

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Sample Cold Lunch and Supper Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

This document provides guidance and sample 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) CACFP. The specified servings meet or exceed the requirements of the [CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#) and are indicated in parentheses after each menu item. Servings may be adjusted for other ages.

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

Each component must provide at least the minimum serving in the CACFP meal patterns for children. Lunch and supper menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. Serve nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to the nutrition needs of each age group.



For detailed guidance on the CACFP meal patterns for children, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, [Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#). For additional resources, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns](#) and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what foods to offer in CACFP menus. Modify menus as appropriate and use preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Menu Planning Considerations for Lunch and Supper

Consider the requirements and recommendations below when planning lunch and supper menus. For detailed guidance on crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

- **Meat/meat alternates:** The serving refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. Nut and seed butters credit by volume (tablespoons) not weight. Yogurt cannot exceed 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (3.83 grams per ounce). Commercial meat products with binders and extenders (such as deli meats, hot dogs, and sausage) and commercial combination foods (such as pizza and chicken nuggets) require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation

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statement (PFS) to determine crediting information. For more information on crediting meat/meat alternates, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Deli Meats in the CACFP](#) and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP](#), and visit the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage. The USDA’s [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese.

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Before planning juice at lunch or supper, check that the other meals and snacks that same day do not include juice. Pasteurized full-strength juice (including fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice) credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Juice in the CACFP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the CACFP](#). Dried fruits credits as twice the volume served, e.g., 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, e.g., ½ cup of raw leafy greens credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component. For more information on crediting fruits and vegetables, visit the “Fruits Component” section and the “Vegetables Component” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- **Grains:** Grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains (whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ). At least one serving of grains per day must be whole-grain rich (WGR). The USDA’s [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. Cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [How to Identify Creditable Grains in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the CACFP](#) and [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#). Grains must meet the required weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP](#) or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Calculation Methods for Grains Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP](#) and [How to Use the Ounce Equivalents Chart for the CACFP](#). Grain-based desserts (such as cookies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, pastries, cake, and brownies) do not credit. The CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers) to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA’s webpage, [Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP](#). For more information on crediting grains, visit the “Grains Component” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- **Noncreditable foods:** Noncreditable foods cannot be served in place of the required 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 CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

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- **Water:** The USDA recommends serving water when snacks do not include milk or juice. Water does not credit in the CACFP meal patterns and cannot be offered in place of the required food components. For more information, visit the “[Water Availability](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Crediting Documentation

CACFP facilities must be able to document that lunch and supper menus provide the required food components and quantities. Use the USDA’s *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the required serving for each meal pattern component. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, *Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the CACFP*, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the CACFP*, and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP*, and visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Foods made from scratch must have a recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. For more information, visit the “[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs Programs](#) webpage.

Abbreviations for Sample Menus

M = Milk component

MMA = Meat/meat alternates

V = Vegetables component

F = Fruits component

G = Grains component

WGR = Whole grain-rich

VS = Vegetables substituted for the fruits component

Not credited

A = Additional creditable food (not full serving)

O = Other food (noncreditable)

c = cup

Tbsp = tablespoon

tsp = teaspoon

oz = ounce

oz eq = ounce equivalent

Note: 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 menus will vary depending on the types of foods purchased by the CACFP facility and the recipes and preparation techniques used. 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 “[Crediting Documentation](#)” above).

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		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Macaroni and cheese: Cheddar cheese (1½ oz)	Baked ham (1½ oz)	Herbed chicken (1½ oz cooked chicken)	Black bean soup: Beans (¾ c)	Hamburger (1½ oz cooked)
	V ¼ cup	Tossed salad: Lettuce (½ c) with tomatoes and carrots (⅛ c)	Mashed sweet potato (¼ c)	Green beans (⅛ c) Roasted red potatoes (⅛ c)	Spinach salad (½ c) with oranges	Mixed vegetables (¼ c)
	F ¼ cup	Orange slices (¼ c)	Steamed broccoli (¼ c) VS	Mixed berries (¼ c)	Mandarin oranges (⅛ c) Mango slices (⅛ c)	Sliced cantaloupe (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Enriched macaroni (¼ c)	Whole-wheat roll (½ oz) WGR	Brown rice (¼ c) WGR	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR	Whole-wheat bun (½ oz) WGR
	O	Low-fat Italian dressing (2 tsp)	Mustard (2 tsp)		Low-fat salad dressing (2 tsp)	Ketchup or mustard (2 tsp)
Week 2	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Taco salad: Seasoned ground beef (1½ oz cooked) and shredded cheese (¼ oz)	Toasted cheese sandwich: Ham (1 oz) and American cheese (½ oz)	Mild vegetable chili: Black beans and kidney beans (¾ c)	Baked chicken (1½ oz cooked chicken)	Crunchy coated baked fish (1½ oz cooked fish)
	V ¼ cup	Shredded lettuce (⅛ c) Diced tomato (⅛ c) Mild veggie salsa (⅛ c) Corn niblets (⅛ c)	Vegetable soup (⅛ c vegetables) Roasted kale (⅛ c)	Mild vegetable chili: Tomato sauce (⅛ c) Baked sweet potato wedges (¼ c)	Mashed butternut squash (¼ c)	Confetti couscous: Peas and carrots (⅛ c) Roasted red potatoes (⅛ c)
	F ¼ cup	Pineapple chunks (¼ c)	Sliced kiwi (¼ c)	Watermelon chunks (¼ c)	Sugar snap peas (¼ c) VS	Steamed broccoli florets (¼ c) VS
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-corn tortilla (½ oz) WGR	Whole-wheat bread (½ oz) WGR	Enriched cornbread (1 oz)	Herbed quinoa (¼ c) WGR	Confetti couscous: Enriched couscous (¼ c)
	O				Low-fat salad dressing (2 tsp)	

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		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 3	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Cheese quesadilla triangles: Reduced-fat cheese (1½ oz)	Roast beef (1½ oz cooked)	Lentil soup (¾ c lentils)	Chicken veggie stir-fry: Chicken (1½ oz cooked)	Spaghetti with meat sauce (1½ oz cooked ground beef)
	V ¼ cup	Garden salad (½ c) Mild veggie salsa (⅛ c)	Mashed potatoes (¼ c)	Red and green pepper strips (¼ c)	Stir-fry vegetables: Carrots, celery, peppers, broccoli (¼ c)	Cucumber-tomato salad (¼ c)
	F ¼ cup	Mandarin oranges (¼ c)	Steamed carrots (¼ c) VS	Diced nectarines (¼ c)	Pineapple tidbits (¼ c)	Sliced fresh pears (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-wheat tortilla (½ oz) WGR	Enriched golden cornbread (1 oz)	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR	Brown rice (¼ c) WGR	Whole-wheat spaghetti (¼ c) WGR
	O	Low-fat salad dressing (2 tsp)	Gravy (1 Tbsp)			Grated parmesan cheese (2 tsp)
Week 4	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Toasted ham (1 oz) and cheese (½ oz) sandwich	Chicken enchilada: Cooked chicken (1½ oz) and cheese (⅛ oz)	Broccoli quiche: Egg (½ large) and Swiss cheese (½ oz)	Roast turkey (1½ oz)	English muffin pizza: Low-fat mozzarella cheese (1½ oz)
	V ¼ cup	Vegetable soup (⅛ c vegetables) Sweet potato wedges (⅛ c)	Mashed avocado (⅛ c) Mild veggie salsa (⅛ c)	Broccoli (¼ c)	Green peas (¼ c)	Salad greens (½ c) Pizza sauce (⅛ c)
	F ¼ cup	Sliced kiwi (¼ c)	Cucumber salad (¼ c) VS	Sliced strawberries (¼ c)	Mashed sweet potatoes (¼ c) VS	Fruit salad: Apples, grapes, pineapple and blueberries (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-wheat bread (½ oz) WGR	Whole-corn tortilla (½ oz) WGR Enriched Spanish rice (⅛ c rice)	Enriched crust (½ oz) Whole-wheat roll (¼ oz) WGR	Stuffing: Whole-grain bread (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain English muffin (½ oz) WGR
	O				Gravy (1 Tbsp) Cranberry sauce (1 Tbsp)	Low-fat Italian dressing (2 tsp)

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		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 5	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Oven-fried chicken (1½ oz cooked chicken)	Red beans and rice: Red beans (¾ c)	Meatloaf (1½ oz cooked ground beef)	Barbecued pork (1½ oz cooked pork)	Fish taco: Cooked fish (1½ oz) and shredded cheese (¼ oz)
	V ¼ cup	Roasted rosemary potatoes (¼ c)	Mixed garden salad: Lettuce (½ c) with carrots, tomatoes, and cucumbers (⅛ c)	Green beans (⅛ c) Orange-glazed carrots (⅛ c)	Corn niblets (⅛ c) Snap peas (⅛ c)	Shredded lettuce (¼ c) Diced tomato (⅛ c)
	F ¼ cup	Green peas (¼ c)	Sliced mangos (¼ c)	Red apple slices (¼ c)	Sliced green grapes (¼ c)	Fresh plum (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Quinoa pilaf (¼ c) WGR	Enriched white rice (¼ c)	Enriched egg noodles (¼ c) WGR	Toasted whole-wheat bun (½ oz) WGR	Whole-wheat tortilla (½ oz) WGR
	O		Low-fat dressing (2 tsp)	Ketchup (2 tsp)		
Week 6	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Beef stew (1½ oz cooked beef)	Barbecue chicken (1½ oz cooked)	Veggie pizza: Mozzarella cheese (1½ oz)	Tuna noodle casserole: Tuna (1½ oz)	Turkey sloppy joe: Cooked ground turkey (1½ oz)
	V ¼ cup	Vegetables in stew (¼ c)	Butternut squash (¼ c)	Vegetables on pizza: Tomatoes, green peppers, mushrooms (⅛ c) Carrot sticks (⅛ c)	Peas and carrots (⅛ c) Steamed broccoli (¼ c)	Red cabbage slaw (⅛ c cabbage and carrots) Steamed edamame (⅛ c)
	F ¼ cup	Applesauce (¼ c)	Fresh peach slices (¼ c)	Mixed baby greens (½ c) VS	Watermelon (¼ c)	Honeydew cubes (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Brown rice (¼ c) WGR	Bulgur pilaf (¼ c) WGR	Enriched pizza crust (½ oz)	Enriched egg noodles (¼ c) Whole-grain roll (¼ oz) WGR	Toasted whole-wheat bun (½ oz) WGR
	O			Low-fat salad dressing (2 tsp)		Low-fat salad dressing (2 tsp)

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Resources

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE's training program for child care facilities):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>

CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/CACFPMealPattern.pdf>

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

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>

Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/Guide_CACFP_Meal_Patterns.pdf

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<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 (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#MenuPlanning>

Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning#Recipes>

Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Menu_Planning.pdf

Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/Resources_CACFP_Meal_Pattern.pdf

Sample Hot Lunch and Supper Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes



For more information on the CACFP meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpages, 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_Hot.pdf.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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