

Sample Cold Lunch and Supper Menus for Centers and Family Day Care Homes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

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

This document provides guidance and sample cold lunch and supper menus for ages 3-5 in child care centers, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and family day care homes that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). These sample menus are based on the CACFP meal patterns for children, including the updates required by the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), effective July 1, 2025.

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



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Overview of Lunch and Supper Meal Pattern Requirements

The CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires minimum servings of five meal components, including $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalents (oz eq) of meats/meat alternates, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruits, and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of grains. Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at any lunch or supper.

Each meal component must provide at least the minimum meal pattern serving. CACFP menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. Serve nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to children's nutrition needs.

Consider the meal pattern requirements and recommendations below when planning CACFP menus. For guidance on crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Meats/meat alternates (MMA) component

- The MMA must be served in a main dish or a main dish and one other food item.
- The serving size of MMA refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products (such as combination entrees, deli meats, hot dogs, and sausages) require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- Nut and seed butters credit by volume (tablespoons) not weight. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 2 grams of added sugars per ounce). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- 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.

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For more information, visit the [“Meats and Meat Alternates”](#) section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

Fruits component and vegetables component

- Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at any lunch or supper. The two vegetable servings must be different kinds.
- Dried fruits credit as twice the volume served. For example, ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component.
- Raw leafy greens such as lettuce or spinach credit as half the volume served. For example, ½ cup of raw leafy greens credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component.
- Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. The juice limit includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies. Before planning juice at lunch or supper, make sure that the other daily meals and snacks do not contain juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Juices in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.

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

Grains component

- At least one serving of grains per day must be whole grain-rich (WGR). The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. To meet the CACFP WGR criteria, foods must contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients must be enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit [“Whole Grain-rich Requirement”](#) in the “Grains” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
- To credit as the required oz eq, the serving of grain products and recipes must provide either: 1) the required serving weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) in the USDA’s Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the](#)

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Child and Adult Care Food Program and *How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program*); or 2) the minimum creditable grains per serving (refer to the CSDE's resources, *Calculation Methods for Grains Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program* and *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*). For more information, visit "[Serving Requirements](#)" in the "Grains" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

- Grain-based desserts do not credit. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers) are allowed but the CSDE recommends limiting them to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's [Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage
- Breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified and cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

For more information, visit the "[Grains](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

Milk component

- The CACFP meal patterns for ages 3-5 require unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk.

For more information, visit the "[Milk](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

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Noncreditable foods

Noncreditable foods cannot be served in place of the required meal components. Examples of noncreditable foods include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Required Crediting Documentation

CACFP facilities must be able to document that CACFP menus provide the minimum portion of each required meal component. Menu planners must use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine how foods credit and the amount that provides the required meal pattern serving.

Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. The USDA requires that CACFP facilities must verify PFS forms for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and snacks. For information on crediting documentation for processed foods, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. For information on standardized recipes, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Recipe Standardization Guide for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "[Standardized Recipes](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

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

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Sample Lunch and Supper Menus

This document contains six sample cold lunch and supper menus. The servings in each snack menu provide at least the minimum requirements of the CACFP meal patterns for children and are indicated in parentheses after each menu item. Servings may be adjusted as appropriate or other ages.

The CSDE's sample menus are intended for informational purposes and do not guarantee compliance with the CACFP meal patterns for children. Crediting information for local child care menus will vary depending on the types of foods purchased by the CACFP facility, and the recipes and preparation techniques used by CACFP staff. CACFP facilities are responsible for ensuring that their menus meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and maintaining appropriate crediting documentation on file (refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" in this document).

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Week 1

Day	Milk ¾ cup	MMA 1½ oz eq	Vegetables ¼ cup	Fruits ¼ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Ham sandwich: Ham (1¼ ounce) and reduced-fat cheese (¼ ounce)	Shredded lettuce (¼ cup) and tomato slices (¼ cup)	Orange slices (¼ cup)	Whole-grain bread (½ ounce) WGR	Mustard (1 teaspoon) or low-fat mayonnaise (1 teaspoon)
2	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Sliced turkey (½ ounce)	Lentil salad (¼ cup)	Apple slices (¼ cup)	Whole-grain crackers (½ ounce) WGR	
3	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Low-fat cottage cheese (¾ cup)	Cucumber slices (¼ cup)	Fruit salad: Apples, oranges, grapes, pineapple, banana (¼ cup)	Enriched rye bread (½ ounce)	
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Sunflower butter (3 Tbsp)	Broccoli florets (¼ cup)	Waldorf salad: Apples (⅛ cup), grapes (⅛ cup), raisins (1 teaspoon), celery (1 teaspoon)	Enriched cinnamon bread (½ ounce)	Low-fat Ranch dip (2 teaspoon)
5	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Spinach salad with hard-boiled egg (½ large)	Baby spinach (½ cup) Shredded carrots (⅛ cup)	Cantaloupe wedges (¼ cup)	Whole-grain roll (½ ounce) WGR	Low-fat salad dressing (2 teaspoon)

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Week 2

Day	Milk ¾ cup	MMA 1½ oz eq	Vegetables ¼ cup	Fruits ¼ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Hummus veggie pita (⅔ cup chickpeas)	Shredded lettuce (½ cup) Chopped black olives (⅛ cup)	Sliced cucumbers (¼ cup) Vegetable substitution	Whole- grain pita (½ ounce) WGR	
2	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Low-fat yogurt (½ cup) Banana bread with peanut butter (1 tablespoon)	Carrot raisin salad: shredded carrots (¼ cup)	Diced peaches (¼ cup) Raisins (2 teaspoon)	Enriched banana bread (1 ounce)	
3	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Chicken salad with diced apricots (1½ ounces cooked chicken)	Red pepper strips (¼ cup)	Diced dried apricots (⅛ cup) Fresh pear slices (⅛ cup)	Whole- grain crackers (½ ounce) WGR	
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Sliced turkey on roll (1½ ounces turkey)	Cucumber slices (¼ cup) Shredded lettuce (¼ cup)	Red apple slices (¼ cup)	Whole- grain roll (½ ounce) WGR	
5	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Tuna salad wrap: (1½ ounces tuna)	Chopped tomatoes (⅛ cup) Sliced zucchini sticks (¼ cup)	Fresh pear slices (¼ cup)	Whole- grain tortilla (½ ounce) WGR	

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Week 3

Day	Milk ¾ cup	MMA 1½ oz eq	Vegetables ¼ cup	Fruits ¼ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Chef's salad: Turkey (½ ounce), ham (½ ounce) and cheese (¼ ounce) and sliced hard-boiled egg (¼ large)	Salad greens (½ cup) with tomatoes and carrots (⅛ cup)	Mandarin oranges (¼ cup)	Enriched roll (½ ounce)	Low-fat Italian dressing (2 teaspoon)
2	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Cold sesame noodles with diced chicken (1½ ounces cooked chicken)	Broccoli florets (¼ cup)	Sliced peaches (¼ cup)	Enriched spaghetti (¼ cup)	
3	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Chicken-avocado rollup: Sliced chicken (1½ ounces)	Diced avocado (¼ cup) Chopped lettuce (⅛ cup) and tomato (⅛ cup)	Sliced red grapes (¼ cup)	Whole-grain tortilla (½ ounce) WGR	Low-fat mayonnaise (½ tablespoon)
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Hummus and carrot pita pocket (⅔ cup chickpeas)	Green pepper strips (⅛ cup) Shredded carrots (⅛ cup)	Mango chunks (¼ cup)	Whole-wheat pita half (½ ounce) WGR	
5	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Ham and pasta veggie salad: Diced ham (1 ounce) and cheddar cheese (½ ounce)	Chopped veggies: carrots, broccoli and red peppers (¼ cup)	Pineapple tidbits (¼ cup)	Enriched macaroni (⅛ cup) Whole-wheat roll (½ ounce) WGR	

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Week 4

Day	Milk ¾ cup	MMA 1½ oz eq	Vegetables ¼ cup	Fruits ¼ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Cold meatloaf sandwich (1½ ounces meat)	Sliced cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Watermelon chunks (¼ cup)	Whole-wheat bread (½ ounce) WGR	Ketchup or mustard (½ tablespoon)
2	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Sliced turkey breast (1½ ounces)	Marinated green bean salad (¼ cup)	Strawberries (¼ cup)	Whole-grain crackers (½ ounce) WGR	
3	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Low-fat cottage cheese (¾ cup)	Red and green pepper strips (¼ cup)	Crushed pineapple in juice (¼ cup)	Whole-wheat bagel (½ ounce) WGR	
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Egg salad sandwich (½ large egg)	Carrot raisin salad (¼ cup) Shredded lettuce (¼ cup)	Blueberries (¼ cup)	Whole-wheat bread (½ ounce) WGR	Low-fat mayonnaise (½ tablespoon)
5	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Marinated black bean-tomato-carrot salad (¾ cup beans)	Shredded carrots (⅓ cup) Diced tomatoes (¼ cup)	Fresh pear slices (¼ cup)	Whole-grain roll (½ ounce) WGR	

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Week 5

Day	Milk ¾ cup	MMA 1½ oz eq	Vegetables ¼ cup	Fruits ¼ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Cold oven-fried chicken (1½ ounces chicken)	Potato salad (¼ cup potatoes)	Three-bean salad (¼ cup) Vegetable substitution	Enriched corn muffin (1 ounce)	
2	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Low-fat Greek yogurt with ≤ 2 grams of added sugars per ounce (¼ cup) Almond butter (1 tablespoon)	Cucumber slices (¼ cup)	Cinnamon applesauce (¼ cup)	Whole-grain rice cakes (½ ounce) WGR	
3	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Turkey-avocado roll-up: (1½ ounces turkey)	Baby spinach (¼ cup) diced tomato (⅛ cup), and avocado (⅛ cup)	Orange wedges (¼ cup)	Whole-corn tortilla (½ ounce) WGR	
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Red pepper hummus (⅔ cup chickpeas)	Cucumber-tomato salad (¼ cup)	Carrot sticks (¼ cup) Vegetable substitution	Whole-wheat crackers (½ ounce) WGR	
5	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Egg salad sandwich: Egg (¾ large)	Confetti coleslaw (¼ cup vegetables)	Plums (¼ cup)	Whole-grain bread (½ ounce) WGR	

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Week 6

Day	Milk ¾ cup	MMA 1½ oz eq	Vegetables ¼ cup	Fruits ¼ cup	Grains ½ oz eq	Additional foods
1	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Marina lentil-ham salad: Lentils (¼ cup) and ham (1 ounce)	Red pepper strips (¼ cup)	Fresh nectarine (¼ cup)	Whole-grain roll (½ ounce) WGR	
2	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Chicken sandwich: Cooked chicken (1½ ounces)	Julienned jicama sticks (¼ cup)	Broccoli florets (¼ cup) Vegetable substitution	Enriched marble bread (½ ounce)	
3	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Sliced ham (1 ounce) Sliced Swiss cheese (½ ounce)	Tossed salad greens (½ cup) with tomatoes (⅛ cup)	Watermelon (¼ cup)	Whole-grain crackers (½ ounce) WGR	Low-fat ranch dressing (2 teaspoons)
4	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Low-fat cottage cheese (⅔ cup)	Carrot-raisin salad (¼ cup carrots)	Blueberries (¼ cup)	Enriched soft pretzel (½ ounce)	
5	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ cup)	Tuna pasta salad with tomatoes, carrots, and olives: Tuna (1½ ounces)	Shredded carrots (⅔ cup) Diced tomatoes (⅛ cup) Chopped black olives (⅛ cup)	Honeydew melon (¼ cup)	Enriched rotini pasta (⅔ cup) Whole-wheat roll (½ ounce) WGR	

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Resources

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

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

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

Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

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

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>

Lunch and Supper (“Menu Planning” section of CSDE’s Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/menu-planning#LunchSupper>

Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Menu Planning (CSDE’s Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/menu-planning>

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>

Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE’s Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/recipes-for-child-nutrition-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

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For more information visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/menu_cacfp_lunch_supper_cold.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
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2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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