

# 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 for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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## Overview of Crediting Requirements

Nuts and seeds and their butters credit as the MMA component in the CACFP meal patterns. 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 must meet 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.

Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts. However, fresh soybeans (edamame) credit as the vegetables component (beans, peas, and lentils subgroup). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

### Breakfast

The CACFP breakfast meal pattern does not require the MMA component. Menu planners may substitute MMA foods (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 oz eq of the grains component. For more information, visit the USDA's [Serving Meats and Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#) webpage.

### Lunch and supper

Nuts and seeds may credit as the full MMA component at lunch and supper.

### Snack

The CACFP snack meal pattern requires any two of the five meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk). CACFP facilities may serve nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters as one of the two required meal components at snack..

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## Serving Size for Nut and Seed Butters

Table 1 shows 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 oz eq of the MMA component. This crediting is the same for all types of nut and seed butters, e.g., smooth, crunchy, and natural.

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 oz eq 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 a 1.1-ounce serving of a nut or seed butter credits as 1 oz eq (2 tablespoons) of the MMA component.

**Table 1. Serving size for nut and seed butters**

Serving size	Scoop (disher) size <sup>1</sup>	Meal pattern contribution	Weight equivalent <sup>3</sup>
½ tablespoon (1½ teaspoons)	Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)	¼ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)	0.275 ounces
1 tablespoon (3 teaspoons)	Closest is No. 60 (3¼ teaspoons)	½ oz eq	0.55 ounces
1½ tablespoons	Closest is No. 40 (1⅔ tablespoons)	¾ oz eq	0.825 ounces
<b>2 tablespoons (⅓ cup)</b>	<b>No. 30 (2 tablespoons)</b>	<b>1 oz eq</b>	<b>1.1 ounces</b>
3 tablespoons	Closest is No. 20 (3⅓ tablespoons)	1½ oz eq	1.65 ounces
4 tablespoons (¼ cup)	No. 16 (¼ cup)	2 oz eq	1.2 ounces

<sup>1</sup> Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster](#).

<sup>2</sup> Weight equivalents are from the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

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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 children ages 6 and older and adult participants requires 4 tablespoons of peanut butter to credit as 2 oz eq 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 oz eq of the MMA component from a sandwich containing 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 oz eq of MMA) served with 1 oz eq 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.

### **Nuts, Seeds, and Nut/Seed Butters in Commercial Products Must Be Recognizable**

Nuts and seeds and their butters used as ingredients in commercial products must be visible and easily recognizable as meat substitutes to credit toward the CACFP meal patterns. Commercial products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes do not credit. Some examples include peanut butter blended into other foods (such as muffins or smoothies), peanut butter granola bars, and chopped nuts in muffins.

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 participants. The USDA emphasizes the importance of the nutrition education aspect of the CACFP, which includes the goal of helping participants easily recognize the key food groups that contribute to a healthy meal.

### **Noncreditable Nuts and Seeds**

Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit as the MMA component.

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## Required Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products

CACFP facilities must obtain appropriate crediting documentation that states the amount of the MMA component per serving for all commercial processed products that contain nuts, seeds, or nut/seed butters. Some examples include commercially packaged peanut butter sandwiches and trail mixes with nuts/seeds and dried fruits. Acceptable documentation includes any of the documents below.

- **Child Nutrition (CN) label:** A CN label is a USDA-approved statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements. CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component. Allowable CN label documentation includes 1) the original CN label from the product carton; 2) a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or 3) a CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor and the bill of lading (invoice). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **Product formulation statement (PFS):** A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. The PFS must be signed by an official of the manufacturer and state the amount of each meal pattern component contained in one serving of the product. For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

For example, to credit a commercially packaged 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 that contain nuts, seeds, or nut/seed butters cannot credit in reimbursable meals and snacks without a CN label or PFS.

A PFS is required for all commercial processed products without a CN label. This documentation must be obtained and verified for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and snacks.

For more information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements*, and the USDA's resource, [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#).

## Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

### Storing crediting documentation

CACFP facilities must maintain all crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the CACFP (refer to the CSDE's [Records Retention Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the CACFP.

### 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 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](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/accepting_processed_product_documentation_cacfp.pdf)

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](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_commercial_mma_cacfp.pdf)

Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Standard of Identity for Peanut Butter (21 CFR 164.150):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-164/subpart-B/section-164.150>

## Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements>

Meats and Meat Alternates Component (CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/meats-and-meat-alternates>

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

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

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation>

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](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](http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using_product_formulation_statements_cacfp.pdf)

What's in a Meal Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

## Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage 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](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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