

Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

July 1, 2024, through October 30, 2025

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 meeting the requirements for the CACFP meal patterns for children, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.



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Definition of Noncreditable Foods

Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that do not count toward the five meal components (meats/meat alternates, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk) required by the USDA's CACFP meal patterns. Noncreditable foods include foods and beverages in amounts that are too small to credit (i.e., less than the minimum creditable amount required by the CACFP meal patterns), such as 1 tablespoon of applesauce or $\frac{1}{8}$ ounce of cheese. They also include foods and beverages that do not belong to the five meal components. Some examples include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water. The list on pages 3-4 includes additional examples of noncreditable foods for the CACFP meal adult patterns. This list is not all-inclusive.

Allowable Noncreditable Foods

CACFP facilities may serve noncreditable foods in addition to the meal components to add variety, help improve acceptability in the meal, and satisfy appetites. Some 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 CACFP meals and snacks meet children's nutritional needs, the CSDE encourages CACFP facilities 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.

CACFP Best Practices for Noncreditable Foods

The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend that CACFP menus avoid noncreditable foods that are sources of added sugars. Examples include sweet toppings (e.g., honey, jam, and syrup), mix-in ingredients sold with yogurt (e.g., honey, candy, and cookie pieces), and sugar-sweetened beverages (e.g., fruit drinks and sodas).

Use of CACFP Funds for Noncreditable Foods

CACFP funds cannot be used to purchase noncreditable foods, except for condiments served with creditable foods, and herbs and spices used to prepare and enhance the flavor of meals. For example, CACFP funds cannot be used to purchase grain-based desserts, gelatin, pudding, or canned cream soups.

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Examples of Noncreditable Foods

The foods and beverages below do not credit in the CACFP meal patterns for children. This list is not all-inclusive. For additional guidance, refer to the menu planning notes on page 5.

Almond flour	Cookies ⁴ , except animal crackers and graham crackers
Almond milk ¹	Cranberry cocktail drink
Bacon (pork)	Cream cheese
Bacon bits, regular or imitation	Cream soups, canned, e.g., cream of mushroom, cream of celery, and cream of broccoli
Banana chips	Cream, half and half
Bread products that are not whole grain, whole grain-rich (WGR), or enriched ²	Drinkable or squeezable yogurt and yogurt drinks ⁷
Breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat and cooked) that are not whole grain, whole grain-rich, enriched, or fortified ³	Egg whites without the yolk
Breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat and cooked) with more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce ³	Eggnog
Brownies ⁴	Frozen yogurt
Butter	Fruit drink, fruit beverage, powdered fruit drink mix
Cake ⁴	Fruit leathers (100 percent fruit)
Candy	Fruit punch (not 100 percent juice)
Candy-coated popcorn	Fruit snacks, e.g., fruit roll-ups, wrinkles, twists
Caramel popcorn	Gelatin, regular and sugar free
Cashew milk ¹	Grain-based desserts, e.g., cookies, sweet piecrusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies ⁴
Cereal bars ⁴	Grains that are not whole grain, WGR, or enriched ²
Chocolate milk-based drinks, e.g., Yoo-Hoo	Granola bars ⁴
Cinnamon buns or rolls ⁴	Home-canned products, e.g., vegetables and fruits
Coconut flour	Honey ⁶
Coconut milk	Hot chocolate
Coffee (regular, decaffeinated, and iced)	Ice cream and ice cream novelties
Commercial processed products without a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS), e.g., entrees, smoothies, and breaded vegetables ⁵	Ice milk
Commercial smoothies that contain dietary or herbal supplements	Iced coffee
Condiments, e.g., ketchup, mustard, relish, and barbecue sauce	Iced tea
	Jam and jelly

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Ketchup	Salad dressings
Lemonade	Salt pork
Limeade	Scones, sweet, e.g., blueberry, raisin, or orange cranberry ⁴
Liquid egg substitutes	Scrapple
Maple syrup	Sherbet
Margarine	Soda, regular and diet
Marshmallows	Soups, commercial cream of vegetable, e.g., cream of broccoli, cream of mushroom, and cream of celery
Mayonnaise	Soups, commercial non-vegetable, canned, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice
Milk for age 1: Plain or flavored reduced fat (2%), plain or flavored low-fat (1%), and plain or flavored fat-free	Sour cream
Milk for ages 2-5: Plain or flavored whole, plain or flavored reduced fat (2%), and flavored low-fat (1%)	Soy milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹
Mustard	Sports drinks, regular and diet
Nondairy milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹	Spreadable fruit
Nutritional beverage supplements, e.g., Abbott's Pediasure	Sweet rolls ⁴
Oat milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹	Syrup
Pastries ⁴	Tea, regular, herbal, and iced
Pickle relish	Toaster pastries ⁴
Pies, e.g., coconut, fruit, pecan ⁴	Tofu with less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume) ⁸
Popsicles (not 100 percent juice)	Water ⁹
Potato chips	Yogurt or soy yogurt with more than 3.83 grams of total sugars per ounce ⁷
Powdered milk beverages, e.g., Nestle's NIDO	Yogurt products, e.g., drinkable or squeezable yogurt, frozen yogurt, yogurt bars, and yogurt-covered fruits and nuts ⁷
Probiotic dairy drinks	
Pudding	
Pudding pops	
Puffs, fruit and vegetable	
Rice milk ¹	

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Menu Planning Notes

- ¹ Milk substitutes for children without a disability must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in CACFP Child Care Programs](#)).
- ² For guidance on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, [How to Identify Creditable Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#).
- ³ For guidance on creditable breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- ⁴ Grain-based desserts do not credit in the CACFP meal patterns. For more information, visit the USDA's [Grain-Based Desserts in the CACFP](#) webpage.
- ⁵ Commercial products without a CN label or PFS do not credit in the CACFP. 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](#). Additional guidance is available in the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁶ Honey can contain botulism spores that can cause a serious type of foodborne illness in infants. Honey cannot be served to infants younger than age 1, including honey cooked in products such as honey graham crackers.
- ⁷ For guidance on crediting yogurt, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- ⁸ For guidance on crediting tofu, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- ⁹ CACFP facilities must make drinking water available to children at no charge where meals are served during the meal service. 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 CACFP 20-2016: Water Availability in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

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Resources

Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_cacfp.pdf

CACFP Meal Pattern Updates (CSDE's CACFP webpage):

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/child-and-adult-care-food-program#CACFP_Meal_Pattern_Updates

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

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_cereals_cacfp.pdf

Crediting Commercial Processed Products (“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#commercialproducts>

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

<http://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-cacfp-child-care-programs>

Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_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

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

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_yogurt_cacfp.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP – Handouts and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grain-based-desserts-cacfp>

Guide to Meeting the Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):

http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/guide_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf

Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/wgr_requirement_cacfp.pdf

How to Identify Creditable Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/identify_creditable_grains_cacfp.pdf

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Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf

Standardized Recipes (“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/#StandardizedRecipes>

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

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

USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/Documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/Child-Nutrition-Programs-Meal-Patterns-Consistent-With-The-2020-2025-Dietary-Guidelines-For>

USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the CACFP:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp>

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](#) 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/noncreditable_foods_cacfp.pdf.

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