

Ideas for Using Excess USDA Foods

The mission of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Distribution Program is to strengthen the nation's nutrition safety net by providing food and nutrition assistance to school children and families; and support American agriculture by distributing high quality, 100 percent American-grown USDA Foods. In Connecticut, the USDA Food Distribution Program for the [school nutrition programs](#) and the [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#) is administered through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).

Schools and institutions that participate in the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#) receive USDA Foods, which are also known as "entitlement" foods. These foods are utilized as part of responsible fiscal management of the NSLP.

The ideas below can help menu planners use their excess inventory of USDA Foods in the USDA's school nutrition programs.

- Adjust the school breakfast and lunch menus so the district's remaining USDA Foods are used more often in the menu cycle.
- Use excess fruits and vegetables by increasing the produce offerings at breakfast and lunch.
- Offer a rainbow tray of fruits and vegetables during every lunch service.
- Use excess canned pears or peaches instead of apples to make delicious fruit crisp.
- To save freezer space, encourage schools to use frozen berry cups the day they are delivered or put them in the refrigerator and use them the next day.
- Offer raisins and applesauce cups in grab-and-go breakfasts and field trip meals. Make them available at the register for students who have not already taken a fruit or vegetable with their meal.
- Use excess potato wedges or fries at lunch by serving loaded fries or potatoes with a variety of toppings such as cheese or cheese sauce, ground beef, chili, chicken, beans, and broccoli. Serve with Greek yogurt (as a substitute for sour cream), jalapenos, or salsa.
- Increase burger demand by adding a strip of turkey bacon or providing a toppings bar, e.g., ketchup, mustard, shredded lettuce, sliced tomatoes, chopped onions, and pickles.
- Use broccoli florets as a topping for stuffed baked potatoes or loaded fries. Steam them and add parmesan cheese or cheese sauce for a delicious side.

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- Make hot egg and cheese wraps to use egg patties and increase breakfast participation. Wrap half of a heated egg patty and 1 tablespoon of shredded cheese in a 6-inch whole-wheat wrap and serve with hot sauce or salsa on the side.

For recipe ideas with USDA Foods, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Recipes Using USDA Foods](#).

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For more information on USDA Foods, visit the CSDE's [Food Distribution Program \(USDA Foods\)](#) webpage or contact the [FDP program 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/fdp/ideas_using_excess_usda_foods_inventory.pdf.



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