

Crediting Nuts and Seeds 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 and crediting foods for children, 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 meal patterns and crediting foods for adult participants, visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpages.



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Overview of Crediting Requirements

Nuts and seeds and their butters credit as meat alternates toward the meat/meat alternates (MMA) component of the CACFP meal patterns. 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. Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts., which credit as meat alternates However, fresh soybeans (edamame) are legumes and credit as the vegetables/fruits component. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

The CACFP meal patterns indicate quantities for the MMA component in ounces. Two tablespoons of nut/seed butters and 1 ounce of nuts/seeds credit as 1 ounce of MMA.

Breakfast

The CACFP breakfast meal pattern does not require the MMA component. Menu planners may substitute foods from the MMA component (including nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters) for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. A 1-ounce serving of nuts, seeds, or nut/seed butters offered as a grain substitute credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. For more information, visit the USDA's [Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#) webpage.

Lunch and supper

Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the MMA component at lunch and supper. This requirement does not apply to nut/seed butters.

Nuts and seeds must be combined with another MMA to provide the full serving. For example, the CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 6-12 requires 2 ounces of the MMA component. A lunch or supper for this age group cannot contain more than 1 ounce of nuts or seeds and must also include 1 ounce of another MMA, e.g., ½ cup of yogurt, 1 ounce of lean meat or cheese, ¼ cup of cottage cheese, or ¼ cup of cooked legumes.



Snack

The CACFP snack meal pattern requires two of the five snack components (MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk). A 1-ounce serving of the MMA component may be served as one of the two required snack components. Menu planners may credit nuts and seeds and their butters as the full 1-ounce serving of MMA at snack.

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Crediting Nut and Seed Butters

Examples of 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 Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) standard of identity for peanut butter (21 CFR 164.150), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Table 1 indicates the MMA contribution of different serving sizes of nut and seed butters. The serving for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component. This crediting is the same for all types of nut and seed butters, e.g., smooth, crunchy, and natural.

Table 1. Serving size for nut and seed butters			
Meal pattern serving of meat/meat alternates	Tablespoons ¹	Scoop (disher) size ²	Weight equivalent ³
¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)	½	Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)	0.275 ounces
½ ounce	1	Closest is No. 60 (3¼ teaspoons)	0.55 ounces
¾ ounce	1½	Closest is No. 40 (1⅔ tablespoons)	0.825 ounces
1 ounce	2	No. 30 (2 tablespoons)	1.1 ounces
1½ ounces	3	Closest is No. 20 (3⅓ tablespoons)	1.65 ounces
2 ounces	4	No. 16 (¼ cup)	1.2 ounces
¹ One tablespoon equals 3 teaspoons. ² Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition’s <i>Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster</i> . ³ Weight equivalents are from the USDA’s <i>Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs</i> .			

The required volume measure (tablespoons) for nut and seed butters is not the same as weight (ounces). For example, a 1-ounce serving of peanut butter does not provide 1 ounce of the MMA component. Nut and seed butters that are portioned by weight instead of volume must use the appropriate weight conversion in the USDA’s *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG). The FBG indicates that 1.1 ounces of a nut or seed butter credits as 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of the MMA component.

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Serving Size Considerations for Nut/Seed Butters

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the required serving for each age group. 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. For example, the lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 6 and older and adult participants requires 4 tablespoons of peanut butter to credit as 2 ounces of the MMA component. This is a large amount for two slices of bread.



The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing it with another MMA to provide the full serving. For example, a lunch or supper menu could provide 2 ounces of the MMA component from a sandwich containing 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce of meat alternate) served with 1 ounce of another MMA, such as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt. Another option is providing the required 4 tablespoons of peanut butter in three half-sandwiches that each contain 4 teaspoons of peanut butter.

Crediting Nuts, Seeds, and Nut/Seed Butters in Commercial Products

For commercial processed products (such as pre-made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or trail mix with nuts and dried fruit), CACFP facilities must obtain a CN label (if available) or a PFS stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. For example, to credit a commercial pre-made peanut butter sandwich product as 1 ounce of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 tablespoons of peanut butter.

Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters that are ingredients in commercial products must be visible and easily recognizable as meat substitutes to credit toward the CACFP meal patterns. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that CACFP facilities offer foods from the MMA component in a form that is recognizable to children. Commercial products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes cannot credit as the MMA component. Some examples include peanut butter blended into other foods (such as muffins or smoothies) and chopped nuts in muffins.

Noncreditable Nuts and Seeds

Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit as the MMA component in the CACFP meal patterns.

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Required Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products

Commercial processed products that contain nuts and seeds or their butters (such as pre-made peanut butter sandwiches, or a trail mix with nuts and dried fruit) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. Acceptable documentation for commercial processed products includes:

- 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 the MMA component contained in one serving of the product.



For example, to credit a commercial pre-made peanut butter sandwich product as 1 ounce of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 tablespoons of peanut butter.

Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in the CACFP meal patterns.

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

For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For guidance on how to review a PFS, refer to the USDA's [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#) and [Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates](#). Additional guidance on documentation for commercial products is available in 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.

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Nuts, seeds, chunky peanut butter, and chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters are choking hazards. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding how to offer nuts, seeds, and their butters in CACFP menus, and modify foods and menus as appropriate. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of

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choking include grinding or finely chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds before adding to prepared foods, and using only creamy nut or seed butters and spreading them 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 Commercial Meat/Meat Alternates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

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

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-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 CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Adult-Centers>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

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>

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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

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.us/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.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>

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>

Standardized Recipe Form for the CACFP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Standardized_Recipe_Form_CACFP.docx

Standardized Recipes in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

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

Standardized Recipes in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

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

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

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):

https://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/CACFP_Credit_Nuts_Seeds.pdf.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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