Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for 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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Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Definition of Noncreditable Foods

Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that do not count toward the meal components for reimbursable meals and snacks in the USDA's CACFP meal patterns. The five meal components include meats/meat alternates (MMA), grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk.

Noncreditable foods include the two categories below.

1. **Foods and beverages served in amounts too small to credit:** These are foods and beverages that are less than the minimum creditable amount for each meal component, such as 1 tablespoon of applesauce or ⅛ ounce of cheese. The minimum creditable amounts are ¼ ounce equivalent (oz eq) for the grains component and MMA component, ⅛ cup for the fruits component and vegetables component, and 1 cup for the milk component, except for smoothies. The minimum creditable amount of milk in smoothies is ¼ cup.

2. **Foods and beverages that do not belong to any meal component:** These are foods and beverages that do not meet the crediting requirements for any meal component. 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 "Examples of Noncreditable Foods" list in this document includes many examples of noncreditable foods for the CACFP meal patterns. This list is not all-inclusive.

Allowable Noncreditable Foods

CACFP facilities may serve certain noncreditable foods in addition to the meal components to add variety, help improve acceptability of meals and afterschool snacks, 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 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 fat, and sodium. Menu planners should read labels, be aware of the ingredients in foods, and limit the frequency and amount of less nutritious choices.

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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.

Examples of Noncreditable Foods

The foods and beverages listed below do not credit in the CACFP meal patterns for children or the CACFP adult meal patterns. This list is not all-inclusive. For additional guidance, refer to "Menu Planning Notes" in this document.

- Acorns
- Almond flour
- Almond milk [1]
- Alternate protein products (APPs) that do not meet the USDA requirements specified in appendix A of the CACFP regulations (7 CFR 226)
- Bacon (pork)
- Bacon bits, regular or imitation
- Banana chips
- Bread products that are not whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched [2]
- Breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat and cooked) that are not whole grain-rich, enriched, or fortified [3]
- Breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat and cooked) that contain more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce [3]
- Brownies [4]
- Butter
- Cakes and cupcakes [4]
- Candy
- Candy-coated popcorn
- Cashew milk [1]
- Cereal bars [4]
- Chestnuts
- Chili sauce

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- Chocolate milk-based drinks, e.g., Yoo-Hoo
- Cinnamon buns or rolls [4]
- Cobbler/crisp topping in fruit cobblers and crisps [4]
- Coconut flour
- Coconut milk [1]
- Coffee (regular, decaffeinated, and iced)
- Commercial processed products without a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS), e.g., entrees like pizza and chicken nuggets, smoothies, hummus, and breaded vegetables [5]
- Condiments, e.g., ketchup, mustard, relish, barbecue sauce
- Cookies, all types [4], except animal crackers and graham crackers
- Cranberry cocktail drink
- Cream cheese
- Cream, half and half
- Dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning
- Drinkable or squeezable yogurt and yogurt drinks [5]
- Egg whites without the yolk
- Eggnog
- Flavored milk for ages 1-5
- Frozen yogurt
- Fruit drink, fruit beverage, powdered fruit drink mix
- Fruit leathers (100 percent fruit)
- Fruit punch (not 100 percent juice)
- Fruit snacks, e.g., fruit roll-ups, wrinkles, and twists
- Gelatin, regular and sugar free
- Grain products that are not whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched [2]
- Grain-based desserts, e.g., cookies, sweet piecrusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies [4]
- Granola bars [4]
- Home-canned products, e.g., vegetables and fruits
- Honey
- Hot chocolate
- Ice cream and ice cream novelties

- Ice milk
- Iced coffee
- Iced tea
- Imitation cheese
- Jam
- Jelly
- Ketchup
- Lemonade
- Limeade
- Liquid egg substitutes
- Maple syrup
- Margarine
- Marshmallow cereal treats [4]
- Marshmallows
- Mayonnaise
- Milk for age 1: unflavored or flavored reduced fat (2%) milk, low-fat (1%) milk; and fat-free milk
- Milk for ages 2-5: flavored milk
- Milk reconstituted from dry milk powder (section 7 CFR 226.20(e)(2) of the CACFP regulations allows reconstituted milk only with approval from the state agency when there is a continuing emergency that prevents fluid milk from being available)
- Mustard
- Nectar drinks
- Nondairy milk substitutes that do not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes [1]
- Nutrition supplement beverages, e.g., Abbott's Pediasure
- Oat milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes [1]
- Pastries [4]
- Pickle relish
- Pies, e.g., coconut, fruit, pecan [4]
- Pita chips, sweet, e.g., cinnamon sugar, [4]
- Popsicles (not 100 percent juice)
- Potato chips
- Powdered milk beverages, e.g., Nestle's NIDO

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- Probiotic dairy drinks
- Pudding
- Pudding pops
- Puffs, fruit and vegetable
- Reconstituted milk powder (refer to “Milk reconstituted from dry milk powder”)
- Rice milk [1]
- Salad dressings
- Salt pork
- Scones, sweet, e.g., blueberry, raisin, or orange cranberry [4]
- Scrapple
- Sherbet
- Smoothies that contain dietary or herbal supplements
- Soda, regular and diet
- Soups, commercial cream of vegetable, e.g., cream of broccoli, cream of mushroom, and cream of celery
- Soups, commercial non-vegetable, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice
- Sour cream
- Soy milk that does not meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes [1]
- Sports drinks, regular and diet
- Spreadable fruit
- Syrup
- Tea, regular, herbal, and iced
- Toaster pastries [4]
- Tofu that is not easily recognizable as a meat substitute, e.g., tofu blended into other foods (like smoothies, soup, and sauces), tofu baked in desserts, and tofu that does not represent a meat substitute, such as tofu noodles [6]
- Tofu with less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume) [6]
- Water [7]
- Yogurt and soy yogurt that contain more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (more than 2 grams of added sugars per ounce) [8]
- Yogurt products, e.g., drinkable or squeezable yogurt, frozen yogurt, yogurt bars, yogurt-covered breakfast bars, and yogurt-covered fruits and nuts

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Menu Planning Notes

[1] Milk substitutes for non-disability reasons must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, visit the "Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes (Nondairy Beverages)" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

[2] Grains must be WGR or enriched. Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains. For guidance on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, *How to Identify Creditable Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*. For guidance on meeting the WGR requirements, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program*.

[3] Breakfast cereals must be whole grain, enriched, or fortified; and cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. 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 processed products do not credit in the school nutrition programs unless they are listed in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* or have a CN label or PFS. The USDA requires that CACFP facilities must verify PFS forms for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. For information on crediting documentation, 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*. The USDA's guidance is provided in USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements* and on the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement webpage. Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage. Training on the documentation requirements, CN labels, and PFS forms is available in Module 7: Introduction to Crediting Documentation, Module 8: Child Nutrition (CN) Labels, and Module 9: Product Formulation Statements of the CSDE's training program, *Bite Size: Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Patterns.*

[6] Tofu and tofu products must be easily recognizable as a meat substitute and must contain at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight (¼ cup volume equivalent). For guidance on crediting tofu, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*.

[7] The USDA requires that child care facilities must make plain potable drinking water available to children at no charge during the meal and snack service. However, water is not a meal component and is not part of reimbursable meals or snacks. 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*: The water requirement does not apply to CACFP adult day care centers.

[8] Yogurt and soy yogurt must meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for yogurt (21 CFR 131.200) and cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 2 grams of added sugars per ounce). For guidance on crediting yogurt, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*.

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Resources

Accepting Product Documentation (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/accepting-product-documentation

Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons for Adult Participants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_cacfp_adults.pdf

Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_cacfp.pdf

Bite Size Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Patterns (CSDE training):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/bite-size-meal-pattern-training#module9

Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA webpage):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/tips-evaluating-pfs

Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs#Commercial

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 Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs

Crediting Enriched Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_enriched_grains_cacfp.pdf

Crediting Whole Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_whole_grains_cacfp.pdf

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Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program

Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (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.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg

Guide to Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program Adult Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/guide_cacfp_meal_patterns_adults.pdf

Guide to Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/guide_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf

Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/wgr_requirement_cacfp.pdf

Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf

Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:
https://www.fna.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

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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

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#module8

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/nslp/crediting/noncreditable_foods_cacfp.pdf.

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Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

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