

Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools

**School Year 2026-27
(July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027)**

Complying with Healthy Food Certification under
Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes



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Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs
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About this Document

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools* provides comprehensive information about the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS), including implementation guidance and the rationale for development of each standard. The CNS is consistent with current science-based national nutrition recommendations and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Smart Snacks nutrition standards for competitive foods, which are defined by the final rule, [National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School](#) (Federal Register, Vol. 81, No. 146, July 29, 2016). Schools that follow the CNS will meet or exceed the USDA's Smart Snacks nutrition standards.

The standards in this document apply to school year 2026-27, from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. For additional information on the CNS, visit the CSDE's [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) and [Healthy Food Certification](#) webpages or contact the CSDE's [HFC Coordinator](#). This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/cns/connecticut_nutrition_standards_full_document.pdf.

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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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASP	Afterschool Snack Program
BOE	board of education or school governing authority
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CGS	Connecticut General Statutes
CN	Child Nutrition
CNS	Connecticut Nutrition Standards
CNP	Child Nutrition Programs
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
HFC	Healthy Food Certification
HHFKA	Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010
IOM	Institute of Medicine, National Academies of Science (now known as the National Academy of Medicine)
LEA	local educational agency
MMA	meats/meat alternates
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
PFS	product formulation statement
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SMP	Special Milk Program
SSO	Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP
RTE	ready to eat



USDA United States Department of Agriculture

WGR whole grain-rich

1 — Introduction

[Section 10-215e](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) required the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to publish a set of nutrition standards by August 1, 2006, for all foods offered for sale to students at school separately from school meals that are reimbursable under the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). The CSDE developed the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) in July 2006, with input from a state nutrition standards committee that included representation from the following organizations:

- American Academy of Pediatrics (Hezekiah Beardsley Connecticut Chapter);
- American Heart Association;
- Connecticut Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics;
- Connecticut Action for Healthy Kids;
- School Nutrition Association of Connecticut;
- Connecticut State Department of Education;
- Connecticut State Department of Public Health;
- End Hunger Connecticut! Inc.;
- New England Dairy & Food Council; and
- University of Connecticut, Department of Nutritional Sciences.

For links to the state statutes, refer to “[Connecticut Statutes and Regulations for Competitive Foods](#)” in section 9.

CNS Philosophy

The CNS promotes healthier choices for students in schools. The nutrients addressed in the CNS are based on current nutrition science and national health recommendations from the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). The standards focus on:

- moderating calories;
- limiting total fat, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars; and
- promoting increased consumption of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and beans, peas, and lentils.

The CNS does not address nutrients or food ingredients that lack scientific consensus regarding negative health effects and are therefore not currently addressed by national health recommendations. Some examples include high fructose corn syrup, food additives, and artificial colors. However, the CSDE strongly encourages schools to read product labels and choose foods without these types of ingredients. In general, products with fewer ingredients are

healthier choices. The CSDE's Better Choice Recommendations assist schools with identifying products that do not contain these ingredients (refer to "[Better Choice Recommendations](#)" in this section).

Fortification and Supplementation

The CNS promotes the consumption of needed nutrients through naturally nutrient-rich healthy food choices, not through fortified products that would otherwise have little nutritional value. Naturally nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and beans, peas, and lentils provide substantial amounts of naturally occurring vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients with relatively few calories. Foods and beverages that are not nutrient rich supply calories, but relatively small amounts of nutrients (and sometimes none), unless fortified. Examples of products that are not naturally nutrient rich include "energy" bars and baked goods (e.g., doughnuts and muffins) fortified with multiple vitamins, minerals, and nutrition supplements.

The CNS does not allow any significantly fortified products for use in schools unless they are naturally nutrient-rich products that are fortified with nutrients at levels based on scientifically documented health needs, such as:

- milk fortified with vitamins A and D;
- breakfast cereals fortified with iron;
- orange juice fortified with calcium,
- soy beverages fortified with calcium; and
- grain products fortified with folic acid.

A basic premise of the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) is that Americans should meet their nutrient needs by primarily consuming nutrient-rich foods. Fortified foods and beverages are advantageous only if they provide additional sources of certain nutrients that might otherwise be present only in low amounts in some food sources, provide nutrients in highly bioavailable forms, or address a documented public health need. Manufacturers often fortify nutrient-poor foods and beverages with a variety of vitamins and minerals that do not meet these criteria. These products do not provide the same health benefits as naturally nutrient-rich foods that contain these nutrients.

Significantly fortified foods and beverages could possibly lead to a nutrient excess with toxic effects if students are consuming too much of a product or consuming multiple sources of different fortified products. Currently, there are no scientifically documented health needs or recommendations for children to have additional fortification of nutrients through these types of products.

The CNS does not approve food or beverage products that contain nutrition supplements such as amino acids (e.g., taurine, glutamine, lysine, and arginine), extracts (e.g., green tea extract and gotu kola extract), and herbs or other botanicals (e.g., ginseng and ginkgo biloba). Their efficacy and safety for consumption by children is not well known, and some nutrition supplements may have harmful side effects. **Note:** Products may contain the following ingredients when used for color or flavor only: vegetable and fruit extracts such as pomegranate extract, beet extract, and red cabbage extract; and [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)-approved food colors](#) from natural sources such as spirulina and turmeric extract.

Without scientific proof of established health benefit and certification of safety for use with children by the FDA and national health organizations, products that are significantly fortified or contain nutrition supplements do not merit inclusion on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage, regardless of whether their nutrient content complies with the CNS or the state beverage statute.

Revision Requirements

C.G.S. [Section 10-215e](#) requires the CSDE to publish the state nutrition standards by January 1 of each year, to be effective for the next school year (July 1 through June 30). This allows sufficient time for schools to review the requirements and decide if they will choose the healthy food option of the annual Healthy Food Certification (HFC) by the July 1 deadline (refer to "[Healthy Food Certification](#)" in this section).

Nutrition science is continually evolving. The CSDE annually reconvenes the state nutrition standards committee to evaluate and revise the CNS as needed, based on changes in nutrition science, national health recommendations, and federal regulations. The most current version of the CNS is available on the CSDE's [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) webpage.

Rationale for Current Revisions

The state nutrition standards committee did not make any changes to the CNS for school year 2026-27. The current [USDA Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards](#) are still in place, based on the requirements of USDA's final rule, [National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the HHFKA of 2010](#) and the updates of the USDA's final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).

The 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans were released in January 2026. The CSDE is required to publish the CNS in January of each year to meet the statutory deadline for the CNS and the state HFC application deadline of July 1 (refer to "[Revision Requirements](#)" above). Changes to the CNS require sufficient time to 1) review all currently approved products on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) to provide the committee with data on the

impact of each potential change; and 2) provide sufficient notification to schools and vendors to ensure product availability for the next school year. The 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines were not released in time to implement this process for the current school year.

Previous Revisions

The state nutrition standards committee made three changes to the CNS for school year 2025-26 based on the USDA's final rule, [*Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*](#), issued on April 25, 2024.

1. **Limit for added sugars in breakfast cereals (cold and cooked):** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule requires a new limit for added sugars in breakfast cereals (no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce). The state nutrition standards committee adopted this standard to make the CNS consistent with the federal requirements. Effective July 1, 2025, the current CNS requirement changes from total sugars (no more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and 15 grams of total sugars) to added sugars (no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce). The prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remains the same.
2. **Limit for added sugars in yogurt and pudding:** Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule requires a new limit for added sugars in yogurt (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce). The state nutrition standards committee adopted this standard for yogurt to make the CNS consistent with the federal requirements. Effective July 1, 2025, the current CNS requirement changes from total sugars (no more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce) to added sugars (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remains the same.

The current CNS sugars limits for pudding and yogurt are the same (no more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce). The state nutrition standards committee also adopted the same added sugars limit for pudding (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce) to maintain the consistency of one standard for this CNS category and be consistent with the USDA final rule to reduce added sugars. The prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remain the same.

3. **Limit for added sugars in smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice):** The current CNS sugars limits for smoothies are the same as pudding and yogurt (no more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce). The state nutrition standards committee changed the current CNS requirement from total sugars to added sugars (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no

more than 2 grams per ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The portion size limits (no more than 8 fluid ounces for elementary schools and 12 fluid ounces for middle and high schools) and prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remain the same.

These changes are consistent with the integrity of CNS and align with Smart Snacks.

Previous revisions based on USDA's Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards

As required by the USDA final rule, [National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the HFFKA of 2010](#), implementation of the USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards for competitive foods began on July 1, 2014. The final rule provisions took effect on September 27, 2016. Smart Snacks applies to all competitive foods sold on school campus during the school day in public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the NSLP and SBP.

Only the Smart Snacks beverage standards apply to HFC public schools. The food standards do not apply because the state HFC statute requires that foods comply with the stricter CNS, which supersedes the Smart Snacks food standards. For a comparison of the CNS and Smart Snacks, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Comparison of the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and the USDA's Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards](#).

Effective with school year 2014-15, the state nutrition standards committee revised the CNS to align with Smart Snacks, except when doing so would weaken the integrity of the current CNS or be inconsistent with state statutes.

Effective with school year 2017-18, the state nutrition standards committee made two revisions to the CNS to reflect changes in the Smart Snacks final rule.

1. **Exemptions for general standards:** The committee changed the exemption for canned vegetables from "Canned vegetables with no added ingredients except water; or that contain a small amount of sugar for processing purposes to maintain the quality and structure of the vegetable are exempt from all nutrient standards" to "Low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats are exempt from all nutrient standards."
2. **Exemptions for total fat and saturated fat:** The committee added an exemption for whole eggs with no added fat.

Effective with school year 2024-25, the state nutrition standards committee made two revisions to the CNS to reflect changes in the Smart Snacks final rule.

1. **Elimination of trans fat standard:** The committee removed the synthetic trans fat standard.
2. **Exemption for bean dips from the total fat standard:** The committee added an exemption for bean dips from the total fat standard.

Effective with school year 2025-26, the state nutrition standards committee made three revisions to the CNS to reflect the changes in the USDA final rule, [*National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the HRFKA of 2010*](#).

1. **Change to sugars limit for breakfast cereals:** The committee changed the current CNS requirement from total sugars (no more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and 15 grams of total sugars) to added sugars (no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remains the same.
2. **Change to sugars limit for yogurt and pudding:** The committee changed the current CNS requirement from total sugars (no more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce) to added sugars (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remains the same.
3. **Change to sugars limit for smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice):** The committee changed the current CNS requirement from total sugars (no more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce) to added sugars (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The portion size limits (no more than 8 fluid ounces for elementary schools and 12 fluid ounces for middle and high schools) and prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remain the same.

These changes did not weaken the integrity of the current CNS and are consistent with state statutes.

Allowable Foods

The serving of a commercial product or food made from scratch must comply with the following requirements: 1) the food must meet at least one general standard; and 2) the serving with its accompaniments must meet the specific nutrient standards for the applicable food category.

The CNS applies to the amount of the food as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, margarine, cream cheese, jelly, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, relish, salad dressing, sauce, and gravy. When a food includes an accompaniment (such as a bagel with cream cheese or pancakes with syrup), the nutrition information for both items must be added together prior to reviewing the serving for CNS compliance. For additional guidance, refer to "[Accompaniments](#)" in section 2.

Evaluating commercial products

The CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage identifies commercial food products that comply with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#)" in this section and the CSDE's resource, [How to Evaluate Purchased Foods for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#).

Adding accompaniments to a commercial product changes its nutrition information per serving. When a commercial product is served with accompaniments, the selling entity must add the nutrition information for accompaniments to the nutrition information for the approved product to determine if the serving still complies with the CNS. The serving of the food with its accompaniments must meet each nutrition standard for the applicable CNS food category.

Evaluating foods made from scratch

Foods made from scratch cannot be sold to students on school premises unless the selling entity has documentation on file to indicate that the serving with its accompaniments complies with the CNS. The required CNS documentation includes the two items below.

1. **Standardized recipe:** An accurate standardized recipe that indicates the calories, fat, saturated fat, sodium, and sugars per serving. For guidance on developing and using standardized recipes, visit the "[Standardized Recipes](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.
2. **CNS worksheet:** The completed CNS worksheet for the applicable food category documenting that the serving with its accompaniments complies with the CNS (refer to

“[CNS Worksheets](#)” in the “Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance” section of the CSDE’s CNS webpage).

Schools must maintain CNS documentation on file for the annual HFC documentation (due by November 30) and the CSDE’s Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. For more information, visit the “[Annual HFC Documentation](#)” section of the CSDE’s HFC webpage and refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Foods requiring standardized recipes

Standardized recipes that include nutrition information per serving are required for the two categories of foods made from scratch below.

- **Category 1 – Foods Prepared from Ingredients Using a Standardized Recipe:**
Examples include entrees sold only a la carte (i.e., not as part of reimbursable meals in the National School Lunch Program [NSLP] and School Breakfast Program [SBP]) such as pizza, chef’s salad, lasagna, and sandwiches; soups; cooked grains (e.g., rice and pasta) with added salt and fat, e.g., oil, margarine, or butter; cooked vegetables with added salt and fat; salad with dressing; fruit smoothies; and baked goods, e.g., muffins and cookies.
- **Category 2 – Commercial Products with Ingredients Added After Purchasing:**
Examples include popping popcorn kernels in oil and adding salt; making muffins from a mix and adding butter and eggs; and adding sprinkles to commercial frozen cookie dough.

Adding ingredients to a commercial product changes its nutrition information per serving. The selling entity must create a standardized recipe for these foods based on the specific amount of each ingredient, then conduct a nutrient analysis to determine the nutrition information per serving.

For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Guidance on Evaluating Recipes for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) and [How to Evaluate Foods Made from Scratch for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#), and visit the “[Standardized Recipes](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage. Training is available in “Module 4: Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance” of the CSDE’s [Complying with Healthy Food Certification](#) training program.

When standardized recipes are not required

Standardized recipes with nutrition information are not required for entrees sold a la carte during the same meal service on the same day that they are planned and served as part of reimbursable meals in the NSLP and SBP. These entrees are exempt from the CNS and may be sold a la carte during the meal service if they comply with the following: 1) same or smaller portion size as the NSLP and SBP; 2) same accompaniments; and 3) no artificial sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, or chemically altered fat substitutes.

This exemption applies only to the three categories of main dish entree items defined by the CNS (refer to [section 4](#)).

1. A combination food of meat/meat alternate and whole grain-rich (WGR) food, e.g., breakfast egg sandwich on whole-wheat English muffin, turkey wrap on whole-wheat tortilla, pizza with WGR crust, hamburger on whole-grain bun, and bean burrito with whole-corn tortilla.
2. A combination food of vegetable/fruit and meat/meat alternate, e.g., chef's salad with turkey, cheese and hard-boiled egg, fruit and cheese platter, yogurt and fruit parfait, school-made yogurt and fruit/vegetable smoothies, baked potato with chili, and chicken vegetable stir-fry.
3. A meat/meat alternate alone (e.g., sausage patty, hard-boiled egg, and grilled chicken), excluding yogurt, cheese, nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, and meat snacks, e.g., beef jerky and meat sticks.

Any other non-entree meal components sold separately from reimbursable meals must comply with the CNS. For example, french fries and muffins that are part of reimbursable meals cannot be sold a la carte unless they meet the CNS.

List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages

The CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage includes brand-specific lists of commercial food products that meet the CNS and beverages that meet the requirements of state statute (C.G.S. Section 10-221q) and Smart Snacks. This webpage assists school districts with identifying foods and beverages that comply with the state requirements. Products on this list also meet the USDA's Smart Snacks standards.

The CSDE strongly recommends that districts use the List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages webpage to identify products that comply with the state statutes for foods and beverages. This helps districts meet all state requirements and provide the necessary documentation to the CSDE to demonstrate compliance with the state statutes. Due to the often-complicated process of evaluating commercial products for CNS compliance, the CSDE strongly encourages schools to submit food products to the CSDE for review, instead of evaluating them locally. For more information, refer to "[Information needed for product evaluation](#)" in this section.

The CSDE regularly updates the [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) to include new products and remove discontinued products. Connecticut school nutrition programs receive email notifications when updates are made.

Providing naturally nutrient-rich foods and beverages

The CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage only includes packaged convenience food and beverage items. Minimally processed naturally nutrient-rich foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables will always meet the CNS but are not included in the CSDE's list unless they are individually packaged.

It is important to note that foods that comply with the CNS can vary greatly in their nutritional content. While the foods on the CSDE's list are healthier alternatives to traditional snack foods, they are not necessarily the best choices nutritionally. For example, baked chips are better than regular chips because they are lower in fat, but they still do not provide any significant nutritional value.

Many processed products that meet standards for fat, sugars, and sodium still lack the naturally occurring variety of nutrients found in whole foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. For example:

- granola bars made with 50 percent whole grains and 50 percent enriched grains are lower in fiber and nutrients than granola bars made with 100 percent whole grains;
- 100 percent fruit juice does not contain the fiber, vitamins, and minerals found in whole fruits; and
- oven-baked french fries provides less fiber and more fat than baked potatoes.

Schools can use the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage to identify packaged convenience products that are healthier choices, such as whole-grain snacks that are naturally high in fiber and nutrients. The "[Better Choice Recommendations](#)" also assist schools in choosing healthier products.

The CSDE strongly encourages schools to ensure that a la carte food choices include a variety of minimally processed and whole foods that are naturally nutrient rich, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and beans, peas, and lentils. This provides an optimal selection of healthy food choices for students.

Better Choice Recommendations

The Better Choice Recommendations are additional recommendations beyond the CNS requirements. They are not required but help schools to identify foods that are even better choices. Foods that meet these recommendations are often less processed and contain fewer ingredients. The Better Choice Recommendations vary depending on the food category, but generally include the following:

- no artificial flavors or colors;
- no high fructose corn syrup;
- at least 2.5 grams of fiber (a "good" source of fiber as defined by the FDA); and
- 100 percent whole grain (applicable only to products that contain grains).

The CSDE strongly encourages schools to choose foods that meet these recommendations. The Better Choice Recommendations are included in the green and white columns on the right side of each product list on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage.

Information needed for product evaluation

The CSDE reviews commercial products for CNS compliance. Schools and manufacturers can submit product information for the CSDE's review at any time. The product submission must include the specific information indicated in the CSDE's resource, [Submitting Food and Beverage Products for Approval](#).

Healthy Food Certification

Effective July 1, 2006, C.G.S. [Section 10-215f](#) requires that each BOE for all public schools participating in the NSLP must certify annually to the CSDE by July 1 whether they will comply with the CNS for all foods available for sale to students on school premises separately from reimbursable school meals. The CNS applies to all competitive foods offered for sale to students at all times, in all schools, and from all sources, such as cafeterias, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers.

- “Sales” means the exchange of a determined amount of money or its equivalent (such as coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items) for foods and beverages. Sales also include programs and activities that charge a fee that includes the cost of foods provided to students, and activities that suggest a student donation in exchange for foods and beverages. **Note:** Under Connecticut’s statutes and regulations for competitive foods, sales also include tickets and similar items that are given to students (such as food rewards) and can be exchanged for foods and beverages.
- “School premises” include all areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the local or regional board of education or school governing authority (BOE), the regional vocational-technical school system (Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)), or the governing authority district or school.

HFC public schools receive additional funding based on the total number of reimbursable lunches served in the district in the prior school year.

Sources of Competitive Foods

Competitive foods may be available for sale to students from a variety of sources on school premises. Some common examples include school cafeterias, culinary programs (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Culinary Programs in HFC Public Schools](#)), fundraisers (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Food and Beverage Fundraisers in HFC Schools](#)), school stores (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Foods and Beverages in School Stores in HFC Schools](#)), concession stands, and vending machines (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Vending Machines in HFC Schools](#)).

The CNS applies to all foods available for sale to students on school premises (separately from reimbursable meals), except for sales that meet the exemption criteria. The CNS does not apply to foods given to students free of any charge or contribution.

The state beverage statute (G.C.S. Section 10-221q) applies to all beverages available for sale to students (as part of and separately from reimbursable meals) on school premises, except for sales that meet the exemption criteria. The state beverage statute does not apply to beverages given to students free of any charge or contribution. For more information, refer to “[Beverage Requirements for Public Schools](#)” in this section.

Potential sources of food and beverage sales in HFC public schools

The list below shows some examples of potential sources of food and beverage sales to students in HFC public schools. This list is not all-inclusive.

- Adult education programs operated by the BOE
- Afterschool programs and activities, e.g., enrichment programs, extracurricular classes, tutoring sessions, and student clubs
- Cafeteria a la carte sales
- Classroom parties and other celebrations
- Clubs and organizations
- Concession stands
- Culinary arts programs
- Family and consumer sciences classes
- Family resource centers
- Fundraisers conducted by school groups and non-school groups
- Parent-teacher organizations
- Programs and meetings
- Recipient schools under interschool agreements

- School stores, kiosks, and other school-based enterprises
- Sports competitions, e.g., games, matches, and tournaments
- Sports programs
- Summer school programs (e.g., enrichment or exploratory) operated by the BOE
- USDA’s Afterschool Snack Program (ASP)
- USDA’s Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP
- USDA’s Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) operated by the BOE on school premises
- Vending machines
- Vendors on school premises, e.g., food service management companies (FSMCs), food trucks, caterers, online and mobile food delivery companies, and other outside entities that sell foods and beverages to students
- Any other programs, organizations, and activities selling or giving foods and beverages to students on school premises

Food exemptions

Foods that do not comply with the CNS could be sold to students on school premises if the BOE has voted to allow food exemptions as part of the annual HFC Statement, and: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the foods are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

- An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. Events involve a gathering of people in a social context, such as sports competitions, awards banquets, school concerts, and theatrical productions. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. For additional examples, refer to [“Examples of events for food and beverage exemptions”](#) in this section.
- The “school day” is the period from the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. For example, if school ends at 3:00 p.m., the school day is from midnight to 3:30 p.m. Summer school programs operated by the BOE on school premises are part of the regular school day.
- “Location” means where the event is being held. For example, cupcakes may be sold to students on the side of the soccer field during a soccer game but cannot be sold to students in the school cafeteria while a soccer game is played on the soccer field.

The example below shows how food exemptions apply.

Example: The district votes to allow food exemptions. The school day ends at 3:00 p.m. A fundraiser located at an event on school premises could sell noncompliant foods to students anytime between 3:31 p.m. through 11:59 p.m. during the school week, or anytime on Saturday or Sunday.

If the event occurs from 30 minutes before up through 30 minutes after the operation of any CNPs, the state competitive foods regulations require additional restrictions.

- Section 10-215b-1 prohibits selling and giving candy, coffee, tea, and soft drinks to students anywhere on school premises during this time (including events that meet the exemption criteria of the state HFC and beverage statutes).
- Section 10-215b-23 requires that the income from all sales of foods and beverages to students during this time must accrue to the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA).

For example, if the ASP operates from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., an event on school premises cannot sell or give candy, coffee, tea, and soft drinks to students from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition, the income from all sales of foods and beverages to students during this time must accrue to the NSFSA. For guidance on the state competitive foods regulations, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Overview of Connecticut's Competitive Foods Regulations](#).

The vote to allow food exemptions is part of the annual HFC Statement (Addendum to Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs (ED-099)) that public school sponsors of the NSLP must submit to the CSDE by July 1 of each year. The annual HFC Statement is completed online in the CSDE's Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System), as part of the NSLP sponsor's yearly application for the CNPs. Sponsors must upload the meeting minutes that indicate the results of the BOE's HFC votes for the healthy food option and food exemptions.

For more information on food exemptions, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Exemptions for Foods and Beverages in Public Schools](#). For more information on the HFC application process, visit the "[Annual HFC Application](#)" section of the CSDE's HFC webpage and refer to the CSDE's training module, [Completing the Application Process for Healthy Food Certification](#).

Beverage exemptions are not part of the annual HFC Statement. The exemption section of the HFC Statement applies only to foods. If the district chooses to allow beverage exemptions, the BOE must vote separately. For more information, refer to "[Beverage exemptions](#)" in this section.

Examples of events for food and beverage exemptions

The list below shows some examples of events. This list is not all-inclusive. Contact the CSDE for assistance with determining whether specific district fundraising activities meet the definition of event.

- Awards banquets
- Boy Scout Blue & Gold dinner
- Craft fairs
- Debate team competitions
- Election day (if school is not in session)
- Family bingo nights
- Math team competitions
- Mock trial competitions
- School carnivals
- School concerts
- School recitals
- School dances
- School fairs, e.g., health, science, and math
- Silent auctions
- Sports banquets
- Sports games, tournaments, and matches, e.g., basketball, football, soccer, tennis, field hockey, volleyball, and cross county
- Talent shows
- Theatrical productions

For more information and resources on implementing the CNS and HFC, refer to the list of resources in [section 9](#) and visit the CSDE's [CNS](#) and [HFC](#) webpages.

Beverage Requirements for Public Schools

All beverages available for sale to student in public schools must comply with the state beverage statute ([C.G.S. Section 10-221q](#)) and the USDA's Smart Snacks beverage standards. Some Smart Snacks beverage standards are stricter than the state beverage statute, and some standards of the state beverage statute are stricter than Smart Snacks. When the laws differ, the stricter requirements apply.

The Smart Snacks beverage standards apply to beverages available for sale to students separately from school meals during the school day. The state beverage statute applies to all beverages available for sale to students (as part of reimbursable meals and separately from reimbursable meals) on school premises at all times, unless the sales meet the specific exemption criteria of the state beverage statute. Sources of beverage sales include, but are not limited to, cafeterias, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers. For additional examples, refer to "[Potential sources of food and beverage sales in HFC public schools](#)" in this section.

- "Sales" means the exchange of a determined amount of money or its equivalent (such as coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items) for beverages. Sales also include programs and activities that charge a fee that includes the cost of beverages provided to students, and activities that suggest a student donation in exchange for beverages. For more information, refer to "[Sales to Students](#)" and "[Food Rewards](#)" in section 2. **Note:** The Smart Snacks beverage standards apply only coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items that are purchased by students; they do not apply when these items are given to students.
- "School premises" include all areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the local or regional BOE, the regional vocational-technical school system (CTECS), or the governing authority district or school.

For information on the beverage requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Beverages in Connecticut Public Schools](#). This document includes the stricter requirements of the state beverage statute and the USDA's Smart Snacks beverage standards. For additional resources, visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

Beverage exemptions

Beverages that do not comply with the state beverage statute cannot be sold to students in public schools unless the local BOE votes to allow exemptions, and: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

- An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. Events involve a gathering of people in a social context, such as sports competitions, awards banquets, school concerts, and theatrical productions. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. For additional examples of events, refer to [“Examples of events for food and beverage exemptions”](#) in this section.
- The “school day” is the period from the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. For example, if school ends at 3:00 p.m., the school day is from midnight to 3:30 p.m. Summer school programs operated by the BOE on school premises are part of the regular school day.
- “Location” means where the event is being held. For example, lemonade may be sold to students at the baseball field during a baseball game but cannot be sold to students in the school cafeteria while a baseball game is played on the baseball field.

The example below shows how the beverage exemptions apply.

Example: The district votes to allow beverage exemptions. The school day ends at 3:00 p.m. Beverages that do not comply with the state beverage statute could be sold to students at the location of an event held on school premises anytime between 3:31 p.m. through 11:59 p.m. during the school week, or anytime on Saturday or Sunday.

- If the event occurs from 30 minutes before up through 30 minutes after the operation of any CNPs, the state competitive foods regulations require additional restrictions.
- Section 10-215b-1 prohibits selling and giving candy, coffee, tea, and soft drinks to students anywhere on school premises during this time (including events that meet the exemption criteria of the state HFC and beverage statutes). Section 10-215b-23 requires that the income from all sales of foods and beverages to students during this time must accrue to the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA).

For example, if the ASP operates from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., an event on school premises cannot sell or give candy, coffee, tea, and soft drinks to students from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition, the income from all sales of foods and beverages to students during this time must accrue to the NSFSA. For guidance on the state competitive foods regulations, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Overview of Connecticut's Competitive Foods Regulations](#).

Beverage exemptions are not part of the annual HFC Statement (Addendum to Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs (ED-099)), which is required for all public schools that participate in the NSLP. The exemption section of the HFC Statement applies only to foods. The BOE must vote separately to allow any sales of noncompliant beverages to students in public schools. If the vote does not occur, schools cannot sell noncompliant beverages to students on school premises at any time.

Documentation of the approved vote for beverage exemptions must be available in the BOE's meeting minutes. Alternatively, beverage exemptions may be incorporated into the local educational agency's (LEA) policy, e.g., school wellness policy. For more information on beverage exemptions, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Exemptions for Foods and Beverages in Public Schools](#).

For more information on the state beverage requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Beverages in Connecticut Schools](#), and visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage. For additional resources, refer to [section 9](#).

Other Federal and State Requirements

In addition to the nutrition standards for foods and beverages, HFC public schools must also comply with the federal and state laws below:

- State statute requiring public schools to sell nutritious and low-fat foods whenever foods are available for sale to students during the school day: [C.G.S. Section 10-221p](#)
- State regulation restricting selling and giving candy, coffee, tea, and soft drinks to students: [Section 10-215b-1 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies](#)
- Local educational agency's (LEA) school wellness policy (SWP), as required by the USDA final rule, [National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the HHFKA of 2010](#)
- State regulation restricting accrual of income: [Section 10-215b-23 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies](#)
- USDA's regulation for revenue from nonprogram foods: [7 CFR 210.14 \(f\)](#)
- State statute requiring the right of first refusal for the Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services, Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (ADS-BESB) to place vending machines in public schools: [C.G.S. Section 17a-818](#)

For guidance on these requirements, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#) and [Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#).

Training is available in Module 5: Laws for Foods and Beverages in HFC Schools of the CSDE's [Complying with Healthy Food Certification](#) training program.

2 — General Standards for All Foods

The six CNS categories of competitive foods include:

- snacks;
- entrees sold only a la carte;
- non-entree combination foods;
- fruits and vegetables;
- cooked grains; and
- soups.

To be allowed for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals, a competitive food item must meet at least one of the three general standards (refer to [table 2-2](#)), and all nutrient standards for the applicable food category. The nutrient standards include calories, fat, saturated fat, sugars, sodium, and caffeine.

Some food categories have exemptions from the fat or sugars standards for certain nutrient-rich foods that are naturally higher in fat (such as nuts and seeds) or naturally higher in sugars (such as dried fruit). These foods are listed in the “Exemptions” column of each food category. All fruits and vegetables without added fat, sugars, and salt are exempt from the CNS.

Foods must be evaluated for CNS compliance based on the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, cream cheese, syrup, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing (refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in this section).

Prohibited Categories of Foods and Beverages

The two categories of foods and beverages below are not allowed regardless of whether their nutrient content meets the CNS or the state beverage statute.

1. **Significant fortification:** Significantly fortified products except for naturally nutrient-rich foods fortified with nutrients at levels based on scientifically documented health needs, e.g., milk fortified with vitamins A and D, breakfast cereals fortified with iron, orange juice fortified with calcium, and grain products fortified with folic acid.
2. **Nutrition supplements:** Products containing nutrition supplements, e.g., amino acids, extracts, herbs, or other botanicals.

For more information, refer to “[Fortification and Supplementation](#)” in section 1.

Portion Size

Schools purchase and prepare foods in a variety of serving or package sizes such as individual packages, single-serve portions, and quantity recipes portioned into individual servings. Regardless of how foods are packaged or prepared, they must be evaluated for CNS compliance based on the amount of the item as served. The individual serving size or package cannot exceed 350 calories for entrees or 200 calories for the other five food categories (snacks, non-entree combination foods, fruits and vegetables, cooked grains, and soups).

Packages with multiple servings

If the package contains multiple servings, the CNS applies to the nutrition information for the entire package. The nutrition information for the entire package is determined by multiplying the nutrients per serving (e.g., calories, fat, saturated fat, sugars, and sodium) by the number of servings in the package.

- **Example:** A snack product contains 150 calories per serving and the package contains two servings. The entire package contains 300 calories. This product does not comply with the CNS because snack foods cannot contain more than 200 calories.

To evaluate a commercial product for CNS compliance, the nutrition information must be for one serving in a single-serving package. Packages that contain multiple servings do not typically comply with the CNS.

Volume versus weight

When determining the serving size, it is important to note that volume and weight are not the same. Volume is the amount of space an ingredient occupies in a measuring container, such as cups and tablespoons. “Fluid ounces” are a measure of volume but “ounces” are a measure of weight.

The weight of a specific volume of food varies depending on the density of the food. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of lettuce weighs less than $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked butternut squash, and 1 cup of whole-grain flaked cereal weighs less than 1 cup of baked beans. For many foods, a specific measure of volume does not equal the same measure of weight. There are some exceptions, such as yogurt ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup equals 4 ounces by weight) and certain types of canned fruits and vegetables. For information on the weight equivalent of servings measured by volume, refer to the USDA’s [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Accompaniments

The CNS applies to the amount of the food as served, including any accompaniments served with the food, such as butter, cream cheese, salad dressing, and condiments. Some examples of foods with accompaniments include bagels with cream cheese, muffins with butter, french fries with ketchup, pancakes with syrup, french fries with ketchup, salad with dressing, stir-fry chicken with duck sauce, and hamburgers with ketchup.

Adding accompaniments changes the food's nutrition information. When foods include accompaniments, the nutrition information for the food and its accompaniments must be added together to determine if the serving complies with the CNS.

Selling entities must consider how accompaniments affect the nutrient profile of the food item. Many accompaniments are high in fats, sugars, and sodium, and might cause compliant foods to exceed the CNS limits. For example, serving butter with a compliant whole grain-rich corn muffin might cause the muffin to exceed the CNS limit for calories and saturated fat.

Examples of accompaniments

Foods must be evaluated for CNS compliance based on the serving with added accompaniments. The examples below show some accompaniments typically served with foods in each CNS category.

Snacks

- Oatmeal with brown sugar
- Whole grain-rich (WGR) pancakes, waffles or French toast with maple syrup or fruit sauce
- Potato chips with dip
- Pudding with whipped cream
- WGR bagel with cream cheese
- Whole-grain toast with butter and jam
- WGR muffin, cornbread, or roll with margarine or butter
- Whole-corn nachos with cheese sauce

Entree sold only a la carte

- WGR breaded chicken nuggets with dipping sauce
- Hamburger or hotdog with ketchup, mustard, and relish
- Meatloaf with gravy
- Quesadilla with spicy salsa
- Stir-fry chicken and vegetables with duck sauce
- Tacos with taco sauce
- WGR pasta and meat sauce with grated cheese

Non-entree combination foods

- Vegetable egg roll with duck sauce

Fruits and vegetables

- Apple crisp with whipped cream
- Apple slices with caramel dipping sauce
- Carrots with low-fat dressing
- French fries with ketchup
- Salad with low-fat dressing
- Vegetables cooked with oil, margarine, or butter

Cooked grains

- Brown rice with duck sauce
- WGR pasta cooked with oil, margarine or butter
- WGR pasta with marinara sauce

Soups

- Black bean soup with sour cream
- Clam chowder with oyster crackers
- French onion soup with croutons
- Tomato soup with grated cheese

General Standards

Competitive food items must meet at least one of the three general standards and all the nutrient standards for the specific food category to which they belong, e.g., snacks, entrees, non-entree combination foods, fruits and vegetables, cooked grains, and soups. For information on the nutrient standards for each food category, refer to sections 3 through 8.

Rationale

Prior to school year 2014-15, the CNS did not include general standards. Effective July 1, 2014, the state nutrition standards committee added the USDA's general standards and exemptions to be consistent with Smart Snacks. The committee chose to be stricter than the Smart Snacks general standards for WGR foods.

The Smart Snacks general standard for WGR foods requires acceptable grain products to contain 50 percent or more whole grains by weight or have whole grains as the first ingredient. This definition is inconsistent with the WGR definition for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns under the USDA's final rule, [Nutrition Standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#). For school meals in the NSLP and SBP, grain-based foods must comply with the three criteria below to meet the WGR definition.

1. The grain food is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain.
2. Noncreditable grains must be less than two percent of the product formula. To comply with this limit, the combined total of all noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G (baked goods) or 6.99 grams for group H (cereal grains) and group I (ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals).

These grain groups refer to the groups indicated in the USDA's chart, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#). The required amounts for the grains component listed in Exhibit A are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because the meal patterns are different. The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#), indicates the Exhibit A ounce equivalents (oz eq) that apply to the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool.

Since the Smart Snacks definition of acceptable grain products does not require a limit for noncreditable grains, it is inconsistent with the definition of WGR products for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. The state nutrition standards committee believed it was important for the

WGR standard for a la carte foods to be consistent with the WGR standard for foods allowed for school meals. Therefore, the WGR definition for the CNS is the same as the WGR definition for school meals.

CNS general standards

The food item must meet at least one of the three general standards below.

- 1. Whole grain-rich (WGR) foods:** The food item is a WGR grain product that meets the applicable WGR criteria below.
 - **Commercial grain products in groups A-G (e.g., breads, muffins, pancakes, and crackers) and group H (e.g., rice, pasta, quinoa, and cooked breakfast cereals like oatmeal):** 1) The product is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H.
 - **Ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals (group I):** 1) The first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
 - **Commercial combination foods containing a grain portion from groups A-I, e.g., pizza crust in pizza, noodles in lasagna, and breading on chicken nuggets:** 1) The grain portion is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains in the grain portion do not exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I.

For more information on the WGR requirements and noncreditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- 2. Food groups:** The food item has one of the following food groups as the first ingredient: fruits, vegetables, dairy, or protein foods, e.g., meat, beans, poultry, seafood, eggs, nuts, and seeds. If water is the first ingredient, the second ingredient must be a fruit, vegetable, whole grain, dairy, or protein food.

3. **Combination foods:** The food item is a combination food that contains at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit and/or vegetable per serving.

Exempt foods

The following categories of foods are exempt from the CNS general standards and all nutrient standards:

- fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water;
- canned fruits with no added ingredients except water; or that are packed in 100 percent juice, extra light syrup, or light syrup, all without added nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
- low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.

All other foods are not exempt and must meet at least one general standard and all nutrient standards for the specific food category.

Implementation Guidance

The guidance below helps schools determine whether competitive foods meet one of the three general standards.

General standard 1: WGR foods

- For commercial products, consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. All listed products will meet at least one general standard and all nutrient standards for the specific food category.
- For commercial products that are not included on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage, schools must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer that documents the amount of creditable and noncreditable grains per serving. For information on the PFS requirements, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#), [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the "[Product Formulation Statements](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.
- For guidance on determining whether a commercial grain product or standardized recipe is WGR, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

- For information on how to read a food label, refer to the CSDE's [*Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*](#).

General standard 2: Food groups

- For commercial products, consult the CSDE's [*List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages*](#) webpage. All listed products will meet at least one general standard and all nutrient standards for the specific food category.
- For commercial products that are not included on the CSDE's [*List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages*](#) webpage, schools must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer that documents the amount of the food group per serving. For information on the PFS requirements, refer to the CSDE's resources, [*Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*](#) and [*Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs*](#), and visit the "[*Product Formulation Statements*](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage. For guidance on determining if one of the non-grain food groups (fruits, vegetables, dairy, or protein foods) is the first ingredient in a product, refer to the [*MyPlate food groups*](#).
- It is important to note that there are differences between the NSLP and SBP meal components for school meals and the MyPlate food groups. These differences are summarized below.
 - **Meats/meat alternates (MMA) component:** A competitive food could meet general standard 2 because it has a protein food listed as the first ingredient (e.g., chicken, ground beef, or cheese), but it might not meet the USDA's meal pattern requirements for the MMA component. To credit toward the MMA component, schools must obtain either a [*Child Nutrition \(CN\) label*](#) or manufacturer's [*PFS*](#). CN labels are only available for main dish entrees that contribute at least ½ ounce equivalent of the MMA component of the USDA's meal patterns. Examples include beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. For more information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs*](#) and [*Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*](#), and the CSDE's [*Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs*](#), and visit CSDE's [*Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs*](#) webpage.

When reviewing foods for compliance with the NSLP and SBP meal patterns, menu planners cannot determine the amount of meat or meat alternate in a food by reading the product's Nutrition Facts label or ingredients. 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. In addition to protein, meat and meat alternates contain other components, 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.

The terms "protein" and "meat/meat alternate" are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. Except for commercial tofu and tofu products, the NSLP and SBP meal patterns require a specific amount of the MMA component, not a specific amount of protein. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

- **Milk component:** The NSLP and SBP meal patterns require a "milk" component, not a "dairy" component. A competitive food could meet general standard 2 because it has milk or another dairy food as the first ingredient, but it will not meet the NSLP or SBP meal pattern requirements for the milk component. For example, commercial smoothies made with milk do not meet the USDA's requirements for fluid milk because they do not comply with the FDA's standard of identity for milk.

Only fluid milk credits as the milk component for reimbursable meals in the NSLP and SBP and afterschool snacks in the ASP. Dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt credit only as the MMA component for reimbursable school meals. However, for the purposes of meeting the CNS general standards, any food from the dairy group (including milk) could be the first ingredient.

General standard 3: Combination foods with at least ¼ cup of fruit/vegetable

- For commercial products, consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. All listed products will meet at least one general standard and all nutrient standards for the specific food category.
- For commercial products that are not included on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage, schools must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer that documents the amount of fruits/vegetables per serving. A CN label could indicate the fruit or vegetable content if the product is a main dish entree that contributes to the MMA component. For more information on CN labels, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the "[Child Nutrition Labels](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.
- For foods made from scratch, refer to the standardized recipe and use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) to determine if one serving contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetable per serving. For specific guidance on evaluating recipes, refer to the CSDE's resources, [How to Evaluate Foods Made from Scratch for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) and [Guidance on Evaluating Recipes for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#), and visit the "[Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance](#)" section of the CSDE's CNS webpage. For guidance on standardized recipes, visit the "[Standardized Recipes](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

3 — Standards for Snacks

Examples of foods in the snacks category includes chips, crackers, popcorn, rice cakes, hard pretzels, pita chips, snack mix, breakfast cereals (e.g., cold ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals and cooked hot cereals such as oatmeal), trail mix, nuts and seeds, peanut butter and other nut/seed butters, meat snacks (e.g., jerky and meat sticks), cookies, cereal bars, granola bars, bakery items (e.g., pastries, toaster pastries, muffins, waffles, pancakes, French toast, soft pretzels, and rolls), frozen desserts, ice cream (including ice cream novelties), cheese, pudding, yogurt, and smoothies made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice.

The standards for snacks category apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, cream cheese, syrup, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing. For more examples, refer to [“Examples of accompaniments”](#) in section 2.

Calories

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for calories has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks and meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) recommendations for non-entree a la carte foods (200 calories or less per portion as packaged), as specified in the IOM’s publication, [Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth](#).

One of the goals of the CNS is to encourage appropriate portion sizes that limit calories. Many children consume too many calories and are either overweight or obese. The [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends shifting to healthier food and beverage choices and consuming smaller portions to achieve a healthy dietary pattern within an appropriate number of calories. Meeting the Dietary Guidelines recommendations within calorie needs can help prevent excess weight gain at every life stage and support overall good health.

Implementation guidance

- Serve products that meet the CNS requirements in a serving size that does not exceed 200 calories. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific snack products that meet the calorie standard.
- Entities that sell snacks made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the calorie standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Total Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Exemptions:** The following foods are exempt from the fat standard but cannot contain chemically altered fat substitutes:
 - low-fat or reduced fat 100 percent natural cheese (including part-skim mozzarella);
 - nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters (including products that contain small amounts of added fat from processing or roasting);
 - products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - whole eggs with no added fat.

All other snack products are not exempt and must meet the fat standard. The fat exemption does not apply to foods containing cheese, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and dried fruit as an ingredient. Some examples include peanut butter cookies, pecan cookies, granola bars with nuts, cranberry walnut muffin, cheese crackers, cheese sauce, peanut butter crackers, and sesame seed crackers.

Rationale

The CNS limit for total fat is based on previous guidance from the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to limit overall fat intake between 25 to 35 percent of calories for children and adolescents 4 to 18 years of age. High-fat foods add unnecessary calories to the diet. A diet

lower in fat is associated with lower risk of overweight, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers.

The CNS total fat standard and food exemptions are consistent with Smart Snacks. The CNS allows exemptions for some nutrient-rich foods that are naturally high in fat, including nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, low-fat or reduced fat 100 percent natural cheese (including part-skim mozzarella), and whole eggs. Natural low-fat and reduced-fat cheese is a good source of protein and calcium. Most of the fat in nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters is unsaturated, which promotes cardiovascular health. Many nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters also contain small amounts of added fat from processing or roasting. The fat exemption also applies to these foods.

The CNS also allows a fat exemption for products consisting only of dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners (including nutritive sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols) or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes). This exemption is consistent with the committee's previous approach to nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols, and is stricter than the Smart Snacks exemption, which only prohibits added nutritive (caloric) sweeteners. For more information, refer to the standard for sugars in this section and "[CNS Philosophy](#)" in section 1.

Effective with school year 2017-18, the CNS committee added the Smart Snacks fat exemption for whole eggs. Eggs are high in protein and contain essential nutrients including, B vitamins, Vitamin E, Vitamin D, iron, zinc, and magnesium. While eggs are high in fat, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends increased consumption of nutrient-dense foods and includes eggs in a healthy eating pattern. Evidence suggests that one egg a day does not increase a person's risk for high cholesterol or cardiovascular diseases.

The CNS advocates whole or minimally processed foods that are naturally nutrient rich and low in fat. Therefore, the CNS does not allow reducing fat with chemically altered fat substitutes such as olestra (Olean®) and microparticulated whey protein concentrate (Simplese®). Research has not addressed the safety of moderate use of fat replacers for children. Fat substitutes can have negative side effects. For example, olestra can cause abdominal cramping and diarrhea, and inhibits the absorption of some vitamins and other nutrients. Simplese can cause allergic reactions in people with allergies to milk or eggs.

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any snack products that contain added chemically altered fat substitutes. However, the committee kept the previous standard to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Increase the availability of snack items that are fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, or minimally processed foods made from these ingredients. These foods are naturally low in fat.
- Choose snack foods that are lowest in total fat. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- If snacks contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats, such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- The fat exemption for cheese applies only to 100 percent natural (real) cheese, pasteurized blended cheese and cottage cheese, as defined by the FDA's standards of identity ([CFR 21 Part 133](#)). The fat exemption does not apply to full-fat cheese or foods that contain cheese as an ingredient, such as pasteurized process cheese (e.g., American), pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, pasteurized process cheese product, cheese sauces, and cheese crackers. These foods must meet the specific fat standard for the snacks category. For more information, refer to the definitions for “natural cheese” and “pasteurized blended cheese” in the [Glossary](#).
- Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters often contain added saturated fat. Examples include peanuts roasted in oil or peanut butter made with soybean oil. Check the ingredients list and choose nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters without added saturated fat.
- The fat exemption does not apply to packaged snacks that contain nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and cheese as an ingredient. Some examples include peanut butter cookies, pecan cookies, granola bars with nuts, cranberry walnut muffin, cheese crackers, cheese sauce, peanut butter crackers, and sesame seed crackers. These foods must meet the specific fat standard for the snacks category. **Note:** Combination snack foods such as peanut butter with carrot sticks are evaluated in the category for non-entree combination foods (refer to [section 5](#)).
- Entities that sell snacks made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Saturated Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** The following foods are exempt from the standard for saturated fat:
 - low-fat or reduced fat 100 percent natural cheese (including part-skim mozzarella);
 - nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters (including products that contain small amounts of added fat from processing or roasting);
 - products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - whole eggs with no added fat.

The saturated fat exemption does not apply to packaged snacks that contain these foods as an ingredient. Some examples include peanut butter cookies, pecan cookies, granola bars with nuts, cranberry walnut muffin, cheese crackers, cheese sauce, peanut butter crackers, and sesame seed crackers.

Rationale

The [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends limiting saturated fat intake to less than 10 percent of total calories, with most fats consumed from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, e.g., fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Foods that are high in saturated fat increase the risk of coronary artery disease by raising blood cholesterol.

The saturated fat standard and food exemptions have not changed since the last update of the CNS and are consistent with Smart Snacks. The CNS allows exemptions for some nutrient-rich foods that are naturally high in saturated fat, including nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and low-fat or reduced fat 100 percent natural cheese. Natural low-fat and reduced-fat cheese is a good source of protein and calcium. Most of the fat in nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters is unsaturated, which promotes cardiovascular health. Many nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters also contain small amounts of added fat from processing or roasting. The saturated fat exemption also applies to these foods.

The CNS also allows a fat exemption for products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners (including nutritive sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols) or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes). This exemption is consistent with the committee’s approach to nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols, and is stricter than the USDA’s exemption, which only prohibits added nutritive (caloric) sweeteners. For more information, refer to the standard for sugars in this section and [“CNS Philosophy”](#) in section 1.

Effective with school year 2017-18, the CNS committee added the Smart Snacks' saturated fat exemption for whole eggs. Eggs are high in protein and contain essential nutrients including, B vitamins, Vitamin E, Vitamin D, iron, zinc, and magnesium. While eggs are high in fat, the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends increased consumption of nutrient-dense foods and includes eggs in a healthy eating pattern. Evidence suggests that one egg a day does not increase a person's risk for high cholesterol or cardiovascular diseases.

Implementation guidance

- Increase the availability of snack items that are fruits, vegetables, and whole grains or minimally processed snacks made from these ingredients. These foods are naturally low in saturated fat.
- Choose snack foods that are lowest in saturated fat. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the saturated fat content of brand-specific products. Major food sources of saturated fat in the snacks category include ice cream, sherbet, frozen yogurt, cakes, cookies, quick breads, doughnuts, potato chips, corn chips, and popcorn.
- If snacks contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats, such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- The saturated fat exemption for cheese applies only to 100 percent natural (real) cheese, pasteurized blended cheese and cottage cheese, as defined by the FDA's standards of identity ([21 CFR 133](#)). The saturated fat exemption does not apply to full-fat cheese or foods that contain cheese as an ingredient. Some examples include pasteurized process cheese (e.g., American), pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, pasteurized process cheese product, cheese sauces, and cheese crackers. These foods must meet the specific saturated fat standard for the snacks category. For more information, refer to the definitions for “natural cheese” and “pasteurized blended cheese” in the [Glossary](#).
- Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters often contain added saturated fat. Some examples include peanuts roasted in oil or peanut butter made with soybean oil. Check the ingredients list and choose nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters without added saturated fat.

- The saturated fat exemption does not apply to packaged snacks that contain nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters as an ingredient. Some examples include peanut butter cookies, pecan cookies, granola bars with nuts, cranberry walnut muffin, cheese crackers, cheese sauce, peanut butter crackers, and sesame seed crackers. These foods must meet the specific saturated fat standard for the snacks category. **Note:** Combination snack foods such as peanut butter with carrot sticks are evaluated in the category for non-entree combination foods (refer to [section 5](#)).
- Entities that sell snacks made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the saturated fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sugars

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
 - **Breakfast cereals (RTE and cooked, e.g., oatmeal):** No more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
 - **Smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt and/or other low-fat dairy alternatives and/or fruit and/or 100 percent juice):** No more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols. Portion size is limited to no more than 8 fluid ounces for elementary schools and 12 fluid ounces for middle and high schools.
 - **Yogurt and pudding:** No more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce). No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Exemptions:** The following foods are exempt from the sugars standard:
 - products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds with no added sweeteners (including nutritive sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols) or fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - frozen desserts containing only 100 percent juice and/or fruit and no added sweeteners (including nutritive sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols).

All other snack products are not exempt and must meet the standard for sugars.

Rationale

Except for breakfast cereals, smoothies, yogurt, and pudding, the CNS sugars standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. The CNS includes a standard for gram limits because the Smart Snacks standard of 35 percent of total sugars by weight does not provide sufficient restriction of sugars content for snack foods. Since the snack items in this category are typically not nutrient-rich foods, maintaining the standard of “no more than 15 grams of total sugars” eliminates foods that are high in added sugars.

The [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends](#) consuming less than 10 percent of calories from added sugars. On average, added sugars account for almost 270 calories (more than 13 percent of total calories) per day in the U.S. population. Intakes as a percent of calories are particularly high among children and adolescents.

Many foods that contain added sugars provide few or no essential nutrients, and no dietary fiber. However, foods that are naturally high in sugars such as fruits and milk should not be restricted because they provide nutrients and other healthful components. Both naturally occurring sugars and added sugars increase the risk of dental caries.

Effective with school year 2025-26, the CNS committee changed the sugars limit for breakfast cereals (cold and cooked), yogurt and pudding, and smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice) to be consistent with the added sugars limits required by the USDA’s final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), issued on April 25, 2024. For more information, refer to [“Rationale for Current Revisions”](#) in section 2.

- For breakfast cereals, the committee changed the previous CNS requirement from total sugars (no more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and 15 grams of total sugars) to added sugars (no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remains the same.
- For yogurt and pudding, the committee changed the previous CNS requirement from total sugars (no more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce) to added sugars (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remains the same. Since the previous CNS sugars limits for pudding and yogurt are the same, the state nutrition standards committee also adopted the added sugars limit for pudding to maintain the consistency of one standard for this CNS category and be consistent with the USDA final rule to reduce added sugars.
- For smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice), the committee changed the previous CNS requirement from total sugars (no more than 4 grams of total sugars per ounce) to added sugars (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 2 grams per ounce) for consistency with the USDA final rule. The portion size limits (no more than 8 fluid ounces for elementary schools and 12 fluid ounces for middle and high schools) and prohibition on nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols remain the same.

The CNS standard prohibiting nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS (refer to [“CNS Philosophy”](#) in section 1). The CNS advocates whole or minimally processed foods that are naturally nutrient rich and low in added sugars. Therefore, the CNS does not allow reducing sugars with nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.

Children need to learn to enjoy the natural favors of healthy foods that have not been artificially enhanced with a sweet taste. There is little evidence on the long-term health effects of nonnutritive sweeteners, particularly from exposure initiated in childhood. Evidence of the effectiveness of nonnutritive sweeteners in promoting weight loss is inconclusive. Some research suggests that nonnutritive sweeteners can increase cravings for sweet foods and lead to increased calorie consumption.

Implementation guidance

- Choose snack foods that are lowest in sugars. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sugar content of brand-specific products. For more information on reducing sugars, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- Read labels and choose foods without added sugars (refer to "[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)" in this section).
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that foods do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols (refer to "[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)" in this section and the definitions in the [Glossary](#)). For guidance on the FDA approved nonnutritive sweeteners, refer to the FDA's [Aspartame and Other Sweeteners in Food](#) webpage.
- Entities that sell snacks made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sugars standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Yogurts labeled "light" or "lite" typically contain nonnutritive sweeteners. Read the ingredients statement to ensure that foods do not contain these ingredients (refer to "[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)" in this section and "artificial sweeteners," "nonnutritive sweeteners" and "sugar alcohols" in the [Glossary](#)).

Common Sugars and Sweeteners

Added sugars

- Brown rice syrup
- Brown sugar
- Corn sweetener
- Corn syrup
- Corn syrup solids
- Dextrin
- Dextrose
- 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
- Syrup

Nonnutritive sweeteners

The CNS does not allow foods that contain nonnutritive sweeteners (artificial or plant-based) or sugar alcohols. Choose nutrient-dense foods that are naturally low in sugars.

Artificial

- Acesulfame potassium (Ace-K): Sweet One®, Sunett®, Sweet & Safe®
- Advantame
- Aspartame: Nutrasweet, Equal®, Sugar Twin®
- Neotame: Newtame®
- Saccharin: Sweet and Low®, Sweet Twin®, Sweet 'N Low Brown®, Necta Sweet®
- Sucralose: Splenda®

Plant-based

These sweeteners are often called “natural,” but this term has not been defined by the FDA and does not have any consistent meaning when used to describe foods or beverages.

- Stevia rebaudiana: Truvia®, PureVia®, Enliten®, Sweetleaf®
- Luo han guo (monk fruit): Nectresse®, Monk Fruit in the Raw®, PureLo®
- Thaumatin

Sugar alcohols

- Erythritol
- Isomalt
- Lactitol
- Maltitol
- Mannitol
- Sorbitol
- Xylitol
- Hydrogenated starch hydrolysates, e.g., hydrogenated glucose syrups, maltitol syrups, and sorbitol syrups

Sodium

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS sodium standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks.

Based on the Chronic Disease Risk Reduction (CDRR) levels defined by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's [Dietary Reference Intakes \(DRIs\) for sodium](#), the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends the following daily limits for sodium intake: 1,200 milligrams per day for ages 1 through 3; 1,500 milligrams per day for ages 4 through 8; 1,800 milligrams per day for ages 9 through 13; and 2,300 milligrams per day for all other age groups.

The CDRR for sodium was established using evidence of the benefit of reducing sodium intake on cardiovascular risk and hypertension risk. A high sodium intake increases the risk of high blood pressure in individuals who are sodium sensitive. Keeping blood pressure in the normal range reduces the risk of heart disease, congestive heart failure, and kidney disease.

Average sodium intakes are high across the U.S. population compared to the recommended limits of the CDRR. Average intake for ages 1 and older is 3,393 milligrams per day, with a range of about 2,000 to 5,000 milligrams per day. Most sodium consumed in the U.S. comes from salt added during commercial food processing and preparation, including foods prepared at restaurants.

Implementation guidance

- Choose snack foods that are lowest in sodium. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sodium content of brand-specific products. For more information on reducing sodium, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- Eliminate or reduce sodium added to snacks made from scratch. Entities that sell snacks made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sodium standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the

completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to [“Evaluating foods made from scratch”](#) in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Caffeine

- **Nutrient standards:** No caffeine except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for caffeine has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. Smart Snacks prohibits caffeinated foods and beverages for elementary and middle students but allows them for high school students. The CNS prohibits caffeine in all foods and beverages for all grades.

This standard is consistent with the IOM’s nutrition standard for caffeine, indicated in [Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth](#). The IOM recommends that school foods and beverages are caffeine free, except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances. The state nutrition standards committee agrees with the IOM recommendations and rationale for caffeine. The committee does not support offering products with significant amounts of caffeine for school-age children because of the potential for adverse effects, including physical dependency and withdrawal.

Some foods and beverages contain trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine and related substances. Examples include chocolate chip cookies and coffee yogurt. These foods are allowed if the product otherwise complies with the CNS.

Note: Connecticut’s beverage statute prohibits all caffeinated beverages and therefore supersedes the federal requirements. The beverage requirements apply to all public schools regardless of whether the district chooses the healthy food option of HFC or participates in the NSLP. For more information, refer to [“Beverage Requirements for Public Schools”](#) in section 1.

Implementation guidance

- Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the caffeine standard.
- Read the ingredients statement for processed snacks to ensure that products do not contain added caffeine.

4 — Standards for Entrees

The CNS entree standards differentiate between 1) entree items sold a la carte during the meal service on the same day that they are planned as part of reimbursable school meals; and 2) entree items that are sold only as a la carte items and are not planned as part of reimbursable school meals. The standards for entrees apply only to entree items that are **sold only a la carte**, i.e., entrees that are not part of a reimbursable meal.

Entree items that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the same day that they are planned and served as part of a reimbursable school meal are exempt from all nutrient standards if they meet certain requirements (refer to [“Entree Exemption”](#) in this section).

CNS Entree Definition

The CNS entree definition includes the three categories of main dish food items below.

1. A combination food of a meat/meat alternate and WGR food, e.g., breakfast egg sandwich on whole-wheat English muffin, turkey wrap on whole-wheat tortilla, pizza with WGR crust, hamburger on whole-grain bun, and bean burrito with whole-corn tortilla.
2. A combination food of a vegetable/fruit and meat/meat alternate, e.g., chef’s salad with turkey, cheese and hard-boiled egg, fruit and cheese platter, yogurt and fruit parfait, smoothies made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice, baked potato with chili, and chicken vegetable stir-fry.
3. A meat/meat alternate alone (e.g., sausage patty, hard-boiled egg, and grilled chicken), excluding yogurt, cheese, nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, and meat snacks, e.g., beef jerky and meat sticks. This category does not include yogurt, cheese, nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters and meat snacks e.g., jerky and meat sticks. These foods are in the snacks category and must be evaluated using the nutrition standards in [section 3](#).

Foods defined by the menu planner as entrees for the NSLP or SBP might not meet the definition for entrees under the CNS. For example, a menu planner might feature French toast and pancakes as the “entree” for lunch. However, these foods are not considered entrees under the CNS because they do not contain a meat/meat alternate and do not meet the CNS entree definition above. French toast and pancakes are “baked items” in the snacks category and must be evaluated using the nutrition standards in [section 3](#).

Entree Exemption

Entree items that are sold a la carte during the meal service on the same day that they are planned and served as part of a reimbursable school meal are exempt from all nutrient standards if they:

- are the same or smaller portion size as the NSLP and SBP;
- have the same accompaniments (refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in section 2); and
- do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, or chemically altered fat substitutes.

The exemption applies only to entrees that are sold a la carte **during the meal service on the same day** that they are planned and sold as part of a reimbursable meal. It does not apply to any other meal items that are sold a la carte such as fruits, vegetables, soups, breads, rice, and pasta. For example:

- french fries that are part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless they meet the nutrition standards for the fruits and vegetables category ([section 6](#));
- tossed salad with dressing that is part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless it meets the nutrition standards for the fruits and vegetables category ([section 6](#));
- muffins that are part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless they meet the nutrition standards for the snacks category ([section 3](#)); and
- cookies that are part of a reimbursable meal cannot be sold a la carte unless they meet the nutrition standards for the snacks category ([section 3](#)).

All other food items sold separately from the meal are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.

The example below shows how the exemption applies to entree items.

Example: Tacos are the entree for Monday’s reimbursable lunch menu. Tacos may be sold a la carte during lunch on Monday and are exempt from the CNS. If the tacos are sold a la carte on Tuesday when they are not part of the reimbursable meal, the CNS applies. The SFA must have a standardized recipe and completed CNS worksheet on file to indicate that the tacos with their accompaniments comply with the CNS.

Overall Rationale for Entrees

The CNS includes an exemption provision for entree items sold a la carte during the meal service on the same day that they are planned and served as part of reimbursable meals. This is stricter than Smart Snacks, which allows an exemption provision for entrees sold during the meal service “on the day of service or the day after service.” The CNS exemption provision ensures that any leftover entrees served the next day are part of reimbursable meals. This is consistent with the goal of encouraging students to choose a reimbursable meal instead of a single entree item.

The state nutrition standards committee originally developed the entree exemption because they felt it was not necessary to develop a separate set of nutrition standards for entree items that are already addressed by the USDA’s standards for reimbursable school meals. The committee based this decision on the rationale below.

- Meals served in the NSLP and SBP are already planned to meet the USDA’s dietary specifications (nutrient standards) for reimbursable school meals.
- The USDA’s dietary specifications already set limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium in school meals. Menu planners have selected the entrees for reimbursable meals to meet the USDA’s dietary specifications based on the weekly school menu.
- A la carte sales of these items are secondary to the sale of the planned meal.

Smart Snacks also uses this approach. For more information on the USDA’s nutrition standards for school meals, refer to the CSDE’s [*Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*](#).

Restricting calories and portion size to be the same as comparable entree items ensures that reasonable portions are provided. One of the goals of the CNS is to encourage appropriate portion sizes that limit calories. Many children consume too many calories and are either overweight or obese.

The [*2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*](#) recommends shifting to healthier food and beverage choices and consuming smaller portions to achieve a healthy dietary pattern within an appropriate number of calories. Meeting the Dietary Guidelines recommendations within calorie needs can help prevent excess weight gain at every life stage and support overall good health.

Overall Implementation Guidance for Entrees

- Read product labels and specifications. Purchase entree items that are lower in total fat, saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium.
- Serve entree items containing whole grains (e.g., whole-grain breads, whole-grain pasta, and whole brown rice) and naturally fiber-rich foods (e.g., vegetables, beans, peas, and lentils, and fruits) most often. These foods are naturally low in fat.
- Use low-fat cooking techniques for entrees made from scratch. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [*Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*](#).
- If entrees contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats, such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [*Glossary*](#).
- Prepare entrees with flavorful herbs and spices instead of condiments. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [*Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*](#).
- If condiments and other accompaniments are used with entrees, serve low-fat, low-sugar, and low-sodium versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to [*Accompaniments*](#)” in section 2.
- Set a la carte prices that encourage students to choose the reimbursable meal instead of a single entree item. Make the cost of purchasing individual a la carte items greater than the cost of purchasing the complete reimbursable meal.

Entrees Sold Only A La Carte

This category includes all main dish entree items (commercial and made from scratch) that meet the **entree definition** and are **sold only a la carte**, i.e., entree items that are not planned and served as part of reimbursable school meals on the same day. For more information, refer to [“CNS Entree Definition”](#) and [“Entree Exemption”](#) in this section.

These standards apply to the amount of the entree item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, oil, cream cheese, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing. For more examples, refer to [“Examples of accompaniments”](#) in section 2.

Calories

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 350 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for calories has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting calories, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Calories” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Serve entrees that meet all CNS requirements in a serving size that does not exceed 350 calories. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the calorie standard.
- Entities that sell a la carte entrees made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the calorie standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to [“Evaluating foods made from scratch”](#) in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Total Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Exemptions:** The following foods are exempt from the fat standard:
 - seafood with no added fat (including chemically altered fat substitutes).

Rationale

The CNS total fat standard and food exemptions have not changed since the last update of the CNS and are consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting total fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Total Fat” in [section 3](#).

The state nutrition standards committee kept the previous standard prohibiting artificial fat replacers because it is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS. For more information, refer to “[CNS Philosophy](#)” in section 1.

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any entree products that contain chemically altered fat substitutes. However, the committee kept the previous standard to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients. For more information, refer to “[CNS Philosophy](#)” in section 1.

The state nutrition standards committee originally developed the fat standard to encourage schools to plan and sell all entree items as part of reimbursable meals. Setting a limit on percent of calories from fat means that schools cannot sell higher fat entrees a la carte unless they are also part of a reimbursable meal that meets the USDA’s nutrient standards. When entree items are combined with low-fat or fat-free milk, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, the overall meal can meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Implementation guidance

- Purchase entrees that are lower in fat. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the standards for the entrees category.
- Serve entree items containing whole grains (e.g., whole-grain breads, whole-grain pasta, and whole brown rice) and naturally fiber-rich foods (e.g., vegetables, beans, peas, and lentils, and fruits) most often. These foods are naturally low in fat.

- Use low-fat cooking techniques and prepare entrees made from scratch with flavorful herbs and spices. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- If entrees contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats, such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- If condiments and other accompaniments are used with entrees, serve low-fat versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in section 2.
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that cooked grains do not contain chemically altered fat substitutes. For more information, refer to “chemically altered fat substitutes” in the Glossary.
- Entities that sell a la carte entrees made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the total fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Saturated Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for saturated fat has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting saturated fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Saturated Fat” in [section 3](#).

The state nutrition standards committee originally developed the saturated fat standard to encourage schools to plan and sell all entree items as part of reimbursable meals. Setting a limit on percent of calories from saturated fat means that schools cannot sell high saturated fat entrees a la carte unless they are also part of a reimbursable meal that meets the USDA’s nutrient standards. When entree items are combined with low-fat or fat-free milk, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, the overall meal can meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Implementation guidance

- Purchase entrees that are lower in saturated fat. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the saturated fat standard for the entrees category.
- Serve entree items containing whole grains (e.g., whole-grain breads, whole-grain pasta, and whole brown rice) and naturally fiber-rich foods (e.g., vegetables, beans, peas, and lentils, and fruits) most often. These foods are naturally low in saturated fat.
- Use low-fat cooking techniques and prepare entrees made from scratch with flavorful herbs and spices. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- If entrees contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats, such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- If condiments and other accompaniments are used with entrees, serve low-fat versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to [“Accompaniments”](#) in section 2.

- Entities that sell a la carte entrees made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the saturated fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sugars

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

- The **sugars standard** has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The standard includes gram limits in addition to "percent by weight," because "percent by weight" alone does not provide any appreciable restriction of sugar content for dense foods like entrees. Using only the USDA's "percent by weight" standard would weaken the integrity of the CNS.
- The Smart Snacks standard of no more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight allows up to 9.9 grams of sugars per ounce. (One ounce is equivalent to 28.35 grams. Thirty-five percent of 28.35 grams equals 9.9 grams.) Table 4-1 shows some sample calculations for different serving sizes of entrees.
- For example, a 4-ounce entree (113.4 grams) could contain 39.7 grams (9.9 teaspoons) of total sugars. This is almost three times the amount of total sugars allowed by the CNS sugars standard of no more than 15 grams per entree. Since entrees are typically low in added sugars, most products will not reach these levels. The standard of "no more than 15 grams" ensures that high-sugar entree products are not used.

Table 4-1. Examples of total sugars limits for entrees with Smart Snacks and CNS

The approximate number of teaspoons is based on the conversion factor of 4 grams of sugars per teaspoon.

Serving size of yogurt	Federal standard: ≤ 35 percent by weight	State standard: ≤ 4 grams per ounce	Additional amount of total sugars allowed by federal standard
1 ounce (28.35 grams)	9.9 grams (2.5 teaspoons)	9.9 grams (2.5 teaspoons)	0 grams (0 teaspoons)
2 ounces (56.7 grams)	19.8grams (5 teaspoons)	15 grams (3.8 teaspoons)	4.8 grams (1.2 teaspoons)
3 ounces (85.1 grams)	29.8 grams (7.4teaspoons)	15 grams (3.8 teaspoons)	14.8 grams (3.7 teaspoons)
4 ounces (113.4 grams)	39.7 grams (9.9 teaspoons)	15 grams (3.8 teaspoons)	24.7 grams (6.2 teaspoons)

Implementation guidance

- Choose prepared entree products that are lowest in sugars. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sugar content of brand-specific products.
- Read labels and choose entrees without added sugars. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of “added sugars,” refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that entrees do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of these ingredients, refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Prepare entrees made from scratch without added sugars.
- Provide low-sugar alternatives to condiments, dressings, and sauces. For more information, refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in section 2. Check the ingredients statement of “low” or “reduced” sugar accompaniments to ensure that they do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners.

- Entities that sell a la carte entrees made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sugars standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sodium

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 480 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for sodium has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting sodium, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Sodium" in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Choose prepared entree products that are lowest in sodium. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sodium content of brand-specific products.
- Eliminate or reduce sodium added to entrees made from scratch. Use salt-free seasonings such as herbs and spices. For more information on reducing sodium, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- Eliminate saltshakers and salt packets from the serving line.
- Use entrees containing fresh and frozen vegetables. If canned vegetables are used, select no sodium or low-sodium varieties.
- Provide low-sodium alternatives to condiments, dressings, and sauces. For more information, refer to "[Accompaniments](#)" in section 2.

- Entities that sell a la carte entrees made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sodium standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Caffeine

- **Nutrient standards:** No caffeine except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for caffeine has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting caffeine, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Caffeine" in [section 3](#).

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any entree products that contain added caffeine. However, the committee kept the previous standard prohibiting caffeine to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Read the ingredients statement for processed entrees to ensure that products do not contain added caffeine.
- Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the entree standards.

5 — Standards for Non-entree Combination Foods

This category includes nutrient-rich combination foods that are not entrees, such as WGR vegetable egg rolls, carrot sticks with peanut butter, and vegetables with hummus dip. Foods in this category either:

- do not meet the main dish criteria for entrees; or
- do not provide the minimum meal pattern requirements for MMA and grains together, or MMA alone.

These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, oil, sour cream, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing. For more examples, refer to “[Examples of accompaniments](#)” in section 2.

Note: Products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds are evaluated using the standards for the snacks category (refer to [section 3](#)).

Calories

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for calories has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The calorie standard is consistent with all other non-entree categories in the CNS. For information on the rationale for limiting calories, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Calories” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Serve non-entree combination foods that meet all requirements of the CNS in a serving size that does not exceed 200 calories. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the calorie standard.

4 | Non-entree Combination Foods

- Entities that sell non-entree combination foods made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the calorie standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Total Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for total fat has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The total fat standard is consistent with all other non-entree categories in the CNS. For information on the rationale for limiting fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Total Fat" in [section 3](#).

The state nutrition standards committee kept the previous standard prohibiting artificial fat replacers because it is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS (refer to "[CNS Philosophy](#)" in section 1).

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any combination foods containing added chemically altered fat substitutes. However, the committee kept the previous standard to prevent the future use of any commercial non-entree combination products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Increase the availability of non-entree combination foods made with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. These foods are naturally low in fat.
- Choose non-entree combination foods that are lowest in fat. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- If accompaniments (e.g., condiments) are used, serve low-fat versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to "[Accompaniments](#)" in section 2.

- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that non-entree combination foods do not contain chemically altered fat substitutes. For more information, refer to “chemically altered fat substitutes” in the Glossary.
- Entities that sell non-entree combination foods made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the total fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Saturated Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for saturated fat has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The saturated fat standard is consistent with all other non-entree categories in the CNS. For information on the rationale for limiting saturated fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Saturated Fat” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Increase the availability of non-entree combination foods made with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. These foods are naturally low in saturated fat.
- Choose non-entree combination foods that are lowest in saturated fat. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the saturated fat content of brand-specific products.
- Choose nut and seed butters without added saturated fats. These foods provide healthy unsaturated fats.
- Entities that sell non-entree combination foods made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the saturated fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required

nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sugars

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS sugars standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The sugars standard is consistent with all other non-entree categories in the CNS. The standard prohibiting nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols is stricter than Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting nonnutritive sweeteners (artificial and plant-based) and sugar alcohols, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Sugars” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Choose non-entree combination foods that are lowest in sugars. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sugar content of brand-specific products. For more information on reducing sugars, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- Read labels and choose foods without added sugars. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of “added sugars,” refer to the [Glossary](#)
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that foods do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of these ingredients, refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Entities that sell non-entree combination foods made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sugars standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the

applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sodium

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for sodium has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The sodium standard is consistent with all other non-entree categories in the CNS. For information on the rationale for limiting sodium, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Sodium” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Choose foods that are lowest in sodium. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sodium content of brand-specific products.
- Eliminate or reduce sodium added to non-entree combination foods made from scratch. Use salt-free seasonings instead such as herbs and spices. For more information on reducing sodium, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- Entities that sell non-entree combination foods made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sodium standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Caffeine

- **Nutrient standards:** No caffeine except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The standard for caffeine has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. The caffeine standard is consistent with all other non-entree categories in the CNS. For information on the rationale for limiting caffeine, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Caffeine” in [section 3](#).

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any non-entree combination products that contain added caffeine. However, the committee kept the previous standard prohibiting caffeine to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Read the ingredients statement for processed non-entree combination foods to ensure that products do not contain added caffeine.
- Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage or brand-specific products that meet the standards for non-entree combination foods.

6 — Standards for Fruits and Vegetables

This category includes fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables. Dried fruits include fruit snacks that are 100 percent fruit. Dried vegetables include roasted beans, peas, and lentils, e.g., roasted chickpeas.

These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, oil, cream cheese, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing. For more examples, refer to [“Examples of accompaniments”](#) in section 2.

Products consisting of only dried fruit with nuts and/or seeds are evaluated under the snacks category (refer to [section 3](#)).

Overall Rationale for Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins, minerals, and other substances that may protect against many chronic diseases. They are high in fiber and help children feel fuller longer.

Most of the U.S. population does not consume the recommended amount of vegetables or fruits. In addition, with few exceptions, the U.S. population does not meet intake recommendations for any of the vegetable subgroups.

The [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends increasing vegetable and fruit intake; eating a variety of vegetables from each subgroup, including dark green, red and orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other; and consuming at least half of the recommended amount of fruit in whole forms (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) instead of 100 percent juice.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that most fruits and vegetables come from whole food rather than juice. The AAP policy statement, [The Use and Misuse of Fruit Juice in Pediatrics](#), recommends limiting daily juice consumption to 4-6 ounces for ages 1 to 6 and 8-12 ounces for ages 7 to 18. Excessive juice consumption may be linked to children becoming overweight or obese and is associated with tooth decay and diarrhea. Whole fruits and vegetables provide nutrients and fiber that may be lost in the processing of juice. Juice does not offer any nutritional benefits over whole fruits and vegetables.

Juice must meet the requirements specified by [C.G.S. Section 10-221q](#) (refer to [“Beverage Requirements for Public Schools”](#) in section 1).

Overall Implementation Guidance for Fruits and Vegetables

- To ensure nutrient-rich choices for students, competitive foods should include a variety of different fruits and vegetables each day. Offer a la carte vegetable choices from each of the five vegetable subgroups, especially dark green, red, and orange vegetables, and beans, peas, and lentils. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program](#).
- Include whole or cut up fresh fruits and vegetables without added fat, sugars, or sodium whenever possible.
- Serve whole fruits and vegetables instead of juice. Fruit juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits. Whole fruits provide fewer calories and more nutrients than juice and should be served most often, as recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Calories

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** The following fruit and vegetable products are exempt from the calorie standard:
 - fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water;
 - canned fruits with no added ingredients except water; or that are packed in 100 percent juice, extra light syrup, or light syrup, all without added nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.

All other fruit and vegetable products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.

Rationale

The CNS calorie standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. Effective with school year 2017-18, the state nutrition standards committee updated the exemption for canned vegetables to be consistent with the Smart Snacks final rule. The USDA’s Smart Snacks final rule changed the canned vegetables exemption from “Canned vegetables with no added ingredients except water; or that contain no added ingredients except

a small amount of sugar for processing purposes to maintain the quality and structure of the vegetable” to “Low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats are exempt from all nutrient standards.”

The restriction on nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes) is consistent with the committee’s previous approach to these ingredients and is stricter than Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting calories, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Calories” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Nonexempt fruits and vegetables that meet all CNS requirements may be served in a portion size that does not exceed 200 calories. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the calorie content of brand-specific products.
- Entities that sell fruits and vegetables prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the calorie standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Total Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Exemptions:** The following fruit and vegetable products are exempt from the total fat standard:
 - fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water;
 - canned fruits with no added ingredients except water; or that are packed in 100 percent juice, extra light syrup, or light syrup, all without syrup, all without added nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.

All other fruit and vegetable products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.

Rationale

The CNS total fat standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The restriction on nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes) is consistent with the committee's previous approach to these ingredients and is stricter than Smart Snacks.

Effective with school year 2017-18, the state nutrition standards committee updated the exemption for canned vegetables to be consistent with the Smart Snacks final rule. The USDA's Smart Snacks final rule changed the canned vegetables exemption from "Canned vegetables with no added ingredients except water; or that contain no added ingredients except a small amount of sugar for processing purposes to maintain the quality and structure of the vegetable" to "Low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats are exempt from all nutrient standards." For information on the rationale for limiting fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Total Fat" in [section 3](#).

The state nutrition standards committee kept the previous standard prohibiting artificial fat replacers because it is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS. For more information, refer to "[CNS Philosophy](#)" in section 1.

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any fruit or vegetable products that contain added chemically altered fat substitutes. However, the committee kept the previous standard to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Purchase and prepare fruits and vegetables without added fat. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- If fruits or vegetables contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats (such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats). For more information, refer to the “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- Avoid fried or baked pre-fried vegetables, such as french fries, potato puffs, and hash brown patties.
- If accompaniments (e.g., condiments) are used, serve low-fat versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in section 2.
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that fruits and vegetables do not contain chemically altered fat substitutes. For more information, refer to “chemically altered fat substitutes” in the [Glossary](#).
- Entities that sell fruits and vegetables prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the total fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Saturated Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments
- **Exemptions:** The following fruit and vegetable products are exempt from the saturated fat standard:
 - fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water;
 - canned fruits with no added ingredients except water; or that are packed in 100 percent juice, extra light syrup, or light syrup, all without syrup, all without added nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.

All other fruit and vegetable products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.

Rationale

The CNS saturated fat standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. The restriction on nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes) is consistent with the committee's previous approach to these ingredients and is stricter than Smart Snacks.

Effective with school year 2017-18, the state nutrition standards committee updated the exemption for canned vegetables to be consistent with the Smart Snacks final rule. The USDA's Smart Snacks final rule changed the canned vegetables exemption from "Canned vegetables with no added ingredients except water; or that contain no added ingredients except a small amount of sugar for processing purposes to maintain the quality and structure of the vegetable" to "Low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats are exempt from all nutrient standards." For information on the rationale for limiting saturated fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Saturated Fat" in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Purchase and prepare fruits and vegetables without added saturated fat. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the saturated fat content of brand-specific products.
- If fruits or vegetables contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats (such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats). For more information, refer to the “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- Entities that sell fruits and vegetables prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the saturated fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sugars

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight, including any added accompaniments. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Exemptions:** The following fruit and vegetable products are exempt from the sugars standard:
 - fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water;
 - canned fruits with no added ingredients except water; or that are packed in 100 percent juice, extra light syrup, or light syrup, all without syrup, all without added nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.

All other fruit and vegetable products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.

Rationale

The CNS sugars standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting added sugars, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Sugars” in [section 3](#).

The naturally occurring sugars in fruits and vegetables are not a health concern, due to the rich nutrient content of these foods. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends increasing intake of whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried), within appropriate daily calorie levels.

The CNS includes an exemption for canned fruits packed in extra light syrup or light syrup, to be consistent with Smart Snacks. The restriction on nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes) is consistent with the committee’s previous approach to these ingredients and is stricter than Smart Snacks.

Implementation guidance

- If processed fruits and vegetables are served, choose products that are lowest in sugars. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sugar content of brand-specific products.
- Read labels for processed fruits and choose those without added sugars. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of “added sugars,” refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Serve canned fruits in their natural juices or water instead of light syrup.
- Serve dried fruits and vegetables without added sugars or sweeteners. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3.
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that foods do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of these ingredients, refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Entities that sell fruits and vegetables prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sugar standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sodium

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** The following fruit and vegetable products are exempt from the sodium standard:
 - fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables with no added ingredients except water;
 - canned fruits with no added ingredients except water; or that are packed in 100 percent juice, extra light syrup, or light syrup, all without added nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes); and
 - dried whole fruits or vegetables, dried whole fruit or vegetable pieces, and dehydrated fruits or vegetables, all without added sweeteners (including nutritive sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols) and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes).
 - low sodium/no salt added canned vegetables with no added fats, nonnutritive sweeteners, or sugar alcohols.

All other fruit and vegetable products are not exempt and must meet all nutrient standards.

Rationale

The CNS sodium standard for fruits and vegetables is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting sodium, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Sodium” in [section 3](#).

The CNS includes an exemption for canned fruits packed in extra light syrup or light syrup, to be consistent with Smart Snacks. The restriction on nonnutritive sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and fats (including chemically altered fat substitutes) is consistent with the committee’s previous approach to these ingredients and is stricter than Smart Snacks.

Implementation guidance

- Choose fruits and vegetables that are lowest in sodium. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sodium content of brand-specific products.
- Serve fresh vegetables and fruits (whole or cut up) whenever possible.

- If canned vegetables are served, choose low-sodium varieties.
- Entities that sell fruits and vegetables prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sodium standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Caffeine

- **Nutrient standards:** No caffeine except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS caffeine standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting caffeine, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Caffeine" in [section 3](#).

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any fruit or vegetable products that contain added caffeine. However, the committee kept the previous standard prohibiting caffeine to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Read the ingredients statement for processed fruits and vegetables to ensure that products do not contain added caffeine.
- Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the standards for fruits and vegetables.

7 — Standards for Cooked Grains

This category includes all cooked grains such as rice, pasta, and quinoa, except for cooked breakfast cereals like oatmeal, which are in the snacks category (refer to [section 3](#)). These standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as butter, oil, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing. For more examples, refer to [“Examples of accompaniments”](#) in section 2.

Whole Grain-Rich Criteria for Cooked Grains

Cooked grains must meet the WGR criteria for group H under general standard 1: 1) the product must be 100 percent whole grain or contain a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion. Examples of noncreditable grain ingredients include oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, bran, germ, and modified food starch including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours. For additional guidance on noncreditable grains, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

For more information, refer to “Rationale” and “Implementation Guidance” for general standard 1 in [section 2](#).

Calories

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS sodium standard for grains has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting calories, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Calories” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Cooked grains that meet all requirements of the CNS may be served in a portion size that does not exceed 200 calories. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the calorie content of brand-specific products.
- Entities that sell cooked grains prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the calorie standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Total Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS total fat standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Total Fat" in [section 3](#).

The state nutrition standards committee kept the previous standard prohibiting artificial fat replacers because it is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS. For more information, refer to "[CNS Philosophy](#)" in section 1.

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any cooked grain products that contain added chemically altered fat substitutes. However, the committee kept the previous standard to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Purchase cooked grains that are lower in fat. Consult the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- Use low-fat cooking techniques for cooked grains made from scratch. For more information on reducing fat, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- If cooked grains contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats, such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- If accompaniments (e.g., condiments) are used, serve low-fat versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in section 2.
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that cooked grains do not contain chemically altered fat substitutes. For more information, refer to “chemically altered fat substitutes” in the Glossary.
- Entities that sell cooked grains prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the total fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Saturated Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS saturated fat standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting saturated fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Saturated Fat” in [section 3](#)

Implementation guidance

- Purchase cooked grains that are lower in saturated fat. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- Use low-fat cooking techniques for cooked grains made from scratch. For more information on reducing saturated fat, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- If cooked grains contain added fat, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats, such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#).
- If accompaniments (e.g., condiments) are used, serve low-fat versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to [“Accompaniments”](#) in section 2.
- Entities that sell cooked grains prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the saturated fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to [“Evaluating foods made from scratch”](#) in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sugars

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

- The CNS sugars standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. The standard includes gram limits in addition to “percent by weight,” because “percent by weight” alone does not provide any appreciable restriction of sugar content for dense foods like cooked grains.
- Using only the USDA’s “percent by weight” standard would weaken the integrity of the CNS. For example, using 35 percent by weight, a ½-cup serving of brown rice with sweet and sour sauce that weighs 3 ounces could contain up to 29.8 grams (almost 2 ½ tablespoons) of total sugars. This is almost twice the amount of sugars allowed by the CNS limit of no more than 15 grams. Since cooked grains are typically low in added sugars, most products will not reach these levels. However, the committee kept the standard of “no more than 15 grams” to ensure that high-sugar cooked grain products are not used.
- Cooked grains are generally served by volume (e.g., ½ cup) not weight (e.g., 3 ounces). This makes the “percent by weight” calculation difficult unless the menu planner can determine the equivalent weight of the actual serving size, e.g., the weight of ½ cup of cooked rice. The weight of a serving of cooked grains varies depending on many factors such as the ingredients used, cooking method, cooking time and type of food, e.g., brown rice, long-grain white rice or short-grain white rice, and whole-wheat or enriched pasta. Recipes generally express the serving size for cooked grains as volume not weight. For more information, refer to [“Volume versus Weight”](#) in section 2.
- The committee kept the previous standard prohibiting nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols because it is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS. For more information [“CNS Philosophy”](#) in section 1. For information on the rationale for limiting sugars, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Sugars” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Cooked grains prepared without added sugars will meet the sugars standard. Cooked grains are naturally low in total sugars unless sugars are added.
- Serve unprocessed 100 percent whole-grain products most often such as whole-wheat pasta and whole-grain brown rice. Many WGR products are not 100 percent whole grain. For more information, on choosing whole-grain products, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- If purchasing processed products, choose cooked grains that are lowest in sugars. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- Read labels and choose foods without added sugars. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of “added sugars,” refer to the [Glossary](#)
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that foods do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of these ingredients, refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Entities that sell cooked grains prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sugars standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sodium

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS sodium standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is the same as Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting sodium, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Sodium” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Choose cooked grains that are lowest in sodium. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- Prepare cooked grains with no or minimal sodium. For more information on reducing sodium, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- Use salt-free seasonings such as herbs and spices.
- Eliminate saltshakers and salt packets from the serving line.
- Provide low-sodium alternatives to condiments, dressings and sauces. For more information, refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in section 2
- Entities that sell cooked grains prepared or packaged with added ingredients (e.g., fat, sugars, and sodium) must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sodium standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Caffeine

- **Nutrient standards:** No caffeine except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS caffeine standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting caffeine, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Caffeine” in [section 3](#).

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any cooked grain products that contain added caffeine. However, the committee kept the previous standard prohibiting caffeine to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Read the ingredients statement for cooked grains to ensure that products do not contain added caffeine.
- Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the standards for cooked grains.

8 — Standards for Soups

This category includes all soups including ready-to-serve, canned, frozen, and rehydrated. The standards apply to the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments such as sour cream, grated cheese, or croutons. For more examples, refer to [“Examples of accompaniments”](#) in section 2.

Calories

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS calorie standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting calories, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Calories” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Soups that meet all requirements of the CNS may be served in a portion size that does not exceed 200 calories. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the calorie content of brand-specific products.
- Entities that sell soups made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sugars standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to [“Evaluating foods made from scratch”](#) in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Total Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS total fat standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Total Fat” in [section 3](#).

The state nutrition standards committee kept the previous standard prohibiting artificial fat replacers because it is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS. For more information, refer to “[CNS Philosophy](#)” in section 1.

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any soup products that contain added chemically altered fat substitutes. However, the committee kept the previous standard to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Choose commercial soups that are lowest in fat. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the fat content of brand-specific products.
- Prepare soups made from scratch with minimal or no added fat. If fat is used, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats (such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats). For more information, refer “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#). For more information on reducing fat, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- When preparing milk-based soups, use low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk instead of whole or reduced-fat (2%) milk.
- If accompaniments (e.g., condiments) are used, serve low-fat versions in individual portion sizes. For more information, refer to “[Accompaniments](#)” in section 2.

- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that soups do not contain chemically altered fat substitutes. For more information, refer to “chemically altered fat substitutes” in the [Glossary](#).
- Entities that sell soups made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the total fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Saturated Fat

- **Nutrient standards:** Less than 10 percent of calories as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS saturated fat standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting saturated fat, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Saturated Fat” in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Choose commercial soups that are lowest in saturated fat. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the saturated fat content of brand-specific products.
- Prepare soups made from scratch with minimal or no added fat. If fat is used, choose products with healthy unsaturated fats (such as polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats). For more information, refer to “polyunsaturated” and “monounsaturated fats” in the [Glossary](#). For more information on reducing fat, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- When preparing milk-based soups, use low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk instead of whole or reduced-fat (2%) milk.

- Entities that sell soups made from scratch must ensure that the recipe's serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the saturated fat standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to "[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)" in section 1. For the definition of "foods made from scratch," refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sugars

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 35 percent of total sugars by weight and no more than 15 grams of total sugars as served, including any added accompaniments. No nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

- The CNS sugars standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. The standard includes gram limits in addition to "percent by weight," because "percent by weight" cannot be applied to foods whose serving size is based on volume (fluid ounces) instead of weight (ounces). "Percent of sugars by weight" cannot be easily determined because commercially prepared soups and recipes for soups made from scratch do not provide information on the weight of a serving. For more information, refer to "[Volume versus weight](#)" in section 2.
- Even if serving weight information is available, using only the USDA's "percent by weight" standard would weaken the integrity of the previous CNS. "Percent of sugars by weight" allows a high amount of sugars for dense foods such as soups. Since soups are typically low in added sugars, most products will not reach these levels. However, the committee kept the standard of "no more than 15 grams of total sugars" to ensure that any high-sugar soup products are not used.
- The committee kept the previous standard prohibiting nonnutritive sweeteners and sugar alcohols because it is stricter than Smart Snacks and supports the philosophy of the CNS. For more information, refer to "[CNS Philosophy](#)" in section 1. For information on the rationale for limiting sugars, refer to the previously indicated rationale under "Sugars" in [section 3](#).

Implementation guidance

- Read labels and choose foods without added sugars. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of “added sugars,” refer to the [Glossary](#)
- Read the ingredients statement to ensure that foods do not contain nonnutritive sweeteners or sugar alcohols. For more information, refer to “[Common sugars and sweeteners](#)” in section 3. For the definition of these ingredients, refer to the [Glossary](#).
- Entities that sell soups made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sugars standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Sodium

- **Nutrient standards:** No more than 200 milligrams as served, including any added accompaniments.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

Effective July 1, 2016, the USDA’s Smart Snacks standards decreased from 230 milligrams to 200 milligrams, and the state nutrition standards committee added the USDA’s sodium standard to the soups category to be consistent with Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting sodium, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Sodium” in [section 3](#).

The committee recognizes that these sodium limits are very restrictive when applied to the soups category because they eliminate most commercial soups currently available.

Implementation guidance

- Choose soups that are lowest in sodium. Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for the sodium content of brand-specific products.

- Prepare soups from scratch to control sodium content. Use salt-free seasonings, such as herbs and spices. For more information on reducing sodium, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).
- If soup bases are used, purchase low-sodium varieties.
- Entities that sell soups made from scratch must ensure that the recipe’s serving (including any added accompaniments) meets the sodium standard. Required documentation includes 1) an accurate standardized recipe with the required nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving (with added accompaniments) complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to “[Evaluating foods made from scratch](#)” in section 1. For the definition of “foods made from scratch,” refer to the [Glossary](#).

Caffeine

- **Nutrient standards:** No caffeine except for trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Exemptions:** None

Rationale

The CNS caffeine standard has not changed since the last update of the CNS and is stricter than Smart Snacks. For information on the rationale for limiting caffeine, refer to the previously indicated rationale under “Caffeine” in [section 3](#).

Note: To date, the committee is not aware of any soup products that contain added caffeine. However, the committee kept the previous standard prohibiting caffeine to prevent the future use of any commercial products developed with these ingredients.

Implementation guidance

- Consult the CSDE’s [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage for brand-specific products that meet the standards for soups.

9 — Resources

This section includes resources that assist schools with implementing the CNS of HFC (Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes) and the state beverage requirements (Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes). For a detailed list of implementation resources, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for Meeting the Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in Schools](#).

Connecticut Statutes and Regulations for Competitive Foods

[C.G.S. Section 10-215. Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_169.htm#sec_10-215

[C.G.S. Section 10-215a. Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_169.htm#sec_10-215a

[C.G.S. Section 10-215e. Nutrition standards for food that is not part of lunch or breakfast program:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_169.htm#sec_10-215e

[C.G.S. Section 10-215f. Certification that food meets nutrition standards:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_169.htm#sec_10-215f

[C.G.S. Section 10-221o. Lunch Periods and Recess:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-221o

[C.G.S. Section 10-221p. Boards to make available for purchase nutritious and low-fat foods:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-221p

[C.G.S. Section 10-221q. Sale of beverages:](#)

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-221q

[Connecticut General Statutes for School Foods and Beverages](#) (CSDE's Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/laws-and-regulations-for-child-nutrition-programs/state-statutes-and-regulations-for-school-foods-and-beverages#ConnecticutGeneralStatutes>

[Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies \(Sections 10-215b-1 and 10-215b-23\):](#)

https://eregulations.ct.gov/eRegsPortal/Browse/RCSA/Title_10Subtitle_10-215b/

CSDE Resources and Websites

Adult Education Programs (“Guidance and Resources” section of CSDE’s HFC webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification/guidance-and-resources#AdultEducationPrograms>

[Allowable Beverages in Connecticut Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/allowable_beverages_public_schools.pdf

[Beverage Requirements](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/beverage-requirements>

[CNS Worksheets](#) (“Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance” section of CSDE’s Connecticut Nutrition Standards webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/connecticut-nutrition-standards/evaluating-foods-for-cns-compliance#CNSWorksheets>

[Competitive Foods in Schools](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/competitive-foods>

[Complying with Healthy Food Certification](#) (CSDE training program):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification/hfc-training-program>

[Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/connecticut-nutrition-standards>

[Ensuring District Compliance with Healthy Food Certification](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/ensuring_district_compliance_hfc.pdf

[Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance](#) (CSDE’s Connecticut Nutrition Standards webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/connecticut-nutrition-standards/evaluating-foods-for-cns-compliance>

[Fundraisers](#) (“Guidance and Resources” section of CSDE’s HFC webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification/guidance-and-resources#Fundraisers>

[Guidance and Resources](#) (CSDE’s Healthy Food Certification webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification>

[Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/guide_wgr_requirement_snp_grades_k-12.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/guide_wgr_requirement_snp_grades_k-12.pdf

[Healthy Food Certification](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification>

[List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/list-of-acceptable-foods-and-beverages) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/list-of-acceptable-foods-and-beverages>

[Overview of Federal and State Laws for Competitive Foods in Connecticut Public Schools, Private Schools, and Residential Child Care Institutions](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/overview_federal_state_laws_competitive_foods.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/overview_federal_state_laws_competitive_foods.pdf

[Questions and Answers on Connecticut Statutes for School Foods and Beverages](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/questions_answers_connecticut_statutes_school_foods_beverages.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/questions_answers_connecticut_statutes_school_foods_beverages.pdf

[Requirements for Cafeteria A La Carte Foods and Beverages in HFC Public Schools](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/cafeteria_requirements_hfc.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/cafeteria_requirements_hfc.pdf

[Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements_competitive_foods_hfc.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/requirements_competitive_foods_hfc.pdf

[Requirements for Food and Beverage Fundraisers in HFC Public Schools](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/fundraiser_requirements_hfc.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/fundraiser_requirements_hfc.pdf

[Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Culinary Programs in HFC Public Schools](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/culinary_programs_requirements_hfc.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/culinary_programs_requirements_hfc.pdf

[Requirements for Foods and Beverages in School Stores in HFC Public Schools](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/school_store_requirements_hfc.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/school_store_requirements_hfc.pdf

[Requirements for Foods and Beverages in Vending Machines in HFC Public Schools](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/vending_machine_requirements_hfc.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/vending_machine_requirements_hfc.pdf

[School Wellness Policies](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/school-wellness-policies) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/school-wellness-policies>

[Summary Chart of Federal and State Requirements for Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/compfoods/summary_chart_requirements_competitive_foods_hfc.pdf

[Summary of Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/hfc/cns/connecticut_nutrition_standards_summary.pdf

[Vending Machines](#) (“Guidance and Resources” section of CSDE’s HFC webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/healthy-food-certification/guidance-and-resources#VendingMachines>

Glossary

a la carte sales (also known as “competitive foods”): Foods and beverages that are sold separately from reimbursable meals in the USDA’s school nutrition programs. A la carte items include, but are not limited to, foods and beverages sold in the cafeteria serving lines, a la carte lines, kiosks, vending machines, school stores, and snack bars located anywhere on school grounds. For more information, refer to “competitive foods” in this section.

accompaniments: Foods that accompany another food or beverage item, such as butter, cream cheese, syrup, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and salad dressing. Foods must be evaluated for CNS compliance based on the amount of the food item as served including any added accompaniments. Examples include hamburger with ketchup and mustard, bagel with cream cheese, waffles with syrup, whole grain-rich pasta with butter, salad with dressing, and fruit crisp with whipped cream. For more examples, refer to [“Examples of accompaniments”](#) in section 2.

added sugars: According to the [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#), “Added sugars include sugars that are added during the processing of foods (such as sucrose or dextrose), foods packaged as sweeteners (such as table sugar), sugars from syrups and honey, and sugars from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices. They do not include naturally occurring sugars that are found in milk, fruits, and vegetables.” Examples of 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.

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.

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.

carbohydrates: A category of nutrients that includes sugars (simple carbohydrates) and starch and fiber (complex carbohydrates). Foods in the basic food groups that provide carbohydrates — fruits, vegetables, breads, cereals, grains, milk and dairy products — are important sources of many nutrients. However, foods containing large amounts of added sugars provide calories but few, if any, nutrients. Carbohydrates are easily converted by the body to energy (calories). The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend consuming 45 to 65 percent of total daily calories from carbohydrates, especially complex carbohydrates. For more information, refer to “added sugars,” “simple carbohydrates” and “complex carbohydrates” in this section.

cheese: Refer to “natural cheese” and “pasteurized blended cheese” in this section.

chemically altered fat substitutes: Compounds made by chemically manipulating food products to mimic the texture and flavor of fat while providing fewer calories and less metabolizable fat. Examples include olestra (Olean®) and microparticulated whey protein concentrate (Simplese®). Fat substitutes can have negative side effects. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards do not allow foods or beverages with these ingredients.

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 labeling include main dish entrees that contribute to the MMA component of the meal pattern requirements, e.g., beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. The CN label will also indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the “[Child Nutrition Labels](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs 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), 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.

cholesterol: A fat-like substance that performs important functions in the body such as making cell membranes and some hormones. There are two different types of cholesterol. *Blood (serum)* cholesterol circulates in the body in lipoproteins, such as low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL). LDL is known as “bad” cholesterol because high levels can clog arteries, causing atherosclerosis. A high level of serum cholesterol is a major risk factor for coronary heart disease, which leads to heart attack. HDL is known as “good” cholesterol because high levels seem to protect against heart attack. *Dietary cholesterol* does not contain any calories. It comes from foods of animal origin, including meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and dairy

products. Plant foods (including vegetable oils) do not contain cholesterol. There is no dietary requirement for cholesterol because the body can make all it needs.

combination foods: Foods that contain more than one food component such as pizza, burritos, vegetable egg rolls and smoothies made with low-fat yogurt and fruit. For example, macaroni and cheese contains pasta (grains component) and cheese (MMA component). Combination foods generally cannot be separated (such as pizza or a burrito) or are not intended to be separated (such as hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich). Many combination foods, such as pizza, lasagna, and hamburger on a whole-grain bun, meet the definition for “entree items” as defined by the Connecticut Nutrition Standards.

competitive foods (*applies to state statutes and state competitive foods regulations*): All foods and beverages available for sale to students on school premises at all times, other than reimbursable meals and snacks served through the USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs. Competitive foods include, but are not limited to, cafeteria a la carte sales, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers. For other potential sources, refer to “[Potential sources of food and beverage sales in HFC public schools](#)” in section 1. For more information, refer to “a la carte sales” in this section. **Note:** Under Section 10-215b-1 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, competitive foods also include certain foods and beverages that are given to students while CNPs are operating.

complex carbohydrates (starch and fiber): Complex carbohydrates include starch and fiber, which are made from three or more simple sugars linked together. Starch is the storage form of energy in plants and provides calories. Fiber is the structural framework of plants and does not contain any calories. Food sources of complex carbohydrates include beans, peas, and lentils, starchy vegetables (e.g., potatoes, corn, dry beans and green peas), whole-grain breads and cereals, and nuts and seeds. For more information, refer to “dietary fiber” in this section.

Connecticut Nutrition Standards: State nutrition standards developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education, as required by [Section 10-215e](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes. The CNS addresses the nutritional content of all foods available for sale to students separately from reimbursable school meals. The standards limit calories, fat, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars; and promote more nutrient-rich foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, beans, peas, and lentils, and lean meats. All schools in any district that chooses to comply with the healthy food option of HFC under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must follow the CNS for all sources of food sales to students, including school cafeterias, vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and any other sources. The CNS also applies to snacks served in the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) webpage.

Daily Value: A number on the Nutrition Facts panel of food labels that provides recommendations for daily intake of nutrients based on daily caloric intakes of 2,000 and 2,500 calories. The Nutrition Facts panel also includes percent Daily Value, which shows how a serving of the food fits into an overall daily diet of 2,000 calories.

dietary fiber: Nondigestible carbohydrates and lignin (a noncarbohydrate substance bound to fiber) that are naturally occurring in plants, e.g., gums, cellulose, fiber in oats and wheat bran. Fiber improves gastrointestinal health and reduces risk of several chronic diseases, such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes and colon cancer. There are two types of dietary fiber, insoluble and soluble. *Insoluble fibers* aid in digestion by adding bulk and softness to stools to promote regularity and prevent constipation. Insoluble fibers decrease the amount of “transit time” for food waste in the intestine. Insoluble fibers include whole-wheat products, wheat and corn bran, many vegetables (e.g., cauliflower, beans, and potatoes) and the skins of fruits and root vegetables. *Soluble fibers* (e.g., gums, mucilages, and pectin) bind to fatty substances in the body to promote their excretion as waste. They help lower blood cholesterol levels and also help regulate the body’s use of sugars. Soluble fibers are found in dry beans and peas, oats, oatmeal, barley, psyllium seed husk, and many fruits and vegetables, such as apples, carrots, citrus fruits, strawberries, prunes, and beans, peas, and lentils.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans: A federal document that provides science-based advice for Americans ages 2 and older to promote health and to reduce risk for chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is published jointly every five years by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the USDA, and forms the basis of federal food, nutrition education and information programs. For more information, visit the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) webpage.

Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs): A set of nutrient-based reference values that expand upon and replace the former Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) in the United States and the Recommended Nutrient Intakes (RNIs) in Canada. The DRIs include four reference values: Estimated Average Requirements (EARs), RDAs, Adequate Intakes (AIs) and Tolerable Upper Intake Levels (ULs).

dietary specifications: The USDA’s nutrition standards for meals in the NSLP and SBP. The dietary specifications include weekly calorie ranges and weekly limits for saturated fat and sodium. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

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 School Nutrition Programs](#).

entrees: A food item that is one of the following three categories of main dish food items: 1) a combination food of meat/meat alternate and whole grain-rich (WGR) food, e.g., breakfast egg sandwich on a whole-wheat English muffin, turkey wrap on whole-wheat tortilla, pizza with WGR crust, hamburger on a whole-grain bun, and bean burrito with whole-corn tortilla; 2) a combination food of vegetable/fruit and meat/meat alternate, e.g., chef's salad with turkey, cheese and hard-boiled egg; cheese and egg; fruit and cheese platter; yogurt and fruit parfaits; school-made yogurt and fruit smoothies; baked potato with chili; and chicken vegetable stir-fry; and 3) a meat/meat alternate alone (e.g., sausage patty, hard-boiled egg, grilled chicken), excluding yogurt, low-fat or reduced fat cheese, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and meat snacks, e.g., jerky and meat sticks. Yogurt, low-fat or reduced fat cheese, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, and meat snacks must meet the nutrition standards for the snacks category.

event: An occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. Events involve a gathering of people in a social context, such as sports competitions, school concerts, and theatrical productions. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. For more information, refer to [Examples of events for food and beverage exemptions](#) in section 1.

fat substitutes: Refer to “chemically altered fat substitutes” in this section.

fiber: A general term for the indigestible carbohydrates (e.g., pectin, cellulose, and other substances) that make up the framework of plants. Dietary fiber is the total amount of these materials that are not digested by humans. For more information, refer to “dietary fiber” in this section.

foods made from scratch: Two categories of foods, including 1) foods prepared from ingredients using a recipe, e.g., entrees sold only a la carte (carte (i.e., not as part of reimbursable NSLP and SBP meals) such as pizza, chef's salad, lasagna, and sandwiches; soups; cooked grains (such as rice or pasta) with added salt and fat, e.g., oil, margarine, or butter; cooked vegetables with added salt and fat; salad with dressing; fruit smoothies; and baked goods such as muffins and cookies; and 2) foods that have additional ingredients added after purchasing, e.g., popping popcorn kernels in oil and adding salt; making muffins from a mix and adding butter and eggs; and adding sprinkles to commercial frozen cookie dough. Before selling these two categories of foods to students, schools must provide documentation of each recipe's CNS compliance. This requires 1) an accurate standardized recipe with nutrition information per serving; and 2) the completed CSDE CNS worksheet for the applicable CNS food category, indicating that the serving with its accompaniments complies with the CNS. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [How to Evaluate Foods Made from Scratch for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) and [Guidance on Evaluating Recipes for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#), and visit the “[Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance](#)” section of the CSDE's CNS webpage.

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), and to enhance the perceived nutritional value of products with little or no natural nutritional value, e.g., fortifying “energy” bars made from processed flour with multiple vitamins and minerals. Fortification nutrients are added to products in varying amounts, from small percentages up to amounts greater than recommended intakes.

fundraisers: Any activities conducted by any school-related or outside organization or group on school premises, during which money or its equivalent (e.g., coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items) is exchanged for the purchase of a product in support of the school or school-related activities. Fundraisers also include any activities that suggest a student donation in exchange for foods and beverages, since funds may be raised as a result. **Note:** Smart Snacks applies to purchased coupons and similar items that can be exchanged for foods and beverages. The state statutes and state competitive foods regulations apply to all coupons and similar items that can be exchanged for foods and beverages, including tickets that students purchase and tickets given to students free of any charge.

giving (*applies to state statutes and state competitive foods regulations*): Providing foods and beverages to students free of any charge, contribution, or suggested donations. Foods and beverages are being given to students when all of the following five conditions apply: 1) students do not purchase foods and beverages; 2) students do not exchange purchased coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items for foods and beverages; 3) students are not given coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items that can be exchanged for foods and beverages; 4) programs and activities that charge a fee do not include the cost of foods and beverages provided to students; and 5) fundraisers do not give foods and beverages to students in exchange for a suggested donation.

Healthy Food Certification: A requirement of state statute (Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes) that each BOE for all public schools participating in the NSLP must certify annually to the CSDE whether they will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all foods available for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals. Districts that choose to comply with the CNS receive 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free, and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year. For more information, refer to “Connecticut Nutrition Standards” in this section and visit the CSDE’s [Healthy Food Certification](#) webpage.

meals: Refer to “reimbursable school meal” 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), yogurt, soy yogurt, and commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein in a ¼-cup (2.2 ounces) serving. For more information, visit the [“Meats and Meat Alternates”](#) section of the CDSE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

monosaturated fat: A type of unsaturated fat that is found in nuts, seeds, avocados and liquid vegetable oils, such as canola oil, olive oil, high oleic safflower, and sunflower oils. Monosaturated fats may help lower blood cholesterol when used as part of an overall diet that is moderate in fat.

MyPlate: Released in June 2011, MyPlate is the USDA’s food guidance system to translate the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* into a healthy eating plan. MyPlate emphasizes consuming more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy. For more information, visit the [Choose MyPlate](#) website.

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 that is made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheese. Natural cheese does not include pasteurized process cheese (e.g., American), pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, or pasteurized process cheese products.

non-entree combination foods: Products that do not meet the definition of entree items but that contain two or more components representing two or more of the recommended food groups: fruit, vegetable, dairy, protein or grains. This category addresses nutrient-rich combination foods that are not entrees such as yogurt and fruit parfaits, peanut butter with carrot sticks, and hummus dip with vegetables. These foods either do not meet the main dish criteria for entrees or do not provide the minimum meal pattern requirements for MMA and grains together or MMA alone.

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 guidance on the FDA approved nonnutritive sweeteners, refer to the FDA's [Aspartame and Other Sweeteners in Food](#) webpage.

nutrient-dense foods: Foods that provide substantial amounts of naturally occurring vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients with relatively few calories. Nutrient-dense foods include lean sources of protein and/or complex carbohydrates that are low in total fat and saturated fats. Examples include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, lean meat, skinless poultry, fish, eggs, and beans. Foods and beverages that are not nutrient dense provide calories from fat, added sugars and processed carbohydrates but relatively small amounts of nutrients (and sometimes none at all), unless they are fortified.

nutrient-rich foods: Refer to “nutrient-dense foods” in this section.

nutrition standards: Guidelines for the nutritional content of foods and beverages that provide objective criteria for determining what can and cannot be offered, based on current nutrition science and national health recommendations. Nutrition standards help programs to increase healthy options and limit less healthy choices wherever foods and beverages are available. For more information, refer to “Connecticut Nutrition Standards” in this section.

nutrition supplementation of products: Addition of vitamins, minerals, amino acids (e.g., taurine, glutamine, lysine, arginine), extracts (e.g., green tea extract, gotu kola extract), and herbs or other botanicals (e.g., ginseng, ginkgo biloba) to a food or beverage. For many of these supplements, the efficacy and safety for consumption by children is not well known. Some nutrition supplements may have harmful side effects. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards do not allow foods or beverages with these ingredients.

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: A weight-based unit of measure for the grains component and MMA component in the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the “[Grains](#)” and “[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)” sections of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

pasteurized blended cheese: Pasteurized blended cheese is made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheese into a homogenous mass. For more information, refer to “natural cheese” in this section.

polyunsaturated fat: A type of unsaturated fat that is found in fatty cold-water fish (e.g., salmon, mackerel, and herring), nuts, seeds and liquid vegetable oils, such as safflower, sesame, soy, corn, and sunflower. Polyunsaturated fats may help lower blood cholesterol when used as part of an overall diet that is moderate in fat.

portion: Refer to “serving size” in this section.

product formulation statement: An information statement developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA’s meal patterns, and documents how this information is obtained citing Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations. A PFS does not provide any warranty against audit claims. The USDA requires a PFS for commercial processed products without a CN label that are not listed in the [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG). All creditable ingredients in this statement must match a description in the FBG. The PFS must be prepared on company letterhead with the signature of a company official and the date of issue. The USDA requires that school food authorities must verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and snacks. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

public schools: Connecticut public schools include all local and regional school districts, the regional educational service centers, the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) (previously known as the Connecticut Technical High School System), charter schools, interdistrict magnet schools, and endowed academies.

Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA): The average daily dietary intake level that is sufficient to meet the nutrient requirement of most healthy individuals in a particular life stage and gender group. The RDA is one of four reference values that comprise the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs). For more information, refer to definition for “Dietary Reference Intakes” in this section.

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.

reimbursable school meal: A meal that meets the requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program.

sales (*applies to state statutes and regulations*): The exchange of a determined amount of money or its equivalent (such as coupons, tickets, tokens, and similar items) for foods and beverages on school premises at any time. Sales also include fee-based programs and activities that include the cost of foods and beverages provided to students, and activities that suggest a student donation in exchange for foods and beverages. Potential sources of food and beverage sales in schools include cafeteria a la carte sales, vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and any other sources selling foods and beverages to students on school premises.

saturated fat: A type of fat that raises blood cholesterol, which is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Major sources of saturated fat include animal products (e.g., cheese, beef, milk, oils, snack foods, butter, and lard) and tropical vegetable oils (palm, palm kernel, and coconut). For more information, refer to “solid fats” in this section.

School Breakfast Program (SBP): The USDA’s federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. The SBP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to children each school day. The program was established under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to ensure that all children have access to a healthy breakfast at school to promote learning readiness and healthy eating behaviors. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [School Breakfast Program](#) webpage.

school day: The period from the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. For example, if school ends at 3:00 p.m., the school day is from midnight to 3:30 p.m. Summer school programs operated by the school governing authority are part of the regular school day.

school food authority (SFA): The governing body that is responsible for the administration of one or more schools and has the legal authority to operate the USDA’s school nutrition programs, e.g., National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP, Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP, Special Milk Program, and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

school premises (*applies to state statutes and state competitive foods regulations*): All areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the local or regional BOE, the regional vocational-technical school system (Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)), or the governing authority district or school.

Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP: The USDA’s federally assisted summer feeding program that combines features of the NSLP, SBP, and SFSP, and serves meals free of charge to children ages 18 and younger from low-income areas. School districts participating in the NSLP or SBP are eligible to apply to the CSDE to participate in the SSO. SSO meals follow the meal patterns of the NSLP and SBP. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\) of the NSLP](#) webpage.

servicing size: The weight, measure, or number of pieces or slices of a food, or volume of a beverage, provided to students. The individual serving size or package cannot exceed 350 calories for entrees or 200 calories for all other foods. All foods and beverages are evaluated for compliance with the CNS and Smart Snacks nutrition standards based on the amount of the food item as served, including any added accompaniments. For more information, refer to “accompaniments” in this section.

simple carbohydrates (sugars): Carbohydrates consisting of one (e.g., fructose and galactose) or two (e.g., lactose, maltose, sucrose) sugars. 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.

Smart Snacks: The USDA’s federal nutrition standards for foods and beverages available for sale to students on school campus during the school day, separately from reimbursable meals and snacks in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. Smart Snacks includes nutrition standards for entrees sold only a la carte, side dishes, and beverages. The USDA requires the Smart Snacks nutrition standards for all schools and institutions that participate in the NSLP and SBP. These standards were legislated by the final rule, [*National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School as Required by the HHFKA of 2010*](#) (81 FR 50131), effective July 1, 2014. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [*Summary of Smart Snacks Nutrition Standards*](#) and [*Questions and Answers on Smart Snacks*](#), and visit the CSDE’s [Smart Snacks](#) webpage. **Note:** For HFC public schools, Smart Snacks applies only to beverages. HFC public schools must disregard the Smart Snacks food standards because the stricter CNS requirements of the state HFC statute (C.G.S. Section 10-215f) supersede Smart Snacks.

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.

soft drinks (applies to state statutes and state competitive foods regulations): Beverages (with or without carbonation) that contain water and/or juice and added sweeteners (including nutritive sweeteners, nonnutritive sweeteners, and sugar alcohols) and may also contain other ingredients such as edible acids, natural or artificial flavors and colors, and added nutrients. Examples of soft drinks include soda (regular and diet), sports drinks (regular, low-calorie, and zero calorie), sweetened beverages (with or without carbonation) that are not 100 percent juice (such as lemonade and fruit punch drinks), and flavored water with added sweeteners.

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 fat. For more information, refer to “saturated fat” in this section.

standard of identity for food: The mandatory government requirements that determine what a food product must contain to be marketed under a certain name in interstate commerce. These standards protect consumers by ensuring a label accurately reflects what is inside, e.g., mayonnaise is not an imitation spread, ice cream is not a similar, but different, frozen dessert. Standards for meat and poultry products are developed by the USDA. For other food products, standards are set by the FDA.

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, visit the [“Standardized Recipes”](#) section of the CSDE’s Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

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.” Consuming large amounts of sugar alcohols may cause bloating, gas, or diarrhea.

sugars: Refer to “added sugars” and “simple carbohydrates” in this section.

sweeteners: Ingredients used to sweeten foods and beverages. Sweeteners include nutritive sweeteners that contain calories (such as sugars, syrups, and fruit juice concentrate); nonnutritive sweeteners that do not contain calories, including artificial nonnutritive sweeteners (such as aspartame, acesulfame potassium, and sucralose) and plant-based nonnutritive sweeteners (such as stevia, monk fruit, and thaumatin); and sugar alcohols that are low in calories (such as sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, and erythritol). For more information, refer to “added sugars,” “artificial sweeteners,” and “nonnutritive sweeteners” in this section.

total sugars: All sources of sugars including the naturally occurring sugars in foods (such as fruits, vegetables, and milk) and sugars added to foods (e.g., brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup). For more information, refer to “added sugars” and “simple carbohydrates” in this section.

whole foods: Foods that are unprocessed or minimally processed and do not contain added ingredients, such as fat, sugars or 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, or sodium.

whole grain-rich (WGR): A food is WGR if meets two criteria: 1) the food is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent of the product formula (or less than $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq per portion), i.e., no more than 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G (baked goods) or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H (cereal grains). Ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals meet the WGR criteria if: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion. Fortification is not required for 100 whole grain cereals. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

whole grain-rich: Whole grain-rich products must contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any other grain ingredients must be enriched and any noncreditable grains must be less than two percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. To comply with this limit, the combined total of all noncreditable grains in one serving of the product cannot exceed 3.99 grams for groups A-G (baked goods) or 6.99 grams for groups H (cereal grains) and I (ready-to-eat breakfast cereals) of the USDA’s chart, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

whole grains: Grains that consist of the entire kernel, including the starchy endosperm, the fiber-rich bran, and the 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 School Nutrition Programs*](#).

whole-grain flour: Flour made by grinding the entire whole-grain kernel, including the bran, germ, and endosperm. If a flour or meal does not contain all parts of the grain, it is not whole grain, e.g., degermed corn, milled rice, and wheat flour.



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