

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This guidance applies to reimbursable meals and snacks served in child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and adult day care centers that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). For information on the CACFP meal patterns for children and crediting foods, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpages. For information on the CACFP adult meal patterns and crediting foods, visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpages.

For more information on the MMA component, visit the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Child Care Programs](#)” or “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#)” sections of the CSDE’s CACFP webpages.



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Required Crediting Documentation

To credit as the meat/meat alternates (MMA) component in the CACFP meal patterns, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, deli meats, hotdogs, and cheese ravioli) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. The acceptable types of documentation for commercial processed foods include:

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

For example, to credit a commercial breaded chicken patty as 2 ounces of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 ounces of cooked chicken.

Commercial products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in CACFP meals and snacks.

A PFS is required for all commercial processed products that are not CN labeled. CACFP facilities must maintain all crediting documentation on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and the USDA's [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). For additional guidance, visit the "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in CACFP Child Care Programs](#)" or "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#)" sections of the CSDE's CACFP webpages.



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MMA versus Protein

The CACFP meal patterns require a specific amount of the MMA 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 MMA component because the grams of protein listed on the product’s Nutrition Facts label do not correspond to the ounces of the MMA 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.

Menu planners cannot use the Nutrition Facts label or ingredients statement to determine the amount of the MMA 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 (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)).

Serving Size

The amount of the MMA component refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce serving of the MMA component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish without added liquid, binders, and extenders (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#));
- 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended);
- 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food/spread, or cheese substitute (low-fat recommended);
- ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes), e.g., kidney beans, chick peas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Legumes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#));
- ½ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, and sunflower seed butter (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#));
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#));

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- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs ingredients (tempeh products with other ingredients require a CN label or PFS);
- 3 ounces of surimi (alternate crediting amounts must be documented with a PFS);
- ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)); and
- 1 ounce of alternate protein product (APP) that meets the USDA's APP requirements (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)).

Minimum creditable amount

One-quarter (¼) ounce is the smallest amount that credits toward the MMA component. If a menu item provides less than the full meal pattern serving of the MMA component, the menu planner must include an additional meat or meat alternate to meet the full serving for each age group.

Main Dish Requirement for Lunch and Supper

CACFP facilities must serve the daily MMA 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 lunch or supper menu for ages 3-5 could provide the required 1½ ounces of the MMA 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 MMA).

Requirement for Recognizable MMA

The USDA requires that MMA must be recognizable (visible) to credit toward the MMA component. For example, CACFP facilities cannot credit peanut butter in a muffin or smoothie, soft tofu blended in a soup, or pureed beans in a muffin. The intent for this requirement is to ensure that participants can easily identify the foods in CACFP menus. The nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs includes the goal of helping participants recognize the food groups that contribute to healthy meals and snacks.

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

- Yogurt blended in smoothies credits as a meat alternate. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). **Note:** Other MMA foods like peanut butter do not credit when served in smoothies.
- Pasta made with 100 percent legume flours may credit as a meat alternate if the menu also includes an additional meat or meat alternate such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more

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information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Legumes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

These are the only two unrecognizable foods that may credit toward the MMA component. All other MMA must be recognizable.

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Examples of MMA that may cause choking 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 age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of meat/meat alternate foods to offer in CACFP menus; and modify foods and menus as appropriate. 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, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Accepting_Processed_Product_Documentation_CACFP.pdf

Bite Size Module 2: Meal Pattern Documentation (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>

Bite Size Module 4: Meat/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>

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 Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Credit_Deli_CACFP.pdf

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Crediting Legumes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Credit_Legumes_CACFP.pdf

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Credit_Nuts_Seeds_CACFP.pdf

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Credit_Tofu_CACFP.pdf

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Adult-Day-Care-Centers/Documents#MMA>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

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

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

Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/APP_Requirements_CACFP.pdf

Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/Resources_CACFP_Meal_Patterns.pdf

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

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

Serving Meats and Meat Alternates at Lunch and Supper in the USDA CACFP (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-meat-alternates-lunch-supper-cacfp>

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

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

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USDA Memo SP 02-2024, CACFP 02-2024, and SFSP 02-2024: Revised: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs, CACFP, and SFSP:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>

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 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>

USDA Webinar: Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/additional-meat-meat-alternate-tempeh-and-surimi>

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>

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Using_CN_labels_CACFP.pdf

Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Using_Product_Formulation_Statements_CACFP.pdf

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpages or contact the [CACFP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

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

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