

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Guide to Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children and Crediting Requirements

**Child Care Centers • Family Day Care Homes
Emergency Shelters • At-risk Afterschool Care Centers**

October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025



October 2024

**Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs
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Guide to Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children and Crediting Requirements

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About this Guide

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Guide to Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children and Crediting Requirements* provides comprehensive information and resources to assist sponsors of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) with planning menus to meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and crediting requirements. The requirements in this guide apply to CACFP child care centers, at-risk afterschool care centers, emergency shelters, and family day care homes.

This guide is part of the CSDE's menu planning guidance series for CACFP child care programs. This series is designed to assist CACFP facilities with meeting the CACFP meal patterns, including the requirements for crediting foods and beverages, menu documentation, and meal service.

- Guide to Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children and Crediting Requirements
- Guide to Menu Documentation for the CACFP
- Guide to Meal Service Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs

This guide does not apply to the CACFP infant meal patterns for birth through 11 months. For guidance on the infant meal patterns, visit the CSDE's [Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

This guide reflects the USDA regulations and policies in effect as of the publication date. Please note that this information may change. The CSDE will update this guide whenever the USDA issues new guidance regarding the CACFP meal patterns for children. Please check the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage for the most current version.

Links to the USDA's regulations and final rules for the CACFP meal patterns are available in the "[Meal Patterns for the CACFP](#)" section of the CSDE's [Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The USDA provides guidance for implementing the school nutrition programs through the policy memos on the [FNS Documents & Resources](#) webpage. The CSDE's [Program Guidance for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage provides links to information and guidance on the federal and state requirements for the CACFP.

The mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations does not imply approval or endorsement by the CSDE or the USDA. Product names are used solely for clarification.

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For information on the CACFP, visit the CSDE's [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#) webpage.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

APP	alternate protein product
AR	Administrative Review
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CCCNS	Connecticut Child Care Nutrition Standards
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CN	Child Nutrition
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
FBG	Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA)
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
FR	Federal Register
ICN	Institute of Child Nutrition
MMA	meats/meat alternates
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OVS	offer versus serve
oz eq	ounce equivalents
PFS	product formulation statement
SOP	standard operating procedure
TCS	Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WGR	whole grain-rich
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Commonly Used Acronyms and Abbreviations in the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#).

1 — CACFP Meal Patterns for Children

The goal of the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs is to improve and maintain children's health and nutrition while promoting the development of good eating habits. The [CACFP meal patterns for children](#) are designed to meet children's calorie needs, provide key nutrients, and align with the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). CACFP facilities are eligible for USDA reimbursement when meals and snacks served to children contain the minimum serving of each required meal component and meet all crediting requirements.

CACFP Meal Pattern Legislation

The CACFP meal patterns for children are defined in [7 CFR 226.20\(c\)](#) of the CACFP regulations. The current meal patterns were effective October 1, 2017, as legislated by the USDA Final Rule (81 FR 24347), [CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010](#). This final rule updated the CACFP meal patterns to align with the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) by including more whole grains and a greater variety of vegetables and fruits, and reducing added sugars and solid fats in CACFP menus.



Changes to CACFP Meal Patterns

On April 25, 2024, the USDA published the final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (89 FR 31962). This final rule implements gradual updates to the Child Nutrition Programs in several key areas, including the CACFP meal patterns for children. These changes are summarized below and highlighted throughout this guide as applicable.

The final rule also requires other changes that are not related to the CACFP adult meal patterns. For more information, refer to [USDA Memo SP 19-2024, CACFP 07-2024, and SFSP 12-2024](#). *Initial Implementation Memorandum: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.*

Meal pattern changes effective July 1, 2024

Effective July 1, 2024, the final rule implements the terminology updates and menu planning flexibility below.

- Changes all previous references in the regulations for Child Nutrition Programs from “food component” to “meal component.”
- Allows nuts and seeds to credit for the full meats/meat alternates (MMA) component in all meals and snacks, removing the previous 50 percent crediting limit for nuts and seeds at lunch and supper.
- Changes all previous references in the regulations for Child Nutrition Programs from “legumes (beans and peas)” to “beans, peas, and lentils.”
- Updates the previous MMA quantities from ounces to ounce equivalents (oz eq). The amount of MMA that credits as 1 ounce or 1 oz eq is the same.

These updates do not require CACFP facilities to change menus or operations. However, the change to the crediting requirement for nuts and seeds provides flexibility for menu planners.

Meal pattern changes effective October 1, 2025

Effective October 1, 2025, the final rule changes the CACFP meal pattern's product-based limits for yogurt and breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars.

- Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).
- Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

For more information on the final rule changes, refer to the CSDE's [Summary of Final Rule Updates to the Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "Meal Pattern Updates" section of the CSDE's [CACFP](#) webpage.

Required Age Groups

The CACFP meal patterns for children include four age groups: ages 1-2; ages 3-5; and ages 6-12. An additional age group for ages 13-18 applies only to at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters.



Reimbursable Meals and Snacks

The CACFP meal patterns for children consist of minimum servings of specific meal components for each age group. Meals and snacks served to children are eligible for USDA reimbursement when they contain the minimum serving of each required meal component. Reimbursable meals may also contain additional foods beyond the minimum requirements (refer to “[Additional Foods](#)” in this section).

Meal Components

Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, changes the previous terminology for “food component” to “meal component.” A meal component is one of the five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals and snacks, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates (MMA). The table below indicates the required meal components in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

Table 1-1. Required meal components for the CACFP meal patterns for children

Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
<p>3 meal components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Vegetables, fruits, or both • Grains ¹ 	<p>5 meal components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • MMA • Vegetables ² • Fruits • Grains 	<p>Choose 2 of 5 meal components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • MMA • Vegetables • Fruits • Grains

¹ MMA may substitute for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week (refer to “[MMA at breakfast](#)” in section 4).

² Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at lunch and supper. The two servings of vegetables must be different kinds (refer to “[Substituting vegetables for fruits at lunch and supper](#)” in section 5).

Each meal component has specific crediting requirements. All foods must meet these requirements to credit as a meal component of reimbursable meals and snacks. This includes commercial products, foods made from scratch by the CACFP facility, and foods prepared by vendors. For information on the specific crediting requirements for each meal component, refer to sections 3 through 7.

Menu Items

Menu items contribute to the meal components. A menu item is any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk. Menu items may contribute to one or more meal components. For example, a hamburger (MMA component) on a whole-grain bun (grains component) is one menu item that contributes to two meal components.

Required Servings

The CACFP meal patterns for children require minimum servings of each meal component. Meals and snacks that contain less than the minimum serving of any meal component do not meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and are not reimbursable. For example, the breakfast meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits, vegetables, or both. If the breakfast menu contains less than $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, these meals are not reimbursable.

Additional Foods

CACFP menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum meal pattern requirements. When offering additional foods, the CSDE encourages CACFP facilities to choose nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to the nutritional needs of each age group. Examples include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat and nonfat milk products, beans, peas, and lentils, and lean meats, fish, poultry.

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of additional foods based on the nutritional needs of each age group. Young children have small appetites and might not consume the nutritious meal components if the CACFP menu includes additional foods.

Some additional foods do not credit in CACFP menus and cannot be served or should be served only in moderation (refer to [“Noncreditable Foods”](#) in section 2).

Nutrition Standards and Restrictions

The CACFP meal patterns for children require nutrition standards for some specific foods. These include limits for sugars in yogurt and breakfast cereals (refer to [“Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt”](#) in section 4 and [“Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals”](#) in section 7) and a minimum protein requirement for tofu (refer to [“Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products”](#) in section 4).

The CACFP meal patterns for children also prohibit certain foods. Grain-based deserts like cookies, granola bars, and fruit turnovers do not credit in CACFP menus. The CACFP meal patterns for children also prohibit deep-fat frying foods on site, i.e., cooking by submerging food in hot oil or other fat.

CACFP Meal Patterns for Children

The charts in this section show the CACFP meal patterns for breakfast (table 1-2), lunch (table 1-3), and snack (table 1-4). Menu planning notes for each meal component are provided in the online versions of the CACFP meal patterns for children, which are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Training on the CACFP meal patterns is available in the CSDE's recorded training modules, [Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#).



Table 1-2. CACFP breakfast meal pattern for children

Breakfast meal components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18
Milk, fluid Age 1: Whole milk, unflavored Ages 2-5: Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unflavored	4 fluid ounces (fl oz) (½ cup)	6 fl oz (¾ cup)	8 fl oz (1 cup)	8 fl oz (1 cup)
Vegetables, fruits, or portions of both	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Grains, ounce equivalents (oz eq)	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	½ oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal, cereal grain, or pasta	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold):				
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup	1 cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup	1¼ cups	1¼ cups
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup

Table 1-3. CACFP lunch and supper pattern for children

Lunch meal components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18
Milk, fluid Age 1: Whole milk, unflavored Ages 2-5: Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unflavored	4 fl oz (½ cup)	6 fl oz (¾ cup)	8 fl oz (1 cup)	8 fl oz (1 cup)
MMA, oz eq	1 oz eq =	1½ oz eq =	2 oz eq =	2 oz eq =
Lean meat, poultry, or fish; cheese; APPs; or tempeh	1 ounce	1½ ounces	2 ounces	2 ounces
Surimi	3 ounces	4.4 ounces	6 ounces	6 ounces
Tofu	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	¼ cup	⅜ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut/seed butters	2 Tablespoons (Tbsp)	3 Tbsp	4 Tbsp	4 Tbsp
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds	1 ounce	1½ ounces	2 ounces	2 ounces
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened	4 ounces (½ cup)	6 ounces (¾ cup)	8 ounces (1 cup)	8 ounces (1 cup)
Vegetables, cups	⅛ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Fruits, cups	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
Grains, oz eq	½ oz eq =	½ oz eq =	1 oz eq =	1 oz eq =
WGR or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal, cereal grain, or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified RTE breakfast cereal (dry, cold): Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup	1 cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup	1¼ cups	1¼ cups
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup

Table 1-4. CACFP snack pattern for children

Snack meal components <i>Serve any two</i>	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18
Milk, fluid Age 1: Whole milk, unflavored Ages 2-5: Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unflavored	4 fl oz (½ cup)	4 fl oz (½ cup)	8 fl oz (1 cup)	8 fl oz (1 cup)
MMA, oz eq	½ oz eq =	½ oz eq =	1 oz eq =	1 oz eq =
Lean meat, poultry, or fish; cheese; APPs; or tempeh	½ ounce	½ ounce	1 ounce	1 ounce
Surimi	2 ounces	2 ounces	3 ounces	3 ounces
Tofu	1.1 ounces (⅛ cup)	1.1 ounces (⅛ cup)	2.2 ounces (¼ cup)	2.2 ounces (¼ cup)
Cottage cheese	1 ounce (⅛ cup)	1 ounce (⅛ cup)	2 ounces (¼ cup)	2 ounces (¼ cup)
Egg, large	½	½	½	½
Beans, peas, and lentils	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut/seed butters	1 Tbsp	1 Tbsp	2 Tbsp	2 Tbsp
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds	½ ounce	½ ounce	1 ounce	1 ounce
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened	2 ounces (¼ cup)	2 ounces (¼ cup)	4 ounces (½ cup)	4 ounces (½ cup)
Vegetables, cups	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup
Fruits, cups	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup
Grains, oz eq	½ oz eq =	½ oz eq =	1 oz eq =	1 oz eq =
WGR or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal, cereal grain, or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified RTE breakfast cereal (dry, cold): Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup	1 cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup	1¼ cups	1¼ cups
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup

Overview of CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements

This section summarizes the requirements for the CACFP meal patterns for children. For detailed guidance on the crediting requirements for each meal component, refer to sections 3 through 7. For information on the required records for documenting meal pattern compliance, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Breakfast requirements

Breakfast menus must meet the requirements below.

- **Required meal components:** Breakfasts must include three meal components (milk component, vegetables, fruits, or both, and grains component). The serving offered for each meal component must be at least the minimum quantity for each age group in the CACFP breakfast meal pattern (refer to [table 1-2](#) in this section).
- **Breakfast cereals:** CACFP facilities must document whether cooked and RTE breakfast cereals are WGR, enriched, or fortified. This information may be listed on the CACFP menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all cereals served in CACFP menus. For more information, refer to "[Required Documentation for Grains](#)" in section 7.
- **Cereal with milk:** The menu must list the specific type of cereal as one component (e.g., "whole-grain granola") and the specific type of fluid milk as another (e.g., "unflavored low-fat milk"). "Cereal with milk" does not indicate that the breakfast menu provides the required amount of cereal or the required amount and appropriate type of milk for each age group.
- **Juice and fruit:** CACFP facilities must document the specific types of juices and fruits served. For example, indicate "orange juice" instead of "juice," and "banana or diced peaches" instead of "fresh fruit choice." This information may be listed on the CACFP menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all types of juices and fruits served in CACFP menus.
- **Juice limit:** If the breakfast menu credits juice as the vegetables and fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at lunch, supper, or snack that same day (refer to "[Juice limit](#)" in section 6).
- **Substituting MMA for grains:** The MMA component may substitute for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. A 1-oz eq serving of the MMA component substitutes for 1 oz eq of the grains component (refer to "[MMA at Breakfast](#)" in section 4).

- **Water availability:** CACFP facilities must make water available during the meal service but cannot offer water in place of the required meal components. For guidance on the requirements for water, refer to section 7 of the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Meal Service Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

For additional guidance and breakfast menu ideas, refer to the USDA's [It's Breakfast Time! Child and Adult Care Food Program Breakfast Menu Planner for Children 3 Through 18 Years of Age](#) and visit the "Breakfast" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Lunch and supper requirements

Lunch and supper menus must meet the requirements below.

- **Required meal components:** Lunches and suppers must include five meal components (milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits (or vegetable substitutions), and grains). The serving offered for each meal component must be at least the minimum quantity in the CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern (refer to [table 1-3](#) in this section).
- **Substituting vegetables for fruits:** The vegetables component may substitute for the fruits component at any lunch or supper (refer to "[Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch and Supper](#)" in section 5). Lunch and supper menus must include one serving of the vegetables component and one serving of the fruits component, or two different servings of the vegetables component. Lunches and suppers cannot contain two servings of only the fruits component.
- **Vegetables and fruits:** CACFP facilities must document the specific types of vegetables and fruits served. For example, indicate "garden salad with lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, and tomatoes" instead of "salad," and "fresh fruit salad (apples, oranges, bananas, and strawberries)" instead of "fruit salad." This information may be listed on the CACFP menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all types of vegetables and fruits served in CACFP menus.
- **Water availability:** CACFP facilities must make water available during the meal service but cannot offer water in place of the required meal components. For guidance on the requirements for water, refer to section 7 of the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Meal Service Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

For additional guidance and lunch/supper menu ideas, visit the "[Lunch and Supper](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Snack requirements

Snack menus must meet the requirements below.

- **Required meal components:** Snacks must include any two of the five meal components (milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains). A snack that contains two foods from the same meal component is not reimbursable. For example, orange juice and applesauce are both from the fruits component. However, a snack that contains orange juice (fruits component) and carrot sticks (vegetables component) is reimbursable because it contains two different meal components. The serving offered for each meal component must be at least the minimum quantity in the CACFP snack meal pattern (refer to [table 1-4](#) in this section).
- **Best practice for vegetables and fruits:** Snack menus should include a vegetable or fruit as often as possible. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend making at least one of the two required snack meal components a vegetable or fruit.
- **Beverage limit:** If the snack menu includes a creditable beverage (milk or juice), the other meal component cannot be a beverage. The snack menu cannot include juice when milk is the only other meal component.
- **Offering milk with yogurt:** If the snack menu includes milk, the other meal component should not be yogurt. The CSDE recommends this practice to increase nutrient variety.
- **Offering more than two food items:** If the snack menu includes more than two different food items, at least two food items must meet the required meal components and servings. An example is a snack that contains yogurt (MMA component), strawberries (fruits component), and granola (grains component). The snack menu or other documentation must clearly indicate the serving size of each menu item and which items contribute to the CACFP snack meal pattern.
- **Water availability:** CACFP facilities must make water available during the snack service but cannot offer water in place of the required meal components. Water should be offered as a beverage when the snack menu does not include milk or juice. For guidance on the requirements for water, refer to section 7 of the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Meal Service Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

For additional guidance and snack menu ideas, refer to the USDA's [Let's Make a Snack! Child and Adult Care Food Program Breakfast Menu Planner for Children 3 Through 18 Years of Age](#) and visit the USDA's [Serving Snacks in the CACFP](#) webpage. For more snack menu ideas, visit the "[Snacks](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Meal pattern documentation

CACFP facilities must maintain appropriate documentation to indicate that CACFP meals and snacks meet the meal pattern and crediting requirements. An overview of these requirements is below. For detailed guidance on the menu documentation requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

- **Menu:** All sites must have a written menu to document that CACFP meals and snacks provide the required meal components and quantities for each age group. For information on CACFP menus, refer to section 2 of the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **Production records:** The CSDE encourages CACFP facilities to use daily production records. Daily production records are required for CACFP child care centers that operate under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). For more information, refer to section 3 of the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Using Production Records in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and visit the "Production Records" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.
- **Commercial foods:** CACFP facilities must maintain Child Nutrition (CN) labels or production formulation statement (PFS) forms on file to document the meal pattern contribution of all commercial foods served in CACFP menus. Examples include entrees like pizza and chicken nuggets and vegetables and fruits with added ingredients (e.g., coleslaw, potato salad, and carrot-raisin salad). CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute to the MMA component, but they usually indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products, such as grains, vegetables, and fruits. For more information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to sections 6 and 7 CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **Foods made from scratch:** CACFP facilities must maintain recipes on file (preferably standardized recipes) to document the meal pattern contribution of all foods prepared from scratch. Vendors that prepare foods for CACFP facilities must also be able to document the CACFP meal pattern contribution of their recipes. Examples of foods prepared from scratch include entrees (such as pizza, macaroni and cheese, and sandwiches), grains (such as pancakes, muffins, and breads), and vegetables and fruits with added ingredients (e.g., coleslaw, potato salad, and carrot-raisin salad). For information on standardized recipes, refer to section 4 of the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

- **Alternate protein products (APPs):** CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on file to indicate that APPs meet the requirements in [appendix A](#) of the CACFP regulations (7 CFR 226). For more information, refer to “[Crediting Alternate Protein Products \(APPs\)](#)” in section 4 and the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **Breakfast cereals:** CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on file to indicate that all breakfast cereals meet the sugars limit and that the menu planner used one of the USDA’s three allowable methods to determine compliance. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in section 7 and the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **Tofu and tofu products:** CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on file to indicate that tofu and tofu products contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). For more information, refer to “[Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products](#)” in section 4 and the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **WGR foods:** CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on file to indicate that the menu planner identified WGR foods using one of the USDA’s six allowable methods for determining if foods meet the CACFP WGR criteria. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **Yogurt:** CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on file to indicate that all yogurt and soy yogurt products meet the sugars limit. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt](#)” in section 4 and the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

CACFP facilities must maintain all meal pattern documentation on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the CACFP.

Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs

CACFP facilities must comply with the federal nondiscrimination laws and requirements for meal modifications for children with special dietary needs. These requirements are summarized in the CSDE's resource, [Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications for Children the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Choking Prevention for Young Children

Children younger than age 4 are at the highest risk of choking while eating. CACFP facilities should consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what foods to offer in CACFP menus and modify menus as appropriate.

Avoid foods that are choking hazards (such as small marble-sized, sticky, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole). Prepare foods so they are easy for young children to chew and swallow (such as changing the shape, size, and texture of foods). For additional guidance, refer to the USDA's resource, [Reducing the Risk of Choking in Young Children at Mealtimes](#), and visit the "Choking Prevention" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Menu Planning Resources

The resources and websites below provide information and guidance on planning meals and snacks to meet the CACFP meal patterns for children.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE training webinars): <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Training Webinar Series (USDA): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-halftime-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series>
- CACFP Meal Pattern Posters (USDA): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-posters-cacfp>
- CACFP Meal Pattern Training Slides (USDA): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-training-slides-cacfp>
- CACFP Meal Pattern Training Worksheets (USDA): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-training-worksheets-cacfp>
- CACFP Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks (USDA): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>
- CACFP Training Tools (USDA): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/training-tools-cacfp>
- Choking Prevention (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage): <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/food-safety-for-child-nutrition-programs/documents#ChokingPrevention>
- Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-cacfp-child-care-programs>
- Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA): <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-handbook-child-and-adult-care-food-program>
- Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_cacfp.pdf
- Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers (Institute of Child Nutrition): <https://theicn.org/resources/1575/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers/118740/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers.pdf>

- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- It's Breakfast Time! Child and Adult Care Food Program Breakfast Menu Planner for Children 3 Through 18 Years of Age (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/its-breakfast-time>
- Let's Make a Snack! Child and Adult Care Food Program Breakfast Menu Planner for Children 3 Through 18 Years of Age (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/lets-make-snack>
- Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs>
- Menu Planning Basics: A Guide for CACFP Operators in Child Care (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/menu-planning-basics-cacfp/>
- Menu Planning for CACFP Child Care Programs ("How To" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/how-to#MenuPlanning>
- Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning>
- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/resources/resources_menu_planning.pdf
- Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf
- Sample CACFP Menus ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/documents#SampleMenus>
- Snacks ("How To" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/how-to#Snacks>

1 | Meal Patterns

- USDA Memo CACFP 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements>
- 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>

For detailed information on crediting foods in the CACFP meal patterns for children, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources with guidance on meeting the CACFP meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns](#). For additional resources, refer to section 8.



2 — Introduction to Crediting Foods

Each meal component of the USDA’s CACFP meal patterns for children has specific criteria for determining how foods and beverages credit toward reimbursable meals and snacks. All foods and beverages must meet these requirements to credit as a meal component. This includes commercial products, foods made from scratch, and foods prepared by vendors.

Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, changes the previous references in the regulations for Child Nutrition Programs from “food component” to “meal component,” and defines meal component as one of the food groups that comprise reimbursable meals. The meal components are fruits, vegetables, grains, meats/meat alternates, and fluid milk.

The menu planning guidance in this document assists CACFP facilities with meeting the crediting requirements for the five meal components of the CACFP meal patterns for children. The mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations does not imply approval or endorsement by the CSDE or the USDA. Product names are used solely for clarification. For additional guidance on crediting foods, visit the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.



Creditable Foods

Creditable foods are foods and beverages that count toward the meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and snacks in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA considers the following factors when determining whether a food credits toward the meal components:

- nutrient content;
- function in a meal;
- regulations concerning the USDA Child Nutrition Programs (quantity requirements and definition);
- the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standards of identity;
- the USDA's standards for meat and meat products; and
- administrative policy decisions on the crediting of specific foods.

The USDA crediting requirements are indicated in the [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) and communicated through the policy memos on the USDA's [FNS Documents & Resources](#) webpage.

Minimum Creditable Amounts

Each meal component requires a minimum amount to credit in CACFP menus. Food items that contain less than the minimum creditable amount do not credit in CACFP menus.

- **Milk component:** The minimum creditable amount is the full serving of fluid milk. For smoothies only, the minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. If the amount of milk in a smoothie is less than the full serving, the CACFP meal or snack must include the additional amount of milk required to provide the full serving for each age group (refer to "[Crediting Fruits in Smoothies](#)" in section 6).
- **MMA component:** The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. At lunch and supper, the MMA component must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other food item. For more information, refer to "[Main Dish Requirement for Lunch](#)" in section 4.
- **Vegetables component:** The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. Smaller amounts of vegetables used for flavorings or garnishes do not credit in CACFP menus. Menu planners may offer more than one food item to meet the full serving of the vegetables component for each age group if each food item contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetable.
- **Fruits component:** The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. Smaller amounts of fruits used for flavorings or garnishes do not credit in CACFP menus. Menu planners may offer more than one food item to meet the full serving of the fruits component for each age group if each food item contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit.

- **Grains component:** The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. Menu planners may offer more than one food item to meet the full serving of the grains component for each age group if each food item contains at least $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq.

If a food item provides less than the full serving, the CACFP menu must include additional foods from that same meal component to provide the full serving for each age group. For example, the CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component. If a food item provides $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables, the lunch/supper menu must include another food item with at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables to provide the full vegetables component for ages 3-5.

Requirement for Visible Components

The USDA requires that foods must be visible (recognizable) to credit in CACFP menus. For example, menu planners cannot credit peanut butter in smoothies, pureed tofu in soups, or applesauce in muffins. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that CACFP menus offer MMA in a form that is recognizable to children.

Exceptions for certain foods

The USDA allows exceptions to the requirement for visible components for the foods below:

- Yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies credits as the MMA component. For more information, refer to "[Yogurt in smoothies](#)" in section 4 and "[Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies](#)" in section 6.
- Pasta made with 100 percent legume flour may credit as the MMA component if the menu also includes an additional meat or meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more information, refer to "[Crediting Bean, Pea, and Lentil Flour Pasta Products as MMA](#)" in section 4.
- Pureed fruits in smoothies credit as the fruit component and pureed vegetables in smoothies credit as the vegetables component (refer to "[Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies](#)" and "[Crediting Pureed Fruits](#)" in section 6).

In addition, menu planners may credit foods made with pureed vegetables (like entrees) if they also contain at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible creditable vegetables. For example, a serving of macaroni and cheese that contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of diced butternut squash (visible) and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of pureed carrots (not visible) credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables (refer to "[Unrecognizable pureed vegetables](#)" in section 5)

Required Crediting Documentation

CACFP facilities must be able to document that all foods and beverages offered in CACFP menus meet the meal pattern crediting requirements. For example, to credit commercial breaded chicken nuggets as 2 oz eq of the MMA component, CACFP facilities must have documentation stating the number of chicken nuggets per serving and that one serving contains 2 ounces of cooked chicken. Appropriate crediting documentation must be maintained on file for commercial products and foods prepared from scratch. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the CACFP.

Documentation for commercial products

Commercial processed products include foods and beverages that are processed or contain added ingredients, such as:

- entrees like pizza, chicken nuggets, deli meats, hotdogs, and cheese ravioli;
- fruits and vegetables with added ingredients, such as hummus, breaded onion rings, hash brown patties, and fruit smoothies; and
- grain products that contain noncreditable grains, e.g., oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours).

These types of foods require specific documentation to credit toward the meal components of the CACFP meal patterns for children. Allowable crediting documentation for commercial processed products includes the two documents below.

1. **Child Nutrition (CN) label:** The original CN label from the product carton or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton. CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that provide at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component, such as beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, and breaded fish portions. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
2. **Product formulation statement (PFS):** A PFS signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the amount of each meal component contained in one serving of the product. CACFP facilities are responsible for checking the accuracy of the PFS before serving these foods in reimbursable meals. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

A PFS is required for all commercial processed products that are not CN labeled. Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS do not credit in CACFP meals or snacks.

For more guidance and resources on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to sections 6 and 7 of the CSDE's [Guide to the Menu Documentation Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Documentation for foods made from scratch

CACFP facilities that serve foods made from scratch must have recipes on file (preferably standardized recipes) that document the amount of each meal component per serving. Recipes are required for all foods prepared on site by the CACFP facility and all vended foods made from scratch, such as foods provided through a school food agreement with a board of education or a contract with a food service vendor or food service management company (FSMC).

The CSDE strongly encourages the use of standardized recipes to ensure that menus provide the correct CACFP meal components and portions. The USDA defines a standardized recipe as one that has been tried, adapted, and retried at least three times and has been found to produce the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized quantity recipes produce 25 or more servings.

The meal pattern crediting information for standardized recipes must be based on the yields in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (refer to "[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)" in this section). For guidance on recipe standardization, refer to the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition's *Recipe Standardization Guide for the Child and Adult Care Food Program*.

For more guidance and resources on standardized recipes, refer to section 4 of the CSDE's [Guide to the Menu Documentation Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

CACFP facilities should ensure that menu planners use the FBG to plan reimbursable meals and snacks for the CACFP. The FBG is the definitive resource for determining yields and crediting information for foods and beverages. It provides yield information for common types and customary sizes of milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains, including commercially available foods and USDA Foods.

The FBG helps menu planners determine:

- a food's specific contribution toward the meal pattern requirements;
- how many servings a specific quantity of food will provide;
- what quantity of raw product will provide the amount of ready-to-cook food in a recipe; and
- how much food to buy.

The FBG is available as an interactive web-based tool (which includes the Exhibit A Grains Tool, Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW), and Product Formulation Statement (PFS) Workbook), a mobile app, and a downloadable PDF. These resources are available on the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. This webpage also includes training modules and recorded webinars to assist menu planners with using the FBG.



Noncreditable Foods

Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that do not count toward the meal components of the CACFP meal patterns for children. 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 (refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in this section).

Noncreditable foods 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. Examples of noncreditable foods are listed at the end of each meal component section. For more examples, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

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. 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.

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).

CACFP funds cannot purchase noncreditable foods

CACFP facilities cannot use CACFP funds to purchase noncreditable foods. For example, CACFP funds cannot be used to purchase grain-based desserts, gelatin, pudding, or canned cream soups.

The only exceptions are for condiments served with creditable foods, and herbs and spices used to prepare and enhance the flavor of meals.



Resources for Crediting Foods

The resources and websites below address the requirements for crediting foods in the CACFP meal patterns for children. For a list of resources with guidance on meeting the CACFP meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns](#).

- Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-cacfp-child-care-programs>
- Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-handbook-child-and-adult-care-food-program>
- Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_snp_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know! Webinar Series (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-updates-child-nutrition-programs-be-know-webinar-series>
- CSDE Operational Memos for the CACFP (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/lists/operational-memoranda-for-the-cacfp>
- 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 Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs>
- Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf
- USDA CACFP Regulations (7 CFR 226):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-226>
- USDA FNS Instructions for Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/fns-instructions-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Policy Memos (USDA's FNS Documents & Resources webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources>

For additional guidance on crediting foods, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage



3 — Milk Component

Milk must be pasteurized, meet all state and local requirements, and contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the FDA. The CACFP meal patterns for children require fluid milk as a beverage. Only fluid milk meets the USDA’s definition for milk and the FDA’s standard of identity for milk.

Required Servings for Milk

The CACFP meal patterns for children require a serving of fluid milk at breakfast, lunch, and supper.

- A serving of milk may be one of the two required meal components at snack. Only one meal component at snack can be a creditable beverage. Milk cannot be served when juice is the only other meal component at snack.
- Meals and snacks with breakfast cereals may include fluid milk as a beverage, on cereal, or both.

The table below summarizes the required servings of the milk component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-1. Required cups of fluid milk

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 *
Breakfast	½	¾	1	1
Lunch	½	¾	1	1
Snack	½	½	1	1

* The age group for ages 13-18 applies only to at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters.

Allowable Types of Milk

The CACFP meal patterns for children require unflavored whole milk for age 1, and unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk for ages 2 and older. 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.

Allowable types of milk include any pasteurized milk that meets the fat content and flavor restrictions for each age group, including:

- lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk;
- acidified milk;
- cultured milk;
- cultured buttermilk; and
- Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk.

CACFP facilities cannot serve milk that does not comply with the required fat content for each age group. For example, low-fat milk, fat-free milk, and reduced-fat milk cannot be served to 1-year-olds. Whole milk and reduced-fat milk cannot be served to ages 2-5.

If a child requires milk with a different fat content for disability reasons, the CACFP facility must make the substitution prescribed in the medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian (refer to "[Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs](#)" in section 1).



The table below summarizes the allowable types of milk for each age group. For additional guidance, visit the USDA's [Serving Milk in the CACFP](#) webpage.

Table 3-2. Allowable types of milk in the CACFP meal patterns for children

Type of milk	Age 1	Age 2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18
Whole, unflavored	X	X ¹			
Whole, flavored					
Reduced-fat (2%), unflavored		X ¹			
Reduced-fat (2%), flavored					
Low-fat (1%), unflavored		X	X	X	X
Low-fat (1%), flavored				X ²	X ²
Fat-free, unflavored		X	X	X	X
Fat-free, flavored				X ²	X ²

¹ Unflavored whole milk and unflavored reduced-fat milk can be served only during a one-month transition period when switching a 24-month-old child from whole milk to low-fat or fat-free milk (refer to "[Transitioning from Whole Milk to Low-fat or Fat-free Milk](#)" in this section).

² 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.

Transitioning from Breastmilk or Infant Formula to Whole Milk

Iron-fortified infant formula does not meet the fluid milk requirement of the CACFP meal patterns for children. However, meals that contain an allowable iron-fortified infant formula are reimbursable for a one-month transition period when children ages 12 to 13 months are weaning (transitioning) from infant formula to whole cow's milk.

When a child is weaned from formula (or breastmilk) to cow's milk, it is common practice to provide the infant with both foods at the same meal. A small amount of whole milk is added to the iron-fortified infant formula, and gradually increased over time. This eases the transition by helping the infant to accept some of the new food.

Breastmilk past age 1

Breastmilk is allowed as the milk component at any age in the CACFP meal patterns for children. Breastmilk may be served in combination with other types of milk. For meals and snacks to be reimbursable, the combined amount of breastmilk and milk must provide the minimum serving.

- **Example:** The CACFP breakfast meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk for age 2. If a mother provides $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of expressed breastmilk, the CACFP facility must serve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk to make up the difference and meet the minimum $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup milk requirement at breakfast.

The breastmilk and milk do not need to be mixed in the same cup; they may be served separately. The CACFP facility must provide all other required meal components for the meal or snack to be reimbursable.

Transitioning from Whole Milk to Low-fat or Fat-free Milk

The USDA allows CACFP facilities to serve unflavored reduced-fat milk and unflavored whole milk during a one-month transition period when a 24-month-old child is switching from whole milk to low-fat or fat-free milk. The steps below can help ease a child's transition to low-fat or fat-free milk.

1. Add a small amount of reduced-fat milk to whole milk.
2. Gradually change to low-fat or fat-free milk mixed with whole milk.
3. Decrease the amount of whole milk over time so the entire serving is low-fat or fat-free milk by the end of the one-month transition period.

The CACFP meal patterns for children do not allow whole milk or reduced-fat milk for ages 2 and older.

Menu Documentation for Milk

CACFP menus must document the type of milk served to each age group. The examples below show how to indicate the type of milk on CACFP menus.

- The menu for age 1 should state “unflavored whole milk” instead of “whole milk.”
- The menu for ages 2-5 should state “unflavored low-fat milk” instead of “low-fat milk” and “unflavored fat-free milk” instead of “fat-free milk.”
- The menu for ages 6-12 (and ages 6-18 in at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters) should state “unflavored low-fat milk” or “flavored low-fat milk” instead of “low-fat milk” and “unflavored fat-free milk” or “flavored fat-free milk” instead of “fat-free milk.”

This ensures that CACFP menus reflect the appropriate type of milk being served to each age group.

Allowable Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons

The USDA allows two types of substitutions for children who do not consume regular cow’s milk due to non-disability reasons.

1. Lactose-free/reduced milk

Lactose-free/reduced milk are fluid milk and credit the same as regular milk in the milk component for the CACFP meal patterns for children. These types of milk are processed by adding lactase enzymes to reduce or eliminate the lactose (naturally occurring milk sugar) found in regular milk. Children who cannot digest the lactose found in regular milk may be able to drink lactose-free/reduced milk. The USDA recommends these types of milk as the first choice for children with lactose intolerance.

Lactose-free/reduced milk must meet the following meal pattern requirements for each age group: unflavored whole milk for age 1; unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk for ages 2-5; and low-fat or fat-free milk (either unflavored or flavored) for ages 6 and older. Lactose-free/reduced milk served in child care centers that operate in public schools must also meet the additional state beverage requirements for milk under Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) [Section 10-221q](#) (refer to “[Additional State Beverage Requirements for Child Care Programs in Public Schools](#)” in this section).

2. Fluid milk substitutes that meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes

Fluid milk substitutes are plant-based beverages designed to replace cow’s milk, such as soy milk, almond milk, rice milk, and oat milk. Fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons must meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes (refer to [table 3-4](#)). Only certain brands of fluid milk substitutes meet these standards. Fluid milk

substitutes served in child care centers that operate in public schools must also meet the additional state beverage requirements for nondairy milk substitutes under [C.G.S. Section 10-221q](#) (refer to “[Additional State Beverage Requirements for Child Care Programs in Public Schools](#)” in this section).

The table below summarizes these requirements.

Table 3-3. Summary of federal and state requirements

Requirements	Lactose-free/reduced milk	Fluid milk substitutes
Federal nutrition standards (USDA)	<p>Must meet the appropriate CACFP meal pattern requirements for each age group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 1: whole milk, unflavored • Ages 2-5: low-fat or fat-free milk, unflavored • Ages 6 and older: low-fat or fat-free milk, unflavored or flavored 	Must meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes.
State nutrition standards (C.G.S. Section 10-221q : beverages)	<p>Applies only to child care centers in public schools: No artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce (refer to “Additional State Milk Requirements for Public Schools” in this section).</p>	<p>Applies only to child care centers in public schools No artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce, 35 percent of calories from fat, and 10 percent of calories from saturated fat.</p>
Documentation	None: Lactose-free/reduced milk are fluid milk and credit as the milk component in the CACFP meal patterns for children.	Written request from the parent/guardian, a state licensed healthcare professional, or a registered dietitian that identifies the reason for the milk substitute. Maintain on file with child’s medical records.

USDA’s Nutrition Standards for Fluid milk substitutes

CACFP facilities that choose to offer one or more fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons must use commercial products that meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes (refer to the table below). These nutrition standards ensure that children who require a fluid milk substitute receive the important nutrients found in milk.

Fluid milk substitutes must meet each nutrient standard (nutrients per cup) or the percent daily value (% DV). The manufacturer’s nutrition information might list the nutrient values, the unrounded or rounded percent Daily Value (% DV), or both. If any nutrient values are missing, CACFP facilities must obtain this information from the manufacturer.

Table 3-4. USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes

Nutrients per cup (8 fluid ounces)	Unrounded % DV ¹	Rounded % DV ²
Calcium: 276 milligrams (mg)	21.23%	20%
Protein: 8 grams (g)	16%	16%
Vitamin A: 150 micrograms (mcg) retinol activity equivalent (RAE)	16.67%	20%
Vitamin D: 2.5 micrograms (mcg)	12.5%	15%
Magnesium: 24 mg	5.71%	6%
Phosphorus: 222 mg	17.76%	20%
Potassium: 349 mg	7.43%	10%
Riboflavin: 0.44 mg	33.85%	35%
Vitamin B12: 1.1 mcg	45.83%	45%

¹ The unrounded % DV is the minimum nutrients per cup (column 1) divided by the current daily value for each nutrient (refer to the FDA’s [Reference Guide: Daily Values for Nutrients](#)).

² The rounded % DV is based on the FDA labeling laws and is listed on the Nutrition Facts label (refer to Appendix H of the FDA’s [A Food Labeling Guide: Guidance for Industry](#)).

Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, updates the units for vitamin A and vitamin D requirements for fluid milk substitutes to align with the FDA labeling requirements (FDA final rule 81 FR 33742, *Food Labeling: Revision of the Nutrition and Supplement Facts Labels*). For vitamin A, instead of 500 IUs, the unit requirement is now 150 mcg RAE per 8 fluid ounces. For vitamin D, instead of 100 IUs, the unit requirement is now 2.5 mcg per 8 fluid ounces. The amount of vitamin A and vitamin D required in fluid milk substitutes does not change; only the unit of measurement has changed to conform to the FDA's labeling requirements.

For detailed guidance on the requirements and considerations for fluid milk substitutes, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Allowable Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* and *Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs*.



Additional State Beverage Requirements for Child Care Programs in Public Schools

In addition to meeting the USDA's requirements, child care programs operating in public schools must comply with the state beverage requirements of [C.G.S. Section 10-221q](#). These requirements include specific nutrition standards for fluid milk (including lactose-free/reduced milk) and fluid milk substitutes available for sale to students in public schools, as part of and separately from reimbursable meals and snacks.

- Lactose-free/reduced milk cannot contain artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce.
- Fluid milk substitutes cannot contain artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce, 35 percent of calories from fat, and 10 percent of calories from saturated fat.

The state beverage statute does not apply to any other child care programs. For more information on the state beverage statute, visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

Crediting Milk in Smoothies

Milk credits as the milk component when served in smoothies if it meets the required fat content for each age group (refer to "[Allowable Types of Milk](#)" in this section). For smoothies only, the minimum creditable amount of milk is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. If a smoothie contains less than the full serving of milk, the CACFP menu must include the additional amount of milk to provide the full milk component. For more information on crediting smoothies, refer to "[Crediting Fruit in Smoothies](#)" in section 6, "[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)" in section 3, and "[Crediting yogurt in smoothies](#)" in section 4.



Milk in Prepared Foods

Only fluid milk meets the USDA's definition for milk and the FDA's standard of identity for milk. The CACFP meal patterns for children require fluid milk as a beverage.

Milk does not credit when cooked in cereals, puddings, cream sauces, or other foods. For example, milk does not credit when used to make quiche or macaroni and cheese. Foods made from milk (such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream) cannot credit as the milk component. For information on crediting cheese and yogurt as MMA, refer to "[Crediting Cheeses](#)" and "[Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt](#)" in section 4.

Keeping Milk Cold

Implementing procedures to keep milk cold is important for food safety and helps make milk more appealing to children. Milk must be kept at 40°F or below but tastes best at 35°F. CACFP facilities should develop procedures to maintain milk at 35°F during all points of the meal service (receiving, storing, and serving). The U.S. Dairy's [Milk Quality Checklist](#) helps CACFP facilities to evaluate to current practices and implement procedures for keeping milk cold.

Noncreditable Foods in the Milk Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the milk component include:

- for age 1, reduced fat (2%) milk (unflavored or flavored); low-fat (1%) milk (unflavored or flavored), and fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored);
- for ages 2-5, whole milk (unflavored or flavored), reduced fat (2%) milk (unflavored or flavored), flavored fat-free milk, and flavored low-fat (1%) milk;
- for ages 6 and older whole milk (unflavored or flavored) and reduced fat (2%) milk (unflavored or flavored);
- nondairy milk substitutes that do not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, e.g., almond milk, cashew milk, rice milk, some brands of soy milk, and most brands of oat milk (refer to "[USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes](#)" in this section);
- milk that is cooked or baked in prepared foods, such as cereals, puddings, cream sauces, and macaroni and cheese;
- foods made from milk, such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream;
- nutrition supplement beverages, such as Abbott's Pediasure;
- powdered milk beverages, such as Nestle's NIDO; and
- for child care programs operating in public schools, milk and nondairy milk substitutes that do not meet the state beverage requirements (refer to "[Additional State Beverage Requirements for Child Care Programs in Public Schools](#)" in this section).

This list is not all-inclusive. For more information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Resources for Crediting Milk

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting the milk component in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

- 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 CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 3: Milk Component (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Fluid Milk in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-milk-child-nutrition-programs-tip-sheet>
- Food Buying Guide Section 5: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Milk Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section5_Milk.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 5: Yield Table for Milk (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section5_MilkYieldTable.pdf
- Identifying Products that Meet the USDA’s Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/identify_allowable_nondairy_milk_substitutes_cacfp.pdf
- Lactose Intolerance and Milk Allergies (Institute of Child Nutrition Mealtime Memo):
https://theicn.org/wpfd_file/september-2024-mealtime-memo-lactose-intolerance-and-milk-allergies/
- Milk Component (“How To” 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/how-to#Milk>

- Serving Milk in the CACFP (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-milk-cacfp>
- USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010, and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/qas-milk-substitution-children-medical-or-special-dietary-needs-non-disability>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

For additional crediting resources, visit the “Milk Component” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.



4 — Meats/Meat Alternates Component

The meats/meat alternates (MMA) component consists of meats like cooked lean meat, poultry, and fish; and meat alternates (foods that provide a similar protein content to meat). Examples of Meat alternates include alternate protein products (APPs), cheese, eggs, beans, peas, and lentils, nuts and seeds and their butters, yogurt, soy yogurt, tofu, and tempeh. Beans, peas, and lentils credit as either the vegetables component or the MMA component, but one serving cannot credit as both meal components in the same meal or snack.

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.

Required Servings for MMA

Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), updates the MMA quantities in the CACFP meal patterns from ounces to ounce equivalents (oz eq). The amount of MMA that credits as 1 ounce or 1 oz eq is the same.

The CACFP meal patterns for children require a serving of the MMA component at lunch and supper. The MMA component is not required at breakfast but may substitute for the entire grains component up to three times per week (refer to "[MMA at Breakfast](#)" in this section). A serving of MMA may be one of the two required meal components at snack. The table below summarizes the required servings of the MMA component for each age group and meal.

Table 4-1. Required oz eq of the MMA component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 *
Breakfast	None	None	None	None
Lunch	1	1½	2	2
Snack	½	½	1	1

* The age group for ages 13-18 applies only to at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters.

Minimum creditable amount for MMA

The minimum creditable amount for the MMA component is $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. Meats and meat alternates offered in amounts less than $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq do not credit in CACFP menus (refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in section 2).

When crediting menu items toward the MMA component, menu planners must round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. For example, a CACFP recipe or commercial product that contains 0.9 oz eq of cooked chicken per serving credits as 0.75 oz eq of the MMA component.

Amounts for 1 oz eq

The amounts in the MMA component refer to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients.

The serving must contain the appropriate edible portion of MMA, excluding any other ingredients. For example, to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, tuna salad must contain 1 ounce of tuna fish, before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, celery, and seasonings.

A 1-oz eq serving of the MMA component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish;
- 3 ounces of surimi;
- 1 ounce of natural cheese, e.g., Colby, Monterey Jack, and Swiss or process cheese, e.g., American (reduced-fat or low-fat recommended for ages 2 and older);
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cottage cheese (reduced-fat or low-fat recommended for ages 2 and older);
- 2 ounces of cheese food/spread or cheese substitute;
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans, peas, and lentils, e.g., kidney beans, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas;
- $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter and sunflower seed butter;

- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts;
- ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (unflavored or flavored) containing no more than 23 grams of sugars per 6 ounces (3.83 grams per ounce);
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains specific ingredients;
- 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume) of tofu and other soy products containing at least 5 grams of protein; and
- 1 ounce of APP that meets the USDA’s APP requirements.

This section contains specific crediting guidance for each type of MMA. Menu planners should consult the USDA’s FBG to determine the crediting information for foods in the MMA component (refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2).



MMA versus Protein

The CACFP meal patterns for children require a specific amount of the MMA component, not a specific amount of protein. The terms “protein” and “meats/meat alternates” are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. “Meats/meat alternates” refers to the meal component of the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. “Protein” refers to one of the key nutrients found in meats and meat alternates.

Except for commercial tofu and tofu products, protein content is not an indicator that a commercial product credits as the MMA component because the grams of protein listed on the product’s Nutrition Facts label do not correspond to the oz eq of the MMA component contained in the product. A serving of meat or meat alternate contains other components in addition to protein, such as water, fat, vitamins, and minerals. Protein is also found in varying amounts in other ingredients (such as cereals, grains, and many vegetables) that may be part of a commercial meat or meat alternate product.

Menu planners cannot use the Nutrition Facts label or ingredients statement to determine the oz eq of the MMA component in a commercial product. The only exception is commercial tofu and tofu products, which must contain at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight (refer to [“Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products”](#) in this section).

To credit as the MMA component, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, veggie burgers, and cheese ravioli) require a CN label or PFS to document the oz eq of the MMA component per serving. For more information, refer to [“Crediting MMA in Commercial Products”](#) in this section.

Choking Prevention for MMA

Some MMA may be a choking hazard for young children. Examples include nuts and seeds, e.g., peanuts, almonds and sunflower or pumpkin seeds; chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut/seed butters; tough meat or large chunks of meat; fish with bones; and large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese.

Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding what MMA to offer in CACFP menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cutting tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces; removing all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving; grinding up tough meats and poultry; chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grinding before adding to prepared foods;

and spreading nut/seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers). For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

Crediting Documentation for Commercial Processed Products

CACFP facilities must obtain crediting documentation for commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients, such as pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli. This documentation must state the amount of the MMA component per serving. For example, to credit a slice of commercially prepared cheese pizza as 1½ oz eq of the MMA component, the product’s CN label or PFS must indicate that the serving contains 1½ ounces of cheese. For more information, refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resource, [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Main Dish Requirement for Lunch and Supper

The MMA component at lunch or supper must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other food item. The main dish is generally considered the main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items. For example, a lunch or supper menu for ages 3-5 could provide the required 1½ oz eq of the MMA component from:

- a sandwich containing 1½ ounces of tuna (1½ oz eq); or
- a sandwich containing 1 ounce of tuna (1 oz eq) served with vegetable soup that contains ⅛ cup of kidney beans (½ oz eq).

CACFP facilities cannot serve the daily MMA component for lunch in more than two food items.

Requirement for recognizable main dish

Foods that are not a recognizable main dish do not credit toward the MMA component. For example, menu planners cannot credit peanut butter in a muffin or smoothie, pureed beans in a muffin, or blended soft tofu in soup. The USDA’s intent for this requirement is to ensure that CACFP menus offer MMA in a form that is recognizable to children.

The USDA allows two exceptions to the requirement for a recognizable main dish: 1) yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies; and 2) pasta made with 100 percent legume flour, if the menu also includes an additional meat or meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” in section 2.

MMA at Breakfast

The MMA component is not required at breakfast. However, menu planners may choose to substitute the MMA component for the entire grains component up to three times per week. This provision applies regardless of the number of days in the week. For example, the menu planner could choose to substitute the MMA component for the entire grains component three times during a three-day week or three times during a five-day week.

A 1-oz eq serving of the MMA component substitutes for 1 oz eq of the grains component. For example, the menu planner could substitute 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, 1 ounce of cheese, half of a large egg, or ½ cup of yogurt for 1 oz eq of the grains component.

The USDA's [Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#) webpage contains handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish with additional guidance on serving the MMA component in CACFP breakfast menus.



Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)

APPs credit as meat alternates. A 1-oz eq serving of a creditable APP credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The total MMA contribution cannot exceed the weight of product.

APPs are food ingredients that may be used alone or in combination with meat, poultry, or seafood. They are processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources and may be dehydrated granules, particles, or flakes. Some examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. APPs may be used in the dry (nonhydrated), partially hydrated, or fully hydrated form.

APPs are generally used as part of a formed meat patty or in a vegetarian patty resembling a meat product. Examples of foods that might contain added APPs include beef patties, beef crumbles, pizza topping, meat loaf, meat sauce, taco filling, burritos, and tuna salad.

Criteria for APPs

APPs must meet the USDA's requirements specified in [appendix A](#) of the CACFP regulations (7 CFR 226). These regulations specify that APPs may credit for part or all the MMA requirement if they meet the three criteria below.

1. The APP must be processed so that some portion of the non-protein constituents of the food is removed. This refers to the manufacturing process for APP. APPs must be safe and suitable edible products produced from plant or animal sources.
2. The biological quality of the protein in the APP must be at least 80 percent of casein (milk protein), determined by performing a Protein Digestibility Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS). The PDCAAS is a method of evaluating protein quality.
3. The APP contains at least 18 percent protein by weight when fully hydrated or formulated. "When hydrated or formulated" refers to a dry APP and the amount of water, fat, oil, colors, flavors, or any other substances that have been added.

Menu planners cannot determine if an APP product meets these criteria by reading the product's label. The labeling laws of the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) require manufacturers to list product ingredients, but percentage labeling is voluntary. For example, a product may list whey protein concentrate and hydrolyzed soy protein in the ingredients but will not indicate the percentage of these protein ingredients by weight. Therefore, manufacturers must provide the appropriate crediting documentation.

Required documentation for APPs

The FBG does not contain yield information for APPs. CACFP facilities must obtain documentation from the manufacturer that the product meets the USDA APP criteria. Without appropriate documentation, APPs do not credit in CACFP menus.

CN-labeled APP products will indicate the appropriate crediting information. Products that are CN labeled require a PFS from the manufacturer with supporting documentation on company letterhead to indicate that the APP ingredient meets the USDA's requirements. Sample APP documentation is on page 6 of the USDA's [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products](#).

The manufacturer's documentation should include information on the percent protein contained in the dry alternate protein product and in the prepared product. For an APP product mix, manufacturers should provide information on the amount by weight of dry APP in the package, hydration instructions, and instructions on how to combine the mix with meat or other meat alternates.



If the PFS for a commercial product lists APP ingredients that are being credited as the MMA component, the manufacturer must provide supporting documentation to indicate that the APP ingredients meet the USDA's APP requirements. APP ingredients without this supporting documentation cannot credit in CACFP menus.

The USDA's [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products \(APP\)](#) provides additional guidance on documenting the APP requirements. For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2. For more information on crediting APPs, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as MMA

Beans, peas, and lentils are pulses, which are a type of legumes, i.e., plants that include pods. Pulses are the dried edible seeds of legumes. Examples of foods in the beans, peas, and lentils subgroup include black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), edamame (soybeans), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soybeans, split peas, and white beans.

- Beans, peas, and lentils may credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or snack. A ¼-cup serving credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component or ¼ cup of the vegetables component.
- Beans, peas, and lentils may credit as the MMA component or the vegetables component in different meals. For example, refried beans may credit as the MMA component at one lunch and as the vegetables component at another lunch.
- If a meal or snack includes two servings, the menu planner may choose to credit one serving as the MMA component and one serving as the vegetables component. For example, ¼ cup of garbanzo beans in a salad may credit as ¼ cup of the vegetables component and ¼ cup of kidney beans in chili may credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Menu planners must determine in advance how to credit beans, peas, and lentils in a meal.

Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), changes the previous references in the regulations for Child Nutrition Programs from “legumes (beans and peas)” to “beans, peas, and lentils.”



Serving size for beans, peas, and lentils credited as MMA

Beans, peas, and lentils credit as meat alternates based on volume. A ¼-cup serving (4 tablespoons) of beans, peas, or lentils credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is 1 tablespoon.

The serving size refers to the amount of cooked beans, peas, and lentils without other ingredients, such as the sauce and pork fat in baked beans. For example, to credit baked beans as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, the serving must contain ¼ cup of beans, not including the sauce and pork fat.

The table below shows the MMA contribution for different amounts of cooked beans, peas, and lentils.

Table 4-2. MMA contribution of cooked beans, peas, and lentils

Serving size	MMA contribution
1 tablespoon	¼ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)
2 tablespoons (⅓ cup)	½ oz eq
3 tablespoons	¾ oz eq
4 tablespoons (¼ cup)	1 oz eq
5 tablespoons	1¼ oz eq
6 tablespoons (⅔ cup)	1½ oz eq
7 tablespoons	1¾ oz eq
8 tablespoons (½ cup)	2 oz eq

For information on crediting beans, peas, and lentils as vegetables, refer to “[Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as Vegetables](#)” in section 5.

Crediting beans, peas, and lentils as MMA in recipes

CACFP facilities must maintain appropriate crediting documentation for menu items that contain beans, peas, and lentils as an ingredient, such as lentil soup, bean burritos, hummus, and chili. These foods credit based on the cups of beans, peas, and lentils in the recipe's serving. A recipe must provide at least 1 tablespoon ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq) of beans, peas, or lentils per serving to credit toward the MMA component.

The menu planner must determine the oz eq of MMA in the recipe by dividing the cups of beans, peas, and lentils in one serving of the recipe by 0.25, then rounding down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. For guidance on how to calculate the contribution of beans, peas, and lentils in a recipe, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils as MMA

Roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils (such as roasted soybeans or roasted chickpeas) credit as meat alternates based on weight (ounces). A 1-ounce serving of roasted or dried beans, peas, or lentils credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

For information on crediting roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils as the vegetables component, refer to "[Crediting Roasted or Dried Beans, Peas, and Lentils as Vegetables](#)" section 5.

Resources for beans, peas, and lentils

The recipes and resources below assist CACFP facilities with incorporating beans, peas, and lentils into CACFP menus.

- Beans and Peas are Unique Foods (USDA):
<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/vegetables/vegetables-beans-and-peas>
- CACFP Recipes for Child Care Homes and Adult Day Care (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/standardized-recipes-cacfp>
- Pulses in Schools (USDA Pulses):
<https://www.usapulses.org/schools/school-nutrition>
- Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Child Care Centers (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbook-child-care-centers>

For additional resources, refer to “Beans, Peas, and Lentils” in the CSDE’s [Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs](#).



Crediting Bean, Pea, and Lentil Flour Pasta Products as MMA

Pasta products made of 100 percent bean, pea, and lentil flours (such as chickpea flour or lentil flour) credit as meat alternates. However, the menu planner must offer the pasta with an additional MMA, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that CACFP menus offer MMA in a form that is recognizable to children (refer to ["Requirement for visible components"](#) in section 2).

The table below shows the MMA contribution for different amounts of pasta products made of 100 percent bean, pea, and lentil flours. A ¼-cup cooked serving credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Table 4-3. MMA contribution of cooked 100 percent bean/pea/lentil flour pasta products

Serving size	MMA contribution
1 tablespoon	¼ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)
⅛ cup	½ oz eq
⅜ cup	¾ oz eq
¼ cup	1 oz eq
½ cup	2 oz eq

Alternatively, manufacturers and CACFP facilities may credit bean, pea, and lentil flour pasta using the bean flour yield information in the FBG's [Appendix C](#), or with appropriate documentation on the manufacturer's PFS. For more information, refer to ["Documentation for commercial products"](#) in section 2 and the USDA's resources, [Product Formulation Statement \(Product Analysis\) for Meat/Meat Alternate \(MMA\) Products in Child Nutrition Programs](#) and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's PFS](#).

Pasta made of 100 percent bean, pea, and lentil flours may also credit as the vegetables component but cannot credit as both the vegetables component and MMA component in the same meal or snack. For more information, refer to ["100 percent vegetable flours crediting as a vegetable"](#) in section 5.

The requirements for crediting pasta products made of vegetable flours are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 26-2019](#), [CACFP 13-2019](#), and [SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Crediting Cheeses

Cheeses credit as meat alternates. The USDA recommends serving low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses for ages 2 and older and choosing natural cheeses.

Large chunks of cheese (such as cheese cubes or string cheese) may be a choking hazard for young children. Grate or thinly slice cheese to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

Natural cheeses

Natural cheeses are produced directly from milk, such as cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, mozzarella, Muenster, provolone, Swiss, feta, and brie. Natural cheeses also include pasteurized blended cheeses made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheeses. Natural cheeses credit based on weight. A 1-ounce serving credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Process Cheeses

Process cheeses are made by blending natural cheeses with other ingredients such as emulsifiers, preservatives, colorings, and flavorings. Examples include American cheese, pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, and pasteurized process cheese products. Process cheeses credit based on weight. A 1-ounce serving credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Cheese substitutes

Cheese substitutes include reduced fat, low fat, nonfat, and lite versions of cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, and cheese spread substitute. These foods must meet the FDA’s standard of identity for substitute foods and must be labeled as “cheese substitute,” “cheese food substitute,” or “cheese spread substitute.” The FDA’s standard of identity requires that a cheese substitute is not nutritionally inferior to the standardized cheese for which it is substituting. Cheese substitutes require 2 ounces to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Menu items that contain cheese

CACFP facilities must maintain appropriate crediting documentation for menu items that contain cheese as an ingredient, such as pizza, lasagna, and macaroni and cheese. Menu planners must document the oz eq of cheese per serving with a PFS or CN label for commercial products and a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) for foods made from scratch (refer to “[Required](#)

[Crediting Documentation](#)” in section 1). The table below summarizes the required quantity for different types of cheeses to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Table 4-4. Required quantity of cheese for 1 oz eq of MMA

Type of cheese	1 oz eq of MMA =
Natural cheese, e.g., cheddar and Swiss	1 ounce
Grated cheese, e.g., Parmesan or Romano	1 ounce ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup)
Process cheese, e.g., American	1 ounce
Cottage or ricotta cheese	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Process cheese food	2 ounces
Process cheese spread	2 ounces
Process cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, or process cheese spread substitute	2 ounces

Noncreditable cheeses

Imitation cheese and cheese products do not credit in CACFP menus.



Crediting Deli Meats, Hot Dogs, and Sausages

Deli meats (such as turkey, chicken, ham, roast beef, salami, and bologna), hot dogs, and sausages credit as the MMA component in the CACFP meal patterns for children. The serving that provides 1 oz eq depends on the product's ingredients and varies greatly between different brands and types. CACFP facilities must ensure that the serving of a commercial meat product provides the oz eq being credited toward the MMA component.

Hotdogs and other tube-shaped meats may be a choking hazard for young children. Cut hot dogs into short strips instead of round pieces. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer hot dogs in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Crediting meat products with added liquids, binders, and extenders

Commercial meat products like deli meats, hot dogs, sausages, and other processed meats often contain added liquids, binders, and extenders (refer to table 4-5). Binders and extenders are defined by the USDA's regulations for the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) ([9 CFR 318.7](#)).

Products with added liquids (such as water or broth), binders, and extenders credit based on the percentage of meat in the product formula, not the serving weight. Crediting depends on the amount of meat per serving, excluding added ingredients. For example, one brand of deli meat might require 1.6 ounces to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, while another brand might require 2.3 ounces.

A 1-ounce serving of products that contain added liquids, binders, and extenders does not credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

The examples below show some commercial turkey breast products that contain added liquid, binders, and extenders.

- **Example 1:**
Ingredients: Turkey breast, **water**, **modified cornstarch**, contains less than 2% of sodium lactate, salt, sugar, sodium phosphates, **carrageenan**, natural flavor, sodium diacetate, potassium chloride, sodium ascorbate, sodium nitrite, caramel color.

- **Example 2:**

Ingredients: Turkey breast meat, **turkey broth**, contains 2% or less salt, sugar, **carrageenan**, sodium phosphate, sodium acetate, sodium diacetate, flavoring.

These products require a PFS or CN label to document crediting toward the MMA component.

Table 4-5. Examples of binders and extenders

Agar-agar	Isolated soy protein (APP) ¹
Algin (a mixture of sodium alginate, calcium carbonate and calcium gluconate/lactic acid)	Locust bean gum
Bread	Methyl cellulose
Calcium-reduced dried skim milk	Modified food starch
Carrageenan	Reduced lactose whey
Carboxymethyl cellulose (cellulose gum)	Reduced minerals
Cereal	Sodium caseinate
Dried milk	Soy flour (APP) ¹
Dry or dried whey	Soy protein concentrate (APP) ¹
Enzyme (rennet) treated calcium-reduced dried skim milk and calcium lactate	Starchy vegetable flour
Gums, vegetable	Tapioca dextrin
	Vegetable starch
	Wheat gluten
	Whey
	Whey protein concentrate (APP) ¹
	Xanthan gum

¹ Products may contain these ingredients if they meet the USDA's APP requirements (refer to "[Crediting Alternate Protein Products \(APPs\)](#)" in this section).

CACFP facilities must obtain a CN label or PFS for all commercial meat products with added liquids, binders, and extenders. This documentation must indicate the oz eq of MMA contained in one serving of the product. For more information, refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2 and the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting 100 percent meat products

Products that are 100 percent meat without added liquids, binders, or extenders credit on an ounce-per-ounce basis, i.e., the actual serving weight. For example, 1 ounce of deli meat that is 100 percent meat credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Developing recipes for deli meats

Different brands and types of deli meats credit differently. To ensure proper crediting, CACFP facilities should develop recipes for menu items that contain deli meats, such as sandwiches and other entrees. Standardized recipes are recommended to ensure accurate crediting information.

These recipes should indicate the deli meat's contribution to the MMA component based on a specific weight of a specific brand. To make portioning simple for food service staff and ensure that the serving provides the proper crediting amount, round up the weight of the deli meat in the recipe to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce. For example, the recipe should list 1.2 ounces of deli meat as 1.25 ounces and 1.6 ounces of deli meat as 1.75 ounces.

If the CACFP facility makes the same food item using different brands of deli meats that credit differently, the recipe should include the specific weight of each brand.

- **Example:** A child care center makes a turkey sandwich using either ABC brand turkey breast or XYZ brand turkey breast. The center's recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) should include the required weight of ABC brand for 1 oz eq of MMA and the required weight of XYZ brand for 1 oz eq of MMA. Alternatively, the menu planner could also choose to develop a separate turkey sandwich recipe for each brand of deli meat.

For information on standardized recipes, refer to "[Documentation for foods made from scratch](#)" in section 2.



Crediting Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products

Shelf-stable, dried, and semi-dried meat, poultry, and credit as the MMA component. Some examples include jerky and summer sausage. The USDA indicates that these products are most useful in meals served off-site like field trips. However, CACFP facilities may also credit these products in meals and snacks served on the premises.

Dried meat, poultry, and seafood products require a CN label or PFS to document the oz eq of the MMA component per serving. The FBG does not include crediting information for dried meat, poultry, or seafood products because industry production standards for these products vary widely.

Dried meat products (such as jerky) may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer dried meat products in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Evaluating the PFS for commercial dried meat products

Menu planners must evaluate the dried meat product's PFS to ensure that it complies with the USDA's crediting principles below.

1. The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must match or have a similar description as the ingredient listed in the product's ingredients statement.

- **Example:**

Ingredients: Ground beef (not more than 30% fat), water, salt, less than 2% brown sugar, spices, monosodium glutamate, sugar, flavorings, sodium nitrate.

Since this dried beef stick product lists "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)" as the first ingredient, the product's PFS must also list the crediting information for "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)."

2. The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must have a similar description to a food item in the FBG. For the example above, "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)" matches the description for "Beef, Ground, fresh or frozen, Market Style, no more than 30% fat (Like IMPS #136), cooked lean meat" in the FBG.

3. The creditable amount cannot exceed the finished weight of the product, i.e., the cooked weight ready for serving. For example, a 1-ounce serving of beef jerky cannot credit for more than 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

Commercial products that do not meet these requirements do not credit in CACFP menus.

Crediting dried meat products with ground pork and beef ingredients

Ground pork and beef ingredients must include the percent fat because the fat content has a direct correlation to the cooking yield. To credit in Child Nutrition Programs, the fat content of ground beef or ground pork in dried meat products cannot exceed 30 percent. Products that do not indicate the fat percentage do not credit in CACFP menus.

- **Example:**
Ingredients: **Pork**, cane sugar, garlic (garlic, citric acid, ascorbic acid), contains 2% or less of: Spanish smoked paprika (paprika, rosemary extract), sea salt, natural flavors, sherry wine vinegar, red pepper chili flakes, celery powder, in collagen casing.

This dried pork stick product does not credit as the MMA component because the creditable ingredients (pork) do not list the fat percentage and does not match a description in the FBG.

The requirements for crediting dried meat are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019, and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting dried meat products, refer to the USDA's webinar, [Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products](#).

Crediting Eggs

Whole eggs credit as meat alternates. One large egg credits as 2 oz eq of the MMA component. Half of a large egg credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. Liquid egg substitutes are not whole eggs and do not credit in CACFP menus. Egg whites do not credit if served without the yolks.

Menu items that contain eggs

CACFP facilities must maintain appropriate crediting documentation for menu items that contain eggs as an ingredient, such as quiche, frittatas, breakfast sandwiches, pre-cooked egg patties, and scrambled egg breakfast burritos. Menu planners must document the eggs per serving based on the yields in the FBG. Commercial products require a CN label or a PFS and menu

items made from scratch must have a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) (refer to [“Required Crediting Documentation”](#) in section 1).

Crediting Hummus and Bean Dips as MMA

Hummus and bean dips may credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both meal components in the same meal or snack. To credit as the MMA component, the serving must contain at least $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq of MMA from the combined amount of chickpeas (or other beans, peas, and lentils) and tahini (sesame paste).

- **Beans, peas, and lentils:** A $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of beans, peas, or lentils credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is 1 tablespoon ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq).
- **Tahini:** Tahini credits the same as nut/seed butters. Two tablespoons of tahini credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq).

CACFP facilities must maintain crediting documentation for hummus and bean dips that indicates the amount per serving of beans, peas, and lentils and tahini or other ground nut/seed butters, based on the yields in the FBG. Commercial products require a CN label or a PFS and menu items made from scratch must have a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) (refer to [“Required Crediting Documentation”](#) in section 1).

For information on crediting hummus as the vegetables component, refer to [“Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as Vegetables”](#) in section 5.

Bean dip is a spread made from ground pulses (beans, peas, and/or lentils) with one or more of the following optional ingredients: ground nut/seed butter (such as tahini [ground sesame] or peanut butter; vegetable oil (such as olive oil, canola oil, soybean oil); seasoning (such as salt, citric acid); vegetables and juice for flavor (such as olives, roasted peppers, garlic, lemon juice); and for manufactured bean dip, ingredients necessary as preservatives and/or to maintain freshness.

Crediting MMA in Combination Entrees

Commercial combination entrees (such as tacos, lasagna, and chicken stir-fry) require a CN label or a PFS stating the amount of the MMA component per serving (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). Menu items made from scratch must have a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) that documents the amount of the MMA component per serving based on the yields in the FBG (refer to “[Documentation for foods made from scratch](#)” and “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2).

Crediting MMA in Commercial Products

To credit as the MMA component, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. For example, to credit a commercial breaded chicken patty as 1½ oz eq of the MMA component, the product’s CN label or PFS must state that one serving of the product contains 1½ ounces of cooked chicken. Commercial products cannot credit as the MMA component without this documentation.

CACFP facilities must have a CN label or PFS to document the meal pattern contribution of all commercial MMA products used in CACFP menus. Commercial products without this documentation cannot credit in CACFP menus (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). CACFP facilities are responsible for checking the manufacturer’s PFS for accuracy before including any commercial products in CACFP meals and snacks

The CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), summarizes the requirements for crediting commercial MMA in the CACFP.



Crediting Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds credit as meat alternates. Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, soy nuts, sunflower seeds, and roasted or dried soybeans. **Note:** Fresh soybeans (edamame) are legumes and credit only as the vegetables component.

Nuts and seeds may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer these foods in CACFP menus. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food and are ground or finely chopped. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

A 1-ounce serving of nuts or seeds credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. Refer to the crediting guidance below and in the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Change to limit for nuts and seeds at lunch and supper

Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), removes the previous 50 percent crediting limit for nuts and seeds at lunch and supper. Nuts and seeds may credit for the full MMA component at any meal or snack.



Crediting Nut/Seed Butters

Nut/seed butters credit as meat alternates. Examples of creditable nut/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 FDA’s standard of identity for peanut butter (21 CFR 164.150), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Serving size is based on volume not weight

The serving size for nut/seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons), not weight (ounces). Two tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup) of nut/seed butter credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. This crediting is the same for all types of nut/seed butters, such as smooth, crunchy, and natural.

The required volume measure (tablespoons) for nut/seed butters is not the same as weight (ounces). A 1-ounce serving (weight) of nut/seed butter does not provide 1 oz eq of the MMA component. Nut/seed butters that are portioned by weight instead of volume must use the appropriate weight conversion in the USDA’s FBG. For more information, refer to “[Volume versus weight](#)” in section 2.

The FBG indicates that 2 tablespoons (1.1 ounces) of nut or seed butter credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

The table below shows the MMA contribution for different amounts of nut/seed butters.

Table 4-6. MMA contribution of nut/seed butters

Serving size	MMA contribution
$\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon	$\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq
$1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons	$\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq
2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	1 oz eq
3 tablespoons	$1\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq
4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)	2 oz eq

Serving size considerations

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the required serving for each age group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of nut/seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich.

The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of nut/seed butter and supplementing it with another MMA to provide the full serving. For example, the CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires 1½ oz eq of the MMA component, which equals 3 tablespoons of peanut butter. A lunch menu could provide 1½ oz eq of MMA from a sandwich containing 1½ tablespoons of peanut butter (¾ oz eq of MMA) served with ¾ cup of yogurt (¾ oz eq of MMA).

Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters in commercial products

CACFP facilities must obtain a CN label or PFS for commercial processed products that contain nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters. Some examples include pre-made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and trail mix with nuts and dried fruits.

This documentation must state the amount of the MMA component per serving (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). For example, to credit a commercial pre-made peanut butter sandwich as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, the product’s CN label or PFS must indicate 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 in CACFP menus (refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” in section 2). Commercial products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes do not credit in CACFP menus. Some examples include peanut butter blended into other foods (such as muffins or smoothies) and chopped nuts in muffins.

Chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nut or seed butters in CACFP menus. Use only creamy peanut butter (not chunky) and spread thinly to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

Noncreditable nuts and seeds

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

Crediting Surimi Seafood

Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). Surimi seafood is available in many forms and shapes, including chunks, shredded, and flaked. Surimi seafood can be incorporated into a variety of menu items, such as seafood salads, sushi-style rolls, sandwiches, tacos, and ramen.

The amount of fish in surimi varies depending on the manufacturer and product. Surimi seafood may contain as little as one-third seafood ingredient and may include other creditable food ingredients. A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

The requirements for crediting surimi are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). The USDA’s webinar, [Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi](#), provides additional guidance on crediting surimi.

Oz eq contribution per serving

The table below shows the MMA contribution for different amounts of surimi seafood. The crediting ratio for surimi seafood differs based on portion size due to the USDA rounding rules that require rounding down to the nearest 0.25 oz eq.

Table 4-7. MMA contribution of surimi seafood

Serving size	MMA contribution
1 ounce	¼ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)
2 ounces	½ oz eq
3 ounces	1 oz eq
4.4 ounces	1½ oz eq
6 ounces	2 oz eq

To credit surimi differently from the amounts above, CACFP facilities must obtain a CN label or manufacturer’s PFS that documents how the crediting is determined (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). For example, a manufacturer’s PFS might document that 1 ounce of a surimi product credits as ½ oz eq of the MMA component.

Crediting recipes containing surimi

For all menu items made from scratch, CACFP facilities must maintain recipes (preferably standardized recipes) that document the MMA contribution per serving based on the crediting ratio of 3 ounces of surimi per oz eq (refer to “[Documentation for foods made from scratch](#)” in section 2).

Crediting Tempeh

Tempeh credits as a meat alternate. Tempeh is a highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. Tempeh may be used as a meat alternate in a variety of recipes, including stir-fries, sandwiches, and salads. The CACFP facility’s recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) must document the oz eq of tempeh per serving.

The requirements for crediting tempeh are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 25-2019](#), [CACFP 12-2019](#), and [SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting tempeh, refer to the USDA’s webinar, [Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi](#).



Oz eq contribution per serving

A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other beans, peas, and lentils), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If a tempeh product contains other ingredients, CACFP facilities must obtain a CN label or PFS to document crediting (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2).

Varieties of tempeh that include other creditable foods as ingredients (such as brown rice, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, flax seed, and vegetables) may also credit as the MMA component, grains component, and vegetables component. To credit in CACFP menus, this type of tempeh product must provide the minimum creditable quantities, such as ¼ oz eq of MMA, ¼ oz eq of grains, and ¼ cup of vegetables. CACFP facilities must obtain a CN label or manufacturer’s PFS to document how much tempeh and other creditable foods these products contain.

Crediting recipes containing tempeh

Adult day care centers must maintain recipes (preferably standardized recipes) that document the MMA contribution per serving based on the amount of tofu per serving (refer to [“Documentation for foods made from scratch”](#) in section 2).

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products

Tofu does not have an FDA standard of identity. Tofu must meet the three requirements below to credit as a meat alternate.

1. **Must be commercially prepared and meet USDA’s definition:** Tofu must be commercially prepared and meet the following definition in [7 CFR 210.2](#) and [7 CFR 226.2](#): “a soybean-derived food, made by a process in which soybeans are soaked, ground, mixed with water, heated, filtered, coagulated, and formed into cakes. Basic ingredients are whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water.”
2. **Must be easily recognizable:** The tofu or tofu product must be easily recognizable as a meat substitute to credit as the MMA component (refer to [“Requirement for visible components”](#) in section 1). Tofu is widely recognized as a meat substitute and comes in a variety of textures such as silken, soft, firm, and extra firm. Some examples of recognizable tofu and tofu products include firm or extra firm tofu in stir-fries, omelets, miso soup, and minced in lasagna as a substitute for ricotta cheese; and commercial meat substitute products like tofu burgers and tofu sausage.

Tofu products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes do not credit in CACFP menus. Some examples include 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.

3. **Must meet protein requirement:** The tofu ingredient must contain at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight (¼ cup volume equivalent) to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. Menu planners must use the Nutrition Facts panel or PFS to determine if commercial tofu meets this protein requirement. Table 4-8 shows the MMA contribution for different amounts of tofu and the minimum grams of protein required to credit in CACFP menus.

CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on file to indicate that commercial tofu products comply with these requirements. For guidance on calculating the grams of protein per serving, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting recipes containing tofu

For foods made from scratch that contain tofu as an ingredient, the CACFP facility's recipes must document the amount of MMA per serving based on the yields in the FBG (refer to ["Documentation for foods made from scratch"](#) and ["Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs"](#) in section 2).

Table 4-8. MMA contribution of tofu

Serving size	MMA contribution	Minimum protein (grams) per serving
0.55 ounce (1 tablespoon)	¼ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)	1.25 grams
1.1 ounces (⅛ cup)	½ oz eq	2.5 grams
2.2 ounces (¼ cup)	1 oz eq	5 grams
3.3 ounces (⅜ cup)	1½ oz eq	7.5 grams
4.4 ounces (½ cup)	2 oz eq	10 grams



Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt

Commercial yogurt and soy yogurt must meet the USDA's sugars limit to credit as meat alternates in the CACFP meal patterns (refer to "[Sugars limit for yogurt](#)" in this section). Yogurt may contain added fruit, either blended or on the bottom, and may be:

- unflavored or flavored;
- sweetened or unsweetened; and
- any fat content, e.g., whole fat, low fat, or nonfat.

Yogurt must meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for yogurt ([21 CFR 131.200](#)).

Serving size for yogurt

The required serving size for yogurt is based on volume (cups) or weight (ounces) and is the same for all types, flavors, and fat contents. A ½-cup serving (volume) or 4 ounces (weight) credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is ⅛ cup or 1 ounce. The table below shows the MMA contribution for different amounts of yogurt.

Table 4-9. MMA contribution of yogurt

Serving size	MMA contribution
⅛ cup or 1 ounce	¼ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)
¼ cup or 2 ounces	½ oz eq
⅜ cup or 3 ounces	¾ oz eq
½ cup (4 ounces)	1 oz eq
¾ cup (6 ounces)	1½ oz eq
1 cup (8 ounces)	2 oz eq

Sugars limit for yogurt

Yogurt and soy yogurt must meet the sugars limit of no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce). Yogurt and soy yogurt used as an ingredient in smoothies must also meet this requirement.

Effective with program year 2025-26 (beginning October 1, 2025), the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), changes the product-based limit for yogurt from total sugars to added sugars. Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce). With state agency approval, CACFP facilities may choose to implement the added sugars limit prior to October 1, 2025.

The CACFP facility must have documentation on file to indicate that yogurt and soy yogurt served in CACFP menus comply with the sugars limit. For guidance on how to determine if a product complies with the sugars limit, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and "Resources for crediting yogurt" in this section.



Crediting yogurt in smoothies

Yogurt or soy yogurt that meets the sugars limit may credit as the MMA component when used as an ingredient in smoothies. A ½-cup serving of yogurt credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.

CACFP facilities must document the amount of yogurt per serving with a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) for smoothies made from scratch, and a CN label or PFS for commercial products (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in section 1). For example, to credit a smoothie as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, the CACFP facility’s recipe or the commercial product’s CN label or PFS must indicate that each serving contains ½ cup of yogurt.

The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk. Fluid milk must be offered at breakfast, lunch, and supper to meet the milk component requirement of the CACFP meal patterns for children.

For more information on crediting smoothies, refer to “[Crediting Fruit in Smoothies](#)” in section 6, “[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)” in section 5, and “[Crediting Milk in Smoothies](#)” in section 3.

Nutrition guidance

The CSDE encourages CACFP facilities to read labels and consider fat content when purchasing yogurt for meals and snacks. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends low-fat or fat-free yogurt for ages 2 and older. These types of yogurts provide the same nutrients as whole-milk yogurt but contain less saturated fat and fewer calories.

The CSDE encourages CACFP facilities to choose yogurts without nonnutritive sweeteners (such as aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia) or sugar alcohols. These products are often labeled as “light” or “lite.”

Noncreditable yogurt products

Drinkable or squeezable yogurt and frozen yogurt do not credit in CACFP menus. The FDA’s definition and standard of identity requires that yogurt must be “coagulated,” not liquid. The FDA does not have a standard of identity for frozen yogurt. Homemade yogurt does not credit for food safety reasons. Yogurt-flavored products (such as yogurt bars and yogurt-covered fruit or nuts) do not meet the FDA’s definition and standard of identity for yogurt, and do not credit in CACFP menus.

Resources for crediting yogurt

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting yogurt as the MMA component in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

- Calculating Sugar Limits for Yogurt in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-yogurt-cacfp>
- Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Sugars (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-yogurts-are-lower-sugar>
- Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_smoothies_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
- USDA Memo SP 02-2024, CACFP 02-2024, and SFSP 02-2024: Revised: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs, CACFP, and SFSP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Links to these resources are also available under “Yogurt” in the “Meats/Meat Alternates Component” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Noncreditable Foods in the MMA Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the MMA component include:

- acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts;
- APPs that do not meet the USDA’s regulatory requirements;
- bacon (pork);
- commercial canned soups, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice;
- cream cheese;
- drinkable yogurt;
- egg whites without the yolks;
- frozen yogurt;
- imitation cheese and cheese products;
- liquid egg substitutes;
- pork fat;
- products made with tofu that are not easily recognized as meat substitutes;
- sour cream;
- tofu that contains less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2-ounce serving by weight;
- tofu that is not easily recognized as a meat substitute; and
- yogurt or soy yogurt that contains more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce.

This list is not all-inclusive. For more information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the MMA component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.

Resources for Crediting MMA

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the MMA component in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

- 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: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 4: Meats/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_beans_peas_lentils_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_commerical_mma_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_deli_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Meats/Meat Alternates in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-meats-meat-alternates-child-nutrition-tip-sheet>
- Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_nuts_seeds_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
- Food Buying Guide Section 1: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Meats/Meat Alternates Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternates.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 1: Yield Table for Meats/Meat Alternates (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternatesYieldTable.pdf

- Meats/Meat Alternates Component (“How To” 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/how-to#MMA>
- Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>
- Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/app_requirements_cacfp.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019, and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>
- USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019, and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019, and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 53-2016 and CACFP 21-2016: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs and the CACFP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>
- USDA Webinar: Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products>

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Meats/Meat Alternates Component](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

5 — Vegetables Component

The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables; and pasteurized full-strength vegetable juice. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend that CACFP menus include at least one serving per week of the vegetable subgroups recommended by the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). These include dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy vegetables, and other vegetables. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) also recommend incorporating seasonal and locally produced foods into child care meals and snacks. For information on farm to school, refer to the USDA's resources, [Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings](#) and [Integrating Local Foods into Child Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the USDA's [Farm to CACFP](#) webpage and [Procuring Local Foods](#) webpage.

Required Servings for Vegetables

The CACFP meal patterns for children require a serving of the vegetables component at lunch and supper. Vegetables and fruits are one meal component at breakfast and may and may include a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both. A serving of vegetables may be one of the two required meal components at snack. The table below summarizes the required servings of the vegetables component for each age group and meal.

Table 5-1. Required cups of the vegetables component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18
Breakfast	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Lunch and supper	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Snack	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{3}{4}$

* The age group for ages 13-18 applies only to at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters.

The amounts for the vegetables component refer to the edible portion after any applicable preparation techniques, such as peeling, trimming, and cooking. All vegetables credit based on volume (cups) with the exceptions below.

- **Raw leafy greens:** Raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served (refer to [“Crediting Raw Leafy Greens”](#) in this section).
- **Dried or dehydrated vegetables:** Dried or dehydrated vegetables such as potato flakes and dried soup mix credit based on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume (refer to [“Crediting Dried Vegetables”](#) in this section).

Menu planners should consult the USDA’s FBG to determine the number of servings provided by a specific quantity of vegetables (refer to [“Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs”](#) in section 2).

Meeting the required vegetable servings

CACFP facilities may choose to serve a combination of several vegetables to meet the minimum requirement. Each serving must contain at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables (refer to [“Minimum creditable amounts”](#) in section 2). For example, a lunch or supper menu for ages 3-5 could meet the required $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of the vegetables component with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of broccoli, or $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of broccoli and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of carrots. Servings that contain less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables do not credit in CACFP menus.

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the vegetables component, the menu planner must include additional vegetables to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component for ages 3-5. If a menu item contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables to provide the full serving for ages 3-5.

When crediting menu items toward the vegetables component, menu planners must round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. For example, a CACFP recipe or commercial product that contains $2\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of corn per serving credits as 2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup) of the vegetables component.

Choking Prevention for Vegetables

Some vegetables may be a choking hazard for young children. Examples include cooked or raw whole-kernel corn, and small pieces of raw vegetables, e.g., raw green peas, whole beans, raw carrot rounds, baby carrots, string beans, celery, and other raw or partially cooked hard vegetables.

Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what vegetables to offer in CACFP menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch and Supper

Vegetables may replace the fruits component at any lunch or supper. For example, menu planners may choose to substitute vegetables for the fruits component on Monday and Friday, or every day of the week.

Lunch and supper menus that include vegetable substitutions must meet one of the requirements below.

1. Offer one serving of the vegetables component and one serving of the fruits component.
2. Offer two different servings of the vegetables component.

A lunch or supper cannot contain two servings of only the fruits component, without offering vegetables.

Crediting Canned Vegetables

Canned vegetables must be drained. A serving of canned vegetables cannot include the packing liquid, such as water or sauce. For example, to credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component, a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of canned peas cannot include the water in which it is packed, and a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of baked beans cannot include the sauce in which it is packed. The serving must contain $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables before any added liquid.

Crediting Dried Vegetables

Dried or dehydrated vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit as the vegetables component based on their rehydrated volume. Dried vegetables used for seasonings (such as dried onion and dried parsley) do not credit in CACFP menus.

The FBG lists yields for some dehydrated vegetables, such as pinto beans, refried beans, onions, bell peppers, potatoes, seaweed, and sweet potatoes. Dried vegetables not listed in the FBG require a PFS to determine crediting information (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). The PFS must provide specific documentation on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume. Menu planners should check the accuracy of the PFS prior to including foods with dehydrated vegetables in CACFP menus.

Determining rehydrated volume

The rehydration volume of dried vegetables often varies from brand to brand. Menu planners must use the procedures below to determine and document the rehydrated volume of dehydrated vegetable products.

1. Rehydrate (add water or liquid to) a purchase unit of the dehydrated vegetable according to the manufacturer’s directions. If the container does not include directions, request rehydration directions from the manufacturer.
2. Measure the rehydrated volume.
3. Measure the number of ¼-cup servings of rehydrated product that one purchase unit provides.
4. Keep records on file as verification. Records should include information on the size of the purchase unit, the number of ¼-cup servings of rehydrated product per purchase unit, the name of the manufacturer, and the manufacturer’s directions for rehydrating the product.

Since product rehydration volumes often vary from brand to brand, CACFP facilities should use this procedure for each brand of dehydrated product. For more information, refer to “[Determining in-house product yields](#)” in section 2.

Crediting Hominy as Vegetables

Hominy is a traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin.

Hominy is available dried and in a fully cooked canned form. Drained canned hominy or cooked whole hominy (from dried hominy) credits toward the vegetables component. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of canned drained hominy credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the starchy vegetables subgroup.

For information on crediting hominy as the grains component, refer to “[Crediting Hominy as Grains](#)” in section 7.

Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as Vegetables

Beans, peas, and lentils credit as either the vegetables component or the MMA component, but one serving cannot credit as both meal components in the same meal or snack. The menu planner must determine in advance how to credit beans, peas, and lentils in CACFP menus.

Beans, peas, and lentils credit as the vegetables component based on the volume (cups) served. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of kidney beans credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component.

A serving of cooked beans, peas, or lentils must contain the minimum required amount of beans, peas, or lentils without other ingredients such as sauce and pork fat. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of baked beans that contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of sauce and pork fat credits as $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of the vegetables component. For more information, refer to “[Vegetables with Added Ingredients](#)” in this section.

A menu item must provide at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of beans, peas, or lentils to credit toward part of the vegetables component. If the amount is less than the full serving, the meal or snack must include additional vegetables to meet the full serving for each age group. For more information, refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in section 2 and “[Required Servings for Vegetables](#)” in this section.

For information on crediting beans, peas, and lentils as the MMA component, refer to “[Crediting Beans, peas, and lentils as MMA](#)” in section 4.

Crediting roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils as vegetables

Roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils (such as chickpeas and soybeans) credit as the vegetables component based on the volume (cups) served. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of roasted chickpeas credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component.

Roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer these foods in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

The USDA recommends that menu planners use discretion when offering snack-type beans, peas, and lentils (such as individually wrapped soy nuts) as part of reimbursable meals, due to their perception as snack foods. While these types of products credit in the CACFP meal patterns for children, they may be better suited for meals served off site, such as bagged lunches for field trips.

For information on crediting roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils as the MMA component, refer to "[Crediting roasted or dried beans, peas, and lentils as MMA](#)" in section 4.

Crediting hummus and bean dips as vegetables

Beans, peas, and lentils in hummus and bean dips may credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both meal components in the same meal or snack. Crediting as the vegetables component is based on the cups of beans, peas, and lentils per serving. For example, hummus that contains $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of chickpeas per serving credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

To credit hummus and bean dips as the vegetable component, CACFP facilities must maintain crediting documentation that indicates the cups of beans, peas, and lentils per serving, based on the yields in the FBG. Commercial products require a CN label or PFS (refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2). Hummus and bean dips made from scratch require a recipe (refer to "[the standardized recipes in recipes as vegetables](#)" in this section).

For information on crediting hummus as the MMA component, refer to "[Crediting Hummus and Bean Dips as MMA](#)" in section 4.

Crediting beans, peas, and lentils in recipes as vegetables

CACFP facilities must maintain appropriate crediting documentation for menu items that contain beans, peas, or lentils as an ingredient, such as lentil soup, bean burritos, and chili. The CACFP facility's recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) must provide at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of beans, peas, or lentils per serving to credit toward the vegetables component.

The menu planner must determine the amount of the vegetables component per recipe serving by dividing the total cups of beans, peas, or lentils in the recipe by the number of servings, then rounding down to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. For guidance on how to calculate the contribution of beans, peas, and lentils in a recipe, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting documentation for commercial products

Commercial processed products that contain beans, peas, and lentils (such as black bean burritos and vegetarian chili) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving (refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2).

Crediting Mixed Vegetables at Lunch and Supper

The crediting of mixed vegetables depends on whether the menu planner knows the amount of each type of vegetable in the mixture. Some examples of vegetable mixtures include carrots, peas, and corn; three-bean salad; and a California mix of broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots.

Known quantities of vegetables

A vegetable mixture may credit as two servings of vegetables (and may credit toward both the vegetables component and the fruits component at lunch) if the menu planner knows the quantities of the different vegetables and each vegetable is at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

- **Example:** A lunch menu for ages 3-5 includes a vegetable mixture of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of broccoli and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cauliflower. Since vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at lunch and supper, the menu planner may choose to credit the broccoli as the full vegetables component ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) and use the cauliflower to replace the full fruits component ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup). The cauliflower provides the minimum $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving for the fruits component.

For more information, refer to "[Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch and Supper](#)" in this section.

Unknown quantities of vegetables

If the menu planner does not know the quantities of the different vegetables, the vegetable mixture credits as one serving of vegetables and cannot credit as the fruit component. In this case, the lunch or supper menu would require either a serving of the fruits component, or another serving of vegetables substituted for the fruits component.

Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flours

Pasta products made of vegetable flours credit as the vegetables component if they meet the specific requirements in [USDA Memo SP 26-2019](#), [CACFP 13-2019](#), and [SFSP 12-2019](#): *Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*. These requirements are summarized below.

Pasta made of 100 percent bean, pea, or lentil flours credits as the MMA component or the vegetables component but cannot credit as both meal components in the same meal or snack. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as MMA](#)” in section 4.

Crediting vegetable flours as vegetables

Pasta made of one or more 100 percent vegetable flours credits toward the vegetables component, even when it is not served with another recognizable vegetable. These products credit the same as vegetables. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pasta made of 100 percent vegetable flour credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component. The ingredients statements below show examples of pasta products that contain 100 percent vegetable flour.

- Ingredients: Red lentil flour.
- Ingredients: Green lentils, cauliflower, parsnips.

Menu planners could choose to credit these products toward the vegetables component based on the cooked volume of the serving.



Crediting vegetable flours with other non-vegetable ingredients

Pasta products made of vegetable flour with other non-vegetable ingredients may credit toward the vegetables component (or for 100 percent bean, pea, or lentil flour pasta, the MMA component) with a PFS that details the actual volume of vegetable flour per serving. This crediting does not apply to grain-based pasta products that contain small amounts of vegetable powder for color, such as spinach pasta or sun-dried tomato pasta. The examples below show the ingredients statements for some vegetable flour pasta products.

- **Example 1:**

Ingredients: Semolina (wheat), durum flour (wheat), **dried spinach**, niacin, ferrous sulfate (iron), thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This product does not credit toward the vegetables component. The spinach is used for coloring and the amount is too small to credit.

- **Example 2:**

Ingredients: Semolina (wheat), durum flour (wheat), **dried carrots, dried tomato, dried spinach**, niacin, ferrous sulfate (iron), thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This product might credit toward the vegetables component depending on the amount of dried carrots, dried tomato, and dried spinach per serving. The CACFP facility must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine the crediting information for this product.

Signage and staff training for vegetable flour pastas

The USDA encourages CACFP facilities to provide information, as age appropriate, that helps children understand what foods are in their meals and snacks. For example, if a lunch or supper includes 100 percent chickpea pasta as the vegetables component, the menu could list chickpea pasta with a symbol showing it to be part of the vegetables component of the meal, not the grains component.

Menu planners should also inform serving staff when meals include pasta made with vegetable flour, so they are aware of how these foods contribute to the CACFP meal patterns for children.

Crediting Pureed Vegetables

Pureed vegetables must be visible to credit in CACFP menus (refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” in section 2). Examples include pureed foods made from one vegetable such as tomato sauce, split pea soup, mashed potatoes, mashed sweet potatoes, and pureed butternut squash.

Pureed vegetables credit based on the volume (cups) after pureeing. For example, to determine the volume of pea puree obtained from 1 cup of green peas, food service staff would puree the whole peas and measure the resulting amount of puree. Pureed vegetables typically have a smaller volume than the whole vegetable pieces. Menu planners may use the CSDE’s [Yield Study Data Form for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) to document the yield of pureed vegetables.

Unrecognizable pureed vegetables

Foods made with pureed vegetables that are not visible (such as pureed carrots in macaroni and cheese) cannot credit as the vegetables component unless they also provide at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of a visible creditable vegetable. For example, a serving of macaroni and cheese that contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of diced butternut squash (visible) and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of pureed carrots (not visible) credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component.

Pureed vegetables do not credit when used to improve the nutrient profile of a food. For example, pureed sweet potatoes in muffins cannot credit toward the vegetables component. The USDA emphasizes the importance of the nutrition education aspect of the CACFP, which includes the goal of helping children easily recognize the key food groups that contribute to a healthy meal.

Pureed vegetables in smoothies

Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice toward the vegetables component and count toward the juice limit (refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in section 6). Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed carrots credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetable juice.

Smoothies that contain any combination of pureed fruits, pureed vegetables, and 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the greatest vegetable or fruit ingredient. For more information, refer to “[Mixed fruits and vegetables in smoothies](#)” in section 6.

For more information on crediting smoothies, refer to “[Crediting Fruit in Smoothies](#)” in section 6, “[Crediting Milk in Smoothies](#)” in section 3, and “[Crediting yogurt in smoothies](#)” in section 4.

Crediting Raw Leafy Greens

Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of raw leafy greens credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component. Examples of raw leafy greens include kale, greens (e.g., beet, collard, mustard, and turnip), spinach, arugula, and lettuce such as iceberg, romaine, Boston, Bibb, red leaf, and spring mix.

As a reminder, cooked leafy greens (such as spinach and kale) and roasted or dried leafy greens (such as roasted kale) credit based on the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked spinach or roasted kale credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component.

Crediting Vegetable and Fruit Mixtures

Mixtures of vegetables and fruits may credit toward both the vegetables component and fruits component if the serving contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible vegetables and at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible fruits. For example, a carrot-raisin salad that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of carrots and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component. As a reminder, dried fruits credit as twice the volume served (refer to “[Crediting Dried Fruits](#)” in section 6).



Crediting Soups

Vegetable soups made from scratch credit based on the amount of vegetables per serving. CACFP facilities must document this information with a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) based on the yields in the FBG (refer to “[Documentation for foods made from scratch](#)” and “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2).

Only certain types of commercial vegetable soups credit in the CACFP meal patterns for children (refer to the table below). The FBG indicates that 1 cup of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables, and 1 cup of commercial vegetable soup credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables. The serving refers to the amount of cooked soup, e.g., heated canned or frozen ready-to-serve soup, reconstituted dried soup, and reconstituted condensed soup.

To credit a commercial soup that is not listed in the FBG, CACFP facilities must obtain a PFS stating the specific contribution of vegetables per serving (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). A CN label might be available for some commercial vegetable soups that contain at least $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of the MMA.

Table 5-2. Creditable commercial vegetable soups

Vegetable soups	Bean, pea, and lentil soups
1 cup = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of additional vegetables	1 cup = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of beans, peas, and lentils subgroup
Minestrone soup	Bean soup, e.g., black bean, navy bean, and mixed bean
Tomato soup	Pea soup, e.g., split pea
Tomato soup with other basic components such as rice	Lentil soup
Vegetable soup (contains only vegetables)	
Vegetable soup with other basic components such as meat or poultry	

For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Soups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Serving size considerations for commercial soups

The served portion of soup must be sufficient to provide the amount of vegetables being credited in CACFP menus. Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for different ages and the container size used to serve the soup.

- **Meal pattern contribution:** The large serving required for a commercial soup to provide the full serving of vegetables might be unreasonable, especially for younger children. For example, the minimum serving for the vegetables component at snack is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, which equals 2 cups of a commercial vegetable soup or 1 cup of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup.
- **Container size:** A 1-cup container (8 fluid ounces) does not provide 1 cup of soup unless it is filled to the top, which is impractical. To avoid spilling and ensure that the served portion meets the meal pattern requirements, the container should be larger than the planned serving size of soup. For example, CACFP facilities could use a 10-fluid ounce bowl to hold 8 fluid ounces (1 cup) of soup and a 6-fluid ounce bowl to hold 4 fluid ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of soup.

Noncreditable soups

Commercial beef barley soup, chicken or turkey noodle soup, chicken or turkey rice soup, and cream vegetable soups (such as cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom) do not credit in CACFP menus.



Crediting Vegetable Juice

Any type of pasteurized full-strength (100 percent) vegetable juice credits in the CACFP meal patterns for children. Vegetable juice may be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the terms below

- Full-strength juice
- Single-strength juice
- 100 percent juice
- Reconstituted juice
- Juice from concentrate

The statements “natural” and “organic” do not indicate that a juice is full strength.

Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one CACFP meal or snack per day. Menu planners must check each day’s breakfast, lunch, and snack menus to ensure that juice does not exceed the limit.

Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice (refer to “[Pureed vegetables in smoothies](#)” in this section). For more information, refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in section 6 and the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Juice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting Vegetables in Combination Foods

Combination foods that contain vegetables credit based on the amount of the visible portion of vegetables per serving (refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” in section 2). Some examples include tomato sauce in pizza and lasagna, kidney beans and tomatoes in chili, vegetable egg rolls, chickpeas in hummus, and vegetables in chicken-vegetable stir-fry.

CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on the amount of vegetables per serving. Commercial products require a CN label (if the vegetables are part of a main dish entree that contains at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component) or PFS. Foods made from scratch require a recipe that documents the cups of vegetables per serving based on the yields in the FBG. For more information, refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in section 2.

Crediting Vegetables with Added Ingredients

When vegetables contain added ingredients (such as mayonnaise, yogurt, sugar, molasses, salad dressing, or breading), only the vegetable portion credits in CACFP menus. Some examples of vegetables with added ingredients include tossed salad with dressing and croutons, potato salad, mashed potatoes made with butter and milk, baked beans with sauce, carrot-raisin salad, breaded vegetables like eggplant and onion ring, and vegetables with cheese.

- **Example:** To credit coleslaw as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component, the serving must contain $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of shredded vegetables like cabbage and carrots, before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, and spices.

CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on the amount of vegetables per serving. Commercial products require a CN label (if the vegetables are part of a main dish entree that contributes to the MMA component) or PFS. Foods made from scratch require a recipe that documents the cups of vegetables per serving based on the yields in the FBG. For more information, refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in section 2.

CACFP facilities are not required to maintain recipes and PFS forms for vegetables without added ingredients, such as whole or cut-up fresh vegetables, canned vegetables, and frozen vegetables.

Produce Safety

CACFP facilities must ensure that all staff members understand how to prepare produce safely. The ICN’s [Produce Safety Resources](#) webpage includes resources that describe best practices for receiving, storing, handling, and purchasing fresh and fresh-cut produce. For additional resources, refer to the CSDE’s [Resource List for Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Noncreditable Foods in the Vegetables Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the vegetables component include:

- chili sauce;
- dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning;
- cream vegetable soups, e.g., cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom;
- home-canned products (for food safety reasons);
- ketchup;
- pickle relish; and
- snack-type foods made from vegetables, such as potato chips and corn chips.

This list is not all-inclusive. For more information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the vegetables component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.



Resources for Crediting Vegetables

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the vegetables component in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 6: Vegetables Component (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_beans_peas_lentils_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Juice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_juice_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA Webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs>
- Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_smoothies_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Soups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_soups_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Vegetables in Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetables-child-nutrition-programs-tip-sheet>
- Food Buying Guide Section 2: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Vegetables Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section2_Vegetables.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 2: Yield Table for Vegetables (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section2_VegetablesYieldTable.pdf
- Serving Vegetables in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-vegetables-cacfp>
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-gas>

- USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019, and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>
- Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/vegetable_subgroups_cacfp.pdf
- Vegetables Component (“How To” 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/how-to#Vegetables>

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Vegetables Component](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.



6 — Fruits Component

The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits; and pasteurized full-strength fruit juice. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend that CACFP facilities:

- serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice;
- make at least one of the two required meal components at snack a vegetable or fruit, and
- incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.

For information on farm to school, refer to the USDA's resources, [Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings](#) and [Integrating Local Foods into Child Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the USDA's [Farm to CACFP](#) webpage and [Procuring Local Foods](#) webpage.



Required Servings for Fruits

The CACFP meal patterns for children require a serving of the fruits component at lunch and supper. Vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at any lunch or supper (refer to [“Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch and Supper”](#) in section 5).

Vegetables and fruits are one meal component at breakfast and may include a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both.

A serving of fruit may be one of the two required meal components at snack. Juice cannot be served when milk is the only other meal component at snack. Only one meal component at snack can be a creditable beverage such as juice, a fruit smoothie, or milk. The table below summarizes the required servings of the fruits component for each age group and meal.

Table 6-1. Required cups of the fruits component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 *
Breakfast	¼	¼	½	½
Lunch and supper	⅛	¼	¼	¼
Snack	½	½	¾	¾

* The age group for ages 13-18 applies only to at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters.

The amounts for the fruits component refer to the edible portion after any applicable preparation techniques, such as peeling, removing seeds and pits, and cooking. All fruits credit based on volume (cups) except for dried fruits, which credit as twice the volume served (refer to [“Crediting Dried Fruits”](#) in this section).

Menu planners should consult the USDA’s FBG to determine the number of servings provided by a specific quantity of fruit (refer to [“Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs”](#) in section 2).

Meeting the required fruit servings

CACFP facilities may choose to serve a combination of several fruits to meet the meal pattern requirement. Each serving must contain at least ⅛ cup of fruit (refer to [“Minimum creditable amounts”](#) in section 2). For example, a lunch or supper menu for ages 3-5 could meet the required ¼-cup serving of the fruits component with ⅛ cup of peaches and ⅛ cup of applesauce. Servings that contain less than ⅛ cup of fruit do not credit in CACFP menus.

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the fruits component, the meal or snack must include additional fruit to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component for ages 3-5. If a menu item contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit to provide the full serving for ages 3-5.

When crediting menu items toward the fruits component, menu planners must round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. For example, a CACFP recipe or commercial product that contains $2\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of diced strawberries per serving credits as 2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup) of the fruits component.

Choking Prevention for Fruits

Some fruits may be a choking hazard for young children. Examples include whole grapes, berries, melon balls, apples and other hard pieces of raw fruit, and dried fruits. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what fruits to offer in CACFP menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Crediting Canned Fruits

Allowable canned fruits include canned fruits in juice, water, and light syrup. Juice and light syrup in canned fruit or fruit cups may count toward the fruits component and are not subject to the juice limit. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned peaches in juice or light syrup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component.

Crediting Coconut

Fresh and frozen coconut credit as the fruits component based on the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fresh or frozen coconut credits as $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of the fruits component. Dried coconut credits the same as other dried fruits (refer to "[Crediting Dried Fruits](#)" in this section). For example, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of dried coconut credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component.

Coconut is high in calories and saturated fat and should be limited in CACFP menus. Coconut flour, coconut oil, and coconut milk do not credit in CACFP menus.

The requirements for crediting coconut are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 34-2019](#), [CACFP 15-2019](#), and [SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Crediting Dried Fruits

Dried fruits (such as raisins, apricots, dried cherries, dried cranberries, dried blueberries, mixed dried fruit, and dried coconut) credit as twice the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component.

This crediting requirement does not apply to dried fruits in amounts less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (the minimum creditable amount). For example, $\frac{1}{16}$ cup (1 tablespoon) of raisins does not credit as $\frac{1}{8}$ cup fruit.

Dried fruits may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer dried fruits in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Manufacturers sometimes process dried fruits with added sugars to keep the fruit pieces separated. The CSDE encourages menu planners to read labels and choose dried fruit without added sweeteners, including sugars and nonnutritive sweeteners (such as aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia).



Crediting Fresh Fruits

The crediting contribution of one piece of fresh fruit (whole or cut up) varies depending on the type and size, and ranges from $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups. For example, the FBG indicates that:

- one 60-count plum, one 88-count peach, and one clementine each credit as $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of fruit;
- one 100-120-count banana, one 150-count pear, one 80-count peach, one 138-count orange, and one 45-count plum each credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit;
- one 113-count and 125-count orange each credit as $\frac{5}{8}$ cup of fruit;
- one size 56-64 nectarine, one size 56 peach, and one 120-count pear each credit as $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of fruit; and
- one 125-138-count apple credits as 1 cup of fruit.

Menu planners must ensure that an individual piece of fresh fruit (whole or cut up) provides the correct serving for each CACFP meal and snack. If the amount is less than the full serving, the meal or snack must include additional fruit to meet the full serving. The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- **Example for breakfast:** The breakfast meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits, vegetables, or both. One 120-count tangerine credits as $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of fruit, which does not provide the full serving. To credit as the full fruits component, the breakfast menu must include an additional $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruits or vegetables.
- **Example for snack:** The snack meal pattern for ages 1-2 and 3-5 requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. One kiwi credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit, which does not provide the full serving. To credit as the full fruits component, the snack menu must include an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component.

Table 6-2 lists the FBG's meal pattern contribution of some fresh fruits, and the additional amount needed to provide a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving. A $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruits is required for ages 3 and older at breakfast and for ages 6 and older at snack (if fruit is offered as one of the two required meal components at snack).

The count pack is the number of whole fruits that fit into a case. The smaller the count, the larger the size of the fruit.

Table 6-2. Meal pattern contribution of fresh fruits

Fruit (one piece, whole or cut up)	Meal pattern contribution from FBG	Additional amount needed for ½ cup
Apple, 125-138 count	1 cup	0
Apricot, medium (1 ¾-inch diameter)	¼ cup	¼ cup
Banana, 150 count (7 to 7 ⁷ / ₈ inch)	½ cup	0
Banana, 100-120 count, regular	½ cup	0
Clementine, whole, peeled	¾ cup	⅛ cup
Grapefruit, 27-32 count, large	1 cup	0
Kiwi, 33-39 count	¼ cup	¼ cup
Nectarine, size 88-96 (2 ¼-inch diameter)	½ cup	0
Nectarine, size 56-64 (2 ¾-inch diameter)	¾ cup	0
Orange, Arizona or California, 113 count	⅝ cup	0
Orange, Florida or Texas, 125 count	⅝ cup	0
Orange, Arizona or California, 138 count	½ cup	0
Peach, size 88 and 84 (2 ⅛-inch diameter)	¾ cup	⅛ cup
Peach, size 64 and 60 (2 ½-inch diameter)	⅔ cup	0
Peach, size 80	½ cup	0
Peach, size 56	¾ cup	0
Peach, size 56	¾ cup	0
Pear, 150 count	½ cup	0
Pear, 120 count	¾ cup	0
Pear, D'Anjou, Bosc, or Bartlett, 100 count	1¼ cups	0

Fruit (one piece, whole or cut up)	Meal pattern contribution from FBG	Additional amount needed for ½ cup
Plum, purple, red, or black, size 45 and 50 (2-inch diameter)	½ cup	0
Plum, purple, red, or black, 2 ½-inch diameter	⅝ cup	0
Plum, Japanese or hybrid, size 60 and 65	¾ cup	⅛ cup
Tangerine, 120 count	¾ cup	⅛ cup

Crediting Frozen Fruits

Frozen fruits credit based on the volume served. For some frozen fruits (such as frozen sliced strawberries and frozen apricots), the serving includes the thawed liquid. For other frozen fruits (such as frozen berry blends, frozen sweet cherries, and frozen mangoes), the serving is for the thawed, drained fruit. Check the FBG for the specific serving and crediting requirements for different types of frozen fruits.

Choose frozen fruits without added sugars. The USDA recommends limiting sweetened fruits to help reduce children’s consumption of added sugars and help children develop a taste preference for unsweetened fruit.

Crediting Fruits in Commercial Products

Commercial products that contain at least ⅛ cup of one or more visible fruits (such as mixed berries in a yogurt-fruit parfait) credit based on the cups of fruit per serving (refer to [“Requirement for visible components”](#) in this section). Commercial products must have a CN label or PFS that documents the cups of fruits per serving (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2).

Crediting Fruits in Yogurt

Fruits in commercially prepared yogurt (either blended or on the bottom or top) do not credit toward the fruits component. Menu planners may credit fruits offered as a separate meal component, such as yogurt topped with fresh blueberries or sliced strawberries in a yogurt-fruit parfait.

Crediting Fruits in Grain-Based Desserts

Grain-based desserts do not credit in CACFP menus. However, the visible fruit portion of grain-based desserts (such as fruit crisp, fruit pies, and fruit turnovers) may credit based on the amount of fruit in the serving (refer to [“Requirement for visible components”](#) in section 2).

- **Example:** A fruit turnover that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of apples credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component.

Keep in mind that the large amount of a grain-based dessert needed to provide the required serving of fruit might be unreasonable, especially for younger children.



The grain portion of grain-based desserts (such as piecrust and cobbler or crisp topping) does not credit as the grains component in the CACFP meal patterns for children (refer to [“Grain-based Desserts Prohibited”](#) in section 7). The USDA recommends limiting sweetened fruit to help reduce children’s consumption of added sugars and help children develop a taste preference for unsweetened fruit.

CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on the amount of fruits per serving. Commercial products require a PFS (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2). Foods made from scratch require a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) that documents the cups of fruits per serving based on the yields in the FBG (refer to [“Documentation for foods made from scratch”](#) and [“Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs”](#) in section 2).

Crediting Fruits with Added Ingredients

When fruits contain added ingredients (such as yogurt, mayonnaise, sugar, butter, sauce, or toppings), only the fruit portion credits in CACFP menus. Some examples of fruits with added ingredients include yogurt-fruit parfaits, carrot-raisin salad, Waldorf salad, cottage cheese mixed with crushed pineapple, and baked apples.

- **Example:** To credit Waldorf salad as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component, the serving must contain $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit (e.g., diced apples, sliced grapes, and raisins), before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, sugar, and spices.

CACFP facilities maintain documentation on the amount of fruits per serving. Commercial products require a PFS (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). Foods made from scratch require a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) that documents the cups of fruits per serving based on the yields in the FBG (refer to “[Documentation for foods made from scratch](#)” and “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2).

CACFP facilities are not required to maintain recipes and PFS forms for fruits without added ingredients, such as whole or cut-up fresh fruits; canned fruits in juice, water, or light syrup; frozen fruits; and dried fruits.



Crediting Fruit Juice

Any type of pasteurized full-strength (100 percent) fruit juice credits in the CACFP meal patterns for children. Fruit juice may be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the terms below.

- Full-strength juice
- Single-strength juice
- 100 percent juice
- Reconstituted juice
- Juice from concentrate

The statements “natural” and “organic” do not indicate that a juice is full strength.

Juice may be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate, and may be served liquid or frozen, e.g., full-strength frozen juice pops. For more information, refer to “[Frozen juice products](#)” in this section and the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Juice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).



The USDA recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice, based on the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables, which contain fiber, fewer calories, and more nutrients.

Juice concentrates

Juice concentrates credit only when they are reconstituted with water to 100 percent full-strength juice and served in the form of juice. Foods made with juice concentrate, such as gelatin or sherbet, do not credit as juice because they are no longer in the form of juice.

Juice made from concentrate is reconstituted with a volume of water that is several times the amount of the juice concentrate. A typical reconstitution ratio might be three parts water to one part concentrate, but this ratio may vary for different juice products.

Commercial juice products made from concentrate will list “water” as the first ingredient, followed by the type of juice concentrate, for example, “water, orange juice concentrate” and “filtered water, grape juice concentrate.” Juice made from concentrate that is labeled “100 percent juice” credits when the CACFP facility follows the manufacturer’s specific instructions for reconstituting.

Juice blends

Juice blends must be a combination of full-strength (100 percent) fruit juices, full-strength vegetable juices, or full-strength fruit and vegetable juices. At lunch and supper, fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product credits as the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the vegetables component.

- **Example:**
Ingredients: **Reconstituted vegetable juice blend (water and concentrated juices of sweet potatoes, purple carrots, carrots)**, reconstituted fruit juices (water and concentrated juices of apples, white grapes, cranberries, blackberries), contains less than 2% of: natural flavoring, citric acid, lemon juice.

This product credits as the vegetables component because the first ingredient is a reconstituted vegetable juice blend.

Frozen juice products

Frozen 100 percent fruit juice products (such as full-strength frozen juice pops) credit based on the fluid volume prior to freezing. CACFP facilities must request a PFS from the manufacturer to document this information (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2). Frozen fruit juice must meet the same requirements as juice and counts toward the juice limit (refer to [“Juice limit”](#) in this section).

Apple cider

Apple cider credits toward the fruits component if it is pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Pasteurized juice has been heat-treated to kill harmful bacteria. Menu planners must check labels, as some brands of apple cider are not pasteurized. CACFP facilities cannot serve unpasteurized apple cider or any other type of unpasteurized juices. Apple cider counts toward the juice limit (refer to [“Juice limit”](#) in this section).

Coconut water

Coconut water labeled as 100 percent juice credits toward the fruits component based on the volume served. Coconut water must meet the same requirements as juice and counts toward the juice limit (refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in this section).

Juice ingredients

All pasteurized 100 percent juices meet the USDA’s requirements for the fruits component, but their ingredients may vary among manufacturers. The FDA’s labeling regulations allow 100 percent juice with added ingredients to be labeled “100% juice.” This means that some 100 percent juices contain added ingredients such as artificial flavors, artificial colors (e.g., red 40, blue 1, yellow 5 and 6, and titanium dioxide), preservatives (e.g., sodium benzoate and potassium sorbate), flavor enhancers (e.g., ethyl maltol), and emulsifiers or thickeners (e.g., glycerol esters of wood rosin and xanthan gum). The CSDE encourages menu planners to read product ingredients statements and choose 100 percent juice without these added ingredients.

Juice limit

Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one CACFP meal or snack per day. The daily juice limit applies to all sources of 100 percent juice, including juices that are fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate, frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies.

If a CACFP meal or snack includes any type of juice as the fruits component or vegetables component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at any other CACFP meal or snack that same day.



The examples below show how the juice limit applies.

- **Example 1:** The CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern requires a serving of the fruits component and a serving of the vegetables component. Lunch/supper menus cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of fruits and vegetables because both credit as juice. For example, the lunch/supper menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and tomato juice as the vegetables component. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component at lunch and supper must be a whole fruit or vegetable (fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).
- **Example 2:** If the CACFP lunch menu includes juice as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast, supper, or snack that same day.
- **Example 3:** If the CACFP breakfast menu includes juice as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as either the vegetables component or fruits component at lunch, supper, or snack that same day.
- **Example 4:** If the CACFP snack menu includes a smoothie made with pureed peaches as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast, lunch, or supper that same day. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice (refer to “[Crediting Smoothies](#)” in this section).

Menu planners must check each day’s breakfast, lunch, supper, and snack menus to ensure that juice does not exceed the limit.

Offering juice as an extra menu item

Menu planners may choose to offer juice as an extra menu item that does not credit in CACFP menus. However, the USDA encourages CACFP facilities to limit juice in CACFP menus to ensure that meals and snacks meet children’s nutritional needs.

The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving a variety of fruits and choosing whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.

Crediting Pureed Fruits in Smoothies

Fruit juice and pureed fruits in smoothies credit only as juice toward the fruits component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of juice and pureed fruits per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice.

Juice limit for smoothies

Juice and pureed fruits in smoothies count with all other juices toward the juice limit. For example, if the menu planner credits pureed strawberries in a smoothie as the fruits component at breakfast, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at lunch, supper, or snack that same day. For more information, refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in this section and the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Juice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting fruits in commercial smoothies

Commercial smoothies made with pureed fruits credit based on the volume of fruits after pureeing and before freezing. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars. They do not credit in smoothies unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

The product label must include a statement regarding the “percent juice content,” which is required by the FDA for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or puree. For example, an 8-fluid ounce commercial smoothie made from fruit puree labeled with “contains 50% juice” credits as 4 fluid ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of juice. CACFP facilities may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruits in the product.

Combined fruits and vegetables in smoothies

Smoothies that contain any combination of pureed fruits, pureed vegetables, and 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the greatest fruit or vegetable ingredient.

- Commercial smoothies credit as the fruits component if the first juice ingredient is fruit juice or fruit puree. Commercial smoothies credit as the vegetables component if the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice or vegetable puree.
- Smoothies made from scratch credit as the fruits component if fruit juice or fruit puree is the greatest juice ingredient in the CACFP facility's recipe. Smoothies made from scratch credit as the vegetables component if vegetable juice or vegetable puree is the greatest juice ingredient in the CACFP facility's recipe.

For information on crediting smoothies as the vegetables component, refer to "[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)" in section 5.

Crediting other components in smoothies

Other creditable ingredients in smoothies include vegetable juice and pureed vegetables (refer to "[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)" in section 5), milk (refer to "[Crediting Milk in Smoothies](#)" in section 3), and yogurt (refer to "[Crediting yogurt in smoothies](#)" in section 4).

Required documentation for smoothies

CACFP facilities must have documentation on file that indicates the quantity of all creditable ingredients in the smoothie serving, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, juice, yogurt, and milk. The total creditable amount in a smoothie cannot exceed the volume served. For example, ½ cup of a commercial smoothie cannot credit as 1 cup of juice.

Commercial smoothie products that contain at least ½ oz eq of yogurt might have a CN label. Products that are not CN labeled require a PFS. Foods made from scratch require a recipe that documents the cups of fruits per serving based on the yields in the FBG. For more information, refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" in section 2.

Noncreditable commercial smoothies

Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in CACFP menus. Noncreditable commercial smoothies also include probiotic dairy drinks, drinkable yogurt, and yogurt drinks.

Crediting considerations for smoothies

Menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when including smoothies in CACFP meals and snacks.

- **Breakfast:** Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as juice toward the entire vegetables and fruits component at breakfast, if the serving provides the minimum meal pattern amount. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed mangoes and peaches credits as the full fruits component for ages 3-5 at breakfast. If the smoothie contains less than the required amount, the breakfast menu must include additional vegetables and fruits to meet the full requirement.
- **Lunch and supper:** The CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern requires a serving of vegetables and a serving of fruits. Menu planners cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of vegetables and fruits at lunch and supper. Since both foods credit as juice, this would exceed the juice limit. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component at lunch and supper must be a whole fruit or vegetable (fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).
- **Snack:** The CACFP snack meal pattern requires any two of the five meal components. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as either the entire fruits component or the entire vegetables component but cannot credit as both meal components in the same snack. Smoothies containing juice and milk may credit as either the fruits component or the milk component but cannot credit as both meal components in the same snack. If the amount of milk or juice in the smoothie is less than the full serving, the snack menu must include additional foods to provide the full component. The snack menu cannot include juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) when milk is the only other meal component.

The USDA recommends not offering smoothies at more than one meal or snack per day.

Crediting examples for smoothies at snack

The examples below show how smoothies could credit at snack. The CACFP snack meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires any two of the following five meal components: ½ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk; ½ oz eq of MMA; ½ cup of vegetables; ½ cup of fruits; and ½ oz eq of grains.

- Example 1:** A smoothie recipe contains ½ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and ½ cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving. The menu planner may choose to credit this smoothie as either the full fruits component or the full milk component, but not both meal components in the same snack. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second meal component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., MMA, grains, or vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include a 1-ounce whole-grain corn muffin (grains component) as the second meal component.
- Example 2:** A smoothie recipe contains ½ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and ¼ cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving. The pureed fruit credits as the full fruits component. However, the milk does not credit as the full milk component because it is less than ½ cup. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second meal component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., MMA, grains, or vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include ½ cup of diced cucumbers (vegetables component) as the second meal component.

The smoothies in these examples cannot credit as the milk component for age 1 because the CACFP meal patterns for children require whole milk for age 1.

The CSDE's resource, [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), summarizes the requirements for crediting smoothies in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to [USDA Memo SP 40-2019](#), [CACFP 17-2019](#), and [SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Pureed Fruits in Other Foods

Except for smoothies, foods made with pureed fruits cannot credit as the fruits component (refer to "[Requirement for visible components](#)" in section 2). Some examples include pureed prunes or applesauce in muffins, and pureed bananas in banana bread.

Noncreditable Foods in the Fruits Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the fruits component include:

- banana chips;
- fruit snacks (e.g., fruit roll-ups, fruit leathers, fruit wrinkles, fruit twists, yogurt-covered fruit snacks);
- home-canned products (for food safety reasons);
- jams, jellies, and preserves;
- juice drinks that are not 100 percent juice such as grape juice drink, orange juice drink, pineapple-grapefruit drink, cranberry juice cocktail, and lemonade; and
- commercial fruit smoothies that contain dietary or herbal supplements.

This list is not all-inclusive. For more information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the fruits component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.

Resources for Crediting Fruits

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the fruits component in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

- 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: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 5: Fruits Component (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Fruits in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-fruits-child-nutrition-programs-tip-sheet>
- Crediting Juice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_juice_cacfp.pdf
- Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_smoothies_cacfp.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 3: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Fruits Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section3_Fruits.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 3: Yield Table for Fruits (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section3_FruitsYieldTable.pdf
- Fruits Component (“How To” 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/how-to#Fruits>
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>
- USDA Memo SP 10-2014, CACFP 05-2014, and SFSP 10-2014 (v3): Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

- Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>
- Webinar: Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs>

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Fruits Component](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.



7 — Grains Component

Grain menu items must be WGR or enriched to credit in CACFP menus. Breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified. Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains

The grains component includes a variety of WGR and enriched foods, such as:

- breads, biscuits, bagels, rolls, tortillas, and muffins;
- snack products, such as crackers (including sweet crackers, such as animal crackers and graham crackers), hard pretzels, hard breadsticks, tortilla chips; and popcorn;
- cereal grains, such as buckwheat, brown rice, bulgur, and quinoa;
- RTE breakfast cereals, such as puffed cereals, whole-grain round or flaked cereal, and granola;
- cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular), such as oatmeal, farina, and cream of wheat;
- bread products used as an ingredient in another menu item, such as combination foods, e.g., breading on fish or poultry and pizza crust in pizza; and
- pasta products, such as macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, orzo, and couscous.

CACFP menus must include at least one serving of WGR grains per day, between all meals and snacks served to children. Products that are 100 percent whole grain, such as whole-wheat bread and brown rice, provide the best nutrition and should be served most often.

Overview of Crediting Requirements

Menu planners must complete two steps to determine if grain menu items credit in CACFP menus.

1. **Crediting criteria:** Determine if the grain menu item meets the CACFP crediting criteria. To credit as the grains component, the grain menu item must be WGR or enriched. For guidance on the crediting and WGR criteria, refer to [“Part A: Crediting Requirements”](#) and [“Part B: WGR Criteria.”](#)
2. **Oz eq contribution:** Determine the oz eq contribution of the planned serving. For guidance on determining a grain menu item’s oz eq contribution, refer to [“Part C: Serving Size.”](#)

These steps apply to all grain menu items, including commercial grain products and foods prepared from scratch.

Choking Prevention for Grains

Some grains may be a choking hazard for young children. Examples include plain wheat germ; whole-grain kernels such as rice or wheat berries; crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole-grain kernels such as wheat berries; breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels, and hard chunks (such as granola); and popcorn. Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding what grains to offer in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.



Grain-based Desserts Prohibited

Grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component in the CACFP meal patterns for children. Examples of grain-based desserts include breakfast bars, brownies, cakes (including cupcakes and coffee cakes), cereal bars, cinnamon rolls, cinnamon streusel quick breads, cookies (all kinds, including vanilla wafers), doughnuts, gingerbread, granola bars, ice cream cones, marshmallow cereal treats, pastries (such as cinnamon buns, Danish, sweet buns, sweet rolls, and eclairs) piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), sweet biscotti (such as those made with fruits, chocolate, or icing) sweet bread pudding, sweet croissants (e.g. chocolate filled), sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), rice pudding, and toaster pastries.

Identifying grain-based desserts

The USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) identifies creditable grain-based desserts in red. If a product is not listed on the Exhibit A chart, the menu planner may decide if a food is a grain-based dessert by considering the common perceptions of the food and how it's typically served. The questions below help menu planners determine if the product is a grain-based dessert.

- Is the food thought of or served as a dessert?
- Is it frosted, iced, or dessert-flavored, like chocolate, caramel, or butterscotch?
- Does it contain custard filling or candy?
- Is it in the shape of a cookie or packaged like a dessert?

Menu planners should not rely on a product's name to determine if it is grain-based dessert because cookies and similar grain-based desserts do not have an FDA standard of identity. This means that manufacturers might use terms in their product names or labels that might be misleading. Some examples include:

- "breakfast rounds" for oatmeal raisin cookies;
- "breakfast bars" for cereal bars; and
- "super stars" for doughnut holes.

Regardless of the name on the label, these types of foods are still grain-based desserts.

Foods that are not grain-based desserts

Grain-based desserts do not include sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers), muffins, quick breads, e.g., banana bread and zucchini bread (except for cinnamon streusel), cornbread, pancakes, waffles, French toast, savory scones (such as cheese and herb), and piecrusts in entrees such as quiche, meat pies, and chicken potpie.

As a best practice, the USDA encourages CACFP menus to limit sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers) because of their higher sugars content. The CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all CACFP meals and snacks served to children.

Serving grain-based desserts as extra foods

CACFP facilities may choose to serve grain-based desserts as an additional food item that does not credit in CACFP menus. Examples include serving cake or cookies at special celebrations. However, to ensure that children’s nutritional needs are met, the USDA and CSDE encourage CACFP facilities to use discretion when serving noncreditable foods and beverages (refer to “[Noncreditable foods](#)” in section 2). In addition, grain-based desserts cannot be purchased with CACFP funds (refer to “[CACFP funds cannot purchase noncreditable foods](#)” in section 2).

Resources for grain-based desserts

The resources below provide guidance on the requirements for grain-based desserts.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7A: Grains Component Crediting Requirements (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grain-based-desserts-cacfp>
- USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program>
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>

Links to these resources are also available under “[Grain-based Desserts](#)” in the “Grains Component” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

This section addresses the crediting requirements for the grains component of the CACFP meal patterns for children. All grain items served in CACFP menus must comply with these requirements, including commercial grain products and grain foods made from scratch.

Creditable Grains

Grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains to credit as the grains component in the CACFP meal patterns for children. Breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified; and must meet the sugars limit (refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this section).

Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran), and germ (such as wheat germ). Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains.

For information on identifying whole and enriched grains, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Whole Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For guidance on the steps for identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [How to Identify Creditable Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).



The CACFP meal patterns for children have different crediting requirements for commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, cooked breakfast cereals, RTE breakfast cereals, and grain foods made from scratch. This section summarizes these crediting requirements.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

Crediting Criteria for Commercial Grain Products

Commercial grain products in groups A-E (baked goods, such as breads, rolls, muffins, crackers, and waffles) and group H (pasta and cereal grains, such as quinoa, rice, and millet) credit as the grains component if a creditable grain is the first ingredient, or water is the first ingredient and a creditable grain is the second ingredient.

Groups A-E and H-I refer to the grain groups in the USDA's Exhibit A chart. For more information, refer to "[Part C: Required Servings for Grains](#)" in this section. **Note:** Groups F and G (grain-based desserts) do not credit in the CACFP meal patterns for children (refer to "[Grain-based Desserts Prohibited](#)" in this section).

The ingredients for commercial products are listed in descending order of predominance by weight. The ingredient that weighs the most is listed first and the ingredient that weighs the least is listed last. When reviewing the first ingredient on the product's label, water is ignored.

The ingredients statements below show some examples of creditable commercial grain products. Whole grains are indicated in bold and enriched grains are indicated in italics.

- **Example 1:**

Ingredients: *Enriched wheat flour* (*flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid*), canola and/or sunflower oil, salt, contains 2% or less of: yeast, nonfat milk, sugar, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, paprika, spices, celery, onion powder.

This grain product credits as an enriched grain. Enriched wheat flour is the first ingredient and the only grain ingredient.

- **Example 2:**

Ingredients: Water, **whole-wheat flour**, yeast, wheat gluten, contains less than 2% of each of the following: soybean oil, sugar, salt, calcium propionate (preservative), fumaric acid, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, calcium sulfate, ammonium sulfate.

This grain product credits as a whole grain. Whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient after water and is the only grain ingredient. This product is 100 percent whole grain and credits as a WGR food.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

- **Example 3:**

Ingredients: Water, *enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, vitamin B1 [thiamin mononitrate], vitamin B2 [riboflavin], folic acid)*, **whole-wheat flour**, vegetable oil (soybean, palm, and/or canola oil), egg whites, *wheat bran*, sugar, contains 2% or less of leavening (baking soda, sodium aluminum phosphate, monocalcium phosphate), salt, malt flavoring, whey, soy lecithin.

This grain product is an enriched grain. Enriched wheat flour is the first ingredient after water. This product is not WGR because the whole wheat flour is listed after the enriched flour.

The CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) provides more examples of how to determine if commercial grain products are creditable. Menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheet, [Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), to determine if commercial grain products comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)" in this section.

Multiple creditable grains in commercial grain products

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the commercial grain product contains more than one creditable grain, the CACFP facility must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information (refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2).

To credit in CACFP menus, the product's PFS must document that the combined weight of all creditable grains in the product is the greatest ingredient by weight. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Part A: Crediting Requirements**Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals**

Breakfast cereals include RTE breakfast cereals in group I (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereals, and granola) and cooked breakfast cereals in group H (including instant and regular, such as oatmeal, farina, and cream of wheat). Breakfast cereals credit as the grains component if they meet the two criteria below.

1. The first ingredient is a creditable grain, or the cereal is fortified.
2. The cereal meets the sugars limit (no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce).

Effective October 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, [*Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*](#), changes the product-based limit for breakfast cereals from total sugars to added sugars. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. With state agency approval, CACFP facilities may choose to implement the added sugars limit prior to October 1, 2025.

Evaluate sugars per serving first

The CSDE recommends that menu planners review the sugars content of breakfast cereals first, before reviewing the ingredients statement for creditable grains. If a breakfast cereal exceeds the sugars limit, it cannot credit in CACFP menus, even if it contains creditable grains or is WGR.



Part A: Crediting Requirements

Crediting guidance for breakfast cereals

The CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), provides detailed guidance on the crediting requirements for breakfast cereals and includes examples of how to determine if breakfast cereals are creditable. Menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheets, [Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat \(RTE\) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), to determine if breakfast cereals comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)" in this section.

Breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels such as wheat berries, and hard chunks (such as granola) may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what types of breakfast cereals to offer in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Crediting Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods

Commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E (such as pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs) or groups H-I (such as noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes) credit as the grains component if the first **grain** ingredient is a creditable grain.

- **Example for breaded chicken nuggets:**

Ingredients: Boneless, skinless chicken breast with rib meat, water, **whole-wheat flour**, contains 2% or less of the following: dried garlic, dried onion, salt, sea salt, soybean oil, spice, sugar, torula yeast, turmeric, yeast, yeast extract. Breeding set in vegetable oil.

This combination food credits as a WGR food toward the grains component because the first grain ingredient (whole-wheat flour) is a creditable grain. A PFS is required to determine the oz eq per serving (refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2).

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Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods

A commercial combination food that lists the ingredients for the grain portion separately credits as the grains component if a creditable grain is the first ingredient in the grain portion, or water is the first ingredient in the grain portion and a whole grain is the second ingredient in the grain portion.

- **Example for cheese ravioli:**

Ingredients: **Filling:** Fat-free ricotta cheese (whey, skim milk [made from nonfat dry milk powder], vinegar, xanthan gum, carrageenan), water, egg, low moisture part skim mozzarella cheese (cultured part skim milk, salt, enzymes), whey protein isolate, sodium caseinate, Romano cheese made from cow's milk (cultured milk, salt, enzymes), bleached wheat flour, garlic salt (salt, dehydrated garlic), salt, corn starch, sugar, dehydrated garlic. **Pasta: Whole-wheat flour**, enriched durum wheat flour (wheat flour, niacin, ferrous sulfate, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), water, egg.

This combination food credits as a WGR food toward the grains component because the first ingredient (whole-wheat flour) in the pasta (grain portion) is a creditable grain. A PFS is required to determine the oz eq per serving (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2).

Multiple creditable grains in commercial combination foods

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain portion of a combination food contains more than one creditable grain, the CACFP facility must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2). To credit in CACFP menus, the product's PFS must document that the combined weight of all creditable grains in the grain portion of the product is the greatest ingredient by weight in the grain portion. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

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Crediting Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch

Grain foods made from scratch and combination foods made from scratch that contain a grain portion have different crediting requirements.

- **Grain foods:** Grain foods made from scratch (such as breads, rolls, muffins, waffles, and pancakes) credit toward the grains component based on the amount of creditable grains in one serving of the CACFP facility's recipe.
- **Combination foods:** Combination foods made from scratch that contain a grain portion (such as pizza, lasagna, and breaded chicken) credit toward the grains component based on the amount of creditable grains in the grain portion of one serving of the CACFP facility's recipe.

The CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) provides examples of how to determine if grain foods made from scratch are creditable. Menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheets, [Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) or [Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), to determine if grain foods made from scratch comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)" in this section.

CACFP facilities must have recipes on file (preferably standardized recipes) to document the crediting information for grain foods prepared from scratch (refer to "[Documentation for foods made from scratch](#)" in section 2).

Part A: Crediting Requirements**Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal**

Corn ingredients credit as the grains component if they are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized. Nixtamalization is the process of soaking and cooked dried corn in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process results in a product with nutrition content similar to whole-grain corn.

Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, masa harina (corn flour), corn masa (dough from masa harina), and certain types of cornmeal. Masa harina is used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales.

Methods for identifying nixtamalized corn

Menu planners may use the two methods below to identify commercial products made with nixtamalized corn.

1. **Corn is treated with lime:** If the ingredients statement indicates that the corn is treated with lime (such as “ground corn with trace of lime” and “ground corn treated with lime”), the corn ingredient is nixtamalized. The examples below show some commercial corn products that are nixtamalized and therefore credit as 100 percent whole grains.
 - Ingredients: *Corn masa flour*, water, contains 2% or less of: cellulose gum, guar gum, amylase, propionic acid, benzoic acid, and phosphoric acid (to maintain freshness).
 - Ingredients: *Whole-white corn*, vegetable oil (contains soybean, corn, cottonseed, and/or sunflower oil), salt, *lime/calcium hydroxide* (processing aid).
 - Ingredients: *Limed whole-grain white corn*, palm oil, salt, TBHQ (preservative).
 - Ingredients: *Whole-grain yellow corn*, high oleic canola oil, water, *corn flour*, salt, *hydrated lime*.

If the ingredients statement does not provide sufficient information (such as “cornmeal” and “yellow corn flour”), CACFP facilities must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer stating that the ingredients are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2).

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2. **Product includes FDA-approved whole grain health claim:** If a commercial product made with corn includes one of two FDA-approved whole grain health claims on its packaging, the corn in the product is nixtamalized and the product provides at least 50 percent whole grain. These health claims are not common.
 - **Low-fat claim:** “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.”
 - **Moderate-fat claim:** “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease.”

Crediting information for corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal is summarized in [USDA Memo SP 34-2019](#), [CACFP 15-2019](#), and [SFSP 15-2019](#): *Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs*.

Crediting Hominy as Grains

Hominy is a traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin.

Hominy is available dried and in a fully cooked canned form. Dried hominy (such as grits) credits as a whole grain. A ½-cup serving of cooked hominy grits or 1 ounce (28 grams) of dry hominy grits credits as 1 oz eq of the grains component.

For information on crediting canned hominy as the vegetables component, refer to “[Crediting Hominy as Vegetables](#)” in section 5.

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Crediting Popcorn

Popcorn is a whole-grain food. Three cups (a 1-ounce serving) of plain popped popcorn credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce), which equals $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. The table below summarizes the grains contribution of popped popcorn.

Table 7-1. Grains contribution of popped popcorn

Cups (popped)	Weight (popped)	Grains contribution
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	0.25 ounces or 7 grams	$\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	0.5 ounces or 14 grams	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq
2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups	0.75 ounces or 21 grams	$\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq
3 cups	1 ounce or 28 grams	1 oz eq

Crediting considerations for popcorn

For developmentally ready children, menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when including popcorn in CACFP menus.

- Consider the appropriateness of the serving size for each age group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of the grains component from popcorn, due to the large volume required for crediting. The CSDE recommends providing a smaller serving of popcorn and supplementing it with another food from the grains component. For example, a snack mix that contains $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of popcorn ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq of grains) and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of enriched or WGR round cereal ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq of grains) credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of the grains component.

Popcorn may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer popcorn in CACFP menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

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- Foods that contain popcorn as an ingredient (such as a popcorn snack mix or popcorn balls) require documentation to determine the crediting information. CACFP facilities must obtain a PFS for commercial products (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2) and a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) for foods prepared from scratch (refer to [“Documentation for foods made from scratch”](#) in section 2).
- Popcorn sometimes includes ingredients and toppings such as salt, caramel, cheese, and butter. The USDA strongly encourages healthier alternatives, such as seasoning the popcorn with herb blends or serving fresh, plain popcorn.
- Popcorn that is an ingredient in grain-based desserts does not credit toward the grains component. Grain-based desserts do not credit in CACFP menus (refer to [“Grain-based Desserts Prohibited”](#) in this section).

The requirements for crediting popcorn are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 23-2019](#), [CACFP 10-2019](#), and [SFSP 09-2019](#): *Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs*.



Part A: Crediting Requirements**Noncreditable Foods in the Grains Component**

Examples of foods that do not credit as the grains component include:

- commercial grain products that are not WGR or enriched;
- breakfast cereals that are not WGR, enriched, or fortified;
- breakfast cereals that contain more than 6 grams of sugars per ounce;
- foods made from scratch that are not WGR or enriched; and
- grain-based desserts such as brownies, cookies, cake, coffee cake, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple and pecan), rice pudding, and sweet bread pudding (refer to “[Grain-based Desserts Prohibited](#)” in this section).

This list is not all-inclusive. For more information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the grains component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.

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Grain Crediting Worksheets

Menu planners may use the CSDE’s CACFP crediting worksheets to evaluate grain-based foods for compliance with the CACFP crediting, WGR, and serving requirements.

- Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

These crediting worksheets are available in the “[CSDE Crediting Worksheets for CACFP Child Care Programs](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Resources for Crediting Grains

The resources below assist menu planners with identifying foods that credit as the grains component in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7A: Grains Component Crediting Requirements (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- 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 Enriched Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_enriched_grainscacfp.pdf
- Crediting Grains in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet Part 1: Creditable Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/grains_tipsheet_part1.pdf

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- Crediting Grains in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet Part 2: Identifying Grain Products That Are Whole Grain-Rich (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/grains_tipsheet_part2.pdf
- Crediting Grains in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet Part 3: Program Requirements (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/grains_tipsheet_part3.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
- Food Buying Guide Section 4: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Grains Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section4_Grains.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 4: Yield Table for Grains (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section4_GrainsYieldTable.pdf
- Grains Component (“How To” 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/how-to#Grains>
- 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
- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf
- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs – Completed Sample (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Example_Grains_Oz_Eq.pdf
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>

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- USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019, and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs>
- Using the WIC Food Lists to Identify Grains for the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-wic-food-lists-identify-grains-cacfp>
- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_cacfp.pdf

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Grains Component](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.



Part B: WGR Requirement

Part B: WGR Requirement

“Whole grain-rich” for the CACFP meal patterns for children means a food that contains at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. All WGR foods credit in the CACFP meal patterns for children but not all creditable grains are WGR. The WGR criteria are different for commercial products and foods made from scratch. This section summarizes these requirements.

Menu Planning Considerations

CACFP menus must include at least one serving of WGR grains per day, between all meals and snacks served to children. The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day.

CACFP facilities may serve a WGR food at any CACFP meal or snack, but menu planners must consider the menu planning requirements below.

- **CACFP facility serves only one meal per day:** If the CACFP facility serves only one CACFP meal per day (breakfast, lunch, or supper), the grain served at that meal must be WGR.
- **CACFP facility serves only breakfast:** If the CACFP facility serves only breakfast and chooses to substitute MMA for the grains component at breakfast (allowed up to three times per week), a WGR food is not required. For more information on MMA substitutes, refer to “[MMA at Breakfast](#)” in section 4.
- **CACFP facility serves only snack:** The grains component is not required at snack but may be served as one of the two required meal components. If the CACFP facility serves only snack and offers a grain as one of the two snack components, the grain must be WGR.



The WGR requirement applies to the CACFP, not to each child. If the CACFP facility serves more than one meal, and two different groups of children are at each meal (such as one group

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of children at breakfast and another group of children at lunch), only one meal is required to contain a WGR food.

The USDA strongly encourages CACFP facilities to vary the meals and snacks that include a WGR item. For example, the CACFP menu could include whole-grain toast at breakfast on Monday and brown rice at lunch on Tuesday. This helps to ensure that all children are served a variety of whole grains, and benefit from the important nutrients these foods provide.

Overview of Rule of Three

The USDA allows six methods for determining if grain foods meet the CACFP WGR criteria. The Rule of Three reviews the product's ingredients statement and looks at the first three grain ingredients. It is the most used method for commercial products. The CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) provides guidance on these methods and includes examples of evaluating grain products for compliance with the Rule of Three WGR criteria.

As a reminder, the ingredients for commercial products are listed in descending order of predominance by weight. The ingredient that weighs the most is listed first and the ingredient that weighs the least is listed last. When reviewing the first ingredient on the product's label, water is ignored.

The Rule of Three applies only to commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, and cooked breakfast cereals. The Rule of Three does not apply to RTE breakfast cereals in group I (puffed cereals, flaked or round cereals, and granola).

Rule of Three Requirements

The Rule of Three requires that the first ingredient (excluding water) is a whole grain, and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are creditable grains. When reviewing a commercial product's ingredients statement for compliance with the Rule of Three criteria, the following requirements apply:

- a whole grain must be the first ingredient, and may be the second or third grain ingredients;
- an enriched grain may be the second or third grain ingredients;
- bran and germ may be the second or third grain ingredients; and

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- noncreditable grains cannot be any of the first three grain ingredients. Examples of noncreditable grains for the CACFP meal patterns for children include vegetable and legume flours (such as chickpea flour, fava bean flour, pea flour, and potato flour), corn flour, corn grits, farina, malted barley flour, milled corn, nut or seed flours, oat fiber, potato flour, potato starch, rice, soy fiber, soy flakes, wheat flour, and yellow corn flour. For additional examples and more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

If a food meets the Rule of Three, the menu planner does not need to check any other grain ingredients further down on the ingredients statement.

The Rule of Three WGR criteria are different for commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, cooked breakfast cereals, RTE breakfast cereals, and foods made from scratch. These requirements are summarized below.

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Grain Products

Under the Rule of Three, commercial grain products in groups A-E (baked goods, such as breads, rolls, muffins, crackers, waffles, and pancakes) and group H (pasta and cereal grains, such as quinoa, rice, and millet) are WGR if they meet the three criteria below.

1. A whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient).
2. The second grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.
3. The third grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.

The examples below show some commercial grain products that meet the Rule of Three WGR criteria. Whole grains are indicated in bold and enriched grains are indicated in italics.

- **Example 1:**
Ingredients: **Whole-wheat flour**, sugar, wheat gluten. Contains 2% or less of each of the following: honey, salt, yeast, molasses, diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono-diglycerides (datem), ascorbic acid, mono-and diglycerides, l-cysteine, enzymes.

Whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient and the only grain ingredient. This product is 100 percent whole grain and credits as a WGR food.

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- **Example 2:**

Ingredients: Water, **whole-wheat flour**, yeast, wheat gluten, contains less than 2% of each of the following: soybean oil, sugar, salt, calcium propionate (preservative), fumaric acid, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, calcium sulfate, ammonium sulfate.

Whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient after water and the only grain ingredient. This product is 100 percent whole grain and credits as a WGR food.

- **Example 3:**

Ingredients: **Whole-wheat flour**, *enriched flour (wheat flour, niacinamide, reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate [vitamin B1], riboflavin [vitamin B2], folic acid)*, soybean oil with TBHQ for freshness, salt, contains 2% or less of corn syrup, baking soda, yeast, soy lecithin.

Whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient. Enriched flour is the second and only other grain ingredient. This product credits as a WGR food.

Multiple whole grains in commercial grain products

If a whole grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain product contains more than one whole grain, the CACFP facility must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer stating the combined weight of all whole grains (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2). The example below shows a grain product that contains more than one whole grain. Whole grains are indicated in bold and enriched grains are indicated in italics.

- **Example:**

Ingredients: *Unbleached enriched wheat flour [flour, malted barley flour, reduced iron, niacin, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid]*, water, **whole-wheat flour**, **whole oats**, sugar, yeast, soybean oil, salt.

To meet the WGR criteria, the product’s PFS must document that the combined weight of the two whole grains (whole-wheat flour and whole oats) is more than the weight of the first ingredient (unbleached enriched wheat flour).

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Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Cooked Breakfast Cereals

Under the Rule of Three, cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular, such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina) are WGR if they meet the two criteria below.

1. The first ingredient is a whole grain.
2. The next two grain ingredients (if any) are whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3) the cereal meets the sugars limit (refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in “Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements”).

The example below shows a whole-grain breakfast cereal.

- **Example:**

Ingredients: **Whole-grain rolled oats**, sugar, natural flavors, salt.

This cooked breakfast cereal is 100 percent whole grain because the first and only grain ingredient (whole grain rolled oats) is a whole grain. To credit as the grains component, this breakfast cereal must also comply with the sugars limit (refer to “[Sugars limit for breakfast cereals](#)” in “Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements”).

For examples of how to determine if cooked breakfast cereals are WGR, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). Menu planners may use the CSDE’s Excel worksheet, [Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), to determine if cooked breakfast cereals comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to “[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)” in this section.



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WGR Criteria for RTE Breakfast Cereals

The Rule of Three does not apply to RTE breakfast cereals. RTE breakfast cereals are WGR if they meet the two criteria below.

1. The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain.
2. Total sugars do not exceed 6 grams per dry ounce (refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in “Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements”).

The example below shows a whole-grain fortified RTE breakfast cereal that meets the WGR criteria. Whole grains are indicated in bold and the enrichment nutrients are highlighted in yellow.

- **Example:**

Ingredients: **Whole-grain oat flour**, sugar, corn flour, whole-wheat flour, rice flour, salt, calcium carbonate, disodium phosphate, reduced iron, niacinamide, zinc oxide, BHT (a preservative), thiamin mononitrate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, folic acid.

This RTE breakfast cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients (calcium carbonate, reduced iron, niacinamide, zinc oxide, thiamin mononitrate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, folic acid). It is WGR because whole-grain oat flour is the first ingredient, and the cereal is fortified. This RTE breakfast cereal credits as a WGR food if meets the sugars limit (refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in “Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements”).

For examples of how to determine if RTE breakfast cereals are WGR, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). Menu planners may use the CSDE’s Excel worksheet, [Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat \(RTE\) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), to determine if RTE breakfast cereals comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR criteria (refer to “[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)” in this section).

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Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods

Under the Rule of Three, commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E (such as pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs) or groups H-I (such as noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes) are WGR if they meet the three criteria below.

1. A whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient).
2. The second grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.
3. The third grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.

The ingredients statement below shows an example for breaded chicken nuggets.

- **Example for breaded chicken nuggets:**

Ingredients: Boneless, skinless chicken breast with rib meat, water, **whole-wheat flour**, contains 2% or less of the following: dried garlic, dried onion, salt, sea salt, soybean oil, spice, sugar, torula yeast, turmeric, yeast, yeast extract. Breading set in vegetable oil.

This product meets the Rule of Three WGR criteria because whole-wheat flour is the first and only grain ingredient. A PFS is required to determine the oz eq per serving (refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2).

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Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods

A commercial combination food that lists the ingredients for the grain portion separately is WGR if it meets the three criteria below.

1. A whole grain is the first ingredient in the grain portion (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient).
2. The second grain ingredient in the grain portion (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.
3. The third grain ingredient in the grain portion (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.

The ingredients statement below shows an example for a breaded chicken patty that lists the grain portion separately.

- **Example for breaded chicken patty:**

Ingredients: Chicken, water, salt, and natural flavor. **Breaded with:** white whole-wheat flour, water, salt, *enriched yellow corn flour*, dried onion, dried garlic, dried yeast, brown sugar, extractives of paprika, and spices. Breeding set in vegetable oil.

This product meets the Rule of Three WGR criteria because the first grain ingredient (white whole-wheat flour), in the breading (grain portion) is a whole grain and the second and only other grain ingredient is an enriched grain (enriched yellow corn flour). A PFS is required to determine the oz eq per serving (refer to “[Documentation for commercial products](#)” in section 2).

Part B: WGR Requirement

Multiple whole grains in commercial combination foods

If a whole grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain portion of the combination food contains more than one whole grain, the CACFP facility must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2). The ingredients statement below shows an example for a breaded chicken patty.

- **Example for breaded chicken patty:**

Ingredients: Chicken, water, salt, and natural flavor. **Breaded with:** *unbleached enriched wheat flour [flour, malted barley flour, reduced iron, niacin, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid], water, whole-wheat flour, whole oats*, dried onion, dried garlic, dried yeast, brown sugar, extractives of paprika, and spices. Breeding set in vegetable oil.

The grain portion (breeding) contains enriched flour as the first ingredient and also contains two whole grains (whole-wheat flour and whole oats). To meet the WGR criteria, the product’s PFS must document that the combined weight of the two whole grains is the greatest ingredient by weight in the grain portion (refer to [“Documentation for commercial products”](#) in section 2).

Part B: WGR Requirement

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch

Grain foods made from scratch (such as breads, rolls, muffins, waffles, and pancakes) are WGR if the combined amount of all whole grains is equal to or more than the combined weight of all other creditable grains in the recipe. The examples below show how CACFP facilities can determine if standardized recipes meet the CACFP WGR criteria.

- **Example 1:** A muffin recipe contains 2 pounds of whole-wheat flour and 2 pounds of enriched flour. This recipe is WGR because the weight of the whole grain and enriched flour are equal.
- **Example 2:** A bread recipe contains $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of whole-grain flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of rolled oats, and 1 pound of enriched flour. This recipe is WGR because the combined weight of the two whole grains (whole-grain flour and rolled oats) is $1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds, which exceeds the weight of the enriched flour.

For examples of how to determine if grain foods made from scratch are WGR, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).



Part B: WGR Requirement**Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Combination Foods Made from Scratch**

The Rule of Three WGR criteria apply only to the grain portion of combination foods made from scratch. Examples of combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E include pizza crust in pizza, breaded chicken, and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs. Examples of combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups H-I include noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes.

The grain portion of a recipe for a combination food is WGR if the combined amount of whole grains in the grain portion is equal to or more than the combined amount of all other creditable grains in the grain portion.

Menu planners must review the CACFP facility's recipes to determine if the grain portion credits as WGR or enriched grains.

Required Documentation for Grains

CACFP facilities must maintain documentation on file to indicate that commercial grain products and food made from scratch comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR requirements. Acceptable documentation for commercial products includes CN labels (if the grain portion is part of a CN-labeled MMA product) and PFS forms. Recipes (preferably standardized) are required for foods made from scratch. The CSDE will review this documentation as part of the Administrative Review of the CACFP. For more information, refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" in section 2.

The CSDE recommends that CACFP menus include information about the type of grain items served for each meal and snack. This helps to document meal pattern compliance and provide information for families. For example, the menu planner could list:

- "whole-wheat bread," "whole grain-rich bread," or "enriched white bread" instead of "bread;"
- "brown rice" or "enriched rice" instead of "rice;"
- "enriched spaghetti" instead of "spaghetti;"
- "whole-corn tortilla" instead of "tortilla;" and
- "fortified whole-grain breakfast cereal" instead of "breakfast cereal."

Part B: WGR Requirement

Other acceptable methods for indicating which grains on CACFP menus are WGR include

- using abbreviations, such as “WW bread” for whole-wheat bread or “WGR blueberry muffin” for a WGR blueberry muffin;
- using symbols to indicate WGR foods; or
- using a check box to signify that a food is WGR.

Menus that include abbreviations or symbols should also indicate what they mean. For example, the menu could feature a statement such as: “WGR means a food that is whole grain-rich.”

CACFP facilities should indicate the crediting and WGR information for the grains component on the daily production record (if used) or provide other menu documentation, such as:

- a binder of nutrition information for commercial products that includes Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients statements;
- a list of all grain products served that indicates which foods are WGR or enriched, or a fortified breakfast cereal;
- recipes (preferably standardized recipes) for foods made from scratch; and
- CN labels and PFS forms for commercial foods.

CACFP facilities must also maintain documentation on file to indicate that all breakfast cereals meet the sugars limit (refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in “Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements”). Documentation should include the product’s Nutrition Facts label and the CACFP facility’s calculation showing that the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Resources for WGR Criteria

The resources below assist menu planners with identifying foods that meet the CACFP WGR criteria.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7B: Grains Component Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- 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
- Grains Component (“How To” 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/how-to#Grains>
- How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-spot-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>
- Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/identifying-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>
- Is My Recipe Whole Grain-Rich in the CACFP? (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/my-recipe-whole-grain-rich-cacfp>
- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/creditingwhen_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_cacfp.pdf

For additional resources, visit the “[Grains Component](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Part C: Required Servings

Part C: Required Servings

The required quantities for the grains component are in oz eq. The CACFP meal patterns for children require a serving of the grains component at breakfast, lunch, and supper. A serving of the grains component may be one of the two required meal components at snack. The table below summarizes the required oz eq of the grains component for each age group and meal.

Table 7-2. Required oz eq of the grains component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 *
Breakfast	½	½	1	1
Lunch and supper	½	½	1	1
Snack	½	½	1	1

* The age group for ages 13-18 applies only to at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters.

Meeting the Required Grain Servings

Menu planners may choose to serve one grain menu item or a combination of several grain menu items to meet the minimum requirement. Each serving must contain at least ¼ oz eq of grains (refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in section 2). For example, a lunch or supper menu for ages 3-5 could provide the required ½ oz eq of the grains component from:

- ¼ cup of brown rice (½ oz eq); or
- ⅛ cup of brown rice (¼ oz eq) and a ¼-ounce serving of a whole-grain roll (¼ oz eq).

Servings that contain less than ⅛ oz eq of grains do not credit in CACFP menus.

When crediting menu items toward the grains component, menu planners must round down to the nearest ¼ oz eq. For example, a CACFP recipe or commercial product that contains 0.49 oz eq of grains per serving credits as 0.25 oz eq of the grains component.

Part C: Required Servings

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the grains component, the meal must include additional grains to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the breakfast meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of the grains component. If a menu item contains $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq of grains, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq of grains to provide the full serving.

USDA's Exhibit A Chart

The USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) summarizes the grain oz eq for nine groups (A-I) of creditable grain foods. Each group contains products with similar grain content.

The Exhibit A grain quantities are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because the meal patterns are different. The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), lists the Exhibit A grain oz eq that apply to the CACFP meal patterns for children. Groups F and G (grain-based desserts) are not included because grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component.

The amount of a creditable grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. A summary of the required quantities for each Exhibit A group is below. For more information, visit the "[Ounce Equivalents](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Groups A-E: Baked goods

Groups A-E include baked goods, such as crackers, animal and graham crackers, breads, rolls, taco shells, muffins, waffles, and pancakes. The amount that provides 1 oz eq ranges from 22 grams (0.8 ounce) for foods in group A to 69 grams (2.4 ounces) for foods in group E.

Foods in groups F and G are grain-based desserts and do not credit as the grains component in the CACFP meal patterns for children (refer to "[Grain-based Desserts Prohibited](#)" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements").

Part C: Required Servings

Group H: Cereal grains

Group H includes cereal grains, such as pasta, cooked breakfast cereals, and other cereal grains, e.g., amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, farina, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat. These foods require $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked or 28 grams (1 ounce) dry to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component.

Cereal grains typically credit based on the cooked serving, but menu planners may choose to credit cereal grains using the dry uncooked weight. Dry cereal grains used as an ingredient in a recipe (such as rolled oats in bread) require 16 grams of creditable grains to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. For guidance on crediting cooked breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Group H: RTE breakfast cereals

Group I includes RTE cold breakfast cereals. These foods require 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. A 1-ounce serving equals 1 cup of flaked or round cereal, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of puffed cereal, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of granola. For guidance on crediting RTE breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Methods to Determine Oz Eq

The USDA allows two methods for determining the oz eq contribution of creditable grain products and recipes. CACFP facilities may use either method but must document how they determine the crediting information for commercial products and foods made from scratch. These methods are summarized below.

Method 1: Weight or volume (USDA's Exhibit A chart)

Method 1 uses the USDA's chart, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (Exhibit A) to determine the required weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) for the grain group where the food belongs. This method is used for commercial grain products and may also be used for foods made from scratch if the menu planner knows the weight (grams or ounces) of the prepared (cooked) serving.

For detailed guidance on determining the oz eq of a grain menu item, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Part C: Required Servings

Method 2: Creditable grains

Method 2 determines oz eq from the weight (grams) of creditable grains per serving. This method is used for recipes and may also be used for commercial grain products with a PFS stating the weight of creditable grains per serving. The required grams of creditable grains for 1 oz eq depend on whether the grain food is enriched or WGR.

- **Creditable foods:** To credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component, foods in groups A-E of the USDA's Exhibit A chart must contain 16 grams of creditable grains and foods in groups H-I must contain 28 grams of creditable grains.
- **WGR foods:** To credit as 1 oz eq of a WGR food, foods in groups A-E of the USDA's Exhibit A chart must contain 16 grams of creditable grains (including at least 8 grams of whole grains) and foods in groups H-I must contain 28 grams of creditable grains (including at least 14 grams of whole grains).

For commercial products, CACFP facilities must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer that documents the weight of the creditable grains per serving (refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2). For guidance on evaluating a grain product's PFS, refer to the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Foods made from scratch require a recipe (preferably a standardized recipe) that indicates the weight of each grain ingredient (refer to "[Documentation for foods made from scratch](#)" in section 2). The grams of creditable grains per serving are determined from the weight of each grain ingredient listed in the recipe. If the recipe lists grain ingredients only by volume (e.g., cups and quarts), the CACFP facility must calculate the equivalent weight (grams) for each grain ingredient (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)).

When method 2 is required for commercial products

CACFP facilities may need to obtain additional information to determine the crediting information for some commercial grain products. If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS, or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the product cannot credit as the grains component in CACFP menus.

Part C: Required Servings

A PFS is required for commercial products when any of the situations below apply.

1. The first ingredient is not a creditable grain, but the product contains more than one creditable grain. The PFS must indicate that the combined weight of all creditable grains is the greatest ingredient by weight.
2. *Applies only to WGR foods:* The first ingredient is not a whole grain, but the product contains more than one whole grain. The PFS must indicate that the combined weight of all whole grains is the greatest ingredient by weight.
3. *Applies only to WGR foods:* The first ingredient is a whole grain, and the product contains two or more enriched grains. The PFS must indicate that the weight of the whole grain is equal to more than the combined weight of the enriched grains.
4. *Applies only to WGR foods:* The first ingredient is a flour blend of whole and enriched flour. The PFS must indicate one of the following: 1) the whole grain content is at least 8 grams per oz eq (groups A-E); or 2) the weight of the whole grain in the flour blend is more than the first ingredient (excluding water) listed after the flour blend.
5. A combination food that contains a grain portion does not have a CN label. The PFS must indicate the following: 1) the weight (grams) of each creditable grain per serving; and 2) how the product provides that amount according to the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) or USDA's regulations, guidance, or policies.
6. The manufacturer claims that the product's serving size is less than the required weight or volume in the USDA's Exhibit A chart. The PFS must indicate the following: 1) the weight (grams) of each creditable grain per serving; and 2) how the product provides that amount according to the FBG or USDA's regulations, guidance, or policies.
7. The product is not listed in the USDA's Exhibit A chart. The PFS must indicate the following: 1) the weight (grams) of each creditable grain per serving; and 2) how the product provides that amount according to the FBG or USDA's regulations, guidance, or policies.

For specific guidance and examples, refer to the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). The CSDE will review crediting documentation during the Administrative Review of the CACFP. For more information, refer to "[Documentation for commercial products](#)" in section 2.

Part C: Required Servings

Grain crediting tools

The tools below help menu planners determine the oz eq contribution of creditable grain products and recipes.

- **USDA’s Exhibit A Grains Tool for commercial grain products:** This [online tool](#) of the USDA’s FBG determines the oz eq of commercial grain products. More information is available in USDA’s webinars, [Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue](#) and [How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool](#).
- **CSDE’s CACFP crediting worksheets:** These Excel worksheets determine if grain products and recipes meet the CACFP crediting requirements and WGR criteria and calculate the oz eq contribution of the serving.
 - Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
 - Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
 - Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

The CACFP grain crediting worksheets are available in the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

- **How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the CACFP:** The CSDE’s resource, [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), reviews the steps for using the Exhibit A quantities to determine the meal pattern contribution of three types of commercial products and recipes. These include grain menu items in groups A-E that contain multiple small pieces per serving (e.g., crackers, hard pretzels, and animal crackers), multiple large pieces per serving (e.g., pancakes, slices of bread, and waffles), and one piece per serving (e.g., muffins, bagels, and rolls).
- **USDA’s Recipe Analysis Workbook:** The FBG’s online [Recipe Analysis Workbook](#) allows menu planners to search for ingredients, develop a standardized recipe, and determine the recipe’s meal pattern contribution per serving. To access this tool, users must create a free account on the USDA’s FBG website.

For additional guidance, visit the “[Ounce Equivalents](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Part C: Required Servings

Crediting Considerations for Bread

Menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when determining the appropriate serving size for bread products and recipes.

Crediting one slice of bread

Bread is in group B of the USDA's Exhibit A chart and requires 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. The weight of one slice of bread varies greatly among manufacturers and different types of bread products. For many types of breads, one slice weighs more or less than 1 ounce. This means that one slice of bread does not always provide 1 oz eq of the grains component. Menu planners must check the serving size on the product's Nutrition Facts label to determine the oz eq contribution per slice.

The weight of one slice is determined by dividing the serving weight by the number of slices per serving, then rounding down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq (refer to "[Meeting the Required Grain Servings](#)" in this section). The example below shows this calculation.

- **Example of calculation for multigrain bread:**

The Nutrition Facts label for a multigrain bread indicates that the serving sizes is 2 slices (44 grams). Bread is in group B and requires 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component.

1. Determine the weight per slice: Divide the serving weight by the number of slices per serving.

44 grams divided by 2 slices = 22 grams per slice. Since 22 grams is less than 28 grams, one slice of this multigrain bread does not credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component.

2. Determine the grain oz eq per slice: Divide the grams per slice by 28 and round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq.

22 grams divided by 28 grams equals 0.78 oz eq, which rounds down to 0.75 oz eq. One slice of this multigrain bread credits as 0.75 oz eq of the grains component.

Part C: Required Servings

Crediting sandwiches with two slices of bread

The oz eq contribution of a sandwich is determined by adding the weight of both slices together before rounding down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. The example below shows this calculation.

- **Example of oz eq calculation:**

A sandwich contains two slices of WGR bread. The Nutrition Facts label indicates that each slice weighs 26 grams. Bread is in group B and requires 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component.

1. Determine the total weight of the bread: Multiply the weight per slice by the number of slices.

52 grams per slice multiplied by 2 slices = 52 grams

2. Bread (group B) requires 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. Divide the total weight of the two slices by 28, then round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq.

52 grams divided by 28 grams per oz eq = 1.86 oz eq, which rounds down to 1.75 oz eq. This sandwich credits as 1.75 oz eq of the grains component.

Note: If the menu planner rounds down the weight of each slice first, the crediting is less than the 1.75 oz eq provided in the manufacturer's serving.

26 grams divided by 28 grams per oz eq equals 0.93 oz eq, which rounds down to 0.75 oz eq per slice, which equals 1.5 oz eq of the grains component for the two slices of bread in the sandwich.



Part C: Required Servings

Resources for Oz Eq

The resources below assist menu planners with determining the oz eq contribution of a grain product or recipe.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7C: Grains Component Ounce Equivalents (CSDE training modules):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>
- CACFP Grains Ounce Equivalents Resources USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grains-ounce-equivalents-resources-cacfp>
- Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/grain_calculation_cacfp_oz_eq.pdf
- Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue>
- Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>
- Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index>
- Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/grain_oz_eq_cacfp.pdf
- Grains Component (“How To” 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/how-to#Grains>
- How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-maximize-exhibit-grains-tool>
- How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/how_to_use_ounce_equivalents_chart_cacfp.pdf

Part C: Required Servings

- Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-ounce-equivalents-grains-cacfp>
- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_cacfp.pdf

For additional resources, visit the “[Grains Component](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.



8 — Resources

This section includes links to resources and websites that assist CACFP facilities with meeting the CACFP meal patterns for children and crediting requirements. More links to information on the federal and state requirements and guidance for the CACFP are available on the CSDE's [Program Guidance for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources on the CACFP meal patterns and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns](#).

CACFP Policy and Guidance

CACFP Afterschool Programs (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/afterschool-programs>

CACFP At-risk Afterschool Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-at-risk-afterschool-care-centers>

CACFP Child Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-child-care-centers>

CACFP Emergency Shelters (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-emergency-shelters>

CACFP Family Day Care Homes (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-family-day-care-homes>

CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Training Webinar Series (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-halftime-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series>

CACFP Handbooks (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/cacfp-handbooks>

CACFP Regulations (USDA webpage):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-226>

CACFP Training Tools (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-training-tools>

Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/child-care-nutrition-and-physical-activity-policies>

Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/child-nutrition-programs>

Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/farm-to-preschool>

Farm to School (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/farm-to-school>

FNS Instructions for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/fns-instructions-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/food-safety-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Forms for CACFP Child Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-child-care-centers/documents>

Forms for CACFP Homes (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-family-day-care-homes/documents>

Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/laws-and-regulations-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/manuals-and-guides-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Operational Memos for the CACFP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/lists/operational-memoranda-for-the-cacfp>

Program Guidance for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/program-guidance-cacfp-child>

Resources for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/resources-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Crediting Requirements and Documentation

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: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children: Module 2: Meal Pattern Documentation (CSDE training module):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources/#BiteSize>

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

<https://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 Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know! Webinar Series (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-updates-child-nutrition-programs-be-know-webinar-series>

Crediting Worksheets for CACFP Child Care Programs (“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#CreditingWorksheets>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: Training Resources (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-training-resources>

Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA’s Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-interactive-web-based-tool>

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://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 11-2015 v2, CACFP 10-2015, and SFSP 13-2015: CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn-labels-copied-watermark-acceptable-documentation>

USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015, and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/administrative-review-process-regarding-child-nutrition-cn-label-watermarked-cn-label-and>

USDA Memo TA 07-2010 (v.3): Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/TA07-2010v3os.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):

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

Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-nutrition-facts-label-cacfp>

Yield Study Data Form for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/yield_study_form.pdf

Fruits Component

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children: Module 5: Fruits Component (CSDE training module):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources/#BiteSize>

Crediting Fruits in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet (USDA):

<http://https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-fruits-child-nutrition-programs-tip-sheet>

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

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

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

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

Fruits Component (“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/#fruits>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Grains Component

Adding Whole Grains to Your CACFP Menu (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/adding-whole-grains-your-cacfp-menu>

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children: Module 7A: Grains Component Crediting Requirements (CSDE training module):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children: Module 7B: Grains Component Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE training module):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children: Module 7C: Grains Component Ounce Equivalents (CSDE training module):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>

CACFP Grains Ounce Equivalents Resources (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grains-ounce-equivalents-resources-cacfp>

Calculating Sugar Limits for Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-breakfast-cereals-cacfp>

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-breakfast-cereals-are-lower-sugar>

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 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 Grains in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheets: Part 1: Creditable Grains in Child Nutrition Programs; Part 2: Identifying Grain Products that are Whole Grain-Rich; and Part 3: Program Requirements (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-grains>

Crediting Single-Serving Packages of Grains in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-single-serving-packages-grains-cacfp>

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

Crediting Worksheets for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-cacfp-child-care-programs/documents#CreditingWorksheets>

Determining Ounce Equivalents of Grains in CACFP Recipes (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/determining-ounce-equivalents-grains-cacfp-recipes>

Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index>

Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue>

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>

Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index>

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Grains Component (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section4_Grains.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Yield Table for Grains (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section4_GrainsYieldTable.pdf

Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

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

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

Grains Component ("How To" 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/how-to#Grains>

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

How to Identify Creditable Grains for the CACFP (CSDE):

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

How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-maximize-exhibit-grains-tool>

How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-spot-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>

How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/how_to_use_ounce_Handout in English and Spanish equivalents_chart_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/how_to_use_ounce_Handout_in_English_and_Spanish_equivalents_chart_cacfp.pdf).

Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/identifying-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>

Is My Recipe Whole Grain-Rich in the CACFP? (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/my-recipe-whole-grain-rich-cacfp>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>

USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019, and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs>

Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-ounce-equivalents-grains-cacfp>

Using the WIC Food Lists to Identify Grains for the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-wic-food-lists-identify-grains-cacfp>

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Meal Modifications

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

FNS Instruction 783-13, Revision 3: Variations in Meal Requirements for Religious Reasons: Jewish Schools, Institutions and Sponsors (USDA).

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/fnsinstruction/783-13.pdf>

Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):

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

Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Medical Statements ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-cacfp-child-care-programs/documents/#MedicalStatements>

Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-cacfp-child-care-programs>

Summary Charts of the Requirements for Meal Modifications for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Meal Patterns and Menu Planning

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE training modules):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>

CACFP Meal Pattern Updates (CSDE's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) webpage):

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

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

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs>

Menu Forms ("Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/documents#MenuForms>

Menu Planning for CACFP Child Care Programs ("How To" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/how-to#MenuPlanning>

Methods for Healthy Cooking (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/methods-healthy-cooking>

Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>

Offer Versus Serve in the CACFP (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offer-versus-serve-cacfp>

Production Records ("Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/documents#ProductionRecords>

Sample Menus ("Documents/Forms" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/documents#SampleMenus>

Serving Snacks in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-snacks-cacfp>

USDA Final Rule Correction: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (81 FR 75671):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

USDA Final Rule: Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (81 FR 24347):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/25/2016-09412/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

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 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern:

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

USDA Memo CACFP 17-2017: Documenting Meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/documenting-meals-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo SP 01-2019 and CACFP 01-2019: Guidance for FY19: Updated CACFP Meal Patterns and Updated NSLP and SBP Infant and Preschool Meal Patterns:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/guidance-fy19-updated-cacfp-meal-patterns-and-updated-nslp-and-sbp-infant-and-preschool-meal>

Meats/Meat Alternates Component

Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/additional-meat-meat-alternate-tempeh-and-surimi>

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children: Module 4: Meats/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE training module):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources/#BiteSize>

Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

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

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

Crediting Meats/Meat Alternates in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/MMA_TipSheet.pdf

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

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

Meats/Meat Alternates Component (“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#MMA>

Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products>

Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meats/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<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 handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-meat-alternates-lunch-supper-cacfp>

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 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019, and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>

USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019, and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019, and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 02-2024, CACFP 02-2024, SFSP 02-2024: Revised: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs, CACFP, and SFSP:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>

Milk Component

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

Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Milk Component (“How To” 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/how-to#Milk>

Serving Milk in the CACFP (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-milk-cacfp>

USDA Memo CACFP 17-2016: Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk and Fluid Milk Substitutions in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Q&As:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/nutrition-requirements-fluid-milk-and-fluid-milk-substitutions-cacfp-qas>

USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010, and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/qas-milk-substitution-children-medical-or-special-dietary-needs-non-disability>

Vegetables Component

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children: Module 5: Vegetables Component (CSDE training module):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>

Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the CACFP (CSDE):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Crediting Vegetables in Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetables-child-nutrition-programs-tip-sheet>

Food Buying Guide Section 2: Yield Table for Vegetables (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section2_VegetablesYieldTable.pdf

Serving Vegetables in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-vegetables-cacfp>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>

USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019, and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

Vegetables Component (“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#Vegetables>

Glossary

added sugars: Sugars and syrups added to foods in processing or preparation, as opposed to the naturally occurring sugars found in foods like fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products. Names for added sugars include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup.

Administrative Review (AR): A periodic review of an institution's operations of the Child Nutrition Programs, conducted by the Connecticut State Department of Education to monitor performance and assess compliance with all USDA regulations.

alternate protein products (APPs): APPs are generally single ingredient powders that are added to foods. Examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. APPs include vegetable protein products. The USDA has specific requirements for crediting APPs in Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

artificial sweeteners: A category of nonnutritive sweeteners used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. The six artificial sweeteners approved by the FDA include acesulfame potassium (Ace-K) (e.g., Sweet One®, Sunett®, and Sweet & Safe®); advantame; aspartame (e.g., Nutrasweet®, Equal®, and Sugar Twin®); neotame (e.g., Newtame®); saccharin (e.g., Sweet and Low®, Sweet Twin®, and Necta Sweet®); and sucralose (Splenda®). These nonnutritive sweeteners are calorie-free except for aspartame, which is very low in calories. For more information, refer to "nonnutritive sweeteners" in this section.

at-risk afterschool care centers: The at-risk afterschool meals component of the CACFP provides reimbursement for snacks and suppers served to children through age 18 who are participating in afterschool programs in eligible (at-risk) areas. The program provides funds to public and private nonprofit (federal tax-exempt) and for-profit organizations, and schools, for nutritious snacks and suppers served as part of organized programs of care, which are known to help reduce or prevent children's involvement in high-risk behaviors. All snacks must meet the requirements of the CACFP meal patterns for children. For more information, visit the USDA's [CACFP Afterschool Programs](#) webpage and the CSDE's [CACFP At-risk Afterschool Care Centers](#) webpage.

bean dip: A spread made from ground pulses (beans, peas, and/or lentils) with one or more of the following optional ingredients: ground nut/seed butter (such as tahini [ground sesame] or peanut butter; vegetable oil (such as olive oil, canola oil, soybean oil); seasoning (such as salt, citric acid); vegetables and juice for flavor (such as olives, roasted peppers, garlic, lemon juice);

and for manufactured bean dip, ingredients necessary as preservatives and/or to maintain freshness.

beans, peas, and lentils (pulses): The dried edible seeds of legumes (such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas) that are one of the five vegetable subgroups recommended by the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). Pulses include all beans, peas, and lentils cooked from dry, canned, or frozen, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, pink beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), split peas, pigeon peas, mung beans, and lentils. The meal patterns for Child Nutrition Programs allow beans, peas, and lentils to credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as MMA](#)” in section 4 and “[Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as Vegetables](#)” in section 5.

bran: The seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Examples include oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran. Bran credits the same as enriched grains.

CACFP facilities: Child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool programs, and adult day care centers that participate in the USDA’s Child and Adult Care Food Program.

CACFP meal patterns for children: The required meal components and minimum serving sizes that facilities participating in the CACFP must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children. The CACFP meal patterns apply to children ages 1-12; children ages 15 and younger of migrant workers; children of any age with disabilities; and children through age 18 in at-risk afterschool care centers and emergency shelters. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

CACFP meal patterns for infants: The required meal components and minimum serving sizes that facilities participating in the CACFP must provide to infants from birth through 11 months to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to infants. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [CACFP Infant Meal Pattern](#), and the USDA’s guide, [Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and visit the CSDE’s [Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

CACFP sponsor: A public or private nonprofit organization that is entirely responsible for the administration of the CACFP in one or more day care homes, child care centers, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, or adult day care centers. In some situations, for-profit institutions may also be eligible to participate in the CACFP. For more information, refer to the section [7 CFR 226.2](#) of the CACFP regulations.

cereal grains: The seeds that come from grasses. Cereal grains can be whole grain (such as amaranth, barley, buckwheat, corn, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rolled wheat, rye, sorghum, triticale, wheat, and wheat berries) or enriched (such as enriched cornmeal, corn grits, and farina).

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program providing nutritious meals and snacks to children in child care centers, family day care homes, and emergency shelters, and snacks and suppers to children participating in eligible at-risk afterschool care programs. The CACFP also provides meals and snacks to adults who receive care in nonresidential adult day care centers. For more information, visit the USDA's [CACFP](#) webpage and the CSDE's [CACFP](#) webpage.

Child Nutrition (CN) label: A statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a food product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. Products eligible for CN labels include main dish entrees that contribute to the meats/meat alternates component, e.g., beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. CN labels usually indicate the contribution of other meal components (such as vegetables, grains, and fruits) that are part of these products. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and visit the USDA's [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling](#) webpage.

Child Nutrition Programs: The USDA's federally funded programs that provide nutritious meals and snacks to children, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP also provides nutritious meals and snacks to the frail elderly in adult day care centers. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

combination foods: Foods that contain more than one meal component, such as pizza, burritos, tacos, lasagna, chicken stir-fry, and smoothies made with milk and fruit. For example, macaroni and cheese contains pasta (grains component) and cheese (MMA component). Combination foods generally cannot be separated (such as pizza and burritos) or are not intended to be separated (such as a hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich).

Connecticut Child Care Nutrition Standards (CCCNS): The CSDE’s recommended guidelines for the nutritional content of all foods and beverages served throughout the child care environment, including CACFP meals and snacks, celebrations and any other activities where foods and beverages are provided by the child care program or families. The CCCNS reflects current nutrition science and national health recommendations, and promotes whole or minimally processed nutrient-rich foods that are low in fat, added sugars, and sodium. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies](#).

corn masa: Dough made from masa harina that is used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales. Corn masa is nixtamalized and credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to “nixtamalization” in this section.

cornmeal: Meal made from ground, dried corn.

creditable food: A food or beverage that counts toward the meal pattern requirements for a reimbursable meal or snack in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to “[Creditable Foods](#)” in section 2 and visit the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

creditable grains: The ingredients in a commercial grain product or standardized recipe that credit toward the grains component. Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ.

deep-fat frying: Cooking by submerging food in hot oil or other fat. The CACFP prohibits deep-fat frying foods on site.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans: A federal document that provides science-based advice for Americans ages 2 and older to promote health and reduce risk for chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture jointly publish the *Dietary Guidelines* every five years. This document forms the basis of federal food, nutrition education and information programs. For more information, visit the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) webpage.

disability: A condition in which a person has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

edible portion: The portion of a food that can be eaten after the nonedible parts are removed, for example, cooked lean meat without bone, and fruit without seeds or pits.

enriched grains: Refined grains (such as wheat, rice, and corn) and grain products (such as cereal, pasta, and bread) that have some vitamins and minerals added to replace the nutrients lost during processing. The five enrichment nutrients are added within limits specified by the FDA, and include thiamin (B₁), riboflavin (B₂), niacin (B₃), folic acid, and iron. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Enriched Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

enrichment: Adding back nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) originally present in a food that were lost during processing. Enrichment nutrients are added back in approximately the same levels as were originally present in the food. For more information, refer to “enriched grains” in this section.

Exhibit A chart: A USDA chart that indicates the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for a grain food to provide 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) or 1 serving of the grains component in the Child Nutrition Programs. The required quantities for the grains component in Exhibit A are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because each program has a different meal pattern. The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), lists the Exhibit A grain oz eq that apply to the CACFP. This chart may be used to determine the grain oz eq for commercial grain products and for recipes that indicate the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. For more information, refer to the USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

flour: Finely ground and sifted wheat or other grains such as rye, corn, rice, or buckwheat.

fluid milk substitutes: Nondairy beverages (such as soy milk) that can be used as a substitute for fluid milk in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For reimbursable meals and snacks, nondairy beverages served to children without disabilities must comply with the USDA nutrition standards for milk substitutes. For more information, refer to “[USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

food item: A specific food offered within the meal components that comprise reimbursable meals in the CACFP. A food item may contain one or more meal components or more than one serving of a single component. For example, macaroni and cheese is one food item that provides two meal components (grains and MMA). A 2-ounce whole grain bagel is one food item that provides 2 oz eq of grains.

food-based menu planning: A type of menu planning for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs that uses a meal pattern with specific meal components in certain amounts based on specific age/grade groups. For more information, refer to “meal components” in this section and “[CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#)” in section 1.

fortification: Adding nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) that were not originally present in a food or beverage or adding nutrients at levels that are higher than originally present. Fortification is used for naturally nutrient-rich products based on scientifically documented health needs (e.g., fortifying milk with vitamin D to increase the body's absorption of calcium), or to enhance the perceived nutritional value of products with little or no natural nutritional value, e.g., an "energy" bar made from processed flour that is fortified with multiple vitamins and minerals. Fortification nutrients are added to products in varying amounts, from small percentages up to amounts greater than recommended intakes.

fruits component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. For more information, refer to section 6 and visit the "[Fruits Component](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

full component: The minimum quantity required in the CACFP meal patterns for children for each meal and age group.

full serving: Refer to "full component" in this section.

full-strength fruit or vegetable juice: An undiluted product obtained by extraction from sound fruit. Full-strength juice may be fresh, canned, frozen or reconstituted from concentrate and may be served in either liquid or frozen state. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: "juice," "full-strength juice," "100 percent juice," "reconstituted juice," or "juice from concentrate." **Note:** The CACFP meal patterns allow pasteurized full-strength juice to credit as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. For more information, refer to "[Juice limit](#)" in section 6 and the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Juice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

germ: The vitamin-rich sprouting section of the whole-grain kernel. Germ credits the same as enriched grains.

grain-based desserts: Desserts that are made primarily of grains and that do not credit in CACFP menus. Examples include brownies, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, coffee cakes, cinnamon streusel quick breads, piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, orange cranberry, and chocolate chip), sweet croissants (e.g., chocolate or almond filled), sweet rice puddings (e.g., cinnamon and vanilla), sweet bread puddings (e.g., made with cinnamon, fruits, chocolate, or icing), and sweet pita chips (e.g., cinnamon sugar). Sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers) are not grain-based desserts.

grains component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of cereal grains and products made from their flours. Creditable grain foods include products and recipes that are WGR or enriched. Creditable cooked and RTE breakfast cereals include products that are WGR, enriched, or fortified. For more information, refer to section 7 and visit the [“Grains Component”](#) section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

grains: Plants in the grass family that produce a dry, edible fruit commonly called a kernel, grain, or berry.

hominy: A traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin. For crediting information, refer to [“Crediting Hominy as Vegetables”](#) in section 5 and [“Crediting Hominy as Grains”](#) in section 7.

juice drink: A product resembling juice that contains full-strength juice along with added water and possibly other ingredients, such as sweeteners, spices, or flavorings. Juice drinks do not credit toward the meal pattern requirements.

lactose: The naturally occurring sugar found in milk. Lactose contains glucose and galactose. For more information, refer to “simple carbohydrates (sugars) in this section.

lean meat and poultry: Defined by the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) as meat and poultry that contains less than 10 grams of fat, no more than 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per 100 grams and per labeled serving size, based on the USDA’s definitions for food label use. Examples include 95% lean cooked ground beef, beef top round steak or roast, beef tenderloin, pork top loin chop or roast, pork tenderloin, ham or turkey deli slices, skinless chicken breast, and skinless turkey breast.

legumes: Plants that grow in pods. Legumes include pulses, which are the edible dried seeds of plants in the legume family, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas. Pulses include all beans, peas, and lentils cooked from dry, canned, or frozen, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, pink beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), split peas, pigeon peas, mung beans, and lentils. The meal patterns for Child Nutrition Programs allow beans, peas, and lentils to credit as either the MMA component or the vegetable component. For more information, refer to “Pulses” in this section and [“Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as Meats/Meat Alternates”](#) in section 4 and [“Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils as Vegetables”](#) in section 5.

main dish: The main dish is generally considered the main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items. Examples of main dish items include pizza, chicken stir-fry, and chef's salad with ham, hard-boiled egg, and cheese.

masa harina: Corn flour used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales. Masa harina is nixtamalized and credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to "nixtamalization" in this section and "[Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal](#)" in section 7.

meal components: The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates. For information on the individual meal components, refer to sections 3 through 7, and visit the "[Documents/Forms](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

meal pattern: The required meal components and minimum servings that schools and institutions participating in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children. For more information, refer to "[CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#)" in section 1.

meal: A grain made by coarsely grinding corn, oats, wheat, or other grains. Whole grain, enriched, or fortified meal credits toward the grains component of the USDA's meal patterns

meals: Refer to "reimbursable meals" in this section.

meat alternates: Foods that provide similar protein content to meat. Meat alternates include alternate protein products, cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans or peas, nuts and seeds and their butters (except for acorn, chestnut, and coconut), tofu and other soy products containing at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume), tempeh, and yogurt (unflavored or flavored) containing no more than 23 grams of sugars per 6 ounces. For more information, refer to section 4 and visit the "[Meats/Meat Alternates Component](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

meats/meat alternates component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes meats (e.g., beef, poultry, and fish) and meat alternates, such as eggs, cheese, yogurt, beans, peas, and lentils, and nuts, and seeds. For more information, refer to section 4 and visit the "[Meats/Meat Alternates Component](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

medical statement: A document that identifies the specific medical conditions and appropriate dietary accommodations for children with special dietary needs and is signed by a state-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. The USDA requires that the medical statement to request meal modifications must include: 1) information about the child's physical or mental impairment that is sufficient to allow the CACFP facility to understand how it restricts the child's diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child's disability; and 3) if appropriate, the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

menu item: Any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk that is part of the reimbursable meal. Menu items consist of food items.

menu of record: The official menu that documents exactly what is served each day in the CACFP facility. This provides a record of the meal components and portion sizes served to all enrolled children and infants and provides documentation for the number of CACFP meals claimed for reimbursement.

milk component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes pasteurized fluid milk that meets the fat content and flavor restrictions of the USDA regulations. The milk component also includes fluid milk substitutes that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, refer to section 3 and visit the "[Milk Component](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. It was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. For more information, visit the CSDE's [National School Lunch Program](#) webpage.

natural cheese: Cheese that is produced directly from milk, such as cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, mozzarella, muenster, provolone, Swiss, feta, and brie. Natural cheese also includes pasteurized blended cheese made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheese. Natural cheeses do not include pasteurized process cheese (e.g., American), pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, or pasteurized process cheese products. For more information, refer to "[Crediting Cheeses](#)" in section 4.

nixtamalization: A process in which dried corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients and results in a product with nutrition content similar to whole-grain corn. Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, masa harina (corn flour), corn masa (dough from masa harina), and certain types of cornmeal. Nixtamalized corn credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to "[Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal](#)" in section 7.

noncreditable foods: Foods and beverages that do not count toward the meal patterns for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. Noncreditable foods include foods and beverages in amounts that are too small to credit and foods and beverages that do not belong to the meal components. For more information, refer to "[Noncreditable Foods](#)" in section 2 and the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

noncreditable grains: Grain ingredients and products that do not contribute toward the grains component of the CACFP meal patterns for children. Examples include fiber and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours). For a list of noncreditable grains for the CACFP meal patterns for children, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

nonnutritive sweeteners: Ingredients without calories that are hundreds of times sweeter than sugars and that are used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. Nonnutritive sweeteners include the six FDA-approved artificial sweeteners (acesulfame potassium (Ace-K), advantame, aspartame, neotame, saccharin, and sucralose) and three plant-based sweeteners (stevia, monk fruit, and thaumatin) that are [Generally Recognized as Safe \(GRAS\)](#) by the FDA. For more information on nonnutritive sweeteners, refer to "[Additional Information about High-Intensity Sweeteners Permitted for Use in Food in the United States](#)" on the FDA's webpage.

nutrient-dense foods: Foods and beverages that provide vitamins, minerals, and other substances that contribute to adequate nutrient intakes or may have positive health effects, and contain little or no solid fats, added sugars, refined starches, or sodium. Ideally, these foods and beverages are also in forms that retain naturally occurring components, such as dietary fiber. Examples include all vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry (when prepared with little or no added solid fats, sugars, refined starches, and sodium). The term "nutrient dense" indicates the nutrients and other beneficial substances in a food have not been "diluted" by the addition of calories from added solid fats, sugars, or refined starches, or by the solid fats naturally present in the food.

nutrient-rich foods: Refer to "nutrient-dense foods" in this section.

nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes: The nutrition requirements for nondairy beverages (such as soy milk) used as fluid milk substitutes in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA requires that any fluid milk substitutes are nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk and meet the following nutrients based on a 1-cup serving (8 fluid ounces): 276 milligrams (mg) of calcium; 8 grams (g) of protein; 150 micrograms (mcg) retinol activity equivalents (RAE) of vitamin A; 2.5 mcg of vitamin D; 24 mg of magnesium; 222 mg of phosphorus; 349 mg of potassium; 0.44 mg of riboflavin; and 1.1 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin B-12. For more information, refer to "[USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes](#)" in section 2 and the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

nutritive sweeteners: Sugars and sweeteners that contain calories and are used to sweeten foods and beverages. Examples include brown rice syrup, brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, dextrin, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, maple syrup, nectars (e.g., peach nectar, pear nectar), raw sugar, sorghum syrup, sucrose, and syrup. For more information, refer to "added sugars" and "simple carbohydrates (sugars)" in this section.

ounce equivalent (oz eq): A weight-based unit of measure for the grains component and MMA component of the CACFP meal patterns for children. One oz eq of the MMA component is sometimes more than a measured ounce, depending on the food's density and nutrition content. The amount of a grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. One oz eq of the grains component is less than a measured ounce for some grain foods (such as pretzels, breadsticks, and crackers), equal to a measured ounce for some grain foods (such as bagels, biscuits, bread, rolls, cereal grains, and RTE breakfast cereals), and more than a measured ounce for some grain foods (such as muffins and pancakes). For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

point-of-service meal/snack count: The moment in the meal service where staff can accurately determine that the child has been served all required meal components for a reimbursable meal or snack. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Service Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

potable water: Water that is safe for human consumption.

pre-fried foods: Commercially prepared foods such as meats, poultry, fish, and vegetables that are fried by the manufacturer during preparation. These foods are usually cooked by the food service operation in the oven or microwave. Pre-fried foods include refrigerated or frozen items that are breaded or battered, most frozen potato products, and most frozen products described as "crispy" or "crunchy." Examples include chicken nuggets, chicken patties, fish sticks, french fries, tater tots, hash browns, and onion rings.

primary grain ingredient: The greatest grain ingredient by weight. For commercial grain foods, this is the first ingredient (excluding water) listed in the product’s ingredients statement. For commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion, this is the first grain ingredient (excluding water) listed in the product’s ingredients statement. For commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion listed separately, this is the first ingredient (excluding water) listed in the grain portion of the product’s ingredients statement.

product formulation statement (PFS): An information statement obtained from the manufacturer that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA’s meal pattern requirements, and documents how this information is obtained citing Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations. All creditable ingredients in this statement must match a description in the USDA’s [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#). The PFS must be prepared on company letterhead with the signature of a company official and the date of issue. Unlike a CN label, a PFS does not provide any warranty against audit claims. CACFP facilities must check the manufacturer’s crediting information for accuracy prior to including the product in reimbursable meals and snacks. For more information, 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](#).

production record: A working tool that outlines the type and quantity of foods used to prepare CACFP meals and snacks. Production records demonstrate how meals contribute to the required food components, food items or menu items for each day of operation. Production records are strongly encouraged for all child care programs, but are required for CACFP child care centers that follow the NSLP meal pattern. For more information, refer to section 3 of the CSDE’s [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Using Production Records in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and visit the “[Production Records](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

pulses: The edible dry seeds from legumes, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas. For more information, refer to “legumes” in this section.

recognizable food item: A food that is visible in the offered meal or snack and allows children to identify the food groups and amounts recommended for consumption at mealtime. Foods must be recognizable to credit in the CACFP meal patterns for children. The USDA allows some exceptions, such as yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and pasta made with 100 percent vegetable flour. For more information, refer to “[Yogurt in smoothies](#)” and “[Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meats/Meat Alternates](#)” in section 4; “[Crediting Pureed Vegetables](#)” and “[Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour](#)” in section 5; and “[Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies](#)” and “[Crediting Pureed Fruits](#)” in section 6.

refined grains: Grains that have been processed to remove the bran and germ, making the product less nutritious than whole grains. Refined grains may or may not be enriched. For more information, refer to “enriched grains” in this section.

registered dietitian (RD) or registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN): The Commission on Dietetic Registration defines a RD and RDN as someone who has completed a minimum of a bachelor’s degree at a U.S. regionally accredited university or college and course work accredited or approved by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND); completed an ACEND-accredited supervised practice program at a health-care facility, community agency, or a foodservice corporation or combined with undergraduate or graduate studies; passed a national examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR); and completed continuing professional educational requirements to maintain registration. For more information, visit the AND’s [What is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist](#) website and the CDR’s [Registered Dietitian \(RD\) or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist \(RDN\) Certification](#) website.

reimbursable meals and snacks: Meals and snacks that meet the meal pattern requirements of the USDA regulations and are eligible for USDA funds. Reimbursable meals contain the minimum serving of each required meal component.

saturated fats: Types of fat that raise blood cholesterol, which is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Major sources of saturated fats include coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils, butter, and beef fats. Saturated fats are also found in other animal fats, such as pork and chicken fats, and in other plant fats, such as nuts. For more information, refer to “solid fats” in this section.

serving size or portion: The weight, measure, or number of pieces or slices of a food or beverage. For and snacks to be reimbursable, CACFP facilities must provide the minimum servings specified in the CACFP meal patterns for children.

simple carbohydrates (sugars): Carbohydrates consisting of one sugar (e.g., fructose and galactose) or two sugars (e.g., lactose, maltose, and sucrose). Sugars can be naturally present in foods (such as fructose in fruit or lactose in milk) or added to foods (such as sucrose or table sugar). Foods that naturally contain simple carbohydrates (such as fruits, milk, and milk products, and some vegetables) also contain vitamins and minerals. Foods that contain large amounts of added sugars (such as cookies, candy, pastries, sweetened baked goods, regular soft drinks, and other sweetened drinks) provide calories with few, if any, nutrients. For more information, refer to “added sugars” in this section.

sodium: A mineral that helps maintain the body’s fluid balance and blood pressure. Diets that are high in sodium can increase the risk of high blood pressure in individuals who are sodium sensitive.

solid fats: Fats that are usually not liquid at room temperature. Solid fats are found in most animal foods but also can be made from vegetable oils through hydrogenation. Some common solid fats include butter, beef fat (tallow, suet), chicken fat, pork fat (lard), stick margarine, coconut oil, palm oil, and shortening. Foods high in solid fats include full-fat (regular) cheese, cream, whole milk, ice cream, well-marbled cuts of meats, regular ground beef, bacon, sausages, poultry skin, and many baked goods (such as cookies, crackers, donuts, pastries, and croissants). Solid fats contain more saturated fats. For more information, refer to “saturated fats” in this section.

standard of identity: The mandatory government requirements that determine what a food product (like whole-wheat bread) must contain or may contain to be marketed under a certain name in interstate commerce. These standards protect consumers by ensuring that a label accurately reflects what is inside. For example, mayonnaise is not an imitation spread, and ice cream is not a similar, but different, frozen dessert. The USDA develops standards for meat and poultry products. The FDA develops standards for other food products.

standardized recipe: A recipe that has been tried, adapted, and retried at least three times and has been found to produce the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized recipes include specific information such as ingredients, weights and measures, preparation directions, serving directions, yield, and portion size. For more information, refer to section 4 of the CSDE’s [Guide to Menu Documentation for the CACFP](#).

state-licensed healthcare professional: An individual who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law and is recognized by the State Department of Public Health (DPH). In Connecticut, recognized medical authorities include physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy (DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN), i.e., nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse anesthetists who are licensed as APRNs. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

sucrose: Another name for table sugar. Sucrose contains glucose and fructose. For more information, refer to “simple carbohydrates (sugars) in this section.

sugar alcohols (polyols): A type of carbohydrate used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. Sugar alcohols are incompletely absorbed and metabolized by the body and contribute fewer calories than most sugars. They also perform other functions such as adding bulk and texture to foods. Common sugar alcohols include sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, maltitol syrup, lactitol, erythritol, isomalt, and hydrogenated starch hydrolysates (HSH). Products with sugar alcohols are often labeled “sugar free.” Large amounts of sugar alcohols may cause bloating, gas, or diarrhea. For more information, refer to “nonnutritive sweeteners” in this section.

sugars: Refer to “added sugars” and “simple carbohydrates” in this section.

surimi: Pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Surimi Seafood](#)” in section 4.

tempeh: A highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other beans, peas, and lentils), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Tempeh](#)” in section 4.

vegetable subgroups: The five categories of vegetables within the vegetables food group that are recommended by the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). The subgroups include dark green, red/ orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other vegetables. The CACFP meal patterns do not require the vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend providing at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup per week. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

vegetables component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. For more information, refer to section 5 and visit the “[Vegetables Component](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

wheat bread: Bread that often has wheat flour or enriched wheat flour (not whole-wheat flour) as an ingredient. Wheat bread is not whole grain unless it is labeled “whole-wheat bread.” Wheat bread is low in fiber unless the manufacturer has added fiber.

whole foods: Foods that are unprocessed or minimally processed, and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, and sodium.

whole fruits and vegetables: Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables that are unprocessed or minimally processed, and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, and sodium.

whole grain-rich (WGR): Foods that are 100 percent whole grain or contain at least 50 percent whole grains and any other grain ingredients are enriched. For more information, refer to “[Part B: WGR Requirement](#)” in section 7 and the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

whole grains: Grains that consist of the entire kernel, including the starchy endosperm, the fiber-rich bran, and the nutrient-rich germ. All grains start out as whole grains, but many are processed to remove the bran and germ, which also removes many of the nutrients. Whole grains are nutrient rich, containing vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and health-enhancing phytonutrients such as lignans and flavonoids. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, whole oats, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, brown rice, whole rye, whole barley, wild rice, buckwheat, and bulgur (cracked wheat). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Crediting Whole Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*](#).

whole-grain flour: Flour made by grinding the entire whole-grain kernel, including the fiber-rich bran, nutrient-rich germ, and starchy endosperm. Flour or meal that does not contain all parts of the grain is not whole grain, e.g., degermed corn, milled rice, and wheat flour.

whole-wheat bread: Bread that contains the whole grain, including the fiber-rich bran, nutrient-rich germ, and starchy endosperm. Whole-wheat flour will be listed as the first grain ingredient.



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