippery, or easily molded to stick to the airway (refer to table 1-5).

Table 1-5. Common foods that may cause choking	
Firm, smooth, or slippery foods that slide down the throat before chewing, such as:	
• Whole grapes, cherries, berries, melon balls, and cherry/grape tomatoes • Hot dogs and similarly shaped foods, including sausages, meat sticks, and cheese sticks (even when cut into round slices)	• Peanuts, seeds, and nuts • Whole beans • Hard or round candy, jelly beans [1]
Small, dry, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole, such as:	
• Popcorn • Hard pretzels and pretzel chips • Potato chips, corn chips, and similar snack foods • Small pieces of raw vegetables, e.g., raw carrot rounds, baby carrots, string beans, celery, and other raw or partially cooked hard vegetables • Apples or other hard pieces of raw fruit, especially those with hard pits or seeds	• Cooked or raw whole-kernel corn • Raw green peas • Peanuts, nuts, and seeds, e.g., sunflower or pumpkin seeds • Plain wheat germ • Whole-grain kernels such as rice or wheat berries • Crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole-grain kernels • Ice cubes [1]

Table 4. Common foods that may cause choking, *continued*	
Sticky or tough foods that do not break apart easily and are hard to remove from the airway, such as:	
• Chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters • Large, hard pieces of uncooked dried fruits or vegetables • Tough meat or large chunks of meat • Large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese	• Fish with bones • Marshmallows [1] • Chewing gum [1] • Chewy fruit snacks [1] • Caramels, gum drops, and gummy candies, or other gooey or sticky candy [1]
[1] These foods do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.	

Safe preparation and serving techniques to reduce choking risks

SFAs can help reduce the risk of choking by avoiding high-risk foods; changing the shape, size, and texture of foods before offering them to children; and serving certain foods in small, manageable bites. SFAs should use the techniques below to prepare foods that are easy for young children to chew and swallow.

- Cook foods until soft enough to pierce easily with a fork.
- Cut soft food into thin slices or small pieces no larger than ½ inch.
- Cut tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving.
- Grind up tough meats and poultry.
- Cook foods such as carrots and celery until slightly soft, then cut into short strips instead of round pieces.
- Mash or puree foods until soft.
- Remove seeds, pits, and tough skins/peels from fruits and vegetables.
- Cut round foods such as grapes, cherries, berries, and melon balls in half lengthwise, and then cut into smaller pieces no larger than ½ inch.
- Grate or thinly slice cheeses.
- Chop peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grind before adding to prepared foods.

- Spread nut and seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers) crackers. Use only creamy, not chunky, nut and seed butters.
- Avoid serving foods that are as wide around as a nickel, which is about the size of a young child's throat.
- Serve shredded carrots and chopped tomatoes instead of baby carrots and cherry tomatoes.

Menu Planning Resources

The resources and websites below provide information and guidance on planning meals and ASP snacks to meet the preschool meal patterns. For detailed information on crediting foods in the preschool meal patterns, visit the "Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources with guidance on meeting the preschool meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns*.

- Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPHandbook.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE training webinars): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- CACFP Best Practices (USDA): https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP_factBP.pdf
- CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Training Webinar Series (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-halftime-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series
- CACFP Meal Pattern Training Slides (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-training-slides-cacfp
- CACFP Meal Pattern Training Worksheets (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp-meal-pattern-training-worksheets
- CACFP Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks
- CACFP Training Tools (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/training-tools-cacfp
- 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

- Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/ComparisonSNPPreschoolGradesK-12.pdf
- Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ComparisonPreschoolGradesK-12ASP.pdf
- Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/ComparisonGrainCreditingSNP.pdf
- Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus ("Related Resources" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources
- Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SNP_Preschool.pdf
- Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/resources/1575/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers/118740/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers.pdf
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-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
- Menu Forms for Preschoolers (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#MenuFormsPreschoolers
- Menu Planning Basics: A Guide for CACFP Operators in Child Care (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/menu-planning-basics-cacfp/

- Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning
- Menu Planning for Preschoolers (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#MenuPlanningPreschoolers
- Reducing the Risk of Choking in Young Children at Mealtimes (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/reducing-risk-choking-young-children-mealtimes
- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Menu_Planning.pdf
- Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Resources_Preschool_Meal_Patterns.pdf
- Serving School Meals to Preschoolers (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-school-meals-preschoolers
- Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs

For information on recipes, refer to "Standardized Recipes" and "Resources for standardized recipes" in section 2. For additional resources, refer to section 5.

Meal Pattern Flexibilities during COVID-19

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the USDA is allowing sponsors to request specific changes to the meal patterns for school year (SY) 2021-22. USDA's memo, COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #91*: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Specific School Meal Pattern Flexibility for School Year 2021-2022*, allows SFAs to request a waiver if they cannot meet the following preschool meal pattern requirements:

- at least one serving of grains per day, across all eating occasions, must be WGR; and
- SFAs must plan menus and offer food components for specified age/grade groups in the stated combinations.

Sponsors must apply to the CSDE to implement any meal pattern changes. If approved by the CSDE, this waiver approval remains in effect through June 30, 2022.

The USDA expects that SFAs will use this flexibility only as needed. The CSDE and USDA strongly encourage and expect operators of the Child Nutrition Programs to maintain and meet the meal patterns to the greatest extent possible, as optimal nutrition is even more critical for children during the current COVID-19 public health crisis.

For more information, refer to "USDA Nationwide Waivers for COVID-19" in the "About this Guide" section and visit the "How To" section of the CSDE's Operation of Child Nutrition Programs during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreaks webpage.

2 — Menu Records

SFAs must be able to document that preschool meals and ASP snacks provide the required food components and quantities. Without appropriate documentation, foods and beverages cannot credit toward reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. The CSDE will disallow reimbursement for noncompliant meals and ASP snacks.

SFAs should ensure that all appropriate staff are aware of the documents needed to demonstrate the menu's compliance with the preschool meal patterns. Staff must also understand how to complete and maintain appropriate documentation.

Table 2-1 summarizes the required documentation for preschool meal pattern compliance. SFAs must maintain these records on file for the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Table 2-1. Required documentation for preschool meal pattern compliance

Commercial foods	Foods made from scratch
Menus Production records Child Nutrition (CN) labels Product formulation statement (PFS) forms Compliance with Buy American provision Nutrition information (Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients) [1]	Menus Production records Standardized recipes Nutrition information

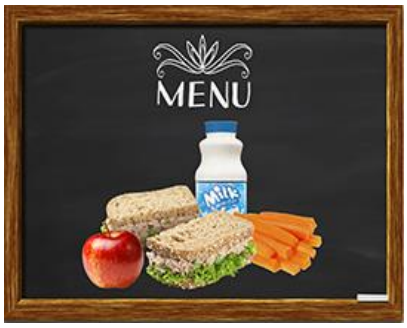
[1] Many commercial products require nutrition information to determine crediting information.

Preschool Menus

SFAs must develop preschool menus that represent the actual food components served for each meal and snack claimed for reimbursement. The menu must identify the date of the meal service and all food items served, including the type of milk and which grain products are WGR. Cycle menus or menus developed in advance of the meal service must specify the month and day, and indicate any menu substitutions that occur. For more information, refer to "Using cycle menus" in this section. The SFA must maintain all menus on file with other required records in accordance with the NSLP and SBP regulations.

Menu forms

The menu form is an important tool to help SFAs comply with the preschool meal patterns. Using an appropriate menu form helps to ensure that preschool meals and ASP snacks include the required food components and servings. When reviewing preschool menus for meal pattern compliance, CSDE staff cannot determine if meal components are offered unless they are indicated on the menu.



The CSDE strongly discourages SFAs from using a blank calendar as a menu form because the menu planner might omit food components or provide insufficient servings. This could result in noncompliant menus. Meals with missing food components or insufficient servings are not reimbursable in the preschool meal patterns.

The CSDE's sample preschool weekly menu forms listed below help menu planners include the required food components and servings.

- ASP Menu Form for Ages 1-2
- ASP Menu Form for Ages 3-4
- Five-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Five-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Five-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Five-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Four-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Four-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Four-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Four-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Seven-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 1-2;

- Seven-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Seven-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 1-2; and
- Seven-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 3-4.

These menu forms are available in the "Menu Forms for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. SFAs may adapt these forms to meet individual program needs. Alternate menu formats should contain appropriate guidance regarding the required food components and servings for each preschool meal and ASP snack served to each age group.

Using cycle menus

The CSDE strongly encourages SFAs to use cycle menus for preschool meals and ASP snacks. A cycle menu is series of menus planned for a specific period (such as four weeks) with a different menu for each day. Cycle menus can help SFAs comply with the meal pattern requirements, increase variety, control food cost, control inventory, and save time.

The CSDE recommends that cycle menus include at least four weeks. This increases the variety of preschool meals and ASP snacks offered, and ensures that children are not served the same combination of foods too often.

The ICN's *Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers* features four seasonal four-week cycle menus for preschoolers. For more information on cycle menus, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) online learning course, *CARE Connection – Planning Cycle Menus in Child Care*, and the CSDE's *Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs*.

Sample preschool menus

The preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same. SFAs may use the CSDE's sample CACFP menus for ages 3-5 listed below to provide meal and snack ideas for preschoolers.

- Sample Cold Breakfast Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Hot Breakfast Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Cold Lunch/Supper Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Hot Lunch/Supper Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

These sample menus are available in the "Sample Menus for CACFP Child Care Programs" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage. Each menu contains at least the minimum required food components and servings. Some menus include additional components or exceed the minimum serving requirements.

The type of foods purchased, and the recipes and preparation techniques used by the SFA, determine whether local menus meet the preschool meal patterns. SFAs should use the FBG to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the required serving for each meal pattern component. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in this section.

For resources on menu planning, refer to "Menu Planning Resources" in this section and the CSDE's *Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs*. Additional resources are available in the "Menu Planning for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Production Records

The USDA regulations for the NSLP (7 CFR 210.10(a)(3)) and SBP (7 CFR 220.8(a)(3)) require that SFAs maintain daily production records for meals for preschoolers and grades K-12. Production records are working tools that outline the type and quantity of foods that must be purchased and available for the meal service. They document that SFAs serve reimbursable preschool meals and ASP snacks. Production records also provide valuable information to help with menu planning, forecasting products and amounts, purchasing foods, controlling waste, and identifying acceptable menu items.

Production records must show how the offered meals contribute to the required food components and food quantities for each meal served to each age group every day. Table 2-2 summarizes what production records should include and when food service staff should complete the information.

> The USDA requires that school nutrition programs must complete daily menu production records that document the service of reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. Production records must demonstrate how meals and ASP snacks contribute to the required food components for each day of operation. SFAs must keep production records on file for three years plus the current school year.

Table 2-2. Information to include on production records	
Complete *before* meal service	Complete *after* meal service
• Name of site • Age groups • Meal date • Meal type (breakfast, lunch, or snack) • All planned menu items including all meal choices, food components, types of milk, leftovers, substitutions, and noncreditable foods (e.g., condiments) • Recipe name and number, or product name and code • Planned serving size and number of servings for reimbursable meals for each age group, and if applicable, nonreimbursable meals (e.g., second meals and adult meals), and a la carte sales	• Temperatures (complete throughout meal service) [1] • Total amount/quantity of food prepared (based on the FBG) for each food item or menu item, e.g., number of servings, pounds, cans, and pieces • Amount of leftover food for each food item or menu item • Total amount of food served • Number of reimbursable meals served to children. • Number of nonreimbursable meals served, served, e.g., second meals and adult meals

[1] Food service staff should record temperatures throughout the meal service to ensure that hot foods are held at 140 °F or above and cold foods at held at 41 °F or below. For additional guidance, visit the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Sample production records

The CSDE's sample production records listed below help SFAs document compliance with the preschool meal patterns.

- ASP Production Record for Ages 1-2
- ASP Production Record for Ages 3-4
- ASP Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Completed Sample)
- Breakfast or Lunch: Production Record for Ages 1-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP or SBP
- Breakfast or Lunch: Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP or SBP
- Breakfast: Production Record for Ages 1-4 (Preschool) in the SBP
- Breakfast: Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Preschool) in the SBP
- Lunch: Production Record for Ages 1-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP
- Lunch: Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP

These forms are available in the "Production Records for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. SFAs may adapt these forms to meet individual program needs.

Guidance for completing production records

Production records must be completed correctly to provide accurate documentation of reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. When using production records, SFAs should ensure that staff:

- complete all information and check for missing or incomplete information;
- record the information legibly, i.e., handwriting can be read;
- use the proper weight or volume measure for the serving of each food item, e.g., cups for fruits and vegetables (refer to "Volume versus weight" below);
- enter the number of servings, pounds, cans, or pieces (not the number of portions prepared) in the column for the total quantity of food used;
- list the type of milk served;
- list all condiments;
- list portion sizes accurately and check that they are the same as what is actually served to children;
- list all items prepared for the meal, including alternate meal choices, if available;
- record the "planned" servings;
- list nonreimbursable meals and ASP snacks separately from reimbursable meals;
- list any unplanned amounts of food added during the meal service;
- indicate if any substitutions are made or leftovers are used; and
- use a production record for each site.

SFAs should maintain production records on file with other required documentation. The CSDE will review menu documentation during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Volume versus weight

The amounts listed in production records must reflect the servings required by the preschool meal patterns. The preschool meal patterns indicate the servings of the food components by weight (ounces) or volume (fluid ounces). For example, the servings for the vegetables component and fruits component are indicated by volume (cups). The servings of most foods in the meat/meat alternates component are indicated by weight (ounces), but volume is required for some foods such as peanut butter (tablespoons), cottage cheese (cups), and legumes (cups).

Volume and weight measurements are not the same. Volume is the amount of space an ingredient occupies in a measuring container. Volume measures include teaspoon, tablespoon, fluid ounce, cup, pint, quart, and gallon.

A common issue with production records is listing incorrect serving sizes, e.g., listing the serving for a fruit or vegetable as "4 ounces" instead of "½ cup." This does not indicate that the serving meets the meal pattern requirements because these two measurements are not the same.

The weight of a specific volume of food varies depending on the density of the food. For example, ½ cup of lettuce weighs less than ½ cup of cooked butternut squash; and 1 cup of whole-grain flaked cereal weighs less than 1 cup of baked beans. For many foods, a specific measure of volume does not equal the same measure of weight. There are some exceptions, such as yogurt (a ½-cup serving of yogurt equals 4 ounces by weight) and certain types of canned fruits and vegetables (refer to the FBG).

> Menu planners should use the FBG to determine the amount of a food that meets the required meal pattern serving, and must ensure that production records reflect this amount. For example, the servings of vegetables, fruits, peanut butter, and legumes must be listed by volume, not weight. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in this section.

For information on weights and measures, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) resource, *Basics at a Glance*, and the "Weights and Measures" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Resources for production records

The websites and resources below provide guidance on developing and using production records.

- Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (ICN): https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/
- Production Records for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Production-Records-for-School-Nutrition-Programs

- Requirements for Production Records in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/ProdRecord/Requirements_Production_Records_NSLP_SBP.pdf
- Weights and Measures (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage) https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#WeightsMeasures

Standardized Recipes

The USDA's regulations 7 CFR 210.10(b)(5)) require that SFAs develop and follow standardized recipes for foods prepared from scratch. The USDA defines a standardized recipe as one that has been tried, adapted, and retried several times for use by a given foodservice operation and has been found to produce the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized quantity recipes produce 25 or more servings.

Standardized recipes are required for foods prepared from scratch, such as cornbread, coleslaw, potato salad, soup, lasagna, chicken stir-fry, and macaroni and cheese; and for foods that require some additional processing by adding other ingredients after purchasing. Examples include making rice or pasta with butter, sautéing vegetables in oil, adding dressing to salad, assembling a sandwich, adding eggs and oil to a muffin mix, and reconstituting canned soup with milk.

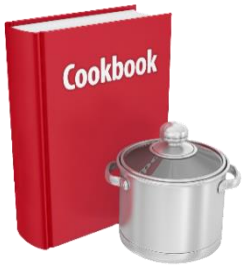
Standardized recipes are not required for commercial foods when the SFA does not add any ingredients after purchasing. Examples include fruits and vegetables (fresh, canned, and frozen); breads, rolls, and baked products; and other commercially prepared products such as entrees, soups, and side dishes.

Benefits of standardized recipes

Standardized recipes document the specific meal pattern contribution of one serving. For example, a standardized lasagna recipe might indicate that one serving credits as 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, ¼ cup of the vegetables component, and ½ ounce equivalent of the grains component. In addition to documenting the meal pattern contribution, standardized recipes provide many other benefits. Standardized recipes help school nutrition programs ensure:

- consistent food quality;
- predictable yield;

- consistent nutrient content;
- customer satisfaction;
- food cost control;
- efficient purchasing procedures;
- inventory control;
- labor cost control;
- increased employee confidence;
- reduced recordkeeping; and
- successful completion of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.



Information to include on standardized recipes

SFAs may standardize their own local recipes or use existing standardized recipes such as the USDA's recipes. Standardized recipes should include the following:

- recipe name that describes the recipe;
- recipe number that is unique to each recipe;
- recipe category classification, e.g., main dish, grains, and vegetables;
- recipe yield (weight and/or volume and number of servings), i.e., the amount produced when production is complete;
- ingredients used;
- ingredient amounts per yield, i.e., the quantity (weight or volume) of all ingredients for each yield, such as 50 servings or 100 servings;
- preparation equipment and utensil, such as pans, steamers and mixers;
- food safety Critical Control Points (CCPs), i.e., time and temperature critical limits for each step of preparing, holding, serving, and storing (visit the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage);
- cooking time and temperature, as required (visit the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage);
- serving size (the weight and/or volume of the single portion size);
- serving utensils such as scoops, ladles, and spoodles; and
- meal pattern component contributions per serving, e.g., fruits component, vegetables component, grains component, and meats/meat alternates component.

The CSDE's *Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs* provides a template that SFAs may use to develop standardized recipes. For more information, refer to "Determining Food Yields and Crediting" and "Resources for standardized recipes" in this section.

Vendor-prepared foods

Vendors that prepare foods for SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the meal pattern contribution per serving. SFAs are responsible for reviewing the crediting information to ensure that it is accurate.

Resources for standardized recipes

The websites and resources below assist SFAs with developing and using standardized recipes.

- Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (ICN):
  https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/
- Child Nutrition Recipe Box (ICN):
  https://theicn.org/cnrb/
- Crediting Foods Prepared on Site in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#ScratchFoods
- Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW) of the FBG (USDA):
  https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/
- Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning#Recipes
- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
  https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Menu_Planning.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 (Chapter 4: Meal Preparation Documentation of the UDSA's Menu Planner for School Meals):
  https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/tn/USD-114%20-%20MenuPlanner_Ch4.pdf
- Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#StandardizedRecipes

- Why Use Standardized Recipes? Fact Sheet (ICN): https://theicn.org/resources/527/food-service-management-skills/107291/why-use-standardized-recipes.pdf

Note: SFAs must ensure that local menus comply with the preschool meal patterns. When using non-USDA recipes and menus, menu planners should check these resources for compliance with the preschool meal patterns and adapt as needed.

Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products

SFAs must be able to document the meal pattern contribution of commercial processed foods served in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For example, to credit a breaded chicken patty product as the meat/meat alternates component and grains component for ages 3-4 at lunch, the manufacturer's documentation must indicate that one serving of the product contains 1½ ounces of cooked chicken and ½ ounce equivalent of WGR or enriched breading. The only acceptable types of documentation for commercial processed foods are:

- the original CN label from the product carton or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or
- a PFS signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the amount of each meal pattern component contained in one serving of the product.

The CSDE will review product documentation during the Administrative Review.

> Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks.

Table 2-3 compares the criteria for CN labels and PFS forms. Only CN labels provide a guarantee of the product's contribution to the USDA's meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. SFAs must check the crediting information on the PFS form for accuracy prior to using the product in reimbursable meals and snacks.

Table 2-3. Comparison of CN labels and PFS forms		
Criteria	**CN label**	**PFS**
Standard information required	✓	
Reviewed and monitored by the USDA	✓	
Includes USDA guarantee of meal component contribution for Child Nutrition Programs	✓	
Distinct six-digit product identification number	✓	
SFAs must check crediting information for accuracy prior to use		✓

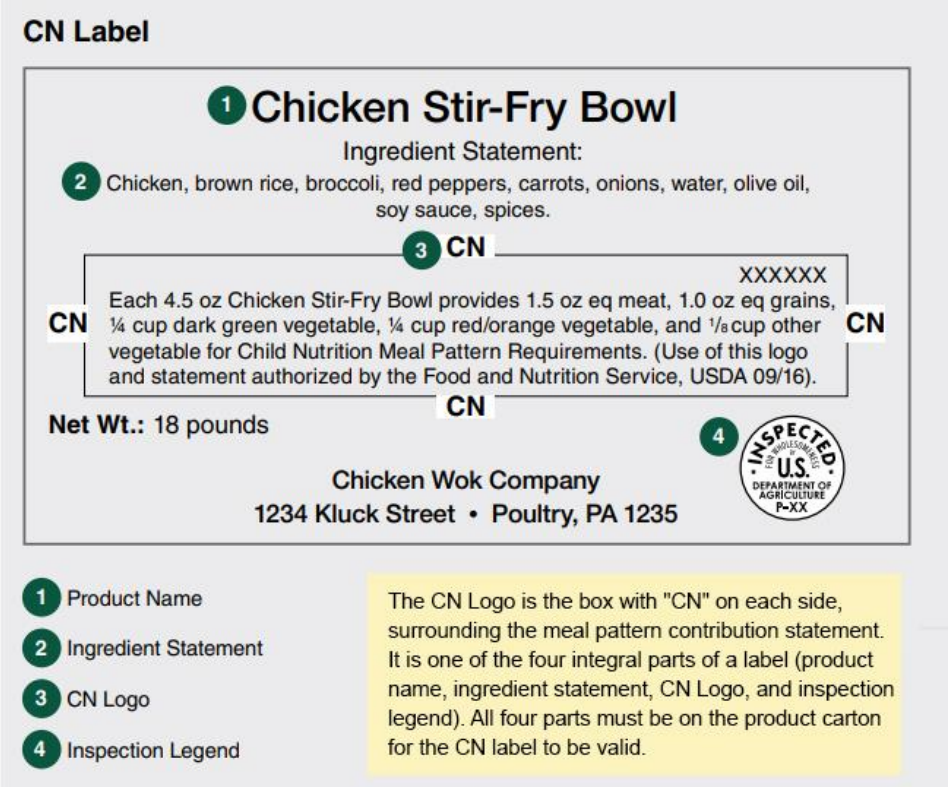
For additional guidance on accepting product documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP,* and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Child Nutrition (CN) Labels

The USDA's CN Labeling Program is a voluntary federal labeling program for the Child Nutrition Programs. A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. CN labeling provides a warranty that the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements, as printed on the label.

CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component of the USDA's meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs, such as beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. However, CN labels will usually indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products. For example, CN-labeled pizza may list contributions to the meat/meat alternates, grains, and vegetables components; and CN-labeled breaded chicken nuggets may list contributions to the meat/meat alternates and grains components.

Table 2-4. Sample CN label



Resources for CN labels

The resources below provide additional information on CN labels.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 2: Documentation (CSDE training webinars): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CN_Labeling_Program.pdf
- CN Labeling Program (USDA website): https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling-program
- USDA Memo SP 11-2015 (v2), CACFP 10-2015 and SFSP 13-2015: CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn-labels-copied-watermark-acceptable-documentation
- USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015 and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement: https://www.fns.usda.gov/administrative-review-process-regarding-child-nutrition-cn-label-watermarked-cn-label-and

The USDA's Authorized Labels and Manufacturers webpage lists approved CN-labeled products and manufacturers.

Product Formulation Statements

A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA's meal patterns for Child Nutrition Programs. It generally includes a detailed explanation of what the product contains and indicates the amount of each ingredient in the product by weight. The information on a PFS can vary among manufacturers. The USDA does not monitor PFS forms for compliance with the product's actual formulation or stated contribution to the meal pattern requirements.

To document meal pattern crediting information, the PFS must:

- list the product name, product code, serving size, and creditable ingredients;
- indicate how the product credits toward the USDA's meal pattern requirements;;
- document how the manufacturer obtained the crediting information by citing specific Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations such as the FBG and USDA's policy on crediting foods (such as the USDA's policy memos for the CACFP and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) instructions for Child Nutrition Programs); and
- be prepared on company letterhead with the signature of a company official and the date of issue. The signature can be handwritten, stamped, or electronic.

All creditable ingredients in the PFS must match a description in the FBG. The USDA's CN Labeling website provides sample PFS templates for the meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains components. If the PFS does not meet these requirements, the SFA cannot accept it, and the product cannot credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks.

Unlike a CN label, a PFS does not provide any warranty against audit claims for reimbursable meals and snacks. SFAs must check the crediting information on the PFS for accuracy prior to including the product in reimbursable meals and snacks; and if needed, request supporting documentation from the manufacturer. This documentation must be maintained on file for the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

USDA's PFS forms for the Preschool Meal Patterns

The USDA's Food Manufacturers/Industry website provides sample PFS templates for the meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains components. The PFS forms that apply to the preschool meal patterns are listed below.

- **Grains:** Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf
- **Grains (completed sample):** Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Example_Grains_Oz_Eq.pdf
- **Meat/Meat Alternates:** Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Document_Meat_Meat_Alternate.pdf
- **Vegetables and Fruits:** 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.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Document_Total_Veg_Fruits.pdf

Resources for PFS forms

The resources below provide information on the requirements for PFS forms.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 2: Documentation (CSDE training webinars): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Product Formulation Statements (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Product_Formulation_Statements.pdf
- Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products: https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf
- Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf

Additional resources for accepting documentation are available in the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Buy American Requirement

All foods sold in the USDA's school nutrition programs must comply with the Buy American provision under the federal regulations for the NSLP (7 CFR 210.21 (d)) and SBP (7 CFR 220.16 (d)). This provision requires that schools and institutions purchase domestic commodities or products to the maximum extent practicable.

- A "domestic commodity or product" is an agricultural commodity that is produced in the United States, and a food product that is processed in the United States substantially using agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States.
- "Substantially" means that over 51 percent of the final processed product consists of agricultural commodities that were grown domestically.

There are **very limited exceptions** to the requirement that SFAs must purchase domestic foods. Nondomestic foods are permitted only:

- after first considering domestic alternatives; and
- when domestic foods are unavailable or prohibitively expensive.

SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that any purchases of nondomestic foods meet these criteria. The CSDE's *Buy American Justification Form* assists SFAs with meeting this requirement. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the SFA's school nutrition programs.

SFAs must ensure that all foods purchased using funds from the nonprofit school food service account comply with the Buy American provision. This includes foods that are part of reimbursable meals and competitive foods sold a la carte, i.e., foods and beverages sold separately from reimbursable meals.

Resources for Buy American

The resources below provide guidance on the Buy American provision.

- Buy American Factsheet (USDA): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Procure/Fact_Sheet_Buy_American.pdf

- Buy American Justification Form (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Procure/Buy_American_Form.pdf
- Letter to Industry on the Buy American Provision (USDA): https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/Buy_America_Industry_Letter.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 32-2019: Buy American and the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018: https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/buy-american-and-agriculture-improvement-act-2018
- USDA Memo SP 38-2017: Compliance with and Enforcement of the Buy American Provision in the NSLP: https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/compliance-enforcement-buy-american

For additional guidance, visit the "Buy American Provision" section of the CSDE's Procurement for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Nutrition Information

SFAs must obtain nutrition information for all commercially prepared foods used to prepare school meals. If a processed product does not have a Nutrition Facts panel, the SFA is responsible for obtaining the necessary information from the manufacturer.

In addition to CN labels and PFS forms, nutrition information helps menu planners to determine if certain commercial products credit toward the preschool meal patterns. Nutrition information is also required to meet the USDA requirements to provide reasonable meal modifications for participants whose children restricts their diet.

Preschool meals are not included when the CSDE conducts a nutrient analysis of school meals as part of the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. The weekly dietary specifications for grades K-12 do not apply to preschool meals. However, SFAs are still responsible for maintaining nutrition information for commercially prepared foods used to prepare preschool meals. SFAs operating the NSLP and SBP must follow the NSLP and SBP regulations. Therefore, SFAs must maintain product Nutrition Facts labels, ingredients, and recipes, as required by the USDA's regulations and policies for the NSLP and SBP.

Determining crediting information

For many commercial products, menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients to determine crediting information. The examples below show when nutrition information is required to credit commercial products toward the preschool meal patterns.

- **Crediting breakfast cereals and yogurt:** The preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for breakfast cereals and yogurt. Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label for these foods to determine whether the amount of sugars per serving complies with the preschool sugar limit. For more information, refer to "Sugar limit for yogurt" and "Sugar limit for breakfast cereals" in section 3.

- **Crediting deli meats and hotdogs:** Deli meats, hotdogs, and similar foods that contain binders and extenders (but are not CN labeled) require a PFS to determine crediting information. The ingredients statement indicates if a product contains added liquids, binders, and extenders. This alerts the menu planner that a PFS is required to determine the correct crediting information for the product. For more information, refer to "Liquids, binders, and extenders" in section 3.

- **Crediting tempeh:** To credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component, tempeh ingredients must be limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If a tempeh product contains other ingredients, SFAs must obtain a CN label or PFS to document crediting. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if tempeh products contain additional ingredients. For more information, refer to "Crediting Tempeh" in section 3.

- **Crediting commercial tofu products:** To credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, commercial tofu products and tofu and other soy products must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label to determine the amount of protein per serving. For more information, refer to "Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products" in section 3.

- **Crediting commercial grain products:** To credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component, a commercial grain product must meet the specific weight for the appropriate grain group in the USDA Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE's resource, *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP)*. Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label to determine the manufacturer's serving weight, which is required to determine the ounce equivalents contribution of the serving. For more information, refer to "Part C: Grain Ounce Equivalents" in section 3.

- **Crediting WGR commercial grain products:** To credit as a WGR food, commercial grain products must contain a whole grain as the first ingredient or the greatest ingredient by weight. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if a whole grain is the first ingredient. For more information, refer to "Part B: Whole Grain-rich Criteria" in section 3.

- **Crediting commercial smoothies:** Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as gingko biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if commercial smoothies contain these ingredients. For more information, refer to "Commercial smoothies" in section 3.

These examples are not all-inclusive.

Making meal modifications

SFAs will need to review nutrition information when planning meal modifications for children with special dietary concerns, such as food allergies, lactose intolerance, and celiac disease. In addition, the USDA considers providing nutrition information for foods served in school meals to be part of reasonable meal modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet. SFAs are responsible for making nutrition information for school meals available to children (when age appropriate), families, school nurses and other medical professionals, and appropriate school staff, as needed. For information on the requirements for meal modifications, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs,* and visit the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Nutrition information for USDA Foods

The USDA's USDA Foods in Schools Product Information Sheets webpage provides product information sheets for USDA Foods. These product information sheets include the product's description, crediting and yield information, culinary tips and recipes, food safety information, and a general Nutrition Facts label. However, they do not include a product-specific Nutrition Facts label or ingredients statement.

For further processed USDA Foods, the nutrition information and ingredients for USDA direct delivery food items (brown box) may vary based on the vendor who received the bid. If a SFA requires product information for students with food allergies or other dietary needs, the SFA must obtain product-specific information from the manufacturer.

To find the nutrition information for USDA direct delivery food items, check the outside of the case or the inside packaging. If nutrition information is not available, check with the product's manufacturer. The processor's agreement with the Connecticut Food Distribution Program (FDP) requires that the processor must provide product nutrition information to SFAs upon request and available on their website. For additional assistance, contact the Connecticut FDP staff.

Nutrition disclosure for APPs

The NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210.10 (n)) require that schools must accurately represent foods on lunch and breakfast menus. Menus cannot claim that a food item is beef, pork, poultry (such as chicken or turkey), or seafood (such as fish or tuna) if the food item contains more than 30 percent APPs. The names used for these menu items must reflect that they are not 100 percent meat, poultry, or fish. For more information on APPs, refer to "Alternate protein products (APPs)" in section 3.

Determining Food Yields and Crediting

Yield refers to the amount (weight, volume, or number of servings) of a product at the completion of the preparation process. For example, 10 pounds of raw ground beef might yield 8 pounds after cooking; 5 pounds of fresh carrots might yield 3½ pounds after peeling and trimming; a vegetable soup recipe might yield 2 gallons after cooking, and a muffin recipe might yield 24 servings after baking. Yield affects how a product or recipe credits toward the preschool meal patterns.

The yield of a product or recipe depends on the type of food and the preparation process. Processed fruits and vegetables yield less than the purchased amount due to peeling and trimming. Raw meats yield less than the purchased amount because moisture and fat are lost in the cooking process. Rice and pasta yield more than the purchased (dry) amount because water is absorbed during the cooking process.

The USDA's FBG is the definitive resource for determining yields and crediting information for the Child Nutrition Programs. SFAs should ensure that menu planners use this resource to plan preschool meals and ASP snacks.

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

The USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) provides yield information for common types and customary sizes of milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains, including commercially available foods and USDA Foods. The FBG helps menu planners determine:

- a food's specific contribution toward the meal pattern requirements;
- how many servings a specific quantity of food will provide;
- what quantity of raw product will provide the amount of ready-to-cook food in a recipe; and
- how much food to buy.

The FBG helps menu planners determine how recipes and purchased foods contribute to the preschool meal patterns. For example, menu planners can use the FBG to determine how much raw broccoli provides 50 servings of ½ cup of cooked vegetable or how much uncooked brown rice provides 100 servings of ½ cup of cooked rice. This information is essential for documenting compliance with the preschool meal patterns.

In addition to the printable version, the FBG also includes several online tools for menu planners. These include the Exhibit A Grains Tool, the FBG Interactive Web-based Tool, and the Recipe Analysis Workbook. The resources below provide guidance on using the FBG.

- Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue! (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue
- Webinar: Food Buying Guide Goes Digital! (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-goes-digital
- Webinar: Navigating the Food Buying Guide FBG Calculator (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/navigating-food-buying-guide-fbg-calculator

Determining in-house product yields

The yield information provided in the FBG represents average yields based on research conducted by the USDA. Many factors affect yield, including:

- the quality and condition of the food purchased;
- storage conditions and handling;
- the equipment used in preparation;
- cooking method and time;
- the form in which the food is served, e.g., whether potatoes are mashed, fried, or baked; and
- the serving utensils and portion control methods used.

If a food service operation consistently obtains a higher or lower yield for a product than the yield listed in the FBG, the SFA should conduct an in-house yield study to determine the actual number of portions of a specified size that the product provides. In-house yields are also required for products not listed in the FBG. The CSDE allows SFAs to use in-house yields that are properly documented and follow the CSDE's yield study procedures.

Yield study procedures

SFAs can use the procedures below to determine and document in-house yields for food products.

1. Select a day when the product is served on the menu. Use at least four separate samples of the product to determine yields. A "sample" is the product pack unit, such as number 10 cans or 5-pound bags. If the food service operation uses more samples, the yield data will be more accurate.

2. For the best yield estimate, at least two people should independently portion and count the samples. Each person completes half of the samples. For example, with a sample of four cans, each person works alone to measure and count the servings from two cans.

3. Select the appropriate measuring utensil for the portion size being served, such as a number 16 scoop/disher or ½-cup measuring spoon. Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) *Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster* and visit the "Weights and Measures" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

4. Fill the measuring utensil level to the top of the measure.

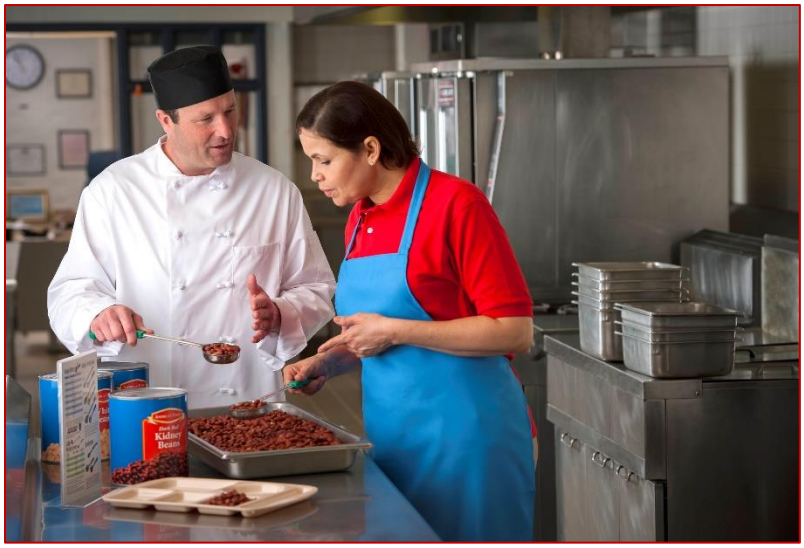
5. Carefully count and document the number of portions in each sample.

6. Add the total number of servings from each of the samples.

7. Divide the total number of servings by the number of samples to get the average number of servings per sample.

8. Complete the CSDE's *Yield Study Form for Child Nutrition Programs* and maintain on file for review by the CSDE staff during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

For additional assistance with yield studies, contact the CSDE's school nutrition programs staff.



3 — Meal Components

Each component of the USDA's preschool meal patterns has specific criteria for determining how foods credit toward reimbursable meals and snacks. All foods (commercial products, foods made from scratch, and foods prepared by vendors) must meet these requirements to credit as a component of reimbursable meals and snacks.

The menu planning guidance in this section assists SFAs with meeting the crediting requirements for the five components of the preschool meal pattern. These components include milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains. For additional guidance on crediting foods, visit the "Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Creditable Foods

Creditable foods are foods and beverages that count toward the meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and snacks in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA considers the following factors when determining whether a food credits:

- nutrient content;
- function in a meal;
- regulations concerning the USDA Child Nutrition Programs (quantity requirements and definition);
- the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standards of identity;
- the USDA's standards for meat and meat products; and
- administrative policy decisions on the crediting of particular foods.

Minimum creditable amounts

Each component requires a minimum amount to credit toward the preschool meal patterns. A food item must include at least the minimum creditable amount.

> Food items that contain less than the minimum amount do not credit.

- **Milk component:** The minimum creditable amount is the full serving of fluid milk. For smoothies only, the minimum creditable amount is ¼ cup. If the amount of milk in a smoothie is less than the full serving, the meal or snack must include the additional amount of milk required to provide the full serving for each age group.

- **Meat/meat alternates component:** The minimum creditable amount is ¼ ounce. At lunch, the meat/meat alternates component must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other food item. For more information, refer to "Main Dish Requirement for Lunch" in the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section.

- **Vegetables component:** The minimum creditable amount is ⅛ cup. Smaller amounts of vegetables used for flavorings or garnishes do not credit. The preschool menu may include more than one food item to meet the full serving of the vegetable component for each age group, as long as each food item contains at least ⅛ cup of vegetable.

- **Fruits component:** The minimum creditable amount is ⅛ cup. Smaller amounts of fruits used for flavorings or garnishes do not credit. The preschool menu may include more than one food item to meet the full serving of the fruits component for each age group, as long as each food item contains at least ⅛ cup of fruit.

- **Grains component:** The minimum creditable amount ¼ ounce equivalent. The preschool menu may include more than one food item to meet the full serving of the grains component for each age group, as long as each food item contains at least ¼ ounce equivalent.

If a food item provides at least the minimum creditable amount of a component, but less than the full-required serving, the preschool menu must include additional foods from that component to provide the full serving for each age group. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires ¼ cup of the vegetables component. If a food item provides ⅛ cup of vegetables, the lunch menu must include another food item with ⅛ cup of vegetables to provide the full vegetables component for ages 3-4.

Requirement for visible components

The USDA requires that foods must be visible (recognizable) to credit toward the preschool meal patterns. For example, SFAs cannot credit peanut butter in smoothies; pureed tofu in soups; applesauce in muffins; and pureed fruits and vegetables in entrees and other foods.

The intent for this requirement is to ensure that children can easily identify the foods in preschool menus. 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.

The USDA allows some exceptions to this requirement, including yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and pasta made with 100 percent vegetable flours. In addition, SFAs may credit foods with pureed vegetables that also that contain at least ⅛ cup of visible creditable vegetables. For example, a serving of macaroni and cheese that contains ⅛ cup of diced butternut squash (visible) and ⅛ cup of pureed carrots (not visible) credits as ¼ cup of vegetables.

For more information, refer to "Yogurt in smoothies" and "Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meat/Meat Alternates" in the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section; "Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies" and "Crediting Pureed Fruits" in the "Fruits Component" section; and "Crediting Pureed Vegetables" and "Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour" in the "Vegetables Component" section.

Resources for creditable foods

The websites and resources below address the requirements for crediting foods in the USDA's preschool meal patterns. For a list of resources with guidance on meeting the preschool meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's *Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns*.

- Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus ("Related Resources" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Program
- Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SNP_Preschool.pdf

- Crediting Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know! Webinar Series (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-updates-child-nutrition-programs-be-know-webinar-series
- CSDE Operational Memos for School Nutrition Programs: https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Lists/Operational-Memoranda-for-School-Nutrition-Programs
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs
- Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents
- USDA CACFP Policy Memos: https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources
- USDA CACFP Regulations: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-226
- USDA FNS Instructions for Child Nutrition Programs: https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/FNS-Instructions-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs
- USDA National School Lunch Program regulations: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210
- USDA School Breakfast Program Regulations: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220

For additional guidance on the USDA's requirements for the NSLP and SBP, visit the CSDE's Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Noncreditable Foods

Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that cannot credit toward the meal patterns for the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. Noncreditable foods include foods and beverages that do not belong to the five meal pattern components. Examples include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water. They also foods and beverages in amounts too small to credit, such as 1 tablespoon of applesauce or ⅛ ounce of cheese (refer to "Minimum creditable amounts" in this section).

Examples of noncreditable foods for each meal pattern component are listed in section 3. For more examples, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

SFAs may serve noncreditable foods in addition to the meal components to add variety, help improve acceptability in the meal, and satisfy appetites. Examples include maple syrup on pancakes, salad dressing on tossed greens, and condiments such as ketchup or mustard on sandwiches and other entrees.

> To ensure that preschool meals and ASP snacks meet children's nutritional needs, the CSDE encourages SFAs to use discretion when serving noncreditable foods. Noncreditable foods typically contain few nutrients and are higher in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. Menu planners should read labels, be aware of the ingredients in foods, and limit the frequency and amount of less nutritious choices.

Federal and state requirements prohibit sales of some noncreditable foods, such as candy, soda, coffee, tea, and sports drinks. For more information, refer to the CSDE's competitive foods guides (*Guide to Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools*, *Guide to Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools*, and *Guide to Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions*) and visit the CSDE's Competitive Foods webpage and Beverage Requirements webpage.

Snack foods sold a la carte (separately from reimbursable preschool meals and ASP snacks) must meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) or the USDA's Smart Snacks nutrition standards. The CNS applies to public school districts that participate in the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification (HFC). The USDA's Smart Snacks nutrition standards apply to non-HFC public school districts, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs).

Milk Component

Milk must be pasteurized, meet all state and local requirements, and contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the FDA. The preschool meal patterns require different types of milk fat content for each age group, based on the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Serving Size for Milk

The preschool meal patterns require a serving of fluid milk at breakfast and lunch. A serving of milk may be one of the two required snack components. Meals and snacks with breakfast cereals may include fluid milk as a beverage, on cereal, or both. Table 3-1 summarizes the required servings of the milk component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-1. Required servings of the milk component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast	½ cup	¾ cup
Lunch	½ cup	¾ cup
Snack [1]	½ cup	¾ cup

[1] Only one snack component can be a creditable beverage. Milk cannot be served when juice is the only other snack component.

Allowable Types of Milk

The preschool meal patterns require unflavored whole milk for age 1, and unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or unflavored fat-free milk for ages 2-5. Other allowable types of milk include pasteurized:

- lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk;
- acidified milk;
- cultured milk;
- cultured buttermilk; and
- Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk.

SFAs may serve any of these types of milk, as long as they meet the fat content and flavor restrictions for each age group. Table 3-2 summarizes the allowable types of milk for each preschool age group. For additional guidance, visit the USDA's Serving Milk in the CACFP webpage.

> SFAs cannot serve milk that does not comply with the required fat content of the preschool meal patterns. For example, low-fat milk, fat-free milk, and reduced-fat milk cannot be served to 1-year-olds; and whole milk and reduced-fat milk cannot be served to ages 2-4.

If a child has a disability that requires milk with a fat content that is different from the preschool meal patterns, the SFA must make the substitution prescribed in the medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority. For more information, refer to "Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs" in section 1.

Table 3-2. Allowable types of milk in the preschool meal patterns

Type of milk	Age 1	Age 2	Ages 3-4
Whole, unflavored	✓	✓ [1]	
Whole, flavored [2]			
Reduced-fat (2%), unflavored		✓ [1]	
Reduced-fat (2%), flavored [2]			
Low-fat (1%), unflavored		✓	✓
Low-fat (1%), flavored [2]			
Fat-free (skim), unflavored		✓	✓
Fat-free (skim), flavored [2]			

[1] Unflavored whole milk and unflavored reduced-fat milk can be served only during a one-month transition period when switching a 24-month-old child from whole milk to low-fat or fat-free milk. For more information, refer to "Transitioning from Whole Milk to Low-fat or Fat-free Milk" in this section.

[2] The preschool meal patterns do not allow flavored milk.

Additional Milk Requirements for Public Schools

Public schools must meet additional state requirements for the milk component. Milk sold anywhere on school premises in Connecticut public schools must comply with the state beverage requirements of Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.). The state beverage requirements apply to milk sold as part of, and separately from, reimbursable meals and snacks. The state beverage statute does not apply to private schools or residential child care institutions (RCCIs).

The state beverage statute requires that milk cannot contain more than 4 grams of sugars per ounce. Products that meet the federal and state requirements for milk are in list 16 on the CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage, which includes brand-specific lists of foods that meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages that meet the requirements of the state beverage statute. For more information on the state beverage statute, visit the CSDE's Beverage Requirements webpage.

Transitioning from Breastmilk or Infant Formula to Whole Milk

Breastmilk is allowed at any age in the preschool meal patterns. Iron-fortified infant formula does not meet the fluid milk requirement of the preschool meal patterns. However, meals that contain an allowable iron-fortified infant formula are reimbursable for a one-month transition period when children ages 12 to 13 months are weaning (transitioning) from infant formula to whole cow's milk.

When a child is weaned from formula (or breastmilk) to cow's milk, it is common practice to provide the infant with both foods at the same meal. A small amount of whole milk is added to the iron-fortified infant formula, and gradually increased over time. This eases the transition by helping the infant to accept some of the new food.

Breastmilk past age 1

Breastmilk is allowed as the milk component in the preschool meal patterns for children at any age. Breastmilk may be served in combination with other types of milk. For meals and snacks to be reimbursable, the combined amount of breastmilk and milk must provide the minimum serving. For example, the preschool breakfast meal pattern requires ½ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk for age 2. If a mother provides ¼ cup of expressed breastmilk, the SFA must serve ¼ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk to make up the difference and meet the minimum ½-cup milk requirement.

The breastmilk and milk do not need to be mixed in the same cup; they may be served separately. The SFA must provide all other required meal components for the meal or snack to be reimbursable.

Transitioning from Whole Milk to Low-fat or Fat-free Milk

The USDA allows SFAs to serve unflavored reduced-fat milk and unflavored whole milk during a one-month transition period when a 24-month-old child is switching from whole milk to low-fat or fat-free milk. The steps below can help ease a child's transition to low-fat or fat-free milk.

1. Add a small amount of reduced-fat milk to whole milk.
2. Gradually change to low-fat or fat-free milk mixed with whole milk.
3. Decrease the amount of whole milk over time so the entire serving is low-fat or fat-free milk by the end of the one-month transition period.

The preschool meal patterns do not allow whole milk for ages 2 and older.

Menu Documentation for Milk

Preschool menus must document the type of milk served to each age group. For example, the menu should state "unflavored low-fat milk" instead of "low-fat milk," and "unflavored fat-free milk" instead of "fat-free milk."

Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities

SFAs may choose, but are not required, to offer one or more allowable milk substitutes for children whose special dietary needs do not constitute a disability. The two types of allowable substitutes for children without disabilities include:

- nondairy milk substitutes that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes (refer to table 3-3); and
- lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk with the appropriate fat content, i.e., low-fat milk (unflavored or flavored) and fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored).

> SFAs cannot offer any other beverages (including water and juice) as a choice instead of milk for reimbursable meals. Juice and water are never allowable milk substitutes for children without disabilities.

Parents or guardians must submit a written request for a nondairy milk substitute for their child. A medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority is not required. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs*, and the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs.*

A written request is not required for lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk. SFAs may offer lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk as a substitute for regular milk at any time. For more information, refer to "Lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk" in this section.

USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes

SFAs that choose to offer a milk substitute as part of reimbursable meals for children without disabilities must use products that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. Table 3-3 summarizes these requirements. SFAs cannot offer cannot offer any other nondairy milk substitutes.

Menu planners cannot determine if a product meets the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes by reading the product's packaging. The Nutrition Facts label lists only a few of the nine nutrients required by the USDA for allowable fluid milk substitutes. To determine if a product meets the USDA's nutrition standards, SFAs must obtain documentation from the manufacturer that includes the nutrition information for all nine nutrients.

Table 3-3. USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes	
Minimum nutrients per cup (8 fluid ounces)	
Calcium	276 milligrams (mg) or 30% Daily Value (DV) [1]
Protein	8 grams (g)
Vitamin A	500 international units (IU) or 10% DV
Vitamin D	100 IU or 25% DV
Magnesium	24 mg or 6% DV
Phosphorus	222 mg or 20% DV [1]
Potassium	349 mg or 10% DV [1]
Riboflavin	0.44 mg or 25% DV [1]
Vitamin B12	1.1 micrograms (mcg) or 20% DV [1]

[1] The FDA labeling laws require manufacturers to round nutrition values to the nearest 5 percent. The unrounded minimum DV is 27.6% for calcium, 22.2% for phosphorus, 9.97% for potassium, 25.88% for riboflavin, and 18.33% for vitamin B12. Source: *How to Determine if a Soy-Based Beverage Meets the Nutrient Requirements to Qualify as an Authorized Milk Substitute in WIC*, USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Office of Research, Nutrition, and Analysis (ORNA), 2006.

Additional nondairy milk substitute requirements for public schools

Public schools must meet additional state requirements for the nondairy milk substitutes. The state beverage statute does not apply to private schools or RCCIs.

Nondairy milk substitutes sold anywhere on school premises in Connecticut public schools must comply with the state beverage requirements of C.G.S. Section 10-221q. The state beverage requirements apply to nondairy milk substitutes sold as part of, and separately from, reimbursable meals and snacks. Nondairy milk substitutes cannot contain artificial sweeteners, and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce; 35 percent of calories from fat; and 10 percent of calories from saturated fats.

Products that meet the federal and state requirements for nondairy milk substitutes are in list 17 on the CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs,* and the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs*.

Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk

Children who cannot digest the lactose found in regular milk may be able to drink lactose-free (e.g., Lactaid) or lactose-reduced milk. These types of milk are regular fluid milk modified by the addition of lactase enzymes to reduce or eliminate the lactose (milk sugar). Lactose-reduced milk has part of the lactose removed, while lactose-free milk has all of the lactose removed.

> Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk credits the same as regular milk. SFAs may substitute low-fat or fat-free lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk for regular milk.

A written request from parents/guardians is not required for lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk. The CSDE encourages SFAs to make lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk available to children as needed.

In addition to meeting the preschool meal patterns, lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk sold in in Connecticut public schools must comply with the sugar limit of the state beverage requirements of the state beverage requirements (C.G.S. Section 10-221q.) List 16 of the CSDE's List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage includes lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk that meets the federal and state requirements. SFAs cannot sell lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk that does not meet the state requirements, either as part of reimbursable meals or a la carte. For more information, refer to "Additional Milk Requirements for Public Schools" in this section.

Crediting Milk in Smoothies

Unflavored low-fat milk or fat-free milk served in smoothies credits as the milk component. For smoothies only, the minimum creditable amount of milk is ¼ cup. If a smoothie contains less than the full serving of milk, the preschool menu must include the additional amount of milk to provide the full milk component. For more information on crediting smoothies, refer to "Crediting Smoothies" in the "Fruits Component" section.

Milk in Prepared Foods

Only fluid milk meets the USDA's definition for milk and the FDA's standard of identity for milk. The preschool meal patterns require fluid milk as a beverage.

Milk does not credit when cooked in cereals, puddings, cream sauces, or other foods. For example, milk does not credit when used to make quiche or macaroni and cheese.

Foods made from milk (such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream) cannot credit as the milk component. For information on crediting cheese and yogurt as meat/meat alternates, refer to the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section.

Serving Milk from Coolers

Milk coolers cannot contain any beverages other than milk. For example, schools cannot sell water and juice from the milk cooler. SFAs cannot promote or offer water, juice, or any other beverage as an alternative selection to fluid milk throughout the food service area.

Keeping Milk Cold

Implementing procedures to keep milk cold is important for food safety and helps make milk more appealing to children. Milk must be kept at 40°F or below, but tastes best at 35°F. SFAs should develop procedures to maintain milk at 35°F during all points of the meal service (receiving, storing, and serving).

New England Dairy's Keep Milk Cold webpage contains resources to help staff serve cold milk. The U.S. Dairy has a *Milk Quality Checklist* that helps programs evaluate their current practices and implement procedures for keeping milk cold.

Noncreditable Milk

Examples of foods that do not credit as the milk component include, but are not limited to:

- for age 1, unflavored or flavored reduced fat (2%) milk; unflavored or flavored low-fat (1%) milk, and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk;
- for ages 2-4, unflavored or flavored whole milk, unflavored or flavored reduced fat (2%) milk, flavored low-fat (1%) milk, and flavored fat-free milk;
- nondairy milk substitutes that do not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, e.g., rice milk, almond milk, and cashew milk;
- milk that is cooked or baked in prepared foods, such as cereals, puddings, and cream sauces;
- nutrition supplement beverages, such as Abbott's Pediasure;
- powdered milk beverages, such as Nestle's NIDO; and
- for child care programs in public schools only, milk and nondairy milk substitutes that do not meet the state beverage requirements of Connecticut General Statute Section 10-221q.

For more information, refer to "Noncreditable Foods" in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Resources for Crediting Milk

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting the milk component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Milk_Substitutes_SNP.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 3: Milk Component (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Food Buying Guide Section 5: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Milk Component (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section5_Milk.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 5: Yield Table for Milk (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section5_MilkYieldTable.pdf
- Serving Milk in the CACFP – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-milk-cacfp
- USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010 and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions: https://www.fns.usda.gov/qas-milk-substitution-children-medical-or-special-dietary-needs-non-disability
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs

For additional crediting resources, visit the "Milk Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Meat/Meat Alternates Component

Meats include cooked lean meat, poultry, and fish. Meat alternates are foods that provide a similar protein content to meat, such as alternate protein products (APPs), cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans or peas (legumes), nuts and seeds and their butters, yogurt, soy yogurt, tofu, and tempeh. Legumes credit as the vegetables component or the meat/meat alternates component, but not both in the same meal or ASP snack.

The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese.

Some meat/meat alternates may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include nuts and seeds, e.g., peanuts, almonds and sunflower or pumpkin seeds; chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters; tough meat or large chunks of meat; fish with bones; and large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese.

Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what meat/meat alternates to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cutting tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces; removing all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving; grinding up tough meats and poultry; chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grinding before adding to prepared foods; and spreading nut and seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers). For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

Meat/Meat Alternates versus Protein

It is important to note that the preschool meal patterns require a specific amount of the meat/meat alternates component, not a specific amount of protein. The terms "protein" and "meat/meat alternates" are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. "Meat/meat alternates" refers to the meal component of the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. "Protein" refers to one of the key nutrients found in meats and meat alternates.

Except for commercial tofu and tofu products, protein content is **not** an indicator that a commercial product credits as the meat/meat alternates component because the grams of protein listed on the product's Nutrition Facts label do not correspond to the ounces of the meat/meat alternates component contained in the product. A serving of meat or meat alternate contains other components in addition to protein, such as water, fat, vitamins, and minerals. Protein is also found in varying amounts in other ingredients (such as cereals, grains, and many vegetables) that may be part of a commercial meat or meat alternate product.

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container
Serving Size 1 burger (64g)

Amount per serving	
Calories	**130**
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 5 g	0%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 390 mg	17%
Total Carbohydrate 8g	3%
Dietary Fiber 4g	15%
Sugars 1g	
Includes <1g Added Sugars	
Protein 16 g	21%
Vitamin D 0.1 mcg	
Calcium 60mg	
Iron 1.1 mg	
Potassium 120mg	

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general advice.

Menu planners cannot use the Nutrition Facts label or ingredients statement to determine the amount of the meat/meat alternates component in a commercial product. The only exception is commercial tofu and tofu products, which must contain at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight. For more information, refer to "Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products" in this section.

To credit as the meat/meat alternates component, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, veggie burgers, and cheese ravioli) require a CN label or PFS to document the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. For more information, refer to "Crediting Meat/Meat Alternates in Commercial Products" in this section.

Serving Size for Meat/Meat Alternates

The preschool meal patterns require a serving of the meat/meat alternates component at lunch and supper. The meat/meat alternates component is not required at breakfast but may substitute for the entire grains component up to three times per week (refer to "Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast" in this section). A serving of meat/meat alternates may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-4 summarizes the required servings of the meat/meat alternates component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-4. Required servings of the meat/meat alternates component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast	None [1]	None [1]
Lunch	1 ounce	1½ ounce
Snack [1]	½ ounce	½ ounce

[1] The meat/meat alternates component is not required at breakfast, but may substitute for the entire grains component up to three times per week. For more information, refer to "Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast" in this section.

Menu planners should consult the USDA's FBG to determine the crediting information for foods in the meat/meat alternates component (refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 2). A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish;
- 3 ounces of surimi;
- 1 ounce of natural cheese, e.g., Colby, Monterey Jack, and Swiss or process cheese, e.g., American (reduced-fat or low-fat recommended for ages 2 and older);
- ¼ cup of cottage cheese (reduced-fat or low-fat recommended for ages 2 and older);
- 2 ounces of cheese food/spread or cheese substitute;
- ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes), e.g., kidney beans, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas;
- ½ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter and sunflower seed butter;
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts;

- ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (unflavored or flavored) containing no more than 23 grams of sugars per 6 ounces (3.83 grams per ounce);
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains specific ingredients (refer to "Crediting Tempeh" in this section);
- 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume) of tofu and other soy products containing at least 5 grams of protein; and
- 1 ounce of APP that meets the USDA's APP requirements (refer to "Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)" in this section).

Meeting the required meat/meat alternates servings

The amounts in the meat/meat alternates component refer to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* indicates that lean meat and poultry contains less than 10 grams of fat, no more than 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per 100 grams and per labeled serving size, based on the USDA's definitions for food label use. Examples include 95 percent lean cooked ground beef, beef top round steak or roast, beef tenderloin, pork top loin chop or roast, pork tenderloin, ham or turkey deli slices, skinless chicken breast, and skinless turkey breast.

The serving must contain the appropriate edible portion of meat/meat alternates, excluding any other ingredients. For example, to credit as 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, tuna salad must contain 1½ ounces of tuna fish, before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, celery, and seasonings.

The minimum creditable amount for the meat/meat alternates component is ¼ ounce equivalent. Meats and meat alternates offered in amounts less than ¼ ounce equivalent do not credit. For more information, refer to "Minimum creditable amounts" in this section.

When crediting menu items toward the meat/meat alternates component, menu planners must **round down** to the nearest ¼ ounce. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains 0.9 ounces of cooked chicken per serving credits as 0.75 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component.

SFAs must obtain crediting documentation for commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients, such as pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli. This documentation must state the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. For example, to credit a commercially prepared cheese pizza as 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, the product's CN label or PFS must indicate that the serving contains 1½ ounces of cheese. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2 and the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP*.

Main Dish Requirement for Lunch

SFAs must serve the daily meat/meat alternates component at lunch in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other food item. The main dish is generally considered the main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items.

For example, a preschool lunch menu for ages 3-4 could provide the required 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component from a sandwich containing 1½ ounces of tuna; or a sandwich containing 1 ounce of tuna served with soup that contains ⅛ cup of legumes (½ ounce of meat/meat alternates).

SFAs cannot serve the daily meat/meat alternates component for lunch in more than two food items.

Requirement for recognizable main dish

Foods that are not a recognizable main dish do not credit toward the meat/meat alternates component. For example, SFAs cannot credit peanut butter in a muffin or smoothie, pureed beans in a spice cake, or blended soft tofu in soup. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that preschool menus offer meat/meat alternates in a form that is recognizable to children. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" at the beginning of section 3.

The USDA allows two exceptions to the requirement for a recognizable main dish: yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies and pasta made with 100 percent legume flours.

- Yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies credits as the meat/meat alternates component. Other meat/meat alternates (such as peanut butter) served in smoothies do not credit. For more information, refer to "Yogurt in smoothies" in this section and "Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies" in the "Fruits Component" section.

- Pasta made with 100 percent legume flours may credit as the meat/meat alternates component if the menu also includes an additional meat or meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more information, refer to "Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meat/Meat Alternates" in this section.

Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast

The meat/meat alternates component is not required at breakfast. The menu planner may choose to substitute the meat/meat alternates component for the entire grains component up to three times per week. This provision applies regardless of the number of days in the week. For example, the menu planner could choose to substitute the meat/meat alternates component for the entire grains component three times during a three-day week or three times during a five-day week.

A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component substitutes for 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. The preschool breakfast meal pattern requires ½ ounce equivalent of the grains component. For example, the menu planner could substitute 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, ½ ounce of cheese, ¼ of a large egg, or ¼ cup of yogurt for ½ ounce equivalent of the grains component.

The USDA's Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast webpage contains handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish with additional guidance on serving the meat/meat alternates component in preschool breakfast menus.

Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)

APPs are generally single ingredient powders (such as soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein) that are added to foods. Examples of foods that might contain added APPs include beef patties, beef crumbles, pizza topping, meat loaf, meat sauce, taco filling, burritos, and tuna salad.

APPs must meet the USDA's requirements specified in appendix A of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). SFAs must have documentation on file to indicate that APPs comply with these requirements. Acceptable documentation includes a CN label, PFS, or a signed letter from a company official attesting that the APP meets the USDA's requirements. For more information on crediting APPs, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP,* and the USDA's resource, *Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products*.

Crediting Cheeses

The USDA recommends serving only low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses (for ages 2 and older) and choosing natural cheeses. Natural cheeses are produced directly from milk, such as cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, mozzarella, Muenster, provolone, Swiss, feta, and brie. Natural cheeses also include pasteurized blended cheeses made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheeses.

Natural cheeses do not include pasteurized process cheeses such as American cheese, pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, and pasteurized process cheese products. Imitation cheese and cheese products do not credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the preschool meal patterns.

> Large chunks of cheese (such as cheese cubes or string cheese) may be a choking hazard for young chidlren. Grate or thinly slice cheese to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

For commercial products that contain cheese (such as lasagna or macaroni and cheese), SFAs must document the serving size with a CN label or PFS. For more information, refer to "Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Table 3-5 shows the amount of different types of cheeses required to credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

Table 3-5. Meat/meat alternates contribution of cheeses

Type of cheese	1 ounce of meat/meat alternates =
Natural cheese, e.g., cheddar and Swiss	1 ounce
Grated cheese, e.g., Parmesan or Romano	1 ounce (⅜ cup)
Process cheese, e.g., American	1 ounce
Cottage or ricotta cheese	¼ cup
Process cheese food	2 ounces
Process cheese spread	2 ounces
Process cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, or process cheese spread substitute [1]	2 ounces

[1] Cheese substitutes include reduced fat, low fat, nonfat, and lite versions of cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, and cheese spread substitute. These foods must meet the FDA's standard of identity for substitute foods and must be labeled as "cheese substitute," "cheese food substitute," or "cheese spread substitute." The FDA's standard of identity requires that a cheese substitute is not nutritionally inferior to the standardized cheese for which it is substituting.

Crediting Deli Meats, Hot Dogs, and Sausage

SFAs must ensure that the serving of a commercial meat product provides the amount of the meat/meat alternates component being credited. The amount that provides 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component depends on the product's ingredients.

- **100 percent meat:** Products that are 100 percent meat without added liquids (such as water or broth), binders, or 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 of the meat/meat alternates component.

- **Added liquids, binders, and extenders:** Products with 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 of the meat/meat alternates component. Crediting depends on the amount of meat per serving, excluding added ingredients. For example, one brand of deli meat might require 1.6 ounces to credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component, while another brand might require 2.3 ounces to credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

Products with added liquids, binders, and extenders cannot credit as the meat/meat alternates component without a CN label or PFS stating 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.

SFAs must obtain appropriate crediting documentation for all meats with added liquids, binders, and extenders. Acceptable documentation includes a CN label or a manufacturer's PFS stating the amount of the meat/meat alternates component contained in one serving of the product. The USDA's Authorized Labels and Manufacturers webpage lists approved CN-labeled products and manufacturers. For more information, refer to "Child Nutrition (CN) Labels" and "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2.

Hotdogs and other tube-shaped meats may be choking hazards for young children. Cut hot dogs into short strips instead of round pieces. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer hot dogs in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

Liquids, binders, and extenders

Table 3-6 lists examples of ingredients that are 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 3-6. Examples of binders and extenders [1]

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

[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 APP requirements. For more information, refer to "Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)" in this section.

For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2 and the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP, CN Labeling Program,* and *Product Formulation Statements*.

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.

The SFA's 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, round up the weight of the deli meat in the standardized recipe to the nearest measure. For example, the standardized 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 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 recipe should include the required weight of ABC brand and the required weight of XYZ brand. Alternatively, the school could develop a separate turkey sandwich recipe for each brand of deli meat.

For information on standardized recipes, refer to "Standardized Recipes" in section 2.

Crediting Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products

Shelf-stable, dried and semi-dried meat, poultry, and seafood (such as jerky or summer sausage) credit as the meat/meat alternates component. The USDA indicates that these products are most useful in meals served off-site, such as during field trips or picnics. However, SFAs may also credit these products in meals served on site.

Crediting of dried meat, poultry, and seafood products must follow the same crediting principles used for all other products made from meat, poultry, or seafood. SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to document the product's meal pattern contribution. The FBG does not include crediting information for dried meat, poultry, or seafood products because industry production standards for these products vary widely.

Menu planners must evaluate the dried meat product's PFS to ensure that it complies with the USDA's crediting principles below.

1. The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must match or have a similar description as the ingredient listed in the product's ingredients statement. For example, the dried beef stick below lists "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat" as the first ingredient. This product's PFS must also list the crediting information for "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)."

    - Ingredients: *Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)*, water, salt, less than 2% brown sugar, spices, monosodium glutamate, sugar, flavorings, sodium nitrate.

2. The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must have a similar description to a food item in the FBG. For the example above, "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat" matches the description for "Beef, Ground, fresh or frozen, Market Style, no more than 30% fat (Like IMPS #136), cooked lean meat" on page 1-17 of the FBG.

3. The creditable amount cannot exceed the finished weight of the product, i.e., the cooked weight ready for serving. For example, a 1-ounce serving of beef jerky cannot credit for more than 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

Ground pork and beef ingredients must include the percent fat because the fat content has a direct correlation to the cooking yield. To credit in Child Nutrition Programs, the fat content of ground beef or ground pork in dried meat products cannot exceed 30 percent. Products that do not indicate the fat percentage do not credit.

For example, the dried pork stick below does not credit as the meat/meal alternates component because the creditable ingredients (pork) does not list the fat percentage, and does not match a description in the FBG.

- Ingredients: *Pork*, cane sugar, garlic (garlic, citric acid, ascorbic acid), contains 2% or less of: Spanish smoked paprika (paprika, rosemary extract), sea salt, natural flavors, sherry wine vinegar, red pepper chili flakes, celery powder, in collagen casing.

For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2. The requirements for crediting dried meat are summarized in USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: *Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs*. For additional guidance on crediting dried meat products, refer to the USDA's webinar, *Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products*.

Dried meat products (such as jerky) may be choking hazards for young children Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer dried meat products in snack menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

Crediting Eggs

Only whole eggs are creditable. Half of a large egg credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Liquid egg substitutes are not whole eggs and are not creditable. Egg whites do not credit if served without the yolks.

Crediting Legumes as Meat/Meat Alternates

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 the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or ASP snack. Menu planners must determine in advance how to credit legumes in preschool menus.

Legumes may credit as either component in different meals. For example, refried beans may credit as the meat/meat alternates component at one lunch and as the vegetables component

at another lunch. If a meal includes two servings of legumes, the menu planner may choose to credit one serving as the meat/meat alternates component and one serving as the vegetables component. For example, a lunch menu includes chili with kidney beans and a salad with garbanzo beans. The menu planner may credit the garbanzo beans as the vegetables component and the kidney beans as the meat/meat alternates component.

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

> The serving size refers to the amount of cooked legumes excluding other ingredients, such as the sauce and pork fat in baked beans. For example, to credit baked beans as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, the serving must contain ¼ cup of beans, not including the sauce and pork fat. For guidance on how to calculate the contribution of legumes in a recipe, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP*.

Table 3-7 shows the meat/meat alternates contribution (ounce equivalents) for different amounts of cooked legumes.

Table 3-7. Meat/meat alternates contribution of cooked legumes

Serving size	Meat/meat alternates
1 tablespoon	¼ ounce equivalent (minimum creditable amount)
2 tablespoons (⅛ cup)	½ ounce equivalent
3 tablespoons	¾ ounce equivalent
4 tablespoons (¼ cup)	**1 ounce equivalent**
5 tablespoons	1¼ ounce equivalents
6 tablespoons (⅜ cup)	1½ ounce equivalents
7 tablespoons	1¾ ounce equivalents
8 tablespoons (½ cup)	2 ounce equivalents

For information on crediting legumes as vegetables, refer to "Crediting Legumes as Vegetables" in the "Vegetables Component" section.

Crediting roasted or dried legumes as meat/meat alternates

Roasted or dried legumes (such as roasted soybeans or roasted chickpeas) credit as the meat/meat alternates component the same as nuts and seeds. A 1-ounce serving of roasted or dried legumes credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

Roasted or dried legumes may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer roasted or dried legumes in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

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 serving for each age group. For more information, refer to "Main Dish Requirement for Lunch," "Minimum creditable amounts," and "Crediting Nuts and Seeds" in this section.

For information on crediting roasted or dried legumes as the vegetables component, refer to "Crediting Roasted or Dried Legumes as Vegetables" in the "Vegetables Component" section.

Resources for legumes

The recipes and resources below assist SFAs with incorporating legumes into preschool meals.

- Beans (ICN Child Nutrition Sharing Site):
  https://theicn.org/cnss/menu-planning/beans/
- Beans and Peas are Unique Foods (USDA):
  https://www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/vegetables/vegetables-beans-and-peas
- Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook for Schools (USDA):
  https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbook-schools
- Pulses in Schools (USDA Pulses):
  https://www.usapulses.org/schools/school-nutrition

For additional resources, refer to "Recipe Resources" in section 2 and "Legumes (Dried Beans and Peas)" in the CSDE's *Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs*.

Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meat/Meat Alternates

Pasta products made of 100 percent legume flours (such as chickpea flour or lentil flour) credit as the meat/meat alternates component. However, the legume flour pasta must be offered with an additional meat/meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that preschool menus offer meat/meat alternates in a form that is recognizable to children. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" at the beginning of section 3.

Table 3-8 shows the meat/meat alternates contribution (ounce equivalents) for different amounts of 100 percent legume pasta. A ¼-cup serving of cooked legume flour pasta credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component.

Table 3-8. Meat/meat alternates contribution of cooked 100 percent legume flour pasta products

Serving size	Meat/meat alternates contribution
1 tablespoon	¼ ounce equivalent (minimum creditable amount)
⅛ cup	½ ounce equivalent
⅜ cup	¾ ounce equivalents
¼ cup	**1 ounce equivalent**
½ cup	2 ounce equivalents

Alternatively, SFAs may credit legume flour pasta using the bean flour yield information on page C-1 of the FBG's Appendix C, or with appropriate documentation on the manufacturer's PFS. For more information, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2 and the USDA's resources, *Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs* and *Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's PFS*.

Pasta made of 100 percent legumes may also credit as the vegetables component, but cannot credit as both the vegetables component and meat/meat alternates component in the same meal. For more information, refer to "100 percent vegetable flours crediting as a vegetable" in the Vegetables section.

The requirements for crediting pasta products made of vegetable flours are summarized in USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019 and SFSP 12-2019: *Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*.

Crediting Meat/Meat Alternates in Combination Entrees

Combination entrees (such as tacos, lasagna, and chicken stir-fry) contain more than one food component. For example, beef lasagna contains the grains component (pasta), the meat/meat alternates component (ground beef and cheese), and the vegetables component (tomato sauce). Most combination entrees cannot be separated (such as pizza or a burrito) or are not intended to be separated (such as hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich).

For foods made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the amount of meat/meat alternates per serving, based on the yields listed in the FBG. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" and "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 2.

For commercial products, SFAs must obtain a CN label (if available) or a PFS stating the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including the combination entree in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Crediting Meat/Meat Alternates in Commercial Products

To credit as the meat/meat alternates component, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli) require documentation stating the amount of the meat/meat alternates component per serving. For example, to credit a commercial breaded chicken patty as 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving of the product contains 1½ ounces of cooked chicken. Commercial products cannot credit as the meat/meat alternates component without this documentation.

SFAs must have a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to document the meal pattern contribution of all commercial meat/meat alternate products used in preschool menus. Commercial products without this documentation cannot credit in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

The CSDE's resource, *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*, summarizes the requirements for crediting commercial meat/meat alternates in preschool menus.

Crediting Nut and Seed Butters

Creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter credits if it meets the FDA's standards of identity for peanut butter (21 CFR 164.150), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nut or seed butters in preschool menus. Use only creamy peanut butter (not chunky) and spread thinly to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

The serving for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons of a nut or seed butter credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Table 3-9 shows the meat/meat alternates contribution for different amounts of nut and seed butters.

Table 3-9. Meat/meat alternates contribution of nut and seed butters

Serving size	Meat/meat alternates contribution
1 tablespoon	¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
2 tablespoons (⅛ cup)	¾ ounce
3 tablespoons	½ ounce
4 tablespoons (¼ cup)	**1 ounce**
5 tablespoons	1½ ounces
6 tablespoons (⅜ cup)	2 ounces

Note: A 1-ounce serving (weight) of a nut or seed butter does not provide 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. To portion nut and seed butters by weight, food service staff must use the appropriate weight conversion listed in the FBG. The FBG indicates that 1.1 ounces of a nut or seed butter credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to "Volume versus weight" in section 2.

Considerations for serving size

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for nut and seed butters. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich.

The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to provide the full serving. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, which equals 3 tablespoons of peanut butter. A lunch menu could provide 1½ ounces of meat/meat alternates from a sandwich containing 1½ tablespoons of peanut butter (¾ ounce of meat/meat alternates) served with ¾ cup of yogurt (¾ ounce of meat/meat alternates).

For more information on crediting nut and seed butters, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the CACFP*.

Crediting Nuts and Seeds

Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, soy nuts, and sunflower seeds. Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit.

Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts. However, fresh soybeans (edamame) are legumes and credit as the vegetables component.

Nuts and seeds may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nuts or seeds in snack menus. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food and are ground or finely chopped. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

At lunch, nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component for each age group. Menu planners must combine nuts and seeds with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement.

The example below illustrates this requirement.

- The preschool lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires 1 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component. A lunch for this age group cannot contain more than ½ ounce of nuts or seeds. The menu must also include ½ ounce of another meat/meat alternate, such as ¼ cup of yogurt, ½ ounce of lean meat, ½ ounce of cheese, ⅛ cup of cottage cheese, ⅛ cup of cooked legumes, or half of a large egg.

For more information, refer to "Minimum creditable amounts" in this section and the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP*.

Crediting Surimi Seafood

Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). Surimi seafood is available in many forms and shapes, including chunks, shredded, and flaked. It does not require additional preparation. Surimi seafood can be incorporated into a variety of menu items, such as seafood salads, sushi-style rolls, sandwiches, tacos, and ramen.

The amount of fish in surimi varies depending on the manufacturer and product. Surimi seafood may contain as little as one-third seafood ingredient, and may include other creditable food ingredients. A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Table 3-10 shows the meat/meat alternates contribution for different amounts of surimi seafood.

Table 3-10. Meat/meat alternates contribution of surimi seafood [1]

Serving size	Meat/meat alternates contribution
1.0 ounce	¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
2.0 ounces	½ ounce
3.0 ounces	**1 ounce**
4.4 ounces	1½ ounces
6.0 ounces	2 ounces

[1] The crediting ratio for surimi seafood differs based on portion size due to USDA rounding rules that require rounding down to the nearest 0.25 ounce.

To credit surimi seafood differently from the amounts in table 3-10, SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer's PFS that documents how the crediting is determined. For example, a manufacturer's PFS might document that 1 ounce of a surimi seafood product credits as ½ ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

The requirements for crediting surimi are summarized in USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: *Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs*. For additional guidance on crediting surimi, refer to the USDA's webinar, *Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi*.

Crediting Tempeh

Tempeh is a highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. Tempeh may be used as a meat alternate in a variety of recipes, including stir-fries, sandwiches, and salads.

A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If a tempeh product contains other ingredients, SFAs must obtain a CN label or PFS to document crediting. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Varieties of tempeh that include other creditable foods as ingredients (such as brown rice, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, flax seed, and vegetables) may also credit as the meat/meat alternates component, grains component, and vegetables component. To credit in the preschool meal patterns, a product must provide the minimum creditable quantities, i.e., ¼ ounce of meat/meat alternates, ¼ ounce equivalent of grains, and ¼ cup of vegetables. SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to document how much tempeh and other creditable foods these products contain.

The requirements for crediting tempeh are summarized in USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: *Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs*. For additional guidance on crediting tempeh, refer to the USDA's webinar, *Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi*.

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products

Commercial tofu and tofu products must meet the two criteria below to credit as the meat/meat alternates component.

1. The product must be easily recognizable as a meat substitute. Examples include tofu burgers and tofu sausage. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" at the beginning of section 3.

2. The tofu ingredient must contain at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight (¼ cup volume equivalent).

SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that tofu products comply with these requirements. For information on how to calculate the grams of protein per serving, refer to the CSDE's resource,*Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP*.

Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt

Commercial yogurt and soy yogurt credit as the meat/meat alternates component. Yogurt may be unflavored or flavored; sweetened or unsweetened; whole-fat, low-fat, or nonfat; and may contain added fruit, either blended or on the bottom. Yogurt must meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for yogurt (21 CFR 131.200), low-fat yogurt (21 CFR 131.203), or nonfat yogurt (21 CFR 131.206).

Serving size for yogurt

The serving size for yogurt is based on volume (cups) or weight (ounces) and is the same for all types, flavors, and fat contents. A ½-cup serving (volume) or 4 ounces (weight) credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component in the preschool meal patterns. Table 3-11 shows the meat/meat alternates contribution for different amounts of yogurt.

Table 3-11. Meat/meat alternates contribution of yogurt

Serving size	Meat/meat alternates contribution
⅛ cup or 1 ounce	¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
¼ cup or 2 ounces	½ ounce
½ cup (4 ounces)	**1 ounce**
¾ cup (6 ounces)	1½ ounces
1 cup (8 ounces)	2 ounces

Sugar limit for yogurt

Yogurt and soy yogurt must meet the preschool sugar limit of no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce). Yogurt and soy yogurt used in smoothies made on site by the SFA must also meet this requirement. The SFA must have documentation on file to indicate that yogurt and soy yogurt served in preschool meals and ASP snacks comply with the sugar limit. For guidance on how to determine if a product complies with the sugar limit, refer to "Resources for crediting yogurt" in this section.

The CSDE encourages menu planners to read labels and choose products without artificial and nonnutritive sweeteners (e.g., aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia), and sugar alcohols. These products are often labeled as "light" or "lite."

Yogurt in Smoothies

Yogurt or soy yogurt that meets the sugar limit may credit as the meat/meat alternates component when used as an ingredient in a smoothie. A ½-cup serving of yogurt credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must document the amount of yogurt per serving with a standardized recipe for smoothies made on site, and a CN label or PFS for commercial products. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk. Fluid milk must be offered at breakfast and lunch to meet the milk component requirement of the preschool meal patterns. For more information on smoothies, refer to "Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies" in the "Fruits Component" section.

Noncreditable yogurt

Drinkable or squeezable yogurt and frozen yogurt do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. The FDA's definition and standard of identity requires that yogurt must be "coagulated," not liquid. The FDA does not have a standard of identity for frozen yogurt.

Homemade yogurt does not credit for food safety reasons. Yogurt-flavored products (such as yogurt bars and yogurt-covered fruit or nuts) do not meet the FDA's definition and standard of identity for yogurt, and do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

Resources for crediting yogurt

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting yogurt as the meat/meat alternates component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Calculating Sugar Limits for Yogurt in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-yogurt-cacfp
- Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Sugars – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-yogurts-are-lower-sugar
- Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothiesSNPpreschool.pdf

- Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditYogurtSNPpreschool.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs

Noncreditable Foods in the Meat/Meat Alternates Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the meat/meat alternates component include, but are not limited to:

- bacon;
- commercial canned soups, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice;
- cream cheese;
- drinkable yogurt;
- egg whites;
- frozen yogurt;
- imitation cheese;
- products made with tofu that are not easily recognized as meat substitutes;
- sour cream;
- tofu that contains less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2-ounce serving by weight; and
- yogurt or soy yogurt that contains more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce.

For more information, refer to "Noncreditable Foods" in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in this section.

Resources for Crediting Meat/Meat Alternates

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the meat/meat alternates component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/AcceptDocumentationSNP.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 4: Meat/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditCommercialMMASNP.pdf
- Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditDeliSNP.pdf
- Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditLegumesSNP.pdf
- Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditNutsSNP.pdf
- Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditTofuSNP.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 1: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternates.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 1: Yield Table for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternatesYieldTable.pdf
- Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app
- Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/APPRequirementsSNP.pdf

- USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition
- USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs
- USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs
- 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
- USDA Memo SP 53-2016 and CACFP 21-2016: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs and the CACFP: https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp
- USDA Webinar: Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products: https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products

For additional crediting resources, visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Vegetables Component

The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables; and pasteurized full-strength vegetable juice. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends that preschool menus include at least one serving per week of dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas (legumes), starchy vegetables, and other vegetables. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP*.

The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* also recommends incorporating seasonal and locally produced foods into meals. For more information, visit the USDA's Farm to Preschool webpage, the CSDE's Farm to School webpage and the University of Connecticut's Put Local on Your Tray webpage.

Some vegetables may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include cooked or raw whole-kernel corn, and small pieces of raw vegetables, e.g., raw green peas, whole beans, raw carrot rounds, baby carrots, string beans, celery, and other raw or partially cooked hard vegetables. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what vegetables to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

Serving Size for Vegetables

The preschool meal patterns for children require a serving of the vegetables component at lunch. At breakfast, vegetables and fruits are one component and may include a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both. A serving of vegetables may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-12 summarizes the required servings of the vegetables component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-12. Required servings of the vegetables component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast [1]	¼ cup	¼ cup
Lunch	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Snack	½ cup	½ cup

[1] Vegetables and fruits are one component and may include vegetables, fruits, or both.

The amounts for the vegetables component refer to the edible portion after any applicable preparation techniques, such as peeling, trimming, and cooking. All vegetables credit based on volume (cups) with the exceptions below.

- Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (refer to "Crediting Raw Leafy Greens" in this section).
- Dried or dehydrated vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume (refer to "Crediting Dried Vegetables" in this section).

Menu planners should consult the USDA's FBG to determine the number of servings provided by a specific quantity of vegetables. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 2.

Meeting the required vegetable servings

SFAs may choose to serve a combination of several vegetables to meet the daily requirement, as long as each serving contains at least ⅛ cup of vegetables (refer to "Minimum creditable amounts" in the beginning of section 3). For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 could meet the required ¼-cup serving of the vegetables component with ¼ cup of broccoli, or ⅛ cup of broccoli and ⅛ cup of carrots. Servings that contain less than ⅛ cup of vegetables do not credit.

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the vegetables component, the meal must include additional vegetables to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern requires ¼ cup of the vegetables component for ages 3-4. If a menu item contains ⅛ cup of vegetables, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least ⅛ cup of vegetables to provide the full serving for ages 3-4.

> When crediting menus items toward the vegetables component, menu planners must **round down** to the nearest ⅛ cup. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains 2½ tablespoons of corn per serving credits as 2 tablespoons (⅛ cup) of the vegetables component.

Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch

Vegetables can replace the fruits component at any lunch. Lunches can contain one serving of the vegetables component and one serving of the fruits component, or two different servings of the vegetables component. For example, menu planners may choose to substitute vegetables for the fruits component on Monday and Friday, or every day of the week. Lunches cannot contain two servings of only the fruits component.

Crediting Canned Vegetables

Canned vegetables must be drained. A serving of canned vegetables cannot include the packing liquid, such as water or sauce. For example, to credit as ½ cup of the vegetables component, a ½-cup serving of canned peas cannot include the water in which it is packed, and a ½-cup serving of baked beans cannot include the sauce in which it is packed. The serving must contain ½ cup of vegetables **before** any added liquid.

Crediting Dried Vegetables

Dried or dehydrated vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit as the vegetables component based on their rehydrated volume. Dried vegetables used for seasonings (such as dried onion and dried parsley) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

The FBG lists yields for some dehydrated vegetables, such as pinto beans, refried beans, onions, bell peppers, potatoes, seaweed, and sweet potatoes. Dried vegetables not listed in the FBG require a PFS to determine crediting information. The PFS must provide specific documentation on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume. Menu planners should check the accuracy of the PFS prior to including foods with dehydrated vegetables in reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Determining rehydrated volume

SFAs can use the procedures below to determine and document the rehydrated volume of dehydrated vegetable products.

1. Rehydrate (add water or liquid to) a purchase unit of the dehydrated vegetable according to the manufacturer's directions. If the container does not include directions, request rehydration directions from the manufacturer.

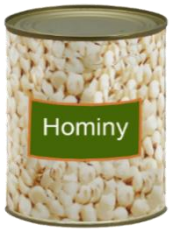
2. Measure the rehydrated volume.

3. Measure the number of ¼-cup servings of rehydrated product that one purchase unit provides.

4. Keep records on file as verification. Records should include information on the size of the purchase unit, the number of ¼-cup servings of rehydrated product per purchase unit, the name of the manufacturer, and the manufacturer's directions for rehydrating the product.

Since product rehydration volumes often vary from brand to brand, SFAs should use this procedure for each brand of dehydrated product. For more information, refer to "Determining in-house product yields" in section 2.

Crediting Hominy as Vegetables



Hominy is a traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin.

Hominy is available dried and in a fully cooked canned form. Drained canned hominy or cooked whole hominy (from dried hominy) credits toward the vegetables component as a starchy vegetable. For example, ¼ cup of canned drained hominy credits as ¼ cup of the starchy vegetables subgroup. As a reminder, the preschool meal patterns do not require vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends providing at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup per week.

For information on crediting hominy as the grains component, refer to "Crediting Hominy as Grains" in the "Grains Component" section.

Crediting Legumes as Vegetables

Legumes credit as the vegetables component or the meat/meat alternates component, but not both in the same meal or ASP snack. The menu planner must determine in advance how to credit legumes in a meal. For information on crediting legumes as the meat/meat alternates component, refer to "Crediting Legumes as Meat/Meat Alternates" in the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section.

Legumes credit as the vegetables component based on the volume (cups) served. For example, ½ cup of kidney beans credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component.

> A serving of cooked legumes must contain the minimum required amount of beans, excluding other ingredients such as sauce and pork fat. For example, ½ cup of baked beans that contains ⅛ cup of sauce and pork fat credits as ⅜ cup of the vegetables component. For more information, refer to "Vegetables with Added Ingredients" in this section.

A menu item must provide at least ⅛ cup of legumes to credit toward part of the vegetables component. If the amount is less than the full preschool serving, the meal or ASP snack must include additional vegetables to meet the full serving for each age group. For more

information, refer to "Minimum creditable amounts" in the beginning of section 3 and "Serving Size for Vegetables" in this section.

Note: Peanuts are legumes that credit only as the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to "Nuts and Seeds" in the "Meat/Meat Alternates" section.

Crediting roasted or dried legumes as vegetables

Roasted or dried legumes, such as chickpeas and soybeans, credit as the vegetables component based on the volume (cups) served. For example, ¼ cup of roasted or dried legumes credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component.

The USDA recommends that menu planners use discretion when offering snack-type legumes (such as individually wrapped soy nuts) as part of reimbursable meals, due to their perception 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.

Considerations for serving roasted or dried legumes are similar to nuts. Roasted or dried legumes may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer roasted or dried legumes in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

For information on crediting roasted or dried legumes as the meat/meat alternates component, refer to "Crediting roasted or dried legumes as meat/meat alternates" in the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section.

Crediting legumes in recipes as vegetables

A standardized recipe must provide at least ⅛ cup of legumes per serving to credit toward the vegetables component. The menu planner must determine the recipe's crediting information for the vegetables component by dividing the total volume (cups) of beans in the recipe by the number of servings, then rounding down to the nearest ⅛ cup. For guidance on how to calculate the contribution of legumes in a recipe, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP*.

Crediting Mixed Vegetables at Lunch

The preschool meal patterns allow vegetables to substitute for the fruits component at any lunch. Vegetable mixtures (such as carrots, peas, and corn; three-bean salad; and a California mix of broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots) may credit toward both the vegetables component and the fruits component at lunch, if the mixture contains at least ⅛ cup each of two different kinds of vegetables.

For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 includes a vegetable mixture of ¼ cup of broccoli and ¼ cup of cauliflower. Since vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at lunch, the menu planner may choose to credit the broccoli as the full vegetables component (¼ cup), and use the cauliflower to replace the full fruits component (¼ cup). The cauliflower provides the minimum ¼-cup serving for the fruits component.

The crediting of mixed vegetables depends on whether the menu planner knows the amount of each type of vegetable in the mixture. If the menu planner does not know the quantities of the different vegetables in a mix (such as frozen mixed carrots and peas), the vegetable mixture credits as one serving of vegetables and cannot credit as the fruit component. In this case, the lunch menu would require either a serving of the fruits component, or another serving of vegetables substituted for the fruits component. For more information, refer to "Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch" in this section.

Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour

Pasta products made of vegetable flours credit as the vegetables component if they meet the specific requirements in USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019 and SFSP 12-2019: *Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*. These requirements are summarized below.

Pasta made of 100 percent legumes credits as the meat/meat alternates component, but cannot credit as the vegetables component and the meat/meat alternates component in the same meal or ASP snack. For more information, refer to "Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meat/Meat Alternates" in the Meat/Meat Alternates section.

Crediting vegetable flours as vegetables

Pasta made of one or more 100 percent vegetable flours credits toward the vegetables component, even when it is not served with another recognizable vegetable. These products credit the same as vegetables, e.g., ½ cup of pasta made of 100 percent vegetable flour credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. The ingredients statements below show examples of pasta products that contain 100 percent vegetable flours.

- Ingredients: *Red lentil flour*.
- Ingredients: *Green lentils, cauliflower, parsnips*.

Crediting vegetable flours from one vegetable subgroup

Pasta products made of one or more vegetable flours from one vegetable subgroup may credit toward the appropriate vegetable subgroup. For example, pasta made of 100 percent red lentil flour credits as ½ cup of the legumes subgroup.

> The preschool meal patterns do not require vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends providing at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup per week.

Pasta made of 100 percent legumes may also credit as the meat/meat alternates component, but cannot credit as the legumes subgroup and the meat/meat alternates component in the same meal. For more information, refer to "Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meat/Meat Alternates" in the Meat/Meat Alternates section.

Crediting vegetable flours with other non-vegetable ingredients

Pasta products made of vegetable flour with other non-vegetable ingredients may credit toward the vegetables component (or in the case of 100 percent legume pasta, the meat/meat alternates component) with a PFS that details the actual volume of vegetable flour per serving. This crediting does not apply to grain-based pasta products that contain small amounts of vegetable powder for color, such as spinach pasta or sun-dried tomato pasta.

The ingredients statement below shows an example of a pasta product that does not credit toward the vegetables component. This product contains dried spinach in an amount that is too small to credit.

- Ingredients: Semolina (wheat), durum flour (wheat), *dried spinach*, niacin, ferrous sulfate (iron), thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

The example below shows an ingredients statement for a vegetable pasta product that contains dried vegetables (carrot, tomato, and spinach) and other non-vegetable ingredients.

- Ingredients: Semolina (wheat), durum flour (wheat), *dried carrots, dried tomato, dried spinach*, niacin, ferrous sulfate (iron), thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This product might credit toward the vegetables component depending on the amount of dried carrots, dried tomato, and dried spinach per serving. The SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine the crediting information for this product.

Signage and staff training for vegetable flour pastas

The USDA encourages SFAs to provide information, as age appropriate, that helps children understand what foods are in their meals and ASP snacks. For example, if meal includes 100 percent chickpea pasta as the vegetables component, the menu could list chickpea pasta with a symbol showing it to be part of the vegetables component (not the grains component) of the meal.

Menu planners should also inform serving staff when meals include pasta made with vegetable flours, so they are aware of how these foods contribute to the preschool meal patterns.

Crediting Pureed Vegetables

Pureed vegetables must be visible (recognizable) to credit in the preschool meal patterns. Examples include pureed foods made from one vegetable such as tomato sauce, split pea soup, mashed potatoes, mashed sweet potatoes, and pureed butternut squash. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" at the beginning of section 3.

> Foods that contain pureed vegetables that are not visible (such as pureed carrots in macaroni and cheese) cannot credit as the vegetables component unless they also provide at least ⅛ cup of visible creditable vegetables. For example, a serving of macaroni and cheese that contains ⅛ cup of diced butternut squash (visible) and ⅛ cup of pureed carrots (not visible) credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component.

Pureed vegetables credit based on the volume (cups) after pureeing. For example, to determine the volume of pea puree obtained from 1 cup of green peas, food service staff would puree the whole peas and measure the resulting amount of puree. Pureed vegetables typically have a smaller volume than the whole vegetable pieces. For more information, refer to "Determining in-house product yields" in section 2.

SFAs must document crediting information with a standardized recipe or PFS. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Crediting Raw Leafy Greens

Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served. For example, ½ cup of raw leafy greens credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component. Examples of raw leafy greens include kale, greens (e.g., beet, collard, mustard, and turnip), spinach, arugula, and lettuce such as iceberg, romaine, Boston, Bibb, red leaf, and spring mix.

Cooked leafy greens (such as spinach and kale) and roasted or dried leafy greens (such as roasted kale) credit based on the volume served. For example, ½ cup of cooked spinach or roasted kale credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component.

Crediting Soups

Vegetable soups made from scratch credit based on the amount of vegetables contained in one serving. SFAs must document this information with a standardized recipe based on the yields listed in the FBG. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" and "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 2.

Creditable commercial vegetable soups include lentil, pea, and bean (legumes); minestrone; tomato; tomato with other basic components such as rice; vegetable (contains only vegetables); and vegetable with other basic components such as meat or poultry. The FBG indicates that a 1-cup serving of a commercial legume soup credits as ½ cup of vegetables, and a 1-cup serving of commercial vegetable soup credits as ¼ cup of vegetables. The serving refers to the amount of the cooked soup, e.g., heated canned or frozen ready-to-serve soup, reconstituted dried soup, and reconstituted condensed soup.

Commercial beef barley soup, chicken or turkey noodle soup, chicken or turkey rice soup, and cream vegetable soups (such as cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for preschoolers. The large serving of a commercial soup needed to provide the full vegetables component might be unreasonable, especially for younger children. For example, to provide ½ cup of the vegetables component at snack requires 2 cups of a commercial vegetable soup and 1 cup of a commercial legume soup. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Soups in the NSLP and SBP*.

Considerations for size of serving container

The served portion of soup (commercial or made from scratch) must be sufficient to provide the amount of each component being credited toward the meal patterns. Menu planners should consider the size of the container used to serve the soup. A 1-cup container (8 fluid ounces) does not provide 1 cup of soup unless it is completely filled to the top, which is impractical.

To avoid spilling and ensure that the served portion meets the meal pattern requirements, the container should be larger than the planned serving size of soup. For example, SFAs could use a 10-fluid ounce bowl to hold 8 fluid ounces (1 cup) of soup and a 6-fluid ounce bowl to hold 4 fluid ounces (½ cup) of soup.

Crediting Vegetable and Fruit Mixtures

Mixtures of vegetables and fruits may credit toward both the vegetables component and fruits component if the serving contains at least ⅛ cup of visible vegetables and at least ⅛ cup of visible fruits.

For example, a carrot-raisin salad that contains ½ cup of carrots and ⅛ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component and ¼ cup of the fruits component. Dried fruits credit as twice the volume served. For more information, refer to "Crediting Dried Fruits" in the "Fruits Component" section.

Crediting Vegetable Juice

Vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice or a combination of vegetable and fruit juices. It can be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate. The name of the full-strength juice on the label must include one of the following terms: "juice," "full-strength juice," "100 percent juice," "reconstituted juice," or "juice from concentrate."

> Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day.

For more information, refer to "Juice limit" in the "Fruits Component" section and the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Crediting Vegetables in Combination Foods

Combination foods (such as pizza, lasagna, chili, vegetable egg rolls, hummus, and chicken-vegetable stir-fry) contain more than one food component. For example, cheese pizza contains the grains component (crust), the meat/meat alternates component (cheese), and the vegetables component (tomato sauce).

The visible vegetable portion of a combination food credits based on the amount of vegetables per serving. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" at the beginning of section 3.

For foods made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the cups of vegetables per serving, based on the yields listed in the FBG. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" and "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 2.

For commercial products, SFAs must obtain a CN label (if the vegetables are part of a main dish entree that contributes to the meat/meat alternates component) or a PFS stating the specific contribution of vegetables. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Crediting Vegetables with Added Ingredients

If a commercial product or CACFP recipe contains added ingredients (such as mayonnaise, yogurt, sugar, molasses, salad dressing, or breading), only the vegetable portion credits toward the preschool meal patterns.

For example, to credit coleslaw as ½ cup of the vegetables component, the serving must contain ½ cup of shredded cabbage and carrots, before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, sugar, and spices. Other examples of vegetables with added ingredients include tossed salad with dressing and croutons; potato salad; sweet potato casserole with marshmallows; mashed potatoes made with butter and milk; baked beans with sauce; carrot-raisin salad; breaded vegetables; and vegetables with cheese.

SFAs must document the amount of vegetables per serving with a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (based on the vegetable yields listed in the FBG) or a PFS for commercial products. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes," "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs," and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Recipes and PFS forms are not required for vegetables without added ingredients, such as whole or cut-up fresh vegetables, canned vegetables, and frozen vegetables.

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Noncreditable Foods in the Vegetables Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the vegetables component include, but are not limited to:

- chili sauce;
- dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning;
- cream vegetable soups, e.g., cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom;
- home-canned products (for food safety reasons);
- ketchup;
- pickle relish; and
- snack-type foods made from vegetables, such as potato chips.

For more information, refer to "Noncreditable Foods" in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the vegetables component. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in this section.

Resources for Crediting Vegetables

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the vegetables component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 6: Vegetables Component (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP(CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuiceSNPpreschool.pdf
- Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditLegumesSNP.pdf
- Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothiesSNPpreschool.pdf
- Crediting Soups in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSoupSNP.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 2: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Vegetables Component (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section2_Vegetables.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 2**:** Yield Table for Vegetables (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section2_VegetablesYieldTable.pdf
- Serving Vegetables in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA)*:* https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-vegetables-cacfp
- Start with Half a Cup: Fresh Vegetable Portioning Guide for Schools: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideVeg85x14.pdf
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas

- 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
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs
- Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Vegetable_Subgroups_CACFP.pdf
- Webinar: Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs

For additional crediting resources, visit the "Vegetables Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Fruits Component

The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits; and pasteurized full-strength fruit juice. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* encourages SFAs to:

- serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice;
- make at least one of the two required snack components a vegetable or a fruit, and
- incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.

For information on farm to school, visit the USDA's Farm to Preschool webpage, the CSDE's Farm to School webpage and the University of Connecticut's Put Local on Your Tray webpage.

Some fruits may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include whole grapes, berries, melon balls, apples and other hard pieces of raw fruit; and dried fruits. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what fruits to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

Serving Size for Fruits

The preschool meal patterns for children require a serving of the fruits component at lunch. At breakfast, vegetables and fruits are one component and may include a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both. A serving of fruit may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-13 summarizes the required servings of the fruits component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-13. Required servings of the fruits component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast [1]	¼ cup	¼ cup
Lunch [2]	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Snack [3]	½ cup	½ cup

[1] Vegetables and fruits are one component and may include vegetables, fruits, or both.
[2] Vegetables may substitute for the full fruits component at any lunch or supper.
[3] Juice cannot be served when milk is the only other snack component. Only one snack component can be a creditable beverage such as juice, a fruit smoothie, or milk.

The amounts for the fruits component refer to the edible portion after any applicable preparation techniques, such as peeling, removing seeds and pits, and cooking. All fruits credit based on volume (cups) except for dried fruits, which credit as twice the volume served. For more information, refer to "Crediting Dried Fruits" in this section.

Menu planners should consult the USDA's FBG to determine the number of servings provided by a specific quantity of fruit. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 2.

Meeting the required fruit servings

SFAs may choose to serve a combination of several fruits to meet the daily requirement, as long as each serving contains at least ⅛ cup of fruit (refer to "Minimum creditable amounts" in the beginning of section 3). For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 could meet the required ¼-cup serving of the fruits component with ⅛ cup of peaches and ⅛ cup of applesauce. Servings that contain less than ⅛ cup of fruit do not credit.

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the fruits component, the meal must include additional fruit to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern requires ¼ cup of the fruits component for ages 3-4. If a menu item contains ⅛ cup of fruit, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least ⅛ cup of fruit to provide the full serving for ages 3-4.

When crediting menu items toward the fruits component, menu planners must **round down** to the nearest ⅛ cup. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains 2½ tablespoons of strawberries per serving credits as 2 tablespoons (⅛ cup) of the fruits component.

Crediting Canned Fruits

The preschool meal patterns allow canned fruit in juice, water, or syrup. Canned fruits in heavy syrup have a higher added sugar content than other types of canned fruits. The USDA recommends choosing fruits canned in juice, water, or light syrup.

A serving of canned fruit may include the 100 percent juice in which the fruit is packed, but cannot include water or syrup. For example, ½ cup of canned peaches in juice credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. However, ½ cup of canned peaches in syrup does not credit as ½ cup of the fruits component. The menu planner can credit only the amount of peaches without the syrup.

The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component (refer to "Juice limit" in this section). For example, if canned pears in juice credit as the fruits component at lunch, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at any other preschool meal or ASP snack that same day.

Juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if the juice is planned as an extra noncreditable food. For example, the juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if food service personnel portion ½ cup of canned fruit in a 5½-ounce container, and then add the juice after measuring the full ½-cup serving of fruit.

Crediting Coconut

Fresh and frozen coconut credit as the fruits component based on the volume served. For example, ⅛ cup of fresh or frozen coconut credits as ⅛ cup of the fruits component. Dried coconut credits the same as other dried fruits (twice the volume served). For example, ⅛ cup of dried coconut credits as ¼ cup of the fruits component. For more information, refer to "Crediting Dried Fruits" in this section.

Coconut is high in calories and saturated fat, and should be limited in preschool menus. Coconut flour, coconut oil, and coconut milk do not credit.

Juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, credit toward the fruits component based on the volume served. Menu planners must count coconut water with all other juices toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to "Coconut water" and "Juice limit" in this section.

The requirements for crediting coconut are summarized in USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019 and SFSP 15-2019: *Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:*

Crediting Dried Fruits

Dried fruits (such as raisins, apricots, dried cherries, dried cranberries, dried blueberries, mixed dried fruit, and dried coconut) credits as twice the volume served. For example, ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. This crediting requirement does not apply to dried fruits in amounts less than ⅛ cup (the minimum creditable amount). For example, $^{1}/_{16}$ cup (1 tablespoon) of raisins does not credit as ⅛ cup fruit.

Dried fruits may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer dried fruits in snack menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

Manufacturers sometimes process dried fruits with added sugar to keep the fruit pieces separated. The CSDE encourages menu planners to read labels and choose dried fruit without added sweeteners, including sugars and nonnutritive sweeteners, e.g., aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia.

Crediting Fresh Fruits

Some fresh fruits may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include whole grapes, berries, melon balls, and apples and other hard pieces of raw fruit. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what fresh fruits to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include removing seeds and hard pits, cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

The crediting contribution of one piece of fresh fruit (whole or cut-up) varies depending on the type and size, and ranges from ¼ cup to 1¼ cups. For example, the FBG indicates that:

- one 60-count plum, one 88-count peach, and one clementine each credit as ⅜ cup of fruit;
- one 100-120-count banana, one 150-count pear, one 80-count peach, one 138-count orange, and one 45-count plum each credit as ½ cup of fruit;
- one 113-count or 125-count orange credits as ⅝ cup of fruit; and
- one size 56-64 nectarine, one size 56 peach, and one 120-count pear each credit as ¾ cup of fruit.

Menu planners must ensure that an individual piece of fresh fruit (whole or cut-up) provides the correct serving for each preschool meal and ASP snack. If the amount is less than the full-required serving, the meal or ASP snack must include additional fruit to meet the full-required serving. The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- The breakfast meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires ½ cup of fruits, vegetables, or both. One 120-count tangerine credits as ⅜ cup of fruit, which does not provide the full-required serving. To credit as the full component, the breakfast menu must include an additional ⅛ cup of fruits or vegetables.

- The snack meal pattern for ages 1-2 and 3-4 requires ¾ cup of the fruits component. One kiwi credits as ¼ cup of fruit, which does not provide the full-required serving. To credit as the full fruits component, the snack menu must include an additional ¼ cup of the fruits component.

Table 3-14 lists the FBG's meal pattern contribution of some fresh fruits, and the additional amount needed to provide a ½-cup serving.

Table 3-14. Meal pattern contribution of fresh fruits

Fruit (one piece) [1]	Meal pattern contribution from FBG	Additional amount needed for ½ cup [2]
Apple, 125-138 count	1 cup	0
Apricot, medium (1 ⅜-inch diameter)	¼ cup	¼ cup
Banana, 150 count (7 to 7⁷/₈ inch)	½ cup	0
Banana, 100-120 count, regular	½ cup	0
Clementine, whole, peeled	⅜ cup	⅛ cup
Grapefruit, 27-32 count, large	1 cup	0
Kiwi, 33-39 count	¼ cup	¼ cup
Nectarine, size 88-96 (2 ¼-inch diameter)	½ cup	0
Nectarine, size 56-64 (2 ¾-inch diameter)	¾ cup	0
Orange, Arizona or California, 113 count	⅝ cup	0
Orange, Florida or Texas, 125 count	⅝ cup	0
Orange, Arizona or California, 138 count	½ cup	0
Peach, size 88 and 84 (2 ⅛-inch diameter)	⅜ cup	⅛ cup
Peach, size 64 and 60 (2 ½-inch diameter)	⅔ cup	0
Peach, size 80	½ cup	0
Peach, size 56	¾ cup	0
Peach, size 56	¾ cup	0
Pear, 150 count	½ cup	0
Pear, 120 count	¾ cup	0

Table 3-14. Meal pattern contribution of fresh fruits, *continued*

Fruit (one piece) [1]	Meal pattern contribution from FBG	Additional amount needed for ½ cup [2]
Pear, D'Anjou, Bosc or Bartlett, 100 count	1¼ cups	0
Plum, purple, red, or black, size 45 and 50 (2-inch diameter)	½ cup	0
Plum, purple, red, or black, 2 ½-inch diameter	⅝ cup	0
Plum, Japanese or hybrid, size 60 and 65	⅜ cup	⅛ cup
Tangerine, 120 count	⅜ cup	⅛ cup

[1] Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what fruits to offer. Prepare all fruits to reduce the risk of choking. For more information, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

[2] A ½-cup serving of fruits is required for ages 3-4 at breakfast, and for ages 1-4 at snack (if fruit is one of the two required snack components).

Crediting Frozen Fruits

A serving of thawed frozen fruit (such as frozen strawberries) may include the thawed juice. The USDA recommends limiting frozen fruits with added sugars.

Crediting Fruits in Commercial Products

Commercial products that contain at least ⅛ cup of one or more visible fruits (such as mixed berries in a yogurt-fruit parfait) credit based on the amount (cups) of fruit per serving. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" in the beginning of section 3 and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

To credit in the preschool meal patterns, commercial products must have a CN label or PFS that documents the amount of fruits per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" in the beginning of section 3 and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Crediting Fruits in Grain-Based Desserts

The visible fruit portion of grain-based desserts (such as fruit crisp, fruit pies, and fruit turnovers) credits based on the amount of fruit in the serving, excluding the grain portion (such as crisp topping and piecrust). For example, a fruit turnover that contains ½ cup of apples credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" at the beginning of section 3.

The grain portion of grain-based desserts (such as piecrust and cobbler or crisp topping) does not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns (refer to "Grain-based desserts" in the "Grains Component" section). The large amount of a grain-based dessert needed to provide the required serving of fruit might be unreasonable, especially for younger children.

For foods made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the cups of fruit per serving, based on the yields listed in the FBG. For commercial products, SFAs must obtain a manufacturer's PFS stating the amount of fruits per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial

products in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes," "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

The USDA recommends limiting sweetened fruit to help reduce children's consumption of added sugars and help children develop a taste preference for unsweetened fruit.

Crediting Fruits in Yogurt

Fruits in commercially prepared yogurt (either blended or on the bottom or top) do not credit toward the fruits component. Menu planners may credit fruits offered as a separate component, such as yogurt topped with fresh blueberries or sliced strawberries in a yogurt-fruit parfait.

Crediting Fruits with Added Ingredients

If a commercial product or preschool recipe contains added ingredients (such as yogurt, mayonnaise, sugar, butter, sauce, or toppings), only the fruit portion credits toward the preschool meal patterns. For example, to credit Waldorf salad as ¼ cup of the fruits component, the serving must contain ¼ cup of fruit (e.g., diced apples, grapes, and raisins), before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, sugar, and spices. Other examples of fruits with added ingredients include yogurt-fruit parfaits; carrot-raisin salad; cottage cheese mixed with crushed pineapple; and baked apples.

SFAs must document the amount of fruits per serving with a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (based on the yields listed in the FBG) or a PFS for commercial products. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes," "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs," and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

> Recipes and PFS forms are not required for fruits without added ingredients, such as whole or cut-up fresh fruits; canned fruits in juice, water, or light syrup; frozen fruits; and dried fruits.

Crediting Fruit Juice

Juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice or a combination of fruit and vegetable juices. The name of the full-strength juice on the label must include one of the following terms: "juice," "full-strength juice," "100 percent juice," "reconstituted juice," or "juice from concentrate." The statements "natural" and "organic" do not indicate that a juice is full strength.

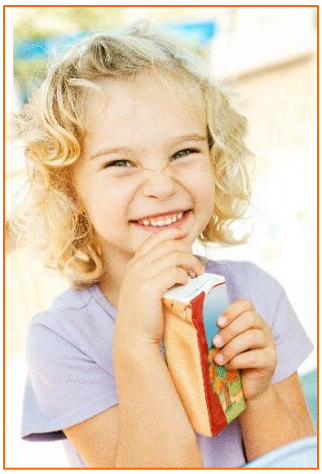
Juice may be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate; and may be served liquid or frozen, e.g., full-strength frozen juice pops. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP.*

The USDA recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice. Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables, which contain fiber, fewer calories, and more nutrients.

Juice concentrates

Juice concentrates credit only when reconstituted with water to 100 percent full-strength juice and served in the form of juice. Foods made with juice concentrate, such as gelatin or sherbet, do not credit as juice because they are no longer in the form of juice.

Juice made from concentrate is reconstituted with a volume of water that is several times the amount of the juice concentrate. A typical reconstitution ratio might be three parts water to one part concentrate, but this ratio may vary for different juice products.



Commercial juice products made from concentrate will list "water" as the first ingredient, followed by the type of juice concentrate, for example, "water, orange juice concentrate" and "filtered water, grape juice concentrate." Juice made from concentrate that is labeled "100 percent juice" credits when the SFA follows the manufacturer's specific instructions for reconstituting.

Juice blends

Juice blends must be a combination of full-strength (100 percent) fruit juices, full-strength vegetable juices, or full-strength fruit and vegetable juices. At lunch, fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product credits as the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the vegetables component. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a vegetable and fruit juice blend.

- Ingredients: *Reconstituted vegetable juice blend (water and concentrated juices of sweet potatoes, purple carrots, carrots),* reconstituted fruit juices (water and concentrated juices of apples, white grapes, cranberries, blackberries), contains less than 2% of: natural flavoring, citric acid, lemon juice.

This product credits as the vegetables component because the first ingredient is a reconstituted vegetable juice blend.

Frozen 100 percent juice products

Frozen 100 percent fruit juice products (such as full-strength frozen juice pops) credit based on the fluid volume prior to freezing. SFAs must request a PFS from the manufacturer to document this information. For more information, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2. Frozen fruit juice must meet the same requirements as juice, and counts toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to "Juice Limit" in this section.

Apple cider

Apple cider credits as the fruits component if it is pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Pasteurized juice has been heat-treated to kill harmful bacteria. Check labels, as some brands of apple cider are not pasteurized. SFAs cannot serve apple cider (or any other type of juice) that is not pasteurized. Apple cider must meet the same requirements as juice, and counts toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to "Juice limit" in this section.

Coconut water

Fruit juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, credit toward the fruits component based on the volume served. Coconut water must meet the same requirements as juice, and counts toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to "Juice limit" in this section.

Juice ingredients

All pasteurized 100 percent juices meet the USDA's requirements for the fruits component, but their ingredients may vary among manufacturers. The FDA's labeling regulations allow 100 percent juice with added ingredients to be labeled "100% juice." Therefore, some 100 percent juices contain added ingredients such as artificial flavors, artificial colors (e.g., red 40, blue 1, yellow 5 and 6, and titanium dioxide), preservatives (e.g., sodium benzoate and potassium sorbate), flavor enhancers (e.g., ethyl maltol), and emulsifiers or thickeners (e.g., glycerol esters of wood rosin and xanthan gum). The CSDE encourages menu planners to read product ingredients statements and choose 100 percent juice without these added ingredients.

Juice limit

Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one CACFP meal or snack per day. The daily juice limit includes all sources of 100 percent juice, such as fruit and vegetable juice; frozen pops made from 100 percent juice; pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies; and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice.

Drained canned fruit and canned fruit in light syrup or water do not count toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to "Crediting Canned Fruits" in this section.

> If a preschool meal or ASP snack includes any type of juice as the fruits component or vegetables component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at any other preschool meal or ASP snack that same day.

The examples below illustrate how the juice limit applies.

- The preschool lunch meal pattern requires a serving of the fruits component and a serving of the vegetables component. Lunch menus cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of fruits and vegetables because both credit as juice. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and tomato juice as the vegetables component. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable (i.e., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).

- If the preschool breakfast menu includes juice as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as either the vegetables component or fruits component at lunch or ASP snack that same day.

- If the preschool lunch menu includes canned fruit in juice as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast or ASP snack that same day.

- If the preschool ASP snack menu includes a smoothie made with pureed peaches as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast or lunch that same day. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to "Crediting Smoothies" in this section.

Offering juice as an extra menu item

SFAs may choose to offer juice as an extra menu item that does not credit toward the preschool meal patterns. However, the USDA encourages SFAs to limit juice in preschool menus to ensure that meals and ASP snacks meet children's nutrition needs.

> The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving a variety of fruits and choosing whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.

Crediting Pureed Fruits

Pureed fruits in foods must be visible (recognizable) to credit in the preschool meal patterns. Pureed foods made from one fruit (such as applesauce) are visible creditable fruits. For more information, refer to "Requirement for visible components" at the beginning of section 3.

Foods made with pureed fruits cannot credit as the fruits component unless they also provide an adequate amount of a visible creditable fruit. For example, a fruit sauce on pancakes must contain at least ⅛ cup of visible fruit to credit as the fruits component.

Pureed fruits credit based on the volume (cups) after pureeing. Crediting information must be documented with a standardized recipe or PFS. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" and "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Crediting Smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice toward the vegetables component or fruits component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains ½ cup of pureed strawberries credits as ½ cup of fruit juice.

Smoothies that contain a mix of pureed fruits and vegetables, or that contain 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends, credit as the fruits component if fruit juice or fruit puree is the predominant ingredient. If vegetable juice or vegetable puree is the predominant ingredient, the smoothie credits as the vegetables component.

For smoothies made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe to document the amount of pureed fruits and vegetables (and any other creditable components) per serving. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Juice limit for smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies must meet the same requirements as juice, and count toward the juice limit. Juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day. For example, if the menu planner credits pureed fruit in a smoothie as the fruits component at breakfast, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at lunch or ASP snack that same day.

In addition, lunch cannot contain a smoothie and juice as the only servings of the fruits component and vegetables component. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and vegetable juice as the vegetables component because both credit as juice. For more information, refer to "Juice limit" in this section and the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Mixed fruits and vegetables in smoothies

Smoothies that contain a mix of pureed fruits and vegetables, or 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends, credit based on the greatest fruit or vegetable ingredient. For commercial products, the smoothie credits as the fruits component if the first juice ingredient is fruit juice. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the vegetables component. For smoothies made on site, if fruit juice is the greatest juice ingredient in the standardized recipe, the smoothie credits as the fruits component. If the greatest juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the smoothie credits as the vegetables component.

Commercial smoothies

Commercial smoothies credit the same as smoothies made on site. Product formulation and labeling can vary greatly because commercial smoothies do not have an FDA standard of identity. To credit commercial smoothies in preschool meals and ASP snacks, SFAs must obtain a PFS (or CN label, if available) that states the amount of all creditable ingredients per serving, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, juice, yogurt, and milk.

- **Crediting pureed vegetables/fruits:** Commercial smoothies made with pureed fruits/vegetables credit only as juice toward the fruits and vegetables component. Crediting is based on the volume of fruits/vegetables after pureeing and before freezing. The product label must include a statement regarding the "percent juice content," which is required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or puree. For example, an 8-fluid ounce smoothie made from fruit puree labeled with "contains 50% juice" credits as 4 fluid ounces (½ cup) of juice. SFAs may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruit in the product.

> Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars. They do not credit in smoothies unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

- **Crediting milk:** Milk credits as the milk component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies. The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with milk are made using ingredients that meet federal, state, and local definitions for fluid milk.

- **Crediting yogurt:** Yogurt or soy yogurt that meets the CACFP sugar limit credits as the meat/meat alternates component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies. The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with yogurt are made in compliance with the federal definition for yogurt.

> The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk in the preschool meal patterns. Fluid milk must be offered in all meals to meet the milk component requirement.

- **Limit for crediting amount:** The total creditable amount in a commercial smoothie cannot exceed the volume served. For example, ½ cup of a commercial smoothie cannot credit as 1 cup of juice.

- **Noncreditable commercial smoothies:** Probiotic dairy drinks, drinkable yogurt, and yogurt drinks are not smoothies, and do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as gingko biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

SFAs must refer to the product's PFS to check for 1) volumes of pureed fruits and vegetables prior to freezing; and 2) documentation that milk and yogurt (if included) meet the preschool meal pattern requirements.

Commercial smoothies cannot credit in CACFP meals and snacks without a PFS (or a CN label for commercial fruit and vegetable smoothies that contain yogurt). SFAs must review PFS forms for accuracy. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

Crediting considerations for smoothies

Menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when including smoothies in preschool meals and ASP snacks. The USDA recommends not offering smoothies at more than one meal or snack per day.

- **Breakfast:** Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as juice toward the entire vegetables and fruits component, if the serving provides the full-required amount. For example, a serving of smoothie that contains ½ cup of pureed mangoes and carrots credits as the full fruits component for ages 3-5 at breakfast. If the smoothie contains less than the full-required amount, the breakfast menu must include additional vegetables and fruits to meet the full requirement.

- **Lunch:** The preschool lunch meal pattern requires a serving of vegetables and a serving of fruits. Menu planners cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of vegetables and fruits at lunch. Both foods credit as juice and would therefore exceed the juice limit. At least one of the required lunch servings of the vegetables component and fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable (fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).

- **Snack:** The preschool snack meal pattern requires two of the five components. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as either the entire fruits component or the entire vegetables component, but not both in the same snack. Smoothies containing juice and milk may credit as either juice or milk, but not both in the same snack. If the amount of milk or juice in the smoothie is less than the full serving, the snack menu must include additional foods to provide the full component. The snack menu cannot include juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) when milk is the only other snack component.

  The examples below illustrate these requirements. The required servings for the snack components are ½ cup of milk, ½ ounce of meat/meat alternates, ½ cup of vegetables, ½ cup of fruits, and ½ ounce equivalent of grains.

  - A smoothie recipe contains ½ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and ½ cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving. The menu planner may choose to credit the smoothie as either the full fruits component or the full milk component, but not both in the same snack. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., meat/meat alternates, grains, or vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include a 1-ounce whole-grain corn muffin (grains component) as the second component.

  - A smoothie recipe contains ½ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and ¼ cup of milk per serving. The pureed fruit provides the full fruits component. However, the milk cannot credit as the full milk component because it is less than ½ cup. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., meat/meat alternates, grains, or vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include ½ cup of diced cucumbers (vegetables component) as the second component.

  Note: The smoothies in these examples cannot credit as the milk component for age 1 because the preschool meal patterns require whole milk for age 1.

The CSDE's resource, *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, summarizes the requirements for crediting smoothies in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For additional guidance, refer to USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: *Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs*.

Noncreditable Foods in the Fruits Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the fruits component include, but are not limited to:

- fruit snacks (e.g., fruit roll-ups, fruit leathers, fruit wrinkles, fruit twists, and yogurt-covered fruit snacks);
- banana chips;
- home-canned products (for food safety reasons);
- jams, jellies, and preserves; and
- juice drinks that are not 100 percent juice such as grape juice drink, orange juice drink, pineapple-grapefruit drink, cranberry juice cocktail, and lemonade.

For more information, refer to "Noncreditable Foods" in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

> Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the fruits component. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in this section.

Resources for Crediting Fruits

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the fruits component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/AcceptDocumentationSNP.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 5: Fruits Component (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP(CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuiceSNPpreschool.pdf
- Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothiesSNPpreschool.pdf

- Food Buying Guide Section 3: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Fruits Component (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section3_Fruits.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 3: Yield Table for Fruits (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section3_FruitsYieldTable.pdf
- Start with Half a Cup: Fresh Fruit Portioning Guide for Schools: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideFruit85x14.pdf
- Start with Half a Cup: Fresh Fruit Portioning Guide for Schools: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideFruit85x14.pdf
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas
- USDA Memo SP 10-2014, CACFP 05-2014 and SFSP 10-2014 (v3): Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs
- Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019 and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs
- Webinar: Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs

For additional crediting resources, visit the "Fruits Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Grains Component

The grains component for the preschool meal patterns includes a variety of products, such as:

- breads, biscuits, bagels, rolls, tortillas, and muffins;
- snack products, such as crackers (including sweet crackers, such as animal crackers and graham crackers), hard pretzels, hard breadsticks, tortilla chips; and popcorn;
- cereal grains, such as buckwheat, brown rice, bulgur, and quinoa;
- RTE breakfast cereals, such as puffed cereals, whole-grain round or flaked cereal, and granola;
- cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular), such as oatmeal, farina, and cream of wheat;
- bread products used as an ingredient in another menu item, such as combination foods, e.g., breading on fish or poultry and pizza crust in pizza; and
- pasta products, such as macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, orzo, and couscous.

To credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns, grain menu items must contain whole grains, enriched grains, bran, or germ as the greatest ingredient by weight. Preschool menus must include at least one serving of whole grain-rich (WGR) grains per day, between all meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers. Products that are 100 percent whole grain, such as whole-wheat bread and brown rice, provide the best nutrition and should be served most often.

Some grains may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include plain wheat germ; whole-grain kernels such as rice or wheat berries; crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole-grain kernels such as wheat berries; breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels, and hard chunks (such as granola); and popcorn. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what grains to offer in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

This section includes three parts to assist menu planners with determining if foods credit as the grains component:

- Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements;
- Part B: WGR Requirement; and
- Part C: Serving Size for Grains.

Grain-based Desserts

Grain-based desserts cannot credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns. Examples of grain-based desserts include brownies, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, coffee cakes, cinnamon streusel quick breads, piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), rice pudding, and sweet bread pudding.

Menu planners should not rely on a product's name to determine if it is grain-based dessert because cookies and similar grain-based desserts do not have an FDA standard of identity. Manufacturers sometimes use terms in their product names or labels that might be misleading, such as "breakfast rounds" for oatmeal raisin cookies, "breakfast bars" for cereal bars, and "super stars" for doughnut holes.

Grain-based desserts do not include sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers), muffins, quick breads, e.g., banana bread and zucchini bread (except for cinnamon streusel), cornbread, pancakes, waffles, French toast, savory scones (such as cheese and herb), and piecrusts in entrees such as quiche, meat pies, and chicken potpie.

As a best practice, the USDA encourages preschool menus to limit sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers) because of their higher sugar content. The CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers.

SFAs may choose to serve grain-based desserts as an additional food item that does not credit toward the preschool meal patterns. Examples include serving cake or cookies at special celebrations. However, the USDA encourages SFAs to use discretion when serving noncreditable foods and beverages (refer to "Noncreditable foods" at the beginning of section 3).

Resources for grain-based desserts

The resources below provide guidance on the requirements for grain-based desserts.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7A: Grains Component Crediting Requirements (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP – Handouts and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grain-based-desserts-cacfp
- USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers: https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP09_2018os.pdf

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

This section addresses the crediting requirements for the grains component of the preschool meal patterns. All grain items served in preschool menus must comply with these requirements, including commercial grain products and grain foods made from scratch.

Creditable Grains

To credit as the grains component, a grain product or recipe must contain a creditable grain as the primary (greatest) ingredient by weight. Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. For information on identifying whole and enriched grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*. For guidance on the steps for identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, *How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

This section summarizes the different crediting requirements for commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, cooked breakfast cereals, RTE breakfast cereals, and grain foods made from scratch.

Groups A-E and H-I refer to the grain groups in the USDA's Exhibit A chart. For more information, refer to "Part C: Serving Size for Grains" in this section.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Crediting Criteria for Commercial Grain Products

Commercial grain products in groups A-E (baked goods, such as breads, rolls, muffins, crackers, and waffles) and group H (pasta and cereal grains, such as quinoa, rice, and millet) credit as the grains component if a creditable grain is the first ingredient, or water is the first ingredient and a creditable grain is the second ingredient. The ingredients statements below show examples of creditable commercial grain products.

- Ingredients: *Enriched wheat flour (flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid)*, canola and/or sunflower oil, salt, contains 2% or less of: yeast, nonfat milk, sugar, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, paprika, spices, celery, onion powder.

- Ingredients: Water, *whole-wheat flour*, yeast, wheat gluten, contains less than 2% of each of the following: soybean oil, sugar, salt, calcium propionate (preservative), fumaric acid, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, calcium sulfate, ammonium sulfate.

- Ingredients: Water, *enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, vitamin B1 [thiamin mononitrate], vitamin B2 [riboflavin], folic acid), whole-wheat flour*, vegetable oil (soybean, palm, and/or canola oil), egg whites, *wheat bran*, sugar, contains 2% or less of leavening (baking soda, sodium aluminum phosphate, monocalcium phosphate), salt, malt flavoring, whey, soy lecithin. **Note:** Bran does not credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.

The CSDE's resource for the CACFP, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP,* provides more examples of how to determine if commercial grain products are creditable. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheet, *Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the CACFP,* to determine if commercial grain products comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in this section.

Multiple creditable grains in commercial grain products

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the commercial grain product contains more than one creditable grain, the SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information. To credit in the preschool meal patterns, the product's PFS must document that the **combined weight** of all creditable grains in the product is the greatest ingredient by weight. For information on PFS forms, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2.

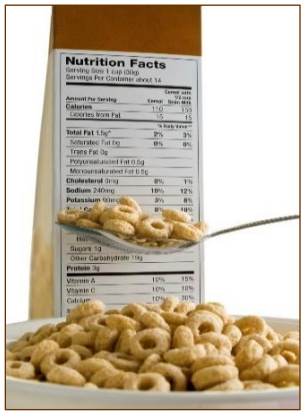
Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals

Breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels such as wheat berries, and hard chunks (such as granola) may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what types of breakfast cereals to offer in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

RTE breakfast cereals in group I (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereal, and granola) and cooked breakfast cereals in group H (including instant and regular, such as oatmeal, farina, and cream of wheat) credit as the grains component if 1) the first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce.

Fortified breakfast cereals have nutrients added by the manufacturer that were not originally present or are at higher levels than originally present. Fortified breakfast cereals typically contain the five enrichment nutrients plus other vitamins and minerals. Different cereal brands may list different fortification nutrients. Manufacturers may choose which additional nutrients to use for fortification. The USDA does not specify a minimum number of nutrients or a minimum percentage for the level of fortification for breakfast cereals in Child Nutrition Programs. If a breakfast cereal is fortified, it does not need to be enriched.



The ingredients statement below shows an example of a creditable cooked breakfast cereal. While the first ingredient (wheat farina) is not a creditable grain, this cereal credits because it is fortified.

- Ingredients: *Wheat farina, calcium carbonate, ferric orthophosphate (source of iron), niacinamide (vitamin B3), pyridoxine hydrochloride (vitamin B6), folic acid, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1) riboflavin (vitamin B2).*

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

The ingredients statement below shows an example of a creditable RTE breakfast cereal. The first ingredient (whole-grain oat flour) is a creditable grain and the cereal is fortified.

- Ingredients: *Whole-grain oat flour*, sugar, corn flour, whole-wheat flour, rice flour, salt, *calcium carbonate*, disodium phosphate, *reduced iron, niacinamide, zinc oxide*, BHT (a preservative), *thiamin mononitrate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, folic acid.*

The CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, provides examples of how to determine if breakfast cereals are creditable. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheets, *Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP* and *Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP,* to determine if breakfast cereals comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in this section.

Sugar limit for breakfast cereals

The preschool meal patterns require that breakfast cereals cannot contain more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal). The sugar limit applies only to breakfast cereals as purchased. SFAs may choose to add toppings to breakfast cereals to increase their appeal. However, the USDA strongly encourages SFAs to offer healthy toppings for breakfast cereals, such as fruit instead of sugar. Minimizing sweet toppings will help reduce consumption of added sugars, which contribute calories without essential nutrients.

The USDA allows three different methods to determine if a breakfast cereal complies with the sugar limit. The CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, summarizes these methods. The USDA's Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar webpage contains handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish with additional guidance on evaluating the sugar content of breakfast cereals.

The CSDE recommends that menu planners refer to the sugar content of breakfast cereals **before** reviewing the ingredients statement for creditable grains. If a breakfast cereal exceeds the sugar limit, it cannot credit in the preschool meal patterns, even if it contains creditable grains or is WGR.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Crediting Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods

Commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E (such as pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs) or groups H-I (such as noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes) credit as the grains component if the first **grain** ingredient is a creditable grain. The ingredients statement below shows an example for breaded chicken nuggets.

- Ingredients: Boneless, skinless chicken breast with rib meat, water, *whole-wheat flour*, contains 2% or less of the following: dried garlic, dried onion, salt, sea salt, soybean oil, spice, sugar, torula yeast, turmeric, yeast, yeast extract. Breading set in vegetable oil.

This product credits toward the grains component because the first grain ingredient (whole-wheat flour) is a creditable grain.

Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods

A commercial combination food that lists the ingredients for the grain portion separately credits as the grains component if a creditable grain is the first ingredient in the grain portion, or water is the first ingredient in the grain portion and a whole grain is the second ingredient in the grain portion.

The ingredients statement below shows an example for cheese ravioli. This product credits toward the grains component because the first ingredient (whole-wheat flour) in the pasta (grain portion) is a creditable grain.

- Ingredients: **Filling:** Fat-free ricotta cheese (whey, skim milk [made from nonfat dry milk powder], vinegar, xanthan gum, carrageenan), water, egg, low moisture part skim mozzarella cheese (cultured part skim milk, salt, enzymes), whey protein isolate, sodium caseinate, Romano cheese made from cow's milk (cultured milk, salt, enzymes), bleached wheat flour, garlic salt (salt, dehydrated garlic), salt, corn starch, sugar, dehydrated garlic. **Pasta:** *Whole-wheat flour,* enriched durum wheat flour (wheat flour, niacin, ferrous sulfate, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), water, egg.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Multiple creditable grains in commercial combination foods

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain portion of a combination food contains more than one creditable grain, the SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information. To credit in the preschool meal patterns, the product's PFS must document that the combined weight of all creditable grains in the grain portion of the product is the greatest ingredient by weight in the grain portion.

For information on PFS forms, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2. For examples of how to determine if commercial combination foods are creditable, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP.*

Crediting Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch

Grain foods made from scratch (such as breads, rolls, muffins, waffles, and pancakes) credit as the grains component if a creditable grain is the greatest ingredient by weight in the recipe, or the combined weight of all creditable grains is the greatest ingredient by weight in the recipe.

Combination foods made from scratch (such as pizza, lasagna, and breaded chicken) credit as the grains component if a creditable grain is the greatest grain ingredient by weight in the recipe, or the combined weight of all creditable grains is the greatest grain ingredient by weight in the recipe.

The CSDE's resource for the CACFP, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP,* provides examples of how to determine if grain foods made from scratch are creditable. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheets, *Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the CACFP* or *Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the CACFP,* to determine if grain foods made from scratch comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in this section.

> SFAs must have a standardized recipe on file that documents the crediting information for foods prepared from scratch. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" in section 2.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal

Corn ingredients credit as the grains component if they are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized. Nixtamalization is the process of soaking and cooked dried corn in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process results in a product with nutrition content similar to whole-grain corn.

Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, masa harina (corn flour), corn masa (dough from masa harina), and certain types of cornmeal. Masa harina is used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales.

Methods for identifying nixtamalized corn

SFAs may use the two methods below to identify commercial products made with nixtamalized corn.

1. **Corn is treated with lime:** If the ingredients statement indicates that the corn is treated with lime (such as "ground corn with trace of lime" and "ground corn treated with lime"), the corn ingredient is nixtamalized. The ingredients statements below show examples of commercial nixtamalized corn products. These products credit as 100 percent whole grains.

    - Ingredients: *Corn masa flour*, water, contains 2% or less of: cellulose gum, guar gum, amylase, propionic acid, benzoic acid, and phosphoric acid (to maintain freshness).
    - Ingredients: *Whole-white corn*, vegetable oil (contains soybean, corn, cottonseed, and/or sunflower oil), salt, *lime/calcium hydroxide* (processing aid).
    - Ingredients: *Limed whole-grain white corn*, palm oil, salt, TBHQ (preservative).
    - Ingredients: *Whole-grain yellow corn*, high oleic canola oil, water, *corn flour*, salt, *hydrated lime*.

If the ingredients statement does not provide sufficient information (such as "cornmeal" and "yellow corn flour"), SFAs must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer stating that the ingredients are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized. For information on PFS forms, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

2. **Product includes FDA-approved whole grain health claim:** If a commercial product made with corn includes one of two FDA-approved whole grain health claims on its packaging, the corn in the product is nixtamalized and the product provides at least 50 percent whole grain. These health claims are not common.

    - **Low-fat claim:** "Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers."

    - **Moderate-fat claim:** "Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease."

Crediting information for corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal is summarized in USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019 and SFSP 15-2019: *Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs.*

Crediting Hominy as Grains

Hominy is a traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin.

Hominy is available dried and in a fully cooked canned form. Dried hominy (such as grits) credits as a whole grain. A ½-cup serving of cooked hominy grits or 1 ounce (28 grams) of dry hominy grits credits as one serving of the grains component.

For information on crediting hominy as the vegetables component, refer to "Crediting Hominy as Vegetables" in the "Vegetables Component" section.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Crediting Popcorn

Popcorn credits as a whole-grain food. Three cups (1 ounce) serving of plain popped popcorn credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. The minimum creditable amount is ¾ cup (¼ ounce equivalent). Table 3-15 summarizes the grains contribution of popped popcorn.

Table 3-15. Grains contribution of popped popcorn

Cups (popped)	Weight (popped)	Grains contribution
¾ cup	0.25 ounces or 7 grams	¼ ounce equivalent (minimum creditable amount)
1½ cups	0.5 ounces or 14 grams	½ ounce equivalent
2¼ cups	0.75 ounces or 21 grams	¾ ounce equivalent
3 cups	**1 ounce or 28 grams**	**1 ounce equivalent**

Crediting considerations for popcorn

For developmentally ready children, menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when including popcorn in CACFP meals and snacks.

- Consider the appropriateness of the serving size for each age group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of the grains component from popcorn, due to the large volume required for crediting. The CSDE recommends providing a smaller serving of popcorn and supplementing with another food from the grains component. For example, a snack mix that contains ¾ cup of popcorn (¼ ounce equivalent) and ¼ cup of enriched or WGR round cereal (¼ ounce equivalent) credits as ½ ounce equivalent of the grains component.

Popcorn may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer popcorn in snack menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

- Foods that contain popcorn as an ingredient (such as a popcorn snack mix or popcorn balls) require documentation to determine the crediting information. SFAs must obtain a PFS for commercial products and a standardized recipe for foods prepared from scratch. For more information, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" and "Standardized Recipes" in section 2.

- Popcorn sometimes includes ingredients and toppings such as salt, caramel, cheese, and butter. The USDA strongly encourages healthier alternatives, such as seasoning the popcorn with herb blends or serving fresh, plain popcorn.

- Popcorn that is an ingredient in grain-based desserts does not credit in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to "Grain-based Desserts" in this section.

The requirements for crediting popcorn are summarized in USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019 and SFSP 09-2019: *Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs*.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Noncreditable Foods in the Grains Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the grains component include, but are not limited to:

- commercial products that do not contain a creditable grain as the first ingredient (excluding water);
- recipes that are not made with creditable grains;
- breakfast cereals that contain more than 6 grams of sugars per ounce; and
- grain-based desserts such as brownies, cookies, cake, coffee cake, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple and pecan), rice pudding, and sweet bread pudding. For more information, refer to "Grain-based Desserts" in this section.

For more information, refer to "Noncreditable Foods" in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the grains component. For more information, refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in this section.

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

Grain Crediting Worksheets

Menu planners may use the CSDE's CACFP crediting worksheets to evaluate grain-based foods for compliance with the preschool crediting, WGR, and serving requirements.

- Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the CACFP
- Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP
- Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP
- Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the CACFP
- Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the CACFP

Links to these worksheets are available under "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in the "Related Resources" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Resources for Crediting Grains

The resources below assist menu planners with identifying foods that credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Adding Whole Grains to Your CACFP Menu – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/adding-whole-grains-your-cacfp-menu
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7A: Grains Component Crediting Requirements (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditEnrichedGrainsSNP.pdf
- Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditWholeGrainsSNP.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 4: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Grains Component (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section4_Grains.pdf

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

- Food Buying Guide Section 4: Yield Table for Grains (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section4_GrainsYieldTable.pdf
- How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/IdentifyCreditableGrainsSNPpreschool.pdf
- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf
- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs – Completed Sample (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Example_Grains_Oz_Eq.pdf
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers
- USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019 and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs
- USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019 and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs
- Using the WIC Food Lists to Identify Grains for the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-wic-food-lists-identify-grains-cacfp

For additional crediting resources, visit the "Grains Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Part B: WGR Requirement

"Whole grain-rich" means a food that contains at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. All WGR foods credit in the preschool meal patterns, but not all creditable grains are WGR. The WGR criteria are different for commercial products and foods made from scratch. This section summarizes these requirements.

Menu Planning Considerations

Preschool menus must include at least one serving of WGR grains per day, between all meals and ASP snacks served to children. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. SFAs may serve a WGR food at any preschool meal or ASP snack.

- If the SFA serves only one preschool meal per day (breakfast or lunch), the grain served at that meal must be WGR.
- If the SFA serves only breakfast and chooses to substitute meat/meat alternates for the grains component at breakfast (allowed up to three times per week), a WGR food is not required.
- The grains component is not required at ASP snack but may be served as one of the two required snack components. If the SFA serves only ASP snack and offers a grain as one of the two snack components, the grain must be WGR.

The WGR requirement applies to the school nutrition programs, not to each child. If the SFA serves more than one meal, and two different groups of children are at each meal (such as one group of children at breakfast and another group of children at lunch), only one meal must contain a WGR food.

The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to vary the meals and ASP snacks that include a WGR item. For example, the preschool menu could include whole-grain toast at breakfast on Monday and brown rice at lunch on Tuesday. This helps to ensure that all children are served a variety of whole grains, and benefit from the important nutrients these foods provide.

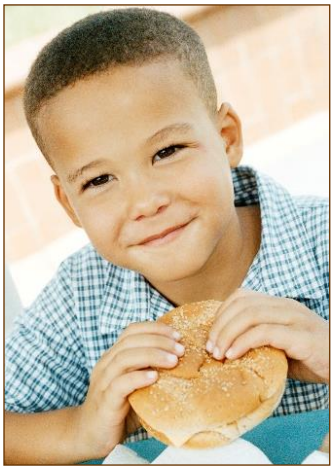
Part B: WGR Requirement

Serving the same WGR foods to preschoolers and grades K-12

The NSLP and SBP WGR criteria are different for preschoolers and grades K-12. Except for grain-based desserts, grain foods that meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 also meet the preschool WGR criteria. However, grain foods that meet the preschool WGR criteria may or may not meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12.

If SFAs serve the same grain foods to preschoolers and grades K-12, these foods must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12. If SFAs serve the same cooked and RTE breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12, these cereals must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 and the preschool sugar limit. SFAs cannot serve the same grain-based desserts to preschoolers and grades K-12 because grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to "Grain-based Desserts" in this section.

The only exceptions to these requirements are when SFAs choose to follow the K-5 meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-5 who eat in the same service area at the same time, or the ASP K-12 meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-12 who eat in the same service area at the same time. For more information on the meal pattern requirements for preschoolers and grade K-12 eating together, refer to "Serving the same foods to preschoolers and grades K-12" in section 1. For information on the differences between the grains component for preschoolers and grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs*.



Part B: WGR Requirement

Overview of Rule of Three

The USDA allows six methods for determining if grain foods meet the preschool WGR criteria. The Rule of Three is the most commonly used method to evaluate for commercial products for compliance with the preschool WGR criteria. **Note:** This method cannot be used to evaluate commercial products for compliance with the WGR criteria for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.

> The CSDE's resource for the CACFP, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*, provides guidance on all six methods and includes examples of evaluating grain products for compliance with the Rule of Three WGR criteria.

The Rule of Three reviews the product's ingredients statement and looks at the first three grain ingredients. The Rule of Three requirements apply only to commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, and cooked breakfast cereals. **Note:** The Rule of Three does not apply to RTE breakfast cereals in group I, such as puffed cereals, flaked or round cereals, and granola.

The Rule of Three requires that the first ingredient (excluding water) is a whole grain, and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are creditable grains When reviewing a commercial product's ingredients statement for compliance with the Rule of Three criteria, the following requirements apply:

- a *whole grain* must be the first ingredient, and may be the second or third grain ingredients;
- an *enriched grain* may be the second or third grain ingredients;
- *bran* and *germ* may be the second or third grain ingredients; and
- noncreditable grains cannot be any of the first three grain ingredients. Examples of noncreditable grains for the preschool meal patterns include legume flours, corn flour, corn grits, farina, malted barley flour, milled corn, nut or seed flours, oat fiber, potato flour, potato starch, rice, soy fiber, soy flakes, wheat flour, and yellow corn flour. For additional examples and more information, refer to the CSDE's resource for the CACFP, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*.

If a food meets the Rule of Three, the menu planner does not need to check any other grain ingredients further down on the ingredients statement.

Part B: WGR Requirement

The Rule of Three WGR criteria are different for commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, cooked breakfast cereals, RTE breakfast cereals, and foods made on site by the SFA. These requirements are summarized below.

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Grain Products

Under the Rule of Three, commercial grain products in groups A-E (baked goods, such as breads, rolls, muffins, crackers, waffles, and pancakes) and group H (pasta and cereal grains, such as quinoa, rice, and millet) are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient); 2) the second grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3); the third grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.

The ingredients statements below show examples of commercial grain products that meet the Rule of Three WGR criteria.

- Ingredients: *Whole-wheat flour*, sugar, wheat gluten. Contains 2% or less of each of the following: honey, salt, yeast, molasses, diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono-diglycerides (datem), ascorbic acid, mono-and diglycerides, l-cysteine, enzymes.

- Ingredients: Water, *whole-wheat flour*, yeast, wheat gluten, contains less than 2% of each of the following: soybean oil, sugar, salt, calcium propionate (preservative), fumaric acid, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, calcium sulfate, ammonium sulfate.

- Ingredients*: Whole-wheat flour, enriched flour (wheat flour, niacinamide, reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate [vitamin B1], riboflavin [vitamin B2], folic acid)*, soybean oil with TBHQ for freshness, salt, contains 2% or less of corn syrup, baking soda, yeast, soy lecithin.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Multiple whole grains in commercial grain products

If a whole grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain product contains more than one whole grain, the SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer stating the combined weight of all whole grains. The ingredients statement below shows an example.

- Ingredients: *Unbleached enriched wheat flour [flour, malted barley flour, reduced iron, niacin, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid]*, water, *whole-wheat flour*, *whole oats*, sugar, yeast, soybean oil, salt.

To meet the WGR criteria, the product's PFS must document that the combined weight of the two whole grains (whole-wheat flour and whole oats) is more than the weight of the first ingredient (unbleached enriched wheat flour). For information on PFS forms, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2.

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Cooked Breakfast Cereals

Under the Rule of Three, cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular, such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina) are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain; 2) the next two grain ingredients (if any) are whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3) the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to "Sugar limit for breakfast cereals" in this section.

The ingredients statement below shows an example of a cooked 100 percent whole-grain cereal.

- Ingredients: *Whole-grain rolled oats,* sugar, natural flavors, salt.

To credit as the grains component, this cereal must also comply with the preschool sugar limit. For more information, refer to "Sugar limit for breakfast cereals" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements."

For examples of how to determine if cooked breakfast cereals are WGR, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheet, *Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP,* to determine if cooked breakfast cereals comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in this section.

Part B: WGR Requirement

WGR Criteria for RTE Breakfast Cereals

The Rule of Three does **not** apply to RTE breakfast cereals. RTE breakfast cereals are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain; 2) the cereal is fortified; and 3) the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to "Sugar limit for breakfast cereals" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements."

The ingredients statement below shows an example of a whole-grain fortified RTE breakfast cereal that meets the WGR criteria.

- Ingredients: *Whole-grain oat flour,* sugar, corn flour, whole-wheat flour, rice flour, salt, *calcium carbonate*, disodium phosphate, *reduced iron, niacinamide, zinc oxide*, BHT (a preservative), *thiamin mononitrate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, folic acid.*

To credit as the grains component, the menu planner must check that this cereal also complies with the preschool sugar limit.

For examples of how to determine if RTE breakfast cereals are WGR, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheet, *Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP,* to determine if RTE breakfast cereals comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in this section.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods

Under the Rule of Three, commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E (such as pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs) or groups H-I (such as noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes) are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient); 2) the second grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3); the third grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.

The ingredients statement below shows an example of breaded chicken nuggets.

- Ingredients: Boneless, skinless chicken breast with rib meat, water, *whole-wheat flour*, contains 2% or less of the following: dried garlic, dried onion, salt, sea salt, soybean oil, spice, sugar, torula yeast, turmeric, yeast, yeast extract. Breading set in vegetable oil.

This product meets the Rule of Three WGR criteria because whole-wheat flour is the first and only grain ingredient.

Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods

A commercial combination food that lists the ingredients for the grain portion separately is WGR if it meets the following criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient in the grain portion (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient); 2) the second grain ingredient in the grain portion (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3); the third grain ingredient in the grain portion (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.

The ingredients statement below shows an example of a breaded chicken patty that lists the grain portion separately.

- Ingredients: Chicken, water, salt and natural flavor. **Breaded with:** *white whole-wheat flour*, water, salt, *enriched yellow corn flour*, dried onion, dried garlic, dried yeast, brown sugar, extractives of paprika, and spices. Breading set in vegetable oil.

This product meets the Rule of Three WGR criteria because the first grain ingredient in the breading (grain portion) is a whole grain, and the second and only other grain ingredient is an enriched grain.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Multiple whole grains in commercial combination foods

If a whole grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain portion of the combination food contains more than one whole grain, the SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information. The ingredients statement below shows an example. This breaded chicken patty with breading (grain portion) contains enriched flour as the first ingredient, but it also contains two whole grains.

- Ingredients: Chicken, water, salt and natural flavor. **Breaded with:** *unbleached enriched wheat flour [flour, malted barley flour, reduced iron, niacin, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid]*, water, *whole-wheat flour*, *whole oats*, dried onion, dried garlic, dried yeast, brown sugar, extractives of paprika, and spices. Breading set in vegetable oil.

To meet the WGR criteria, the product's PFS must document that the **combined weight** of the two whole grains (whole-wheat flour and whole oats) in the breading (grain portion) is the greatest ingredient by weight. For information on PFS forms, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2.

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch

Grain foods made from scratch (such as breads, rolls, muffins, waffles, and pancakes) are WGR if a whole grain is equal to or more than the combined weight of all other creditable grains in the recipe, or the combined weight of all whole grains is equal to or more than the combined weight of all other creditable grains in the recipe. The examples below are recipes that meet the CACFP WGR criteria.

- A muffin recipe contains 2 pounds of whole-wheat flour and 2 pounds of enriched flour. This recipe is WGR because the weight of the whole grain and enriched flour are equal.

- A bread recipe contains ¾ pound of whole-grain flour, ½ pound of rolled oats, and 1 pound of enriched flour. This recipe is WGR because the combined weight (1¼ pounds) of the two whole grains (whole-grain flour and rolled oats) exceeds the weight of the enriched flour.

For examples of how to determine if grain foods made from scratch are WGR, refer to the CSDE's resource for the CACFP, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Combination Foods Made from Scratch

The Rule of Three WGR criteria apply only to the **grain portion** of combination foods made from scratch. Examples of combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E include pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs. Examples of combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups H-I include noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes.

The grain portion of a recipe for a combination food is WGR if the combined amount of whole grains in the grain portion is equal to or more than the combined amount of all other creditable grains in the grain portion.

Menu planners must review recipes to determine if the grain portion credits as WGR or enriched grains.

Required Documentation for Grains

SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that grain products and recipes comply with the preschool crediting and WGR requirements. Acceptable documentation for commercial products includes CN labels (if the grain portion is part of a meat/meat alternate) and PFS forms. Recipes are required for foods made from scratch. The CSDE will review this documentation as part of the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" and "Standardized Recipes" in section 2.

The CSDE recommends that preschool menus include information about the type of grain items served for each meal and snack. This helps to document meal pattern compliance and provide information for families. For example, the menu planner could list:

- "whole-wheat bread," "whole grain-rich bread," or "enriched white bread" instead of "bread;
- "brown rice" or "enriched rice" instead of "rice;"
- "enriched spaghetti" instead of "spaghetti;"
- "whole-corn tortilla" instead of "tortilla;" and
- "fortified whole-grain cereal" instead of "breakfast cereal."

Part B: WGR Requirement

Other acceptable methods for indicating which grains on preschool menus are WGR include using abbreviations, such "WW bread" for whole-wheat bread or "WGR blueberry muffin" for a WGR blueberry muffin; symbols to indicate WGR foods; or a check box to signify that a food is WGR. When the menu includes abbreviations or symbols, SFAs should include information on what they mean.

SFAs should indicate the crediting and WGR information for the grains component on the daily production record (if used), or provide other menu documentation, such as:

- a binder of nutrition information for commercial products that includes Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients statements;
- a list of all grain products served and whether they are WGR (including 100 percent whole grain products), enriched, or fortified (breakfast cereals only);
- recipes for foods made from scratch; and
- CN labels and PFS forms for commercial foods.

SFAs must also maintain documentation on file to indicate that all breakfast cereals meet the preschool sugar limit. Documentation should include the products' Nutrition Facts label and the SFA's calculation showing that the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to "Sugar limit for breakfast cereals" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements."

Part B: WGR Requirement

Resources for WGR Criteria

The resources below assist menu planners with identifying foods that meet the preschool WGR criteria.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7B: Grains Component Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-spot-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp
- Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP – Handouts and webinars in English and Spanish(USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/identifying-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp
- Is My Recipe Whole Grain-Rich in the CACFP? – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/my-recipe-whole-grain-rich-cacfp
- Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/WGR_Requirement_CACFP.pdf

For additional resources, visit the "Grains Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Waiver for WGR Requirement during COVID-19

During the current COVID public health emergency, the USDA is allowing several flexibilities for the preschool meal patterns, including a waiver of the requirement that at least one serving of grains per day must be WGR. SFAs that cannot meet the preschool WGR requirement may request a waiver from the CSDE. If approved by the CSDE, this waiver is in effect through June 30, 2022. For more information, refer to "Meal Pattern Flexibilities during COVID-19" in section 1.

Part C: Serving Size for Grains

The required quantities for the grains component are in ounce equivalents. The preschool meal patterns require a serving of the grains component at breakfast and lunch. A serving of the grains component may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-16 summarizes the required servings of the grains component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-16. Required servings of the grains component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast	½ ounce equivalent	½ ounce equivalent
Lunch	½ ounce equivalent	½ ounce equivalent
Snack	½ ounce equivalent	½ ounce equivalent

Meeting the Required Grain Servings

Menu planners may choose to serve one grain or a combination of several grains to meet the minimum daily requirement, as long as each serving contains at least ¼ ounce equivalent of grains (refer to "Minimum creditable amounts" in the beginning of section 3). For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 could provide the required ½ ounce equivalent of the grains component from ¼ cup of brown rice (½ ounce equivalent), or ⅛ cup of brown rice (¼ ounce equivalent) and a ¼-ounce serving of a whole-grain roll (¼ ounce equivalent). Servings that contain less than ⅛ ounce equivalent of grains do not credit.

Part C: Grain Serving Size

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the grains component, the meal must include additional grains to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the breakfast meal pattern requires ½ ounce equivalent of the grains component. If a menu item contains ¼ ounce equivalent of grains, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least ¼ ounce equivalent of grains to provide the full serving.

When crediting menu items toward the grains component, menu planners must **round down** to the nearest ¼ ounce equivalent. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains 0.49 ounce equivalents of grains per serving credits as 0.25 ounce equivalents of the grains component.

USDA's Exhibit A Chart

The USDA's document, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*, summarizes the grain ounce equivalents for nine groups (A-I) of creditable grain foods. Each group contains products with similar grain content.

The amount of a creditable grain food that provides 1 ounce equivalent varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. For example, to credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component, a roll must weigh 28 grams (1 ounce), a corn muffin must weigh 34 grams (1.2 ounces), and a blueberry muffin must weigh 55 grams (2 ounces). The minimum amount that credits toward the grains component is ¼ ounce equivalent.

The USDA's Exhibit A quantities for the grains component are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs. The CSDE's resource, *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, lists the Exhibit A grain servings that apply to the preschool meal patterns. Groups F and G do not have minimum amounts because grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to "Grain-based Desserts" in this section.

Part C: Grain Serving Size

Methods to Determine Grain Ounce Equivalents

The USDA allows two methods for determining the grain ounce equivalents of a creditable product or recipe. These methods are summarized below. For detailed guidance on both methods, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Method 1: Weight or volume (USDA's Exhibit A chart)

Method 1 uses the USDA's chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs* (Exhibit A) to determine the required weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) for the grain group where the product belongs.

- **Groups A-E** include baked goods, such as crackers, animal and graham crackers, breads, rolls, taco shells, muffins, waffles, and pancakes. The amount that provides 1 ounce equivalent ranges from 22 grams (0.8 ounce) for foods in group A to 69 grams (2.4 ounces) for foods in group E.

- **Group H** includes cereal grains, such as pasta, cooked breakfast cereals, and other cereal grains, e.g., amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, farina, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat. These foods require ½ cup cooked or 28 grams (1 ounce) dry to credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. **Note:** Cereal grains typically credit based on the **cooked** serving, but menu planners may choose to credit cereal grains using the dry uncooked weight. For guidance on crediting cooked breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

  Dry cereal grains used as an ingredient in a recipe (such as rolled oats in bread) require 16 grams of creditable grains to credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component.

- **Group I** includes RTE cold breakfast cereals. These foods require 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. A 1-ounce serving equals 1 cup of flaked or round cereal, 1½ cups of puffed cereal, and ¼ cup of granola. For guidance on crediting RTE breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

Part C: Grain Serving Size

Method 1 is used for all commercial grain products. This method may also be used for recipes if the SFA knows the weight (grams or ounces) of the prepared (cooked) serving.

Menu planners can use the USDA's online Exhibit A Grains Tool to determine a product's grain servings and the required amount to obtain a specific meal pattern contribution. For more information, refer to the USDA's webinars, *Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue* and *How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool*.

Method 2: Creditable grains

Method 2 determines the ounce equivalents for creditable grain products and recipes by calculating the total weight (grams) of creditable grains per serving. The grams of creditable grains are obtained from the commercial product's PFS or calculated from the grain quantities in the SFA's recipe.

- To credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component, foods in groups A-E of the USDA's Exhibit A chart must contain **16 grams** of creditable grains and foods in groups H-I must contain **28 grams** of creditable grains.

- To credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component, foods in groups A-E of the USDA's Exhibit A chart must contain **8 grams** of creditable grains and foods in groups H-I must contain **14 grams** of creditable grains.

For commercial products, method 2 requires a PFS from the manufacturer that documents the weight of the creditable grains per serving. This information cannot be determined from the product's Nutrition Facts label or packaging. For more information, refer to "Documentation for Commercial Products" in section 2.

For foods made from scratch, method 2 requires a standardized recipe that lists the weight of each creditable grain ingredient. If the recipe lists grain ingredients only by volume (e.g., cups and quarts), the SFA must calculate the equivalent weight (grams) for each grain ingredient. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" in section 2.

Part C: Grain Serving Size

When method 2 is required for commercial products

SFAs may need to obtain additional information to determine the crediting information for some commercial grain products. A PFS is required for commercial products when any of the following situations apply:

- a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the product contains more than one creditable grain;
- a combination food that contains a grain portion is not CN labeled;
- the manufacturer claims that the product's serving size is less than the required weight or volume in the USDA's Exhibit A chart;
- the product is not listed in the USDA's Exhibit A chart, or
- the menu planner wants to credit the products as a WGR food but the first ingredient is a flour blend of whose and enriched grains. For information on crediting foods with flour blends, refer to the CSDE's guide for the CACFP, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*.

For additional guidance on each situation, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS, or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the product cannot credit as the grains component in preschool meals and snacks.

Part C: Grain Serving Size

Crediting Considerations for Bread

Bread is in group B of the USDA's Exhibit A chart and requires 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. When crediting bread toward the grains component, menu planners must round down the ounce equivalents per slice to the nearest ¼ ounce equivalent (refer to "Meeting the Required Grain Servings" in this section).

Crediting one slice of bread

The weight of one slice of bread varies between different types of bread products. For many products, one slice of bread weighs more or less than 1 ounce. To determine the ounce equivalents contribution of one slice of bread, menu planners must check the serving size and weight on the Nutrition Facts label. If the serving contains more than one slice, the weight per slice must be determined by dividing the serving weight by the number of slices per serving.

- **Example.** The serving size for a multigrain bread is 2 slices and weighs 44 grams. Each slice of bread weighs 22 grams. Since 22 grams is less than 28 grams, one slice of bread does not credit as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component.

  To determine the ounce equivalents per slice, divide the grams per slice by 28. For this multigrain bread, 22 grams divided by 28 grams equals 0.78 ounce equivalent, which rounds down to 0.75 ounce equivalent of the grains component.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size	2 slices (44g)
Servings per container	about 26
Amount per serving	
Calories	**45**

Crediting sandwiches with two slices of bread

The ounce equivalents contribution of a sandwich is determined by adding the weight of both slices together **before** rounding down to the nearest ¼ ounce equivalent. For example, a sandwich contains two slices of WGR bread that each weigh 26 grams. To determine the ounce equivalents per sandwich, multiply 26 grams by 2, which equals 52 grams; divide by 28, which equals 1.86 ounce equivalents; then round down to nearest ¼ ounce equivalent, which equals 1.75 ounce equivalents.

If the menu planner rounds down the weight of each slice first, the crediting is incorrect. This equals 1.5 ounce equivalents per sandwich (26 grams divide by 28 equals 0.93, which rounds down to 0.75 ounce equivalent per slice).

Part C: Grain Serving Size

Resources for Grain Ounce Equivalents

The resources below assist menu planners with determining the grain servings of a creditable product or recipe.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7C: Grains Component Ounce Equivalents (CSDE training webinar): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize
- CACFP Grains Ounce Equivalents Resources USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grains-ounce-equivalents-resources-cacfp
- Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/GrainCalculationSNPozeqpreschool.pdf
- Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA): https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index
- Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/GrainOzEqSNPpreschool.pdf
- USDA Final Rule (84 FR 50287): Delayed Implementation of Grains Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/25/2019-20808/delayed-implementation-of-grains-ounce-equivalents-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program
- Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-ounce-equivalents-grains-cacfp

For additional resources, visit the "Grains Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

4 — Meal Service

This section addresses the federal and state meal service requirements for the NSLP and SBP, including, meal schedules, Connecticut's statute regarding lunch periods, prohibition of gender separation, water availability, family-style meal service, children's intent to participate in the meal service, and meals consumed off site.

Meal Schedules

The USDA's SBP regulations do not state a specific time period for breakfast, but require that breakfast shall be served at or close to the beginning of the child's day at school (7 CFR 220.2). The USDA's NSLP regulations do not require a specific mealtime or amount of time between meals, but encourage schools to provide sufficient lunch periods that are long enough to give all students adequate time to be served and to eat their lunches (7 CFR 210.10(l)(2)). Public schools must offer all full-day students a daily lunch period of at least 20 minutes.

LEAs should schedule meal services to ensure good nutrition practices and minimize food waste. Generally, most children need to eat about three hours after their last meal. Young children may need to eat more frequently. The CSDE recommends that preschool programs follow the guidelines below.

- Schedule meal and snack periods at appropriate times that are not too close together or too far apart, e.g., at least two but no more than three hours apart. When the time span is too short, children will not be hungry. When the time span is too long, children can experience hunger symptoms (such as fatigue, irritability, inability to concentrate, weakness, and stomach pains) that can interfere with daily activities and learning.

- Offer food at least every three hours so that children's hunger does not overwhelm their ability to self-regulate food intake.

- To encourage meal consumption and improve children's behavior, schedule mealtimes after structured physical activity or active play.

- Provide adequate time to allow all children to eat and socialize. Scheduled mealtimes should provide children with at least 20 minutes to eat breakfast or snack, and at least 30 minutes to eat lunch, after the children are sitting at the table. SFAs should adjust these times as needed to ensure that all preschoolers have enough time to eat until they are no longer hungry.

SFAs should work with their school administrators to determine the appropriate timing and scheduling of preschool meals and ASP snacks that best meet children's nutrition needs. For additional guidance, refer to "Meal Schedules" in the CSDE's *Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies*.

Lunch Periods

Lunch periods in Connecticut schools are governed by state and federal regulations. The CSDE's Circular Letter C-9: *Federal and State Requirements for Provision and Timeframe of Daily Lunch Period for Students,* summarizes the federal and state requirements.

- C.G.S. Section 10-221o mandates that each local and regional board of education requires each school under its jurisdiction to offer all full-day students a daily lunch period of at least 20 minutes.

- The USDA's NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210.10(l)(1)) specify that schools and institutions participating in the NSLP must serve lunches during the period from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. **SFAs must submit a written request to the CSDE for a waiver if lunches will be served before or after this time.** The district must submit the exemption request for the upcoming school year by July 1 of each school year.

The CSDE evaluates the circumstances of each request to determine whether it meets one of the USDA's criteria for an exemption from the specified times for lunch. These criteria are based on USDA's memo, *Granting Exemptions to the Lunch Period*, and are summarized below.

1. The CSDE may grant reasonable variances from the meal service requirements to accommodate special circumstances encountered in schools operating for traditional students at traditional times. For example, if a school has a legitimate need to extend the lunch service to 2:30 p.m. due to capacity concerns or because of extended school hours, an exception would be considered a special circumstance.

2. The CSDE may grant exemptions from the meal service requirements if the school operates for traditional students but at a nontraditional time. For example, a school may need to provide lunch service from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. to accommodate a work-

study program that allows high school students to work in the morning and attend high school classes in the later afternoon or evening. Approval of an exemption for this specific circumstance will be granted only if these alternative programs provide students of high school grade or lower an opportunity to obtain the minimum requirements for graduation at a nontraditional time, and it is not possible to serve lunch at a more traditional time.

The written request for a waiver must be submitted to the CSDE by the superintendent and must include the special circumstances at the school that necessitate a change in the times for lunch. The CSDE will grant exemptions only if the school's schedule meets one of the two USDA criteria specified above. The CSDE will not grant exemptions for routine scheduling choices such as block schedules.

For more information, refer to the CSDE's Circular Letter C-9: *Federal and State Requirements for Provision and Timeframe of Daily Lunch Period for Students* and Operational Memorandum No. 10-19: *Requirements for Lunch Periods in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).*

Prohibition of Gender Separation

In general, the USDA's nondiscrimination laws and policies in 7 CFR Parts 15, 15a, and 15b do not permit SFAs participating in the USDA's school nutrition programs to separate children on any protected basis during meal service. Federal law prohibits discrimination based on gender at any educational institution receiving federal assistance. The USDA allows only two exceptions to the prohibition of gender-separated meal service, as described below.

1. **Coeducational schools and school-based sites:** The USDA recognizes religious exemptions granted by the federal Department of Education (ED) without prior express approval. ED guidelines allow school and school-based sites to apply for an exemption when federal law prohibiting gender separation is inconsistent with the institution's religious tenets. These exemptions apply broadly to operations, including the meal service at a given site, such as a faith-based school. Additionally, ED guidelines specifically allow for the approval of gender-separate instruction at public primary and secondary non-vocational schools that could take a variety of forms. Since the general rule is that gender separation during meal service is prohibited, a coeducational school may not use limited ED approval of gender-separate instruction to justify blanket gender separation during meal service. Limited exemptions in these situations must be approved by the USDA.

2. **Other institutions and organizations:** State agencies may approve exemptions allowing separation by gender during meal service without express prior approval from the USDA in the following circumstances:
    - meal service at religious institutions operating under the dictates of the religion with which they are affiliated;
    - meal service at juvenile correctional facilities where combining members of the opposite gender would present a potential safety risk; and
    - meal service at facilities that fully separate by gender as part of their normal operations, e.g., gender-separated summer camps.

The local educational agency (LEA) must submit the request in writing to the CSDE. LEAs must specify which reason applies and why separation by gender is necessary. For more information on the exemption process, refer to CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 30-15: *Guidance on Prohibition of Separation by Gender during Child Nutrition Program Meal Service.*

The exceptions described above are the only acceptable situations for gender separation during meal service in the USDA's school nutrition programs. The USDA strictly prohibits any gender separation that is not based on the ED or USDA approval processes. Situations

that do not clearly fit into any of the exemptions outlined above may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the CSDE in direct consultation with the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Regional Office, including the FNS Civil Rights Office and appropriate FNS National Office Child Nutrition Program staff.

Water Availability

The HHFKA requires that schools participating in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and ASP must make plain potable water available to children at no cost during the meal service. The water must be available without restriction in the location where meals are served. Water must also be made available for meals and ASP snacks served outside of the cafeteria, such as meals served in a classroom or during in-school suspension. Schools can implement this requirement in a variety of ways, which include:

- offering water pitchers and cups on tables or in an area that is easily accessible to all children during meals and ASP snacks; and
- providing a water fountain or a faucet that allows students to fill their own bottles or cups with drinking water. The location of the water fountain must be in the foodservice area or immediately adjacent, such as a water fountain that is right outside the door to the foodservice area and accessible to all students during the meal period.

The USDA does not provide separate funding for this provision and schools cannot claim reimbursement for water. However, reasonable costs associated with providing potable water are an allowable cost to the nonprofit food service account.

For more information, refer to USDA Memo SP 49-2016 and CACFP 18-2016: *Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities* and USDA Memo SP 28-2011: *Water Availability during National School Lunch Program Meal Service.*

Considerations for serving water

SFAs must consider the guidelines and requirements below when serving water to preschoolers.

- Caregivers should not serve young children too much water before and during mealtimes. Excess water may reduce the amount of food and milk that children consume at mealtimes.
- Water is not a meal pattern component and is not part of reimbursable meals. SFAs cannot offer water as a choice instead of milk.
- If the snack menu includes juice or milk as one of the two required snack components, SFAs cannot offer water as a choice instead of juice or milk.
- Serve water at snack when the snack menu does not include milk or juice.

For more information and resources, visit the "Water Availability" section of the CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

> While SFAs must make drinking water available to children during mealtimes, water is not part reimbursable meals and ASP snacks, and cannot be served instead of fluid milk. Children are not required to take water. SFAs cannot promote or offer water or any other beverage as an alternative selection to fluid milk throughout the food service area.

Family-style Meal Service

Family style is an optional type of meal service that allows children to serve themselves from communal platters or bowls of food with assistance, if needed, from supervising adults who sit with the children. This approach allows children to identify and be introduced to new foods, new tastes, and new menus, while developing a positive attitude toward healthy foods, sharing in group eating situations, and developing good eating habits. Family-style meal service also helps young children develop motor skills and the dexterity and hand strength needed to serve foods. Table 4-1 compares the requirements and best practices for pre-plated or unitized meals and family-style meals.

Unlike other types of meal service (such as cafeteria lines, vended meals, and pre-plated service), family-style meals allow some latitude in the initial serving sizes because additional servings of each food are readily available at each table, and more can be served at any time. When a complete family-style service is not possible or practical, it may be useful to offer some meal components in a family-style manner, particularly when serving smaller children or introducing a new food item.

Requirements for family-style meal service

SFAs that implement family-style meal service for preschoolers must follow the guidelines below to ensure compliance and eligibility for reimbursement.

- **Offering minimum portions:** A sufficient amount of prepared food and the appropriate type of milk (unflavored low-fat or fat-free) must be placed on each table to provide the full-required servings (minimum meal pattern amounts) of each food component (lunch) or food item (breakfast) for all preschoolers at the table. The examples below illustrate this requirement.
    - The preschool lunch menu provides the required ¼-cup serving of the fruits component from ¼ cup of sliced apples. If four preschoolers sit at the table, the communal serving plate or bowl must contain at least 1 cup of apple slices.
    - The preschool breakfast and lunch meal patterns require ¾ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. If four preschoolers sit at the table, the milk pitcher must contain at least 3 cups of milk; or that amount must be readily available nearby. If the required amount of milk makes the pitcher too heavy for young children, the pitcher can initially contain less milk, as long as the remaining required quantity is readily available nearby.

- **Offering food components or food items:** While family style meal service allows children to make choices in selecting foods, the supervising adults should initially offer all children the full-required portion of each food component. Preschoolers may select an initial serving that is less than the full-required portion, except for at least ¼ cup of vegetables or fruits. Supervising adults should encourage additional portions and selections to meet the full-required serving, as appropriate.
    - **Selecting fruits and vegetables:** Preschoolers must take (but are not required to consume) at least ¼ cup of vegetable or fruit for a reimbursable meal. If a preschooler chooses not to self-serve a vegetable or fruit, the meal is not reimbursable. The preschool breakfast meal pattern must offer at least ½ cup of vegetables, fruits, or both. The preschool lunch meal pattern must offer at least ¼ cup of the vegetables component and at least ¼ cup of the fruits component.

- **Selecting meat/meat alternates, grains, and milk**: Preschoolers may select an initial serving that is less than the full-required portion. If a preschooler chooses not to self-serve or consume the full-required portion, the meal is still reimbursable.

- **Role of supervising adults:** During the course of the meal, the supervising adults are responsible for actively encouraging each preschooler to accept service of the full-required portion of each food component. For example, if a child initially refuses a food component or does not accept the full-required portion, the supervising adult should offer the food component to the child again. As a reminder, preschoolers may select an initial serving that is less than the full-required portion, except for at least ¼ cup of vegetables or fruits.

- **Second meals and servings:** Second meals and second servings cannot be claimed for reimbursement. SFAs can claim only one reimbursable breakfast and one reimbursable lunch for each preschooler per day.

- **Using the K-5 meal pattern:** Preschoolers must select ½ cup of fruits or vegetables when three conditions apply: 1) the preschoolers are comingled with grades K-5, i.e., both groups eat together in the same service area at the same time; 2) the SFA chooses to use the K-5 meal pattern for both groups; and 3) the SFA implements OVS. Under these circumstances only, all preschoolers must take at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables, and the full serving of at least two other components, for a reimbursable meal. For more information on serving preschoolers and grades K-5 together, refer to "Preschoolers and grades K-5 eating together in the NSLP and SBP" in section 1.

SFAs must ensure that family-style meal service is strictly supervised to ensure that school staff serve reimbursable meals and follow adequate daily collection procedures. An adult must be present and monitor the entire process at each table to ensure that children take a reimbursable meal. The adult must track children each day to determine who ate lunch in each meal eligibility category (free, reduced, and paid), without overt identification of the child's eligibility status.

The CSDE has observed many compliance issues with family-style meal service in schools. SFAs must carefully consider whether the preschool program has the capacity to implemented family-style meal service correctly and ensure that reimbursable meals are served.

Table 4-1. Comparison of meal service methods for preschoolers	
Pre-plated or unitized meal service: The minimum portion sizes of all meal pattern components are pre-plated or packaged as a unit.	
Requirements	• The meal or snack must provide the minimum portion size of all required components at the same time.
Best practices	• Prepare plates and cups before children are seated. • Measure out portions with appropriate serving utensils, e.g., scoops (dishers) and serving spoons. For more information, visit the "Portion Control" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. • Provide supervising adults with appropriate training and guidance to ensure portions meet the minimum requirements. Examples of resources include the preschool meal patterns, crediting guides, completed menu forms, production records, and standardized recipes. See section 5 for resources.
Family-style meal service: Children serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance, if needed, from supervising adults who sit with the children.	
Requirements	• Foods must be served in communal bowls or dishes. • The minimum portion sizes of prepared foods and milk must be available for each child at the table, and supervising adults who eat with the children. • Children must be allowed to serve the food components themselves, with the exception of beverages such as milk and juice. • Supervising adults are responsible for actively encouraging (but not requiring) each child to serve themselves the full-required portion. If a child refuses or takes less than the full-required portion, the supervising adult should offer the component to the child again.
Best practices	• Place components in communal bowls or dishes on the table before children are seated. • Use appropriately sized bowls, dishes, and serving utensils (such as tongs or spoons) for children to serve themselves. • Serve milk in child-sized pitchers. • Have staff sit with the children and assist with serving.

Requirement for written procedures

Schools that choose to implement family-style meal service for preschoolers must develop written procedures for complying with the requirements for family-style meal service. These procedures must indicate how the school will implement family-style meal service and provide assurances that:

- SFAs will prepare, and supervising adults will offer, the minimum serving for each required component in the preschool meal patterns;
- reimbursable meals will be monitored by a trained supervising adult who sits with the children at each table;
- supervising adults will identify, and SFAs will claim, reimbursable meals based on a child's free, reduced, or paid status;
- supervising adults and other applicable staff will prevent overt identification of children's meal eligibly status during family-style meal service;
- SFAs will conduct and document adequate training for all supervising adults, including how to implement family-style meal service, the preschool meal patterns, and what constitutes a reimbursable meal.

SFAs must share these procedures with all staff and supervising adults involved in implementing family-style meal service, and maintain this documentation on file for the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Resources for family-style meal service

The resources below provide information on family-style meal service for preschoolers in the school nutrition programs.

- Meal Service in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#MealService

- Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Supplement E: Support for Family Style Meals (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/nutrition-wellness-tips-young-children

- Serving School Meals to Preschoolers – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-school-meals-preschoolers

- The Basic Guide to Family Style Dining – Part 1 (ICN): https://theicn.org/resources/382/2013-mealtime-memos/106229/august-2013-the-basic-guide-to-family-style-dining-part-1.pdf

- USDA Memo SP 01-2018: Updated Infant and Preschool Meal Patterns in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Questions and Answers: https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP01-2018os.pdf

For additional resources, visit the "Meal Service for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For technical assistance, contact the SFA's assigned CSDE school nutrition consultant.

Intent to Participate in the Meal Service

For SFAs to claim reimbursement for preschool meals and ASP snacks, children must participate in the meal service or have the intent to participate in the meal service. A child who makes no attempt (i.e., has no intent) to join other children at the meal or snack cannot be included in the reimbursable meal count, even if he or she was asked by the supervising adult to participate.

The USDA regulations allow for reimbursement of meals that are served and eaten by children. They do not allow for reimbursement of ordered or plated meals. If SFAs use pre-plated meals or supervising adults serve the children, it may be difficult to judge the child's intent to participate in the meal service.

> If a child refuses a meal that is pre-plated or served by a staff member, the SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement. The child must show intent to eat, such as coming willingly to the table; helping himself or herself to food, or asking to be served; and attempting to eat the meal. The child does not have to **eat** the meal for the SFA to claim reimbursement, but the child must demonstrate the **intent** to eat.

When a child who clearly has no intent to participate is forced to come to the table or forced to put food on his or her plate, the SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement. A child may not have the intent to participate in a meal for many reasons, such as behavior issues or being sick, tired, angry, or upset.

The scenarios in table 4-2 illustrate the principle of a child's intent to eat, and when SFAs can claim preschool meals and ASP snacks.

Table 4-2. Examples of child's intent to eat

Scenario	Can the SFA claim the meal?
A child typically chooses not to participate in the meal service. A teacher forces the child to come and sit at the table, and serves the child some food. The child does not eat.	**No.** The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child has not chosen (i.e., has no intent) to participate in the meal. Since the teacher knows this child typically does not eat, it would be clear that the child did not intend to participate in the meal. If the child willingly comes to the table, chooses to take a serving of food, but then does not eat, the meal is reimbursable. In this case, the child has the intent to eat, even if he or she did not follow through.
A child who normally participates in the meal service comes to the table then chooses not to take any food.	**No.** The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child has chosen not to participate.
At snack time, a child is crying and upset over an altercation with another child. The teacher asks her to come to the table but she refuses.	**No.** The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child has chosen not to participate.
A child willingly comes to the table at mealtime. He helps himself to several meal components, takes one bite, and then stops eating because he does not feel well.	**Yes.** The SFA may claim the meal for reimbursement because the child chose to participate and had the intent to eat, even though he changed his mind when he did not feel well.
A child gets sick just before lunch. She is lying on a cot, waiting for her parent to pick her up.	**No.** The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child does not have the intent to participate in the meal.

Meals Consumed Off Site

SFAs receive reimbursement for meals and snacks that meet the meal patterns, and are served to children on the premises. A meal consumed off site is not reimbursable because a child who has left the premises is no longer participating in the activities of the school.

> If a child leaves the meal service early, uneaten meal or snack components cannot be packed "to go." By leaving the facility and consuming the food off site, the child is not participating in the meal or snack service with the rest of the group. SFAs cannot claim these meals and snacks for reimbursement.

The school nutrition programs are congregate feeding programs intended to provide meals that are consumed on site unless children are on an approved field trip. Meals served on field trips are reimbursable if they meet the meal pattern requirements and are served and consumed as part of a related function of the school or institution. For guidance on the requirements for meal counting and claiming on field trips, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Field Trip Meals in the NSLP and SBP*.

Waiver for non-congregate meals during COVID-19

During the current COVID public health emergency, the USDA's nationwide waivers allow several flexibilities for school nutrition programs, including a waiver of the requirement for congregate meals. Non-congregate meal service is addressed in USDA memo COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #87: *Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Meal Service for School Year 2021-2022*

The USDA recognizes that in this public health emergency, waiving the congregate meal requirement is vital to ensure appropriate safety measures for providing meals and snacks. Examples include supporting social distancing during mealtimes, and providing options on days when children are participating in school remotely. Non-congregate feeding flexibilities allow schools to provide meal pick-up options for students learning virtually and facilitate grab-and-go meals for students in school.

SFAs must request the non-congregate from the CSDE. If approved by the CSDE, this waiver is in effect through June 30, 2022. For more information, refer to "USDA Nationwide Waivers for COVID-19" in the "About this Guide" section.

5 – Resources

This section includes links to resources and websites that assist SFAs with meeting the NSLP and SBP preschool meal patterns and crediting requirements. Topics include crediting and meal pattern components, CSDE guides and resource lists, meal patterns and menu planning, and USDA regulations and policy.

More links to information on the federal and state requirements and guidance for preschool meals are available on the CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs webpage. For a list of resources on the preschool meal patterns and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns*.

Comparison Charts

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CNPMealPatternComparison.pdf

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/ComparisonPreschoolGradesK-12SNP.pdf

Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SNP_Preschool.pdf.

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPComparisonPreschoolK12.pdf

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/ComparisonGrainCreditingSNP.pdf

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Milk Component in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/ComparisonMilkRequirementsSNP.pdf

Crediting Requirements and Documentation

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/AcceptDocumentationSNP.pdf

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CNlabel.pdf

Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus ("Related Resources" section of CSDE Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents

Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SNP_Preschool.pdf

Crediting Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know! Webinar Series (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-updates-child-nutrition-programs-be-know-webinar-series

Crediting Worksheets for CACFP Child Care Programs ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents#CreditingWorksheets

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: Training Resources (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-training-resources

Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/NoncredretableFoodsSNPpreschool.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf

Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-interactive-web-based-tool

Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/StandardizedRecipeSchools.docx

Standardized Recipes ("Related Resources" section of CSDE Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#StandardizedRecipes

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf

USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015 and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/administrative-review-process-regarding-child-nutrition-cn-label-watermarked-cn-label-and

USDA Memo TA 07-2010 (v.3): Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:
https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/TA07-2010v3os.pdf

Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-nutrition-facts-label-cacfp

Yield Study Form for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/YieldStudy.pdf

CSDE Guides

Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/SpecialDietsGuide.pdf

Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWP/Action_Guide.pdf

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPHandbook.pdf

Guide to Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/CompetitiveFoodsGuideHFC.pdf

Guide to Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/CompetitiveFoodsGuideNonHFC.pdf

Guide to Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/CompetitiveFoodsPrivateRCCI.pdf

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/MPGpreschool.pdf

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals

Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition//-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/OVSguide.pdf

CSDE Resource Lists

Resource List for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Child_Nutrition_Programs.pdf

Resource List for Competitive Foods (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Competitive_Foods.pdf

Resource List for Dietary Guidance and Nutrition Information (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Dietary_Guidance.pdf

Resource List for Food Safety in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Food_Safety.pdf

Resource List for Health and Achievement (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Achievement.pdf

Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Menu_Planning.pdf

Resource List for Nutrition Education (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Nutrition_Education.pdf

Resource List for Obesity Data and Preventions (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Obesity.pdf

Resource List for Physical Activity and Physical Education (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/ResourcesPhysicalActivity.pdf

Resource List for Special Diets in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Special_Diets.pdf

Resource List for Wellness Policies for Schools and Child Care (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Wellness_Policy.pdf

Resources for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Resources-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Resources_Preschool_Meal_Patterns.pdf

Fruits Component

Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuiceSNPpreschool.pdf

Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothiesSNPpreschool.pdf

Fruits Component for Preschoolers ("Related Resources" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Fruits

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas

USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019 and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs

Grains Component

Adding Whole Grains to Your CACFP Menu – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/adding-whole-grains-your-cacfp-menu

CACFP Grains Ounce Equivalents Resources (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grains-ounce-equivalents-resources-cacfp

Calculating Sugar Limits for Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-breakfast-cereals-cacfp

Calculating Sugar Limits for Yogurt in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-yogurt-cacfp

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/GrainCalculationSNPozeqpreschool.pdf

Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-breakfast-cereals-are-lower-sugar

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditCerealsSNPpreschool.pdf

Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditEnrichedGrainsSNP.pdf

Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditWholeGrainsSNP.pdf

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf

Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index

Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/GrainOzEqSNPpreschool.pdf

Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP – Handouts and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grain-based-desserts-cacfp

Grains Component for Preschoolers ("Related Resources" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Grains

How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/IdentifyCreditableGrainsSNPpreschool.pdf

How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-spot-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp

Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP – Handouts and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/identifying-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp

Is My Recipe Whole Grain-Rich in the CACFP? – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/my-recipe-whole-grain-rich-cacfp

Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/WGR_Requirement_CACFP.pdf

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the CACFP: Questions and Answers
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers

USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program

USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019 and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs

USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019 and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs

Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-ounce-equivalents-grains-cacfp

Using the WIC Food Lists to Identify Grains for the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-wic-food-lists-identify-grains-cacfp

Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue

Webinar: How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-maximize-exhibit-grains-tool

Meal Patterns and Menu Planning

Menu Forms for Preschoolers ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents

Methods for Healthy Cooking – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/methods-healthy-cooking

Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks

Preschool Production Records for Lunch and Breakfast (CSDE's Production Records for School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Production-Records-for-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents

Preschool Production Records for the Afterschool Snack Program ("Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Afterschool Snack Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents

Requirements for Production Records in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/ProdRecord/Requirements_Production_Records_NSLP_SBP.pdf

Sample CACFP Menus (CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents#SampleMenus

Serving Snacks in the CACFP (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-snacks-cacfp

USDA Memo CACFP 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements-child-and-adult-care-food-program

USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp

USDA Memo SP 01-2019 and CACFP 01-2019: Guidance for FY19: Updated CACFP Meal Patterns and Updated NSLP and SBP Infant and Preschool Meal Patterns:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/guidance-fy19-updated-cacfp-meal-patterns-and-updated-nslp-and-sbp-infant-and-preschool-meal

USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/flexibility-co-mingled-preschool-meals-questions-and-answers

Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-nutrition-facts-label-cacfp

Meat/Meat Alternates Component

Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Sugar – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-yogurts-are-lower-sugar

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditCommercialMMASNP.pdf.

Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditDeliSNP.pdf

Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditLegumesSNP.pdf

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditNutsSNP.pdf

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditTofuSNP.pdf

Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditYogurtSNPpreschool.pdf

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers ("Related Resources" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents#MMA

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/APPRequirementsSNP.pdf

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA): https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-and-meat-alternates-breakfast

USDA Memo SP 01-2016, CACFP 01-2016 and SFSP 01-2016: Procuring Local Meat, Poultry, Game, and Eggs for Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/procuring-local-meat-poultry-game-and-eggs-child-nutrition-programs

USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition

USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs: https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs

USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs

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/cn/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs

USDA Memo SP 53-2016 and CACFP 21-2016: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs and the CACFP:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp

Milk Component

Allowable Milk Substitutions for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Milk_Substitutes_SNP.pdf

Milk Component for Preschoolers ("Related Resources" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Milk

Serving Milk in the CACFP – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-milk-cacfp

USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010 and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions*:*
https://www.fns.usda.gov/qas-milk-substitution-children-medical-or-special-dietary-needs-non-disability

USDA Regulations and Policy

CACFP Policy Memos (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources

CACFP Regulations (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/part-226%E2%80%94child-and-adult-care-food-program

CSDE Operational Memo No. 13-17: Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs:
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2017/OM13-17.pdf

Final Rule (81 FR 24347): Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (April 25, 2016):
https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/25/2016-09412/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act

Final Rule (84 FR 50287): Delayed Implementation of Grains Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (September 25, 2019):
https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/25/2019-20808/delayed-implementation-of-grains-ounce-equivalents-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program

Final Rule Correction (81 FR 75671): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (November 1, 2016):
https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act

FNS Instruction 783-13, Revision 3: Variations in Meal Requirements for Religious Reasons: Jewish Schools, Institutions and Sponsors.
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/FNSinstruction/783-13.pdf

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act

USDA Memo CACFP 05-2017: Offer Versus Serve and Family Style Meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/offer-versus-serve-and-family-style-meals-child-and-adult-care-food-program

Vegetables Component

Crediting Soups in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSoupSNP.pdf

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs

Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP:
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Vegetable_Subgroups_CACFP.pdf

Vegetables Component for Preschoolers ("Related Resources" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Vegetables

Serving Vegetables in the CACFP – Handouts in English and Spanish (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-vegetables-cacfp

Websites

Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE training webinars):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize

CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Training Webinar Series (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-halftime-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series

CACFP Handbooks (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/cacfp-handbooks

CACFP Training Tools (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-training-tools

Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Child-Care-Nutrition-and-Physical-Activity-Policies

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/child-nutrition-cn-labeling-program

Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Child-Nutrition-Programs

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 CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs

Competitive Foods in Schools (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Competitive-Foods

Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Milk in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Eligibility-for-Free-and-Reduced-price-Meals-and-Milk-in-School-Nutrition-Programs

Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-to-preschool

Farm to School (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Farm-to-School

FNS Instructions for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/FNS-Instructions-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs

Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs

Healthy Food Certification (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Healthy-Food-Certification

Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Laws-and-Regulations-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs

Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Manuals-and-Guides-for-Child-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

Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning

Operational Memos for the CACFP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Lists/Operational-Memoranda-for-the-CACFP

Procurement for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Procurement-for-School-Nutrition-Programs

Production Records for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Production-Records-for-School-Nutrition-Programs

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Program-Guidance-School-Nutrition-Programs

Put Local on Your Tray (University of Connecticut):
https://putlocalonyourtray.uconn.edu/

Resources for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Resources-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs

Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs

Glossary

a la carte sales: Foods and beverages that are sold separately from reimbursable meals in the USDA school nutrition programs.

added sugars: Sugars and syrups added to foods in processing or preparation, as opposed to the naturally occurring sugars found in foods like fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products. Names for added sugars include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup.

Administrative Review (AR): A periodic review of an institution's operations of the Child Nutrition Programs, conducted by the Connecticut State Department of Education to monitor performance and assess compliance with all USDA regulations.

Afterschool Snack Program (ASP): The USDA's federally assisted snack program implemented through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The ASP provides cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children in afterschool activities aimed at promoting the health and well-being of children and youth. Schools must provide children with regularly scheduled activities in an organized, structured and supervised environment that includes educational or enrichment activities, e.g., mentoring/tutoring programs. Programs must meet state or local licensing requirements and health and safety standards. For more information, visit the CSDE's Afterschool Snack Program webpage.

alternate protein products (APPs): APPs are generally single ingredient powders that are added to foods. Examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. APPs include vegetable protein products. The USDA has specific requirements for the crediting of APPs in Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to "Alternate Protein Products" in section 3, and the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP*.

artificial sweeteners: A category of nonnutritive sweeteners used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. The six artificial sweeteners approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) include 1) acesulfame potassium (Ace-K) (e.g., Sweet One®, Sunett ®, and Sweet & Safe®); 2) advantame; 3) aspartame (e.g., Nutrasweet®, Equal®, and Sugar Twin®; 4) neotame (e.g., Newtame®); 5) saccharin (e.g., Sweet and Low®, Sweet Twin®, and Necta Sweet); and 6) sucralose (Splenda®). These nonnutritive sweeteners are calorie-free except for aspartame, which is very low in calories. For more information, refer to "nonnutritive sweeteners" in this section.

beans and peas (legumes): Refer to "legumes" in this section.

bran: The seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Examples include oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran. Bran is not a whole grain. **Note:** Bran credits in the preschool meal patterns for the NSLP, SBP and ASP; and the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. However, it does not credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.

CACFP meal patterns: The required food components and minimum serving sizes that facilities participating in the CACFP must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children. The CACFP meal patterns apply to children ages 1-12; children ages 15 and younger of migrant workers; children of any age with disabilities; and children through age 18 in at-risk afterschool care centers and emergency shelters. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *CACFP Meal Patterns for Children*. **Note:** The preschool meal patterns for ages 1-4 are the same as the CACFP meal patterns for ages 1-2 and 3-5.

cereal grains: The seeds that come from grasses. Cereal grains can be whole grain (such as amaranth, barley, buckwheat, corn, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rolled wheat, rye, sorghum, triticale, wheat, and wheat berries) or enriched (such as enriched cornmeal, corn grits, and farina).

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program providing nutritious meals and snacks to children in child care centers, family day care homes, and emergency shelters, and snacks and suppers to children participating in eligible at-risk afterschool care programs. The CACFP also provides meals and snacks to adults who receive care in nonresidential adult day care centers. For more information, visit the USDA's CACFP webpage and the CSDE's CACFP webpage.

Child Nutrition (CN) label: A statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a food product toward the USDA's meal patterns, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. Products eligible for CN labels include main dish entrees that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component of the meal pattern requirements, e.g., beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. The CN label will usually indicate the contribution of other meal components (such as vegetables, grains, and fruits) that are part of these products. For more information, refer to "Child Nutrition CN Labels" in section 2, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labels*, and visit the USDA's Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling webpage.

Child Nutrition Programs: The USDA's federally funded programs that provide nutritious meals and snacks to children, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP also provides nutritious meals and snacks to the frail elderly in adult day care centers. For more information, visit the CSDE's Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

combination foods: Foods that contain more than one food component, such as pizza, burritos, and smoothies made with milk and fruit. For example, macaroni and cheese contains pasta (grains) and cheese (meat/meat alternate). Combination foods generally cannot be separated (such as pizza and burritos) or are not intended to be separated (such as a hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich).

competitive foods: Any foods and beverages sold to students anytime on school premises other than meals served through the USDA's school meal programs. Competitive food sales include, but are not limited to, cafeteria a la carte sales, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers. For more information, visit the CSDE's Competitive Foods in Schools webpage and the CSDE's guides, *Guide to Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools, Guide to Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools,* and *Guide to Competitive Foods in Private Schools and RCCIs*.

Connecticut Nutrition Standards: State nutrition standards developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education per Section 10-215e of the Connecticut General Statutes. These standards address the nutritional content of all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals. They focus on limiting fat, saturated fats, trans fats, sodium, and added sugars, moderating portion sizes, and increasing consumption of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and legumes. All schools in any district that chooses to comply with the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all sources of food sales to students, including school cafeterias, vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and any other sources. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards also apply to all snacks served in the Afterschool Snack Program. For more information, visit the CSDE's Connecticut Nutrition Standards webpage.

corn masa: Dough made from masa harina that is used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales. Corn masa is nixtamalized and credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to "nixtamalization" in this section.

cornmeal: Meal made from ground, dried corn.

creditable food: A food or beverage that counts toward the meal pattern requirements for a reimbursable meal or snack in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, visit the "Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

cycle menu: A series of menus planned for a specific period of time, with a different menu for each day. Cycle menus can help SFAs to increase variety, control food cost, and save time. For more information, refer to "Using cycle menus" in section 2.

deep-fat frying: Cooking by submerging food in hot oil or other fat. The preschool meal patterns prohibit deep-fat frying foods on site.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans: A federal document that provides science-based advice for Americans ages 2 and older to promote health and reduce risk for chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture jointly publish the *Dietary Guidelines* every five years. This document forms the basis of federal food, nutrition education and information programs. For more information, visit the Dietary Guidelines for Americans webpage.

disability: A condition in which a person has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. For more information, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs*.

edible portion: The portion of a food that can actually be eaten after the nonedible parts are removed, for example, cooked lean meat without bone, and fruit without seeds or pits.

endosperm: The soft, white inside portion of the whole-grain kernel. The endosperm contains starch, protein, and small amounts of B vitamins.

enriched grains: Refined grains (such as wheat, rice, and corn) and grain products (such as cereal, pasta, and bread) that have some vitamins and minerals added to replace the nutrients lost during processing. The five enrichment nutrients are added within limits specified by the FDA, and include thiamin (B_1), riboflavin (B_2), niacin (B_3), folic acid, and iron. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP*.

enrichment: Adding back nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) originally present in a food that were lost during processing. Enrichment nutrients are added back in approximately the same levels as were originally present in the food. For more information, refer to "enriched grains" in this section.

Exhibit A chart: A USDA chart that indicates the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for a grain food to provide 1 ounce equivalent (NSLP and SBP) or 1 serving (ASP) of the grains component. This chart may be used for commercial grain products and for standardized recipes that indicate the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. The required amounts for the grains component are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs. The CSDE's resource, *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, lists the Exhibit A grain ounce equivalents that apply to preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP. For more information, refer to "USDA's Exhibit A Chart" in "Part C: Serving Size for Grains" of section 3, and the USDA's *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*.

family-style meal service: A method of meal service that allows children to serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance from supervising adults, if needed. For more information, refer to "Family-style Meal Service" in section 4.

flour: Finely ground and sifted wheat or other grains such as rye, corn, rice, or buckwheat.

fluid milk substitutes: Nondairy beverages (such as soy milk) that can be used as a substitute for fluid milk in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For reimbursable meals and ASP snacks, nondairy beverages served to children without disabilities must comply with the USDA nutrition standards for milk substitutes. For more information, refer to "USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes" in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs*.

food components: The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates. For information on the individual food components, refer to section 3 and visit the "Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

food item: A specific food offered within the food components that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA's school nutrition programs. A food item may contain one or more food components or more than one serving of a single component. For example, an entree could provide 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component and 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component, and a 2-ounce whole grain or enriched bagel could provide 2 ounce equivalents of the grains component.

food-based menu planning: A type of menu planning for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs that uses a meal pattern with specific food components in certain amounts based on specific age/grade groups. For more information, refer to "food components" in this section and the meal patterns in section 1.

fortification: Adding nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) that were not originally present in a food or beverage or adding nutrients at levels that are higher than originally present. Fortification is used for naturally nutrient-rich products based on scientifically documented health needs (e.g., fortifying milk with vitamin D to increase the body's absorption of calcium), or to enhance the perceived nutritional value of products with little or no natural nutritional value, e.g., an "energy" bar made from processed flour that is fortified with multiple vitamins and minerals. Fortification nutrients are added to products in varying amounts, from small percentages up to amounts greater than recommended intakes.

fruits component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. For more information, refer to "Fruits Component" in section 3 and visit the "Fruits Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

full component: The daily quantity designated by the menu planner (no less than the established minimum) to meet the required weekly ranges.

full serving: See "full component" in this section.

full-strength fruit or vegetable juice: An undiluted product obtained by extraction from sound fruit. Full-strength juice may be fresh, canned, frozen or reconstituted from concentrate and may be served in either liquid or frozen state. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: "juice," "full-strength juice," "100 percent juice," "reconstituted juice," or "juice from concentrate." **Note:** The preschool meal patterns allow pasteurized full-strength juice to credit as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day. For more information, refer to "Juice limit" in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

germ: The vitamin-rich sprouting section of the whole-grain kernel. Germ is not a whole grain. **Note:** Germ credits in the preschool meal patterns for the NSLP, SBP and ASP; and the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. However, it does not credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.

grains component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of cereal grains and products made from their flours. To credit as the grains component, all foods be whole grain-rich or enriched. Breakfast cereals must be whole grain-rich, enriched, or fortified. For more information, refer to "Grains Component" in section 3 and visit the "Grains Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

grains: Plants in the grass family, which produce a dry, edible fruit commonly called a kernel, grain, or berry.

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP): A preventative food safety program to control food safety hazards during all aspects of food service operations. HACCP reduces the risk of foodborne hazards by focusing on each step of the food preparation process from receiving to service.

Healthy Food Certification: A state statute (Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes) that requires each board of education or governing authority for all public schools participating in the NSLP to certify annually to the CSDE whether they will follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) for all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals. Districts that choose to implement the CNS receive additional funding per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free, and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year. For more information, refer to "Connecticut Nutrition Standards" in this section and visit the CSDE's Healthy Food Certification webpage.

hominy: A traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin. For crediting information, refer to "Crediting Hominy as Vegetables" and "Crediting Hominy as Grains" in section 3.

juice drink: A product resembling juice that contains full-strength juice along with added water and possibly other ingredients, such as sweeteners, spices, or flavorings. Juice drinks do not credit toward the meal pattern requirements.

lactose: The naturally occurring sugar found in milk. Lactose contains glucose and galactose. For more information, refer to "simple carbohydrates (sugars) in this section.

lean meat and poultry: Defined by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* as meat and poultry that contains less than 10 grams of fat, no more than 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per 100 grams and per labeled serving size, based on the USDA's definitions for food label use. Examples include 95% lean cooked ground beef, beef top round steak or roast, beef tenderloin, pork top loin chop or roast, pork tenderloin, ham or turkey deli slices, skinless chicken breast, and skinless turkey breast.

legumes: Plants that grow in pods. Legumes include pulses, which are the edible dried seeds of plants in the legume family, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas. Pulses include all beans, peas, and lentils cooked from dry, canned, or frozen, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, pink beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), split peas, pigeon peas, mung beans, and lentils.

local educational agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public or private nonprofit authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools. The term also includes any other public or private nonprofit institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a public or private nonprofit elementary school or secondary school, including residential child care institutions, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and educational service agencies and consortia of those agencies, as well as the state educational agency in a state or territory in which the state educational agency is the sole educational agency for all public or private nonprofit schools.

main dish: The main dish is generally considered the main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items. Examples of main dish items include pizza, chicken stir-fry, and chef's salad with ham, hard-boiled egg, and cheese.

masa harina: Corn flour used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales. Masa harina is nixtamalized and credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to "nixtamalization" in this section and "Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal" in section 3.

meal pattern: The required food components and minimum servings that schools and institutions participating in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children. For more information, refer to the preschool breakfast, lunch, and snack meal patterns in section 1.

meal: A grain made by coarsely grinding corn, oats, wheat, or other grains. Whole grain, enriched, or fortified meal credits toward the grains component of the USDA's meal patterns

meals: See "reimbursable meals" in this section.

meat alternates: Foods that provide similar protein content to meat. Meat alternates include alternate protein products, cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans or peas, nuts and seeds and their butters (except for acorn, chestnut and coconut), tofu and other soy products containing at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume), tempeh, and yogurt (unflavored or flavored) containing no more than 23 grams of sugars per 6 ounces. For more information, refer to "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" in section 3 and visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

meat/meat alternates component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes meats (e.g., beef, poultry, and fish) and meat alternates, such as eggs, cheese, yogurt, beans and peas (legumes) nuts, and seeds. For more information, refer to "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" in section 3 and visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

medical statement: A document that identifies the specific medical conditions and appropriate dietary accommodations for children with special dietary needs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs,* and visit the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

menu item: Any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain or milk that is part of the reimbursable meal. Menu items consist of food items.

milk component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes pasteurized fluid milk that meets the fat content and flavor requirements of the USDA regulations. The allowable types of milk for preschoolers include unflavored low-fat milk and unflavored fat-free milk. The milk component also includes fluid milk substitutes that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, refer to "Milk Component" in section 3 and visit the "Milk Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

MyPlate: Released in June 2011, MyPlate is the USDA's food guidance system to translate the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* into a healthy eating plan. MyPlate emphasizes consuming more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. For more information, visit the USDA's Choose MyPlate website.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. It was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. For more information, visit the CSDE's National School Lunch Program webpage.

natural cheese: Cheese that is produced directly from milk, such as cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, mozzarella, muenster, provolone, Swiss, feta, and brie. Natural cheese also includes pasteurized blended cheese made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheese. Natural cheeses do not include pasteurized process cheese (e.g., American), pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, or pasteurized process cheese products. For more information, refer to "Crediting Cheeses" in section 3.

nixtamalization: A process in which dried corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients and provides a nutritional profile similar to whole-grain corn. Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, masa harina (corn flour), corn masa (dough from masa harina), and certain types of cornmeal. Nixtamalized corn credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to "Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal" in section 3.

noncreditable foods: Foods and beverages that do not contribute toward the meal patterns for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. Noncreditable foods and beverages are either in amounts too small to credit (i.e., foods and beverage that do not provide the minimum creditable amount of a food component), or they do not fit into one of the meal pattern components. For more information, refer to "Noncreditable Foods" in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

noncreditable grains: Grain ingredients and products that do not contribute toward the grains component of the preschool meal patterns. Examples include fiber and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours). **Note:** Bran and germ credit in the preschool meal patterns for the NSLP, SBP and ASP; and in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. However, they do not credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. For a list of noncreditable grains for the preschool meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's resource for the CACFP, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*.

nonnutritive sweeteners: Ingredients without calories that are hundreds of times sweeter than sugars and that are used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. Nonnutritive sweeteners include the six FDA-approved artificial sweeteners (acesulfame potassium (Ace-K), advantame, aspartame, neotame, saccharin, and sucralose) and three plant-based sweeteners (stevia, monk fruit, and thaumatin) that are Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) by the FDA. For more information on nonnutritive sweeteners, refer to "Additional Information about High-Intensity Sweeteners Permitted for Use in Food in the United States" on the FDA's webpage.

nutrient-dense foods: Foods that contain relatively few calories with substantial amounts of naturally occurring vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Nutrient-dense foods include lean sources of protein and/or complex carbohydrates that are low in total fat and saturated fats. Examples include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, lean meat, skinless poultry, fish, eggs, and beans. Foods and beverages that are not nutrient dense supply calories (from fat, added sugars, and processed carbohydrates) but relatively small amounts of nutrients (and sometimes none at all), unless fortified.

nutrient-rich foods: See "nutrient-dense foods" in this section.

nutritive sweeteners: Sugars and sweeteners that contain calories and are used to sweeten foods and beverages. Examples include brown rice syrup, brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, dextrin, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, maple syrup, nectars (e.g., peach nectar, pear nectar), raw sugar, sorghum syrup, sucrose, and syrup. For more information, refer to "added sugars" and "simple carbohydrates (sugars)" in this section.

nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes: The nutrition requirements for nondairy beverages (such as soy milk) used as fluid milk substitutes in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA requires that any fluid milk substitutes are nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk and meet the following nutrients based on a 1-cup serving (8 fluid ounces): 276 milligrams (mg) of calcium; 8 grams (g) of protein; 500 international units (IU) of vitamin A; 100 IU of vitamin D; 24 mg of magnesium; 222 mg of phosphorus; 349 mg of potassium; 0.44 mg of riboflavin; and 1.1 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin B-12. For more information, refer to "USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes" in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, *Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs*.

offer versus serve (OVS): An optional approach to menu planning and meal service that allows children in grades K-12 to decline some of the foods offered in a reimbursable breakfast or lunch. OVS is not allowed for preschool meals in the NSLP or SBP, or snacks in the ASP.

ounce equivalent: A unit of measure that indicates the contribution of a given serving size toward the grains component of the preschool meal patterns (effective October 1, 2021). Ounce equivalents account for dry versus cooked grains and variations in meats/meat alternates. One ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component is sometimes more than a measured ounce, depending on the food's density and nutrition content. The amount of a grain food that provides 1 ounce equivalent varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. For example, 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component can be less than a measured ounce (e.g., pretzels, bread sticks, and crackers), equal to a measured ounce (e.g., bagels, biscuits, bread, rolls, cereal grains, and RTE breakfast cereals), or more than a measured ounce (e.g., muffins, pancakes, and grain-based desserts such as cookies, cake, and granola bars). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*.

point-of-service (POS) meal count: The point in the food service operation where a determination can accurately be made that a reimbursable free, reduced-price, or paid lunch has been served to an eligible child.

potable water: Water that is safe for human consumption.

pre-fried foods: Commercially prepared foods such as meats, poultry, fish, and vegetables that are fried by the manufacturer during preparation. These foods are usually cooked by the food service operation in the oven or microwave. Pre-fried foods include refrigerated or frozen items that are breaded or battered, most frozen potato products, and most frozen products described as "crispy" or "crunchy." Examples include chicken nuggets, chicken patties, fish sticks, french fries, tater tots, hash browns, and onion rings.

preschool meal patterns: The required food components and minimum servings that SFAs participating in the NSLP and SBP must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals served to children ages 1-4. For more information, refer to section 1.

primary grain ingredient: The greatest grain ingredient by weight. For commercial grain foods, this is the first ingredient (excluding water) listed in the product's ingredients statement. For commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion, this is the first grain ingredient (excluding water) listed in the product's ingredients statement. For commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion listed separately, this is the first ingredient (excluding water) listed in the grain portion of the product's ingredients statement. For more information, refer to "Grains Component" section 3.

product fact sheet: See "product specification sheet" in this section.

product formulation statement (PFS): An information statement obtained from the manufacturer that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA's meal pattern requirements, and documents how this information is obtained citing Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations. All creditable ingredients in this statement must match a description in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*. The PFS must be prepared on company letterhead with the signature of a company official and the date of issue. Unlike a CN label, a PFS does not provide any warranty against audit claims. SFAs must check the manufacturer's crediting information for accuracy prior to including the product in reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2 and the CSDE's resources, *Product Formulation Statements* and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP*.

product specification sheet: Manufacturer sales literature that provides various information about the company's products. These materials do not provide the specific crediting information that is required on a product formulation statement, and cannot be used to determine a product's contribution toward the USDA meal pattern components.

production record: A working tool that outlines the type and quantity of foods used to prepare school meals. Production records must demonstrate how meals contribute to the required food components, food items or menu items for each day of operation. In addition, these records must provide sufficient documentation to determine how school meals contribute to meeting the weekly dietary specifications. The USDA's regulations require that all schools in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP must complete daily menu production records for all meals. For more information, refer to "Production Records" in section 2.

pulses: The edible dry seeds from legumes, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas. For more information, refer to "legumes" in this section.

recognizable food item: A food that is visible in the offered meal or snack, and allows students to identify the food groups and amounts recommended for consumption at mealtime. Foods must be recognizable to credit in the preschool meal patterns. The USDA allows some exceptions, such as yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and pasta made with 100 percent vegetable flours. For more information, refer to "Yogurt in smoothies" and "Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meat/Meat Alternates" in the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section; "Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies" and "Crediting Pureed Fruits" in the "Fruits Component" section; and "Crediting Pureed Vegetables" and "Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour" in the "Vegetables Component" section.

recognized medical authority: A state-licensed health care professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law and is recognized by the State Department of Public Health (DPH). In Connecticut, recognized medical authorities include physicians, physician assistants, doctors of osteopathy, and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), i.e., nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse anesthetists who are licensed as APRNs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs.*

refined grains: Grains that have been processed to remove the bran and germ, making the product less nutritious than whole grains. Refined grains may or may not be enriched. For more information, refer to "enriched grains" in this section.

reimbursable meals: Meals and snacks that meet the meal pattern requirements of the USDA regulations, and are eligible for USDA funds. Reimbursable meals contain the minimum serving of each required food component.

residential child care institution (RCCI): RCCIs include, but are not limited to homes for the mentally, emotionally or physically impaired, and unmarried mothers and their infants; group homes; halfway houses; orphanages; temporary shelters for abused children and for runaway children; long-term care facilities for chronically ill children; and juvenile detention centers. A long-term care facility is a hospital, skilled nursing facility, intermediate care facility, or distinct part thereof, which is intended for the care of children confined for 30 days or more.

saturated fats: Types of fat that raise blood cholesterol, which is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Major sources of saturated fats include coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils, butter and beef fats. Saturated fats are also found in other animal fats, such as pork and chicken fats, and in other plant fats, such as nuts. For more information, refer to "solid fats" and "trans fats" in this section.

School Breakfast Program (SBP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions. The SBP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to children each school day. The program was established under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to ensure that all children have access to a healthy breakfast at school to promote learning readiness and healthy eating behaviors. For more information, visit the CSDE's School Breakfast Program webpage.

school food authority (SFA): The governing body that is responsible for the administration of one or more schools and that has the legal authority to operate the school meals programs in those schools.

school nutrition programs: The USDA's school nutrition programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Special Milk Program (SMP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-risk Supper Program implemented in schools. For more information, visit the CSDE's School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP (SSO): The USDA's federally assisted summer feeding program that combines features of the NSLP, SBP, and SFSP, and serves meals free of charge to children ages 18 and younger from low-income areas. School districts participating in the NSLP or SBP are eligible to apply to the CSDE to participate in the SSO. SSO meals follow the meal patterns of the NSLP and SBP. For more information, visit the Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP webpage.

serving size or portion: The weight, measure, or number of pieces or slices of a food or beverage. For meals to be reimbursable, SFAs must provide the minimum servings specified in the preschool meal patterns.

simple carbohydrates (sugars): Carbohydrates consisting of one sugar (e.g., fructose and galactose) or two sugars (e.g., lactose, maltose, and sucrose). Sugars can be naturally present in foods (such as the fructose in fruit or the lactose in milk) or added to foods (such as sucrose or table sugar). Foods that naturally contain simple carbohydrates (such as fruits, milk, and milk products, and some vegetables) also contain vitamins and minerals. Foods that contain large amounts of added sugars (such as cookies, candy, pastries, sweetened baked goods, regular soft drinks, and other sweetened drinks) provide calories with few, if any, nutrients. For more information, refer to "added sugars" in this section.

sodium: A mineral that helps maintain the body's fluid balance and blood pressure. Diets that are high in sodium can increase the risk of high blood pressure in individuals who are sodium sensitive. For more information, refer to "Limiting Sodium" in section 6.

solid fats: Fats that are usually not liquid at room temperature. Solid fats are found in most animal foods but also can be made from vegetable oils through hydrogenation. Some common solid fats include butter, beef fat (tallow, suet), chicken fat, pork fat (lard), stick margarine, coconut oil, palm oil, and shortening. Foods high in solid fats include full-fat (regular) cheese, cream, whole milk, ice cream, well-marbled cuts of meats, regular ground beef, bacon, sausages, poultry skin, and many baked goods (such as cookies, crackers, donuts, pastries, and croissants). Solid fats contain more saturated fats and/or trans fats. For more information, refer to "saturated fats" and "trans fats" in this section.

standard of identity: The mandatory government requirements that determine what a food product (like whole-wheat bread) must contain or may contain to be marketed under a certain name in interstate commerce. These standards protect consumers by ensuring that a label accurately reflects what is inside. For example, mayonnaise is not an imitation spread, and ice cream is not a similar, but different, frozen dessert. The USDA develops standards for meat and poultry products. The FDA develops standards for other food products.

standardized recipe: A recipe that a given food service operation has tested and adapted for use. This recipe produces the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment, and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized recipes include specific information such as ingredients, weights and measures, preparation directions, serving directions, yield, and portion size. For more information, refer to "Standardized Recipes" in section 2 and the CSDE's resource, *Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs*.

sucrose: Another name for table sugar. Sucrose contains glucose and fructose. For more information, refer to "simple carbohydrates (sugars) in this section.

sugar alcohols (polyols): A type of carbohydrate used as sugar substitutes 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." Large amounts of sugar alcohols may cause bloating, gas, or diarrhea. For more information, refer to "nonnutritive sweeteners" in this section.

sugars: See "added sugars" and "simple carbohydrates" in this section.

surimi: Pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to "Crediting Surimi" in section 3.

tempeh: A highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. For more information, refer to "Crediting Tempeh" in section 3.

USDA Foods: Foods available to the USDA Child Nutrition Programs through the CSDE Food Distribution Program. For more information, visit the USDA's Food Distribution Programs webpage and the CSDE's Food Distribution Program webpage.

vegetable subgroups: The five categories of vegetables within the vegetables food group that are recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The subgroups include dark green, red/ orange, beans and peas (legumes), starchy, and other vegetables. The preschool meal patterns do not require vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends providing at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup per week. For more information, refer to the CSDE's CACFP resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP*.

vegetables component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. For more information, refer to "Vegetables Component" in section 3 and visit the "Vegetables Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

wheat bread: Bread that often has wheat flour or enriched wheat flour (not whole-wheat flour) as an ingredient. Wheat bread is not whole grain unless it is labeled "whole-wheat bread." Wheat bread is low in fiber unless the manufacturer has added fiber.

whole foods: Foods that are unprocessed or minimally processed, and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, and sodium.

whole fruits and vegetables: Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables that are unprocessed or minimally processed, and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, or sodium.

whole grain-rich (WGR): For preschool meals and ASP snacks, WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. The WGR criteria for preschool meals and ASP snacks are different from the WGR criteria for grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP. For more information, refer to "Whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement" in section 3, and the CSDE's CACFP resource, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*.

whole grains: Grains that consist of the entire kernel, including the starchy endosperm, the fiber-rich bran, and the nutrient-rich germ. All grains start out as whole grains, but many are processed to remove the bran and germ, which also removes many of the nutrients. Whole grains are nutrient rich, containing vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and health-enhancing phytonutrients such as lignans and flavonoids. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, whole oats, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, brown rice, whole rye, whole barley, wild rice, buckwheat, and bulgur (cracked wheat). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP*.

whole-grain flour: Flour made by grinding the entire whole-grain kernel, including the fiber-rich bran, nutrient-rich germ, and starchy endosperm. Flour or meal that does not contain all parts of the grain is not whole grain, e.g., degermed corn, milled rice, and wheat flour.

whole-wheat bread: Bread that contains the whole grain, including the fiber-rich bran, nutrient-rich germ, and starchy endosperm. Whole-wheat flour will be listed as the first grain ingredient.

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