

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Lunch and Supper Meal Pattern for Children

Program Year 2025-26 (October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026)

Lunch/supper meal components ¹	Minimum for ages 1-2	Minimum for ages 3-5	Minimum for ages 6-12	Minimum for ages 13-18 ²
Milk, fluid ³ Age 1: Whole milk, unflavored Ages 2 and older: Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unflavored	4 fluid ounces (½ cup)	6 fluid ounces (¾ cup)	8 fluid ounces (1 cup)	8 fluid ounces (1 cup)
Meats/meat alternates (MMA), ounce equivalents (oz eq) ⁴	1 oz eq =	1½ oz eq =	2 oz eq =	2 oz eq =
Lean meat, poultry, or fish; cheese; alternate protein products (APPs) ⁵ ; or tempeh ⁶	1 ounce	1½ ounces	2 ounces	2 ounces
Surimi ⁷	3 ounces	4.4 ounces	6 ounces	6 ounces
Tofu ⁸	2.2 ounces (¼ cup)	3.3 ounces (⅜ cup)	4.4 ounces (½ cup)	4.4 ounces (½ cup)
Cottage cheese	2 ounces (¼ cup)	3 ounces (⅜ cup)	4 ounces (½ cup)	4 ounces (½ cup)
Egg, large	½	¾	1	1
Beans, peas, and lentils ⁹	¼ cup	⅜ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut/seed butters	2 tablespoons	3 tablespoons	4 tablespoons	4 tablespoons
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds ¹⁰	1 ounce	1½ ounces	2 ounces	2 ounces
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened ¹¹	4 ounces (½ cup)	6 ounces (¾ cup)	8 ounces (1 cup)	8 ounces (1 cup)
Vegetables, cups ^{12, 13}	⅛ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Fruits, cups ^{13, 14, 15}	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
Grains, oz eq ^{16, 17, 18, 19}	½ oz eq =	½ oz eq =	1 oz eq =	1 oz eq =
Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ oz eq ¹⁹	½ oz eq ¹⁹	1 oz eq ¹⁹	1 oz eq ¹⁹
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ²⁰ , cereal grain ²¹ , rice, or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold): Flakes or rounds ²⁰	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup	1 cup
Puffed ²⁰	¾ cup	¾ cup	1¼ cups	1¼ cups
Granola ²⁰	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup

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Menu Planning Notes

- ¹ Lunch and supper must include the minimum serving of the five meal components. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine how foods credit and the amount that provides the required meal pattern serving. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. CACFP sponsors must verify PFS forms for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and snacks. Foods made from scratch require a recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. [Standardized recipes](#) are encouraged to ensure accurate crediting information. For information on crediting documentation, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), [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](#), and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The CSDE's [Bite Size Meal Pattern Training](#) provides comprehensive guidance on meeting the CACFP meal pattern and crediting requirements.
- ² The age group for ages 13-18 applies only to at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters. Larger portions may be needed to meet the nutritional needs of children ages 13-18.
- ³ Milk must be pasteurized and meet state and local standards. Allowable types of milk are unflavored whole milk for age 1, and unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk for ages 2 and older. This includes lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk, acidified milk, cultured milk, cultured buttermilk, and Ultra High Temperature (UHT). Flavored low-fat or fat-free milk may be served to ages 6 and older, but the USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving only unflavored milk. For children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability, CACFP sponsors may choose to offer optional nondairy milk substitutes (such as soy milk) that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ([7 CFR 226.20\(g\)\(3\)\(ii\)](#)). For guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For more information on the milk component, visit the "[Milk](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
- ⁴ MMA must be served in a main dish or a main dish and one other food item. The serving size of MMA refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products (such as combination entrees, deli meats, hot dogs, and sausages) require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving only lean meats, nuts, and beans, peas, and lentils; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese. For crediting guidance on commercial products, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For information on the MMA

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component, visit the "[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

- 5 APPs must meet the requirements in [appendix A of 7 CFR 226](#). For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- 6 For a 1-ounce serving of tempeh to credit as 1 oz eq of MMA, the product's ingredients must include only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. Tempeh products that contain other ingredients require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information.
- 7 Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A CN label or PFS is required for commercial products that indicate a different crediting amount.
- 8 Tofu must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) to credit as 1 oz eq of MMA. For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- 9 Cooked beans, peas, and lentils credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component but one serving cannot credit as both meal components in the same meal. For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- 10 Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in prepared foods and are ground or finely chopped. For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- 11 Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce). For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- 12 The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent vegetable juice. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of lettuce or spinach credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component. A serving of canned vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend that CACFP menus include at least one serving per week of each vegetable subgroup (dark green; red/orange; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy; and other). For information on the vegetables component, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the](#)

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[Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and visit the “[Vegetables](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

- 13 Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. The juice limit includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies. The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice. For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Juices in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- 14 The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, and dried fruits, canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup, and pasteurized 100 percent fruit juice. The creditable serving of canned fruit in 100 percent juice may include the juice but cannot include water or syrup. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For information on the fruits component, visit the “[Fruits](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
- 15 Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at any lunch or supper. The two vegetable servings must be different kinds.
- 16 Commercial grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains (whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ) and must be WGR or enriched. For information on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [How to Identify Creditable Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and visit the “[Grains](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
- 17 At least one serving of grains per day must be WGR. The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. To meet the CACFP meal pattern WGR criteria, foods must contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients must be enriched, bran, or germ. For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit “[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)” in the “[Grains](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
- 18 Grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers) are allowed but the CSDE recommends limiting them to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, refer to the USDA’s resource, [Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

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- ¹⁹ To credit as the required oz eq, the serving of grain products and recipes must provide either: 1) the required serving weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) in the USDA's Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)); or 2) the minimum creditable grains per serving (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Calculation Methods for Grains Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). For more information, visit "[Serving Requirements](#)" in the "Grains" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
- ²⁰ RTE and cooked breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified, and cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. For crediting guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- ²¹ Examples of cereal grains include amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat.

For more information on the CACFP meal patterns for children, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) Meal Patterns for Children](#) and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [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/mealpattern/cacfp_lunch_supper_meal_pattern.pdf.



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