Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs

National School Lunch Program • School Breakfast Program

Afterschool Snack Program • Seamless Summer Option

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

CONNECTICUT Education

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About this Guide

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs* is part of the CSDE's menu planning guidance series for the school nutrition programs. Refer to "CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance Series" in this section for a summary of the guides that apply to the meal patterns for grades K-12 and the preschool meal patterns.

This guide provides comprehensive information and resources to assist school food authorities (SFAs) with maintaining the records required to document that school menus comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. These documentation requirements apply to the meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. Meals and snacks offered in the SSO follow the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal pattern requirements.

The requirements in this guide apply to all public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO.

> This guide reflects the USDA regulations and policies in effect as of the publication date. Please note that this information may change. The CSDE will update this guide whenever the USDA issues new meal pattern guidance for the school nutrition programs. For the most current version, please check the CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12 webpage or the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_menu_documentation_snp.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.

Questions regarding this guide may be directed to Susan Fiore, MS, RD, Nutrition Education Coordinator, at 860-807-2075 or susan.fiore@ct.gov.

CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance Series

This guide is part of the CSDE's menu planning guidance series for the school nutrition programs. These guides are designed to assist SFAs with meeting the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grade K-12 and preschool, including the requirements for crediting foods and beverages, menu documentation, and meal service.

- Guide to the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program
- Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12
- Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs (applies to the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool)
- Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs (applies to the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool)
- Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program
- Guide to the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs
- Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs

The menu planning guidance series for grades K-12 is available on the CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12 webpage. The preschool menu planning guidance series is available on the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Contact Information

For questions regarding the NSLP, SBP, and ASP, please contact the school nutrition programs staff in the CSDE's Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs. The CSDE's resource, *County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs*, indicates each Connecticut county's assigned CSDE school nutrition team member who provides technical assistance for the USDA school nutrition programs.

For a list of all CSDE Child Nutrition Programs staff, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Child Nutrition Staff and Responsibilities*.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service of USDA
APP	alternate protein product
AR	Administrative Review
ASP	Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CN	Child Nutrition
CNP	Child Nutrition Program
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
FAR	Federal Acquisitions Regulations
FBG	Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA)
FDP	Food Distribution Program
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FNA	Food and Nutrition Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture
FR	Federal Register

ICN	Institute of Child Nutrition
LEA	local educational agency
MMA	meats/meat alternates
NSFSA	nonprofit school food service account
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OVS	offer versus serve
oz eq	ounce equivalents
PFS	product formulation statement
RCCI	residential child care institution
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SFA	school food authority
SSO	Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WGR	whole grain-rich

For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Common Acronyms and Abbreviations in the School Nutrition Programs*.

1 — Introduction

Schools and institutions that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP must offer meals and afterschool snacks that comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. Meals offered in the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP follow the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal pattern requirements.

Overview of Required Documentation for School Menus

School food authorities (SFAs) must maintain specific records to document the service of reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks to students. These required records are summarized below.

Required documentation for commercial foods

- Menus
- Production records
- Child Nutrition (CN) labels
- Product formulation statement (PFS) forms
- Compliance with Buy American requirement
- Nutrition information (Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients)
  Note: Many commercial products require nutrition information to determine crediting information.

Required documentation for foods made from scratch

- Menus
- Production records
- Standardized recipes
- Nutrition information

What Documentation Must Indicate

The SFA's documentation must indicate that breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snack menus meet the specific meal pattern requirements for each age/grade group and school nutrition program. These requirements are summarized below.

- **Creditable foods:** All foods and beverages counted toward the meal components for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks must meet the specific crediting requirements for the applicable meal pattern.

- **Breakfast and lunch menus for grades K-12:** Breakfast and lunch menus for grades K-12 must offer the minimum daily and weekly servings of each meal component and must meet the weekly whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement, the weekly juice limit, and the weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards). Lunch menus for grades K-12 must also meet the weekly vegetable subgroups and the weekly limit for grain-based desserts. Flavored milk, yogurts, and breakfast cereals served in school meals must meet the limits for added sugars.
    - Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).
    - Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.
    - Flavored milk cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces. Flavored milk sold as a competitive food in middle and high schools cannot exceed 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.

- **Snack menus for grades K-12:** Snack menus for grades K-12 must offer the minimum serving of at least two different meal components and must meet the weekly WGR requirement and the weekly juice limit. Flavored milk, yogurts, and breakfast cereals served in afterschool snacks must meet the limits for added sugars. Grain-based desserts are not allowed in afterschool snacks.

- **Preschool breakfast, lunch, and snack menus:** Breakfast, lunch, and snack menus for preschoolers must offer the minimum daily servings of each meal component and meet the daily WGR requirement and juice limit. Yogurts and breakfast cereals served in preschool meals and snacks must meet the limits for added sugars. Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce) and breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. Flavored milk and grain-based desserts are not allowed in the preschool meal patterns.

SFAs must ensure that school food service personnel understand how to complete and maintain the required meal pattern records. These records must be maintained on file for the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs (refer to "Records Retention" in this section).

Training for Documentation Requirements

Training for the required menu documentation for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool is available in Module 7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus and Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Records Retention

The NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210.9(b)(17)) and SBP regulations (7 CFR 220.7(e)(13)) require that all records pertaining to school food service must be retained for a period of three years after the date of the final claim for reimbursement for the fiscal year to which they pertain. If audit findings have not been resolved, the records must be retained beyond the three-year period, for as long as is required for resolution of the issues raised by the audit. For guidance on the records retention requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs*.

Determining Food Yields and Crediting

The purpose of the required menu records is to document that meals served to students meet the applicable meal pattern and crediting requirements. Ensuring that menu planners accurately determine the yield of commercial products and foods made from scratch is a critical element of appropriate documentation.

Yield determines how a food or beverage credits toward the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns. Yield refers to the amount (weight, volume, or number of servings) of a product at the completion of the preparation process.

The yield of a product or standardized recipe depends on the type of food and the preparation process. For example:

- 10 pounds of raw ground beef might yield 8 pounds after cooking;
- 5 pounds of fresh carrots might yield 3½ pounds after peeling and trimming;
- a vegetable soup recipe might yield 2 gallons after cooking; and
- a muffin recipe might yield 24 servings after baking.

Processed fruits and vegetables yield less than the purchased amount due to peeling and trimming. Raw meats yield less than the purchased amount because moisture and fat are lost in the cooking process. Rice and pasta yield more than the purchased (dry) amount because water is absorbed during the cooking process.

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

The USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) is the definitive resource for determining yields and crediting information for the Child Nutrition Programs. The FBG provides yield information for common types and customary sizes of milk, meats/meat alternates (MMA), vegetables, fruits, and grains, including commercially available foods and USDA Foods.

The FBG helps menu planners determine:

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

> SFAs should ensure that menu planners use the FBG to determine accurate crediting information for foods and beverages served in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks.

The FBG helps menu planners determine how standardized recipes and purchased foods contribute to the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. For example, menu planners can use the FBG to determine how much raw broccoli provides 50 servings of ½ cup of cooked vegetable or how much uncooked brown rice provides 100 servings of ½ cup of cooked rice. This information is essential for documenting meal pattern compliance.

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

FBG resources

The resources below provide guidance on using the FBG.

- Food Buying Guide (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/food-buying-guide

- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg

- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs Training Resources (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg/training

- Navigating the Food Buying Guide FBG Calculator (USDA webinar): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/navigating-food-buying-guide-fbg-calculator

For additional resources, visit the "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Determining In-house Product Yields

The yield information provided in the FBG represents average yields based on research conducted by the USDA. Many factors affect yield, including:

- the quality and condition of the food purchased;
- storage conditions and handling;
- the equipment used in preparation;
- cooking method and time;
- the form in which the food is served (for example, whether potatoes are mashed, fried, or baked); and
- the serving utensils and portion control methods used.

If a food service operation consistently obtains a higher or lower yield for a product than the yield listed in the FBG, the SFA should conduct an in-house yield study to determine the actual number of portions of a specified size that the product provides. In-house yields are also required for products not listed in the FBG. The CSDE allows SFAs to use in-house yields to determine a product's meal pattern contribution, if the process is properly documented and follows the CSDE's yield study procedures.

Yield study procedures

SFAs can use the procedures below to determine and document in-house yields for food products.

1. Select a day when the product is served on the menu. Use at least four separate samples of the product to determine yields. A "sample" is the product pack unit, such as number 10 cans or 5-pound bags. If the food service operation uses more samples, the yield data will be more accurate.

2. For the best yield estimate, at least two people should independently portion and count the samples. Each person completes half of the samples. For example, with a sample of four cans, each person works alone to measure and count the servings from two cans.

3. Select the appropriate measuring utensil for the portion size being served, such as a number 16 scoop/disher or ½-cup measuring spoon. For information on measuring utensils, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) *Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster* and visit the "Portion Control" section of the CSDE's Crediting Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

4. Fill the measuring utensil level to the top of the measure.

5. Carefully count and document the number of portions in each sample.

6. Add the total number of servings from each of the samples.

7. Divide the total number of servings by the number of samples to get the average number of servings per sample.

8. Complete the CSDE's *Yield Study Data Form for the Child Nutrition Programs* and maintain on file for review by the CSDE staff during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

For additional assistance with yield studies, contact the CSDE's school nutrition programs staff.

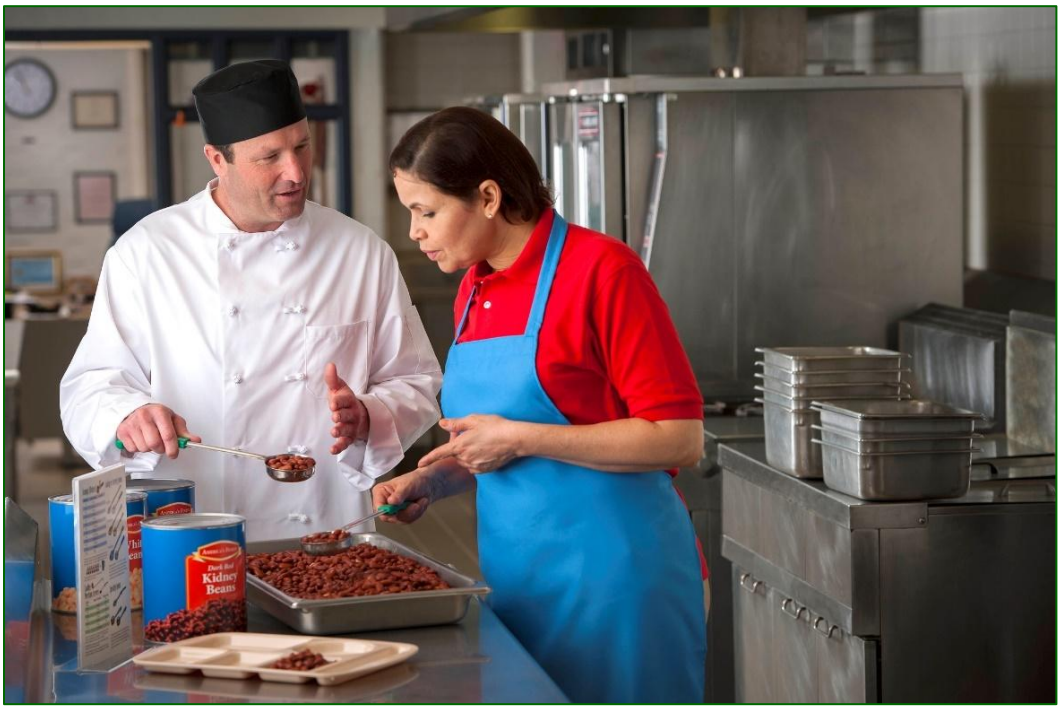
Guidance on Meeting the Meal Pattern Requirements

The resources below provide SFAs with information and guidance on meeting the meal pattern requirements for the school nutrition programs.

- Links to the USDA's regulations and final rules for the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs are available on the CSDE's Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.
- The USDA provides guidance for implementing the school nutrition programs through the policy memos on their Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) Documents & Resources webpage.
- The CSDE's Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs webpage provides links to relevant USDA memos by year and includes memos from the CSDE Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs on the requirements for the school nutrition programs.
- The CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs webpage provides an alphabetical listing of links to information and guidance on the federal and state requirements for the school nutrition programs, including the meal patterns and dietary specifications, crediting foods and beverages, menu documentation, and meal service.
- The CSDE's weekly e-newsletter for school nutrition programs, School Lunch Tray (SLT), provides important guidance and resources to help SFAs comply with the federal and state requirements, and identifies deadlines for completing required activities and submitting required reports.
- The CSDE hosts Table Talk webinars several times each month during the school year to review key topics and information contained in the SLT, as well as more in-depth training and information sessions on current topics. The schedule and registration information for the Table Talk webinars are available in the SLT.
- The CSDE's Training for Child Nutrition Programs webpage provides links to recorded trainings on a variety of topics, including the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.
- The CSDE's Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs webpage provides links to guides on a variety of topics, including food safety, menu planning and meal patterns, program administration, school wellness, and special diets.

SFAs may contact their assigned school nutrition team member for more information and program-specific questions.

1 | Introduction

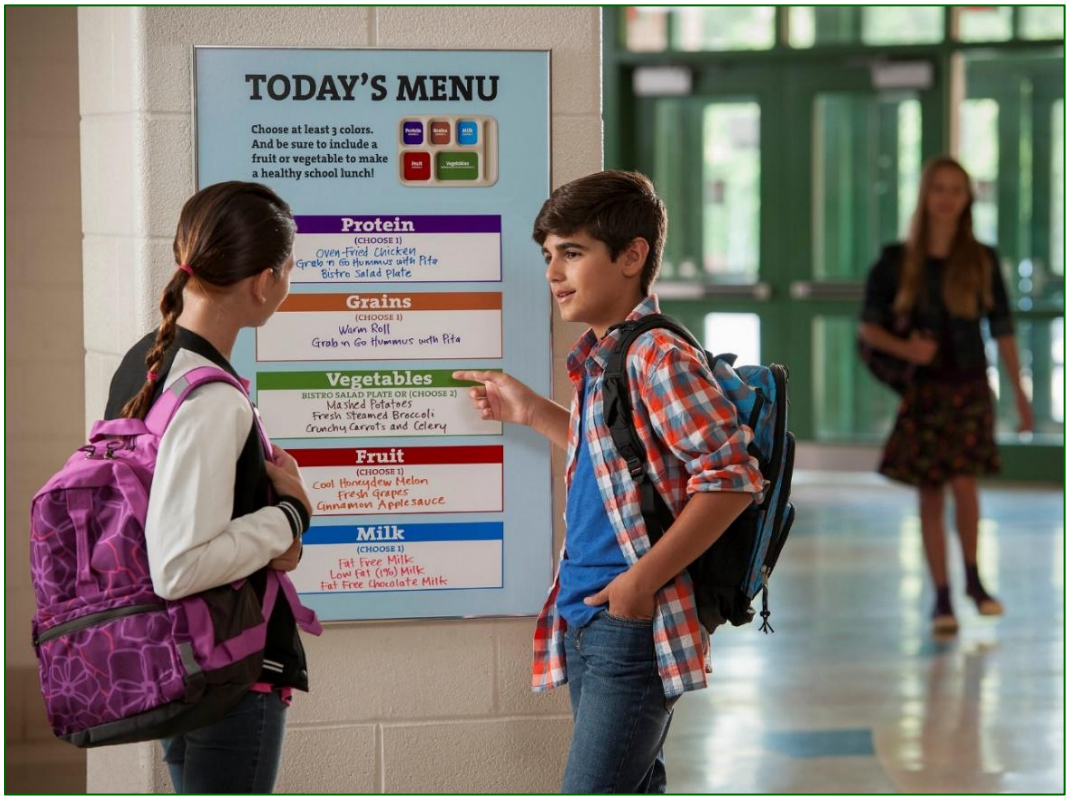


2 — Menus

SFAs must maintain lunch, breakfast, and afterschool snack menus that document the service of reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks to students. School menus must identify the date of the meal or snack service and reflect all offered meal choices and types of milk.

Menus are not required to itemize specific portion sizes or food items (such as the vegetable subgroups for lunch) if this information is listed on the school's production records. For example, a menu may list "daily salad bar," "fruit choice," or "vegetable choice" if the school's production record includes all food items and portions served, and the appropriate crediting documentation is on file, such as CN labels, PFS forms, standardized recipes, and nutrition information.

Cycle menus or menus developed in advance of the meal or snack service must specify the month and day and indicate any substitutions that occur. SFAs must maintain all menus on file with other required records in accordance with the NSLP and SBP regulations (refer to "Records Retention" in section 1).



Using Cycle Menus

The CSDE strongly encourages SFAs to use cycle menus for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. A cycle menu is a series of menus planned for a specific period with a different menu for each day. At the end of the cycle, the menu repeats in the same order.

A typical cycle menu might be for four to six weeks. Offering a cycle menu of at least four weeks increases the variety of offered meals and afterschool snacks and ensures that children are not served the same combination of foods too often.

Cycle menus allow flexibility for variations like holidays, seasonal foods, special items, and the use of USDA Foods. For example, SFAs could have a different cycle menu for fall, winter, and spring.

Benefits of cycle menus

Using cycle menus in the school nutrition programs has many benefits.

- **Structure and predictability:** Cycle menus provide structure and predictability, which helps SFAs with planning and documenting menus that meet the school meal patterns. Predictability also provides familiarity for students, who look forward to their favorite meals being repeated in a predictable way.

- **Save time and labor costs:** SFAs will spend less time gathering information, planning menus, developing product specifications, and checking deliveries. This also helps to standardize purchasing procedures and reduce time spent on purchasing.

- **Improve staff efficiency:** As menu items are repeated, food service staff become more familiar with the standardized recipes and are more efficient in producing them.

- **Control food costs:** SFAs can more easily predict the correct quantity of foods to purchase when previous menu data is available. Cycle menus also help decrease food costs by allowing SFAs to purchase regularly used items in bulk and take advantage of seasonal foods. In addition, SFAs may qualify for volume discounts when buying larger amounts of the same items.

- **Reduce food waste:** SFAs can more easily predict how much of each menu item to prepare when menus are used repeatedly, so less food is left over.

- **Control inventory and storage costs:** SFAs can better estimate the correct quantity of foods to purchase, which helps keep stock at appropriate levels.

For more guidance and resources on cycle menus, refer to chapter 3 in the USDA's *Menu Planner for School Meals* and visit the "Cycle Menus" section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

USDA Certification of Meal Pattern Compliance for the NSLP and SBP

The USDA's menu certification worksheets indicate whether menus for grades K-12 comply with the NSLP and SBP meal patterns, including the meal components and weekly dietary specifications. SFAs must use these worksheets to demonstrate meal pattern compliance and certify that schools are eligible to receive the additional performance-based reimbursement. Compliance is determined:

- when a local educational agency becomes a new sponsor of the school nutrition programs; and
- during the CSDE's Administrative Review of the sponsor's school nutrition programs.

Links to these worksheets and additional resources are available on the CSDE's Certification of Meal Pattern Compliance webpage.

CSDE Lunch Menu Planning Checklists

The CSDE's lunch menu planning checklists help SFAs determine if lunch menus comply with the NSLP meal patterns. These checklists are available in the "Menu Planning Checklists for Lunch for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's Forms for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

For sample menus and more resources, refer to the CSDE's *Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs*. For guidance on menu planning and additional menu checklists, refer to chapter 3 in the USDA's *Menu Planner for School Meals*.

Menu Planning

In addition to meeting the meal pattern requirements, the CSDE encourages SFAs to consider the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* when planning school menus. Menu planners should offer a variety of nutrient-dense foods (such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry), while limiting added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium.

SFAs should follow basic menu planning principles to create appealing and nutritious menus that are culturally relevant and promote positive attitudes about healthy eating. Some key principles include balancing flavors; adding contrast with different tastes, textures, shapes, and types of food; and using a variety of color combinations to enhance the eye appeal of meals and afterschool snacks. Other considerations include incorporating seasonal and local foods like

fresh fruits and vegetables, focusing on regional and cultural food preferences, and planning for holidays and other special occasions.

For menu planning guidance and resources, refer to "Resources for Cycle Menus and Recipes" in this section and visit the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Resources for Cycle Menus and Recipes

The resources below include cycle menus and standardized recipes for school meals and afterschool snacks.

- Certification of Meal Pattern Compliance for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/certification-of-meal-pattern-compliance

- Chapter 3 Menu Development (USDA's Menu Planner for School Meals):
  https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner-school-meals

- Child Nutrition Recipe Box (Institute of Child Nutrition):
  https://theicn.org/cnrb/

- Farm to School Cycle Menu (Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative):
  https://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/site/cyclemenu.html

- Healthier Kansas Menus 8-Week Lunch Cycle with Alternate Entrées (Kansas State Department of Education):
  https://cnw.ksde.gov/snp/food-service-facts/chapters/chapter-16-menu-planning/healthier-kansas-menus/lunch-cycle-with-alternate-entrees

- Menu Cycles (The Lunch Box):
  https://www.thelunchbox.org/recipes-menus/menu-cycles/

- Menu Planning & Meal Service Ideas Using USDA Foods (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services)
  https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/95413/file/UsingUSDAFoods-v3.pdf

- Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning

- Menus that Move (Ohio Department of Education):
  https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports/Food-and-Nutrition/Resources-and-Tools-for-Food-and-Nutrition/Menus-that-Move

- Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/recipes-for-child-nutrition-programs

- Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Schools (USDA):
  https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbook-schools

- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
  https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/resources/resources_menu_planning.pdf

- Team Nutrition Recipes (USDA):
  https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/recipes

- USDA Foods Connecticut Food Distribution Program (CSDE):
  https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/food-distribution-program-usda-foods

For additional resources, visit the "Cycle Menus" section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

SFAs are responsible for ensuring that local menus and recipes meet the USDA meal patterns. Menu planners should verify the meal pattern contribution of all non-USDA cycle menus and recipes before using (refer to "Verifying Compliance of Menus and Recipes from Other Sources" in section 4).

Meal Pattern Resources

The resources below provide guidance on the meal pattern requirements for the school nutrition programs.

- Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/asp/asp_handbook.pdf
- Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_crediting_snp.pdf
- Guide to the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_meal_patterns_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf
- Guide to the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/guide_preschool_meal_patterns.pdf

For a comprehensive list of resources with guidance on meeting the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal pattern requirements, refer to the CSDE's *Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs*. For crediting guidance and resources on the five meal components, visit the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

3 — Production Records

The USDA regulations for the NSLP (7 CFR 210.10(a)(3)) and SBP (7 CFR 220.8(a)(3)) require that SFAs must maintain daily production records that document the service of reimbursable meals to students. This requirement also applies to the ASP and SSO. SFAs must keep production records on file with all other required records (refer to "Records Retention" in section 1).

> A production record is a working tool that outlines the type and quantity of foods that need to be purchased and available for the meal or snack service.

Purpose of Production Records

Production records help verify that the SFA's meal or snack service meets the USDA meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. Completed production records show how the offered meals and afterschool snacks contribute to the required meal components and food quantities for each meal and afterschool snack served to each grade group every day.

Production records are also an important communication tool that informs food service staff about what foods and recipes to use, what quantities to prepare, and what amounts to portion. This information ensures that all school food service staff understand the daily food production requirements and promotes provides consistency and quality in meal preparation.

In addition to documenting reimbursable meals, production records also provide valuable information about the meal or snack service, such as the quantities prepared and total meals served. This historical information helps with future menu planning. SFAs can use previous production records to forecast trends, identify student preferences, and plan future menus. Production records also help SFAs with controlling waste, tracking food safety, and conducting a nutrient analysis of menus.

Required Elements for Production Records

Production records must include certain elements that are recorded at different times. The guidance below indicates what production records must include and when food service personnel should complete the required information. For more information on each required element, refer to "Chapter 4: Meal Preparation Documentation" in the USDA's *Menu Planner for School Meals*.

Complete before meal or snack service

SFAs may complete the information below days or weeks in advance of the meal or snack service. Information that does not change (such as the basic information below) may be pre-filled before printing the production record.

- **Basic information:** Indicate the name of the school/site, grade groups being served, meal date, menu, meal type (breakfast, lunch, or snack), and if offer versus serve (OVS) is implemented for the meal service (breakfast and lunch only).

- **Menu:** List the daily menu including all meal choices.

- **Planned menu items:** List the specific type and amount of all meal choices, milk, leftovers, substitutions, and all noncreditable food items like condiments (refer to the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs*. List each menu item's meal component contribution in oz eq for MMA and grains, and cups for fruits, vegetables, and milk.

    - **MMA (oz eq):** Indicate the correct quantity for each type of MMA. List commercial processed products like pizza and chicken nuggets in oz eq, based on their CN label or PFS. List lean meat, poultry, and fish, natural and processed cheese, and nuts and seeds in ounces (1 ounce = 1 oz eq); eggs by each (½ large egg = 1 oz eq); nut and seed butters in tablespoons (2 tablespoons = 1 oz eq); beans, peas, and lentils, and cottage cheese in cups (¼ cup = 1 oz eq); and yogurt by volume or weight (½ cup or 4 ounces = 1 oz eq). For more information, refer to the resources below.

        - Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs#Commercial

- Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs

- Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_crediting_snp.pdf

- **Grains (oz eq):** Indicate the correct quantity for each type of grain. List groups A-G (baked goods like breads, rolls, muffins, crackers, and pancakes) by weight (ounces) and groups H-I (e.g., cooked cereal grains like rice, pasta, and quinoa) by volume (cups), based on the required quantity for 1 oz eq or the minimum creditable grains per serving. If a commercial processed products has insufficient information to determine crediting, the oz eq must be based on the product's PFS. Indicate if grains are whole grain-rich (WGR). For more information, refer to the resources below.

  - Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/grain_calculation_snp.pdf

  - Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/grain_oz_eq_snp.pdf

  - Serving Requirements ("Grains" section of CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/grains#ServingRequirements

  - When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_snp.pdf

  - Whole Grain-rich Requirement ("Grains" section of CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/grains#WGR

- **Vegetables (cups):** Include the form of the food, e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried. For lunch, indicate the vegetable subgroup contribution (refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program*). Include all vegetable juices.

- **Fruits (cups):** Include the form of the food (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried) and packing medium (e.g., canned in juice or light syrup, or frozen with added sugar). Include all fruit juices.

- **Milk (cups):** List all milk choices based on the allowable types of milk for each meal pattern (refer to the "Milk" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage). Breakfast and lunch for grades K-12 must include a variety (at least two choices) of allowable milk choices including at least one unflavored choice. Flavored milk in reimbursable meals and snacks for grades K-12 cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces. Flavored milk Is not allowed in the preschool meal patterns.

- **Planned portion size and number of servings:** For all planned menu items, indicate the planned portion size with the specific unit of measure (e.g., scoop number, measuring cup amount, each, and ladle or spoodle size) and the planned number of servings. This is the total number of servings planned for all meals and snacks, including reimbursable meals/snacks and if applicable, nonreimbursable meals/snacks (e.g., second student meals and adult meals). Use standard abbreviations (e.g., lb = pound, oz = ounces, gal = gallon, qt = quart, c = cup, Tbsp = tablespoon, and tsp = teaspoon) and express measurements in fractions, when applicable (e.g., ¼, ½, and ¾).

- **Recipe name and number or food product name and code:** Indicate the name and number of the standardized recipe for all foods made from scratch. Indicate the product name and code for all commercial products. Indicate the six-digit material code for all USDA Foods (refer to the USDA's USDA Foods Database).

Complete during meal or snack service

- **Temperatures:** Staff should record temperatures for time/temperature control for safety food (TCS) throughout the meal or snack service as applicable, to ensure that hot foods are held at 135 °F or above and cold foods are held at 41 °F or below. Take corrective action if food is not at target temperature. For additional guidance, visit the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Complete after meal or snack service

- **Substitutions:** Indicate any substitutions for the planned menu, such as different entrees or vegetable subgroups.
- **Total servings prepared:** Indicate the total number of servings prepared for the meal or snack service.
- **Servings left over:** Indicate the total number of servings left over for each menu item.
- **Total servings selected:** Indicate the total number of servings selected during the meal or snack service. Subtract "Servings left over" from "Total servings prepared."
- **Total number of meals/snacks served:** Indicate the number of reimbursable meals/snacks served to students. If applicable, indicate the number of nonreimbursable meals/snacks served, e.g., second student meals and adult meals.

CSDE Production Record Templates

SFAs may use any production record format that includes the required elements (refer to "Required Elements for Production Records" in this section). The CSDE's production record templates for breakfast, lunch, and snack assist SFAs with including the information needed to meet the USDA's production record requirements.

Production records for the meal patterns for grades K-12

- ASP Production Record for Grades K-12
  - Sample Completed ASP Production Record for Grades K-12
- NSLP Production Record for Grades K-5, 6-8, or 9-12
  - Sample Completed NSLP Production Record for Grades K-5, 6-8, or 9-12
- NSLP Production Record for Grades K-8 Option
- SBP Production Record for Grades K-5, 6-8, or 9-12
  - Sample Completed SBP Production Record for Grades K-5, 6-8, or 9-12
- SBP Production Record for Optional Grade Groups (K-8, K-12, or 6-12)

Production records for the preschool meal patterns

- ASP Preschool Production Record
  - Sample Completed ASP Preschool Production Record
- NSLP Preschool Production Record
- SBP Preschool Production Record

These templates are available on the CSDE's Production Records for School Nutrition Programs webpage. Each template includes instructions for completing the form.

Guidance for Completing Production Records

Production records must indicate the specific type and amount of each food item and must be completed correctly to provide accurate documentation of reimbursable meals and snacks. SFAs should ensure that food service personnel follow the guidance below.

- Use a physical written production for each site, including satellite locations.
- Complete all information. Check production records after the meal or snack service to make sure that information is not missing or incomplete.
- Record the information legibly, i.e., make sure that handwriting can be read.
- Use the proper weight or volume measure for each food item (oz eq for MMA and grains, and cups for fruits, vegetables, and milk). For example, fruits and vegetables must be listed in cups, not ounces (refer to "Volume versus Weight" in this section).
- List the specific type and amount of each food item separately. Do not indicate foods as assorted choices. For example, instead of "assorted juices," list apple juice, orange juice, and pineapple juice. Instead of "assorted fruits and vegetables," fruit choices," or "vegetable choices," list each type of fruit and vegetable.
- List each type of allowable milk separately, e.g., low-fat milk, fat-free milk, and fat-free chocolate milk. **Note:** Milk must meet the specific meal pattern requirements for each age/grade group.
- List all condiments, e.g., ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing.
- List portion sizes accurately. Make sure that the listed portion sizes are the same as the amount being served to students.
- List all items prepared for the meal including daily items and alternate meal choices.

- Accurately record the "planned" portions for each age/grade group.
- List the total number of nonreimbursable meals/snacks (e.g., second student meals and adult meals) separately from reimbursable student meals/snacks.
- Add any extra servings of food needed during the meal or snack service period.
- Indicate if any substitutions are made to the planned menu items.
- Indicate if leftovers from a previous day are used.
- Indicate how leftovers from that day's meal or snack service will be used, e.g., refrigerated for use in future meals, frozen for future use in the cycle menu, or discarded.

SFAs should maintain production records on file with other required documentation (refer to "Records Retention" in section 1). The CSDE will review menu documentation during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Volume versus Weight

The quantities listed in production records must reflect the daily and weekly servings required by the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns. The meal patterns indicate the servings of the meal components by weight (ounces) or volume (fluid ounces).

- The servings for the milk component, vegetables component, and fruits component are indicated by volume (cups).
- The servings for most foods in the MMA component are indicated by weight (ounces). Some MMA are indicated by volume, such as peanut butter (tablespoons), and beans, peas, and lentils (cups). Some MMA are indicated by volume or weight, such as cottage cheese, yogurt, and tofu.
- The servings for foods in the grains component are indicated by weight (ounces or grams) or volume (cups), based on the groups in the USDA's chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*. Foods in groups A-G (like crackers, breads, rolls, taco shells, muffins, waffles, pancakes, and grain-based desserts) are indicated by weight. Foods in group H (cereal grains like pasta, cooked breakfast cereals, barley, oats, and quinoa) and group I (ready-to-eat breakfast cereals) are indicated by volume or weight. **Note:** Grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns or the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12.

Menu planners should use the USDA's FBG to determine the quantity of a food that meets the required meal pattern serving (refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in

section 1). The FBG can also be used to determine the weight equivalent of servings measured by volume. Production records must reflect these amounts. For example, servings of vegetables, fruits, peanut butter, and beans, peas, and lentils must be listed by volume, not weight.

For guidance on weights and measures, refer to the ICN's handout, *Basics at a Glance*, and visit the "Portion Control" section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Using the correct measurement for meal pattern portions

When completing production records, food service staff need to understand that volume and weight measurements are not the same. Volume refers to the space an ingredient occupies in a measuring container. Common units of volume include teaspoons, tablespoons, fluid ounces, cups, pints, quarts, and gallons.

> In most cases, a specific volume of food does not equal the same weight. However, there are some exceptions, such as yogurt (½ cup equals 4 ounces by weight) and certain canned fruits and vegetables (refer to the FBG for specific guidance).

A frequent compliance issue with production records is listing incorrect portion sizes. For example, listing fruits and vegetables as "4 ounces" instead of "½ cup" fails to document whether the serving meets the meal pattern requirements, because these measurements are not equivalent. A serving of 4 ounces of fruits or vegetables by weight may or may not equal ½ cup of the fruits component or the vegetables component.

The weight of a specific volume of food varies depending on its density. For example, ½ cup of lettuce weighs less than ½ cup of cooked butternut squash, and 1 cup of whole-grain flaked cereal weighs less than 1 cup of baked beans.

Electronic Production Records

SFAs may choose to use electronic production records but must follow specific requirements. A physical written copy of the production record and all applicable standardized recipes must be available at each site to guide the daily menu production. SFAs must regularly review and update their electronic production records to ensure accuracy and compliance with all federal and state regulations.

Electronic production records must meet the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs (refer to "Records Retention" in section 1).

Administrative Review of Production Records

During the Administrative Review, the CSDE will evaluate the SFA's production records to ensure they provide sufficient information to document meal pattern compliance and meet the requirements below.

- **Support claims for reimbursement:** Production records include all information necessary to support claims for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks, i.e., all menu items are listed, and the minimum daily and weekly servings of all meal components are offered, including the appropriate types of fluid milk for each age/grade group and the minimum servings of WGR foods (refer "What Documentation Must Indicate" in section 1).

- **Menu planning:** The SFA uses production records for proper planning, such as determining meal consumption and leftovers.

- **Quantities of prepared foods:** Production records document that the quantities of prepared foods are sufficient for the total number of reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks offered and served.

- **Number of reimbursable and nonreimbursable meals/snacks:** Production records document the total number of meals and afterschool snacks served (reimbursable and nonreimbursable), including the number of portions for each food and beverage item.

- **Weekly requirements for grades K-12:** Production records document that menus for grades K-12 meet the weekly meal pattern requirements, including the weekly WGR requirement for breakfast and lunch; the weekly juice limits for breakfast, lunch, and snack; the weekly vegetable subgroups at lunch; the weekly limit for grain-based deserts at lunch; and the product-based limits for added sugars in yogurt, breakfast cereals, and flavored milk. (refer "What Documentation Must Indicate" in section 1). For guidance on the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to the*

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

- **Requirements for preschool menus:** Production records document that preschool menus meet the daily WGR requirement, the daily juice limit, and the product-based limits for added sugars in yogurt and breakfast cereals. For guidance on the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs*.

- **Align with standardized recipes:** Production records align with the SFA's standardized recipes, i.e., the ingredients in the SFA's standardized recipes correspond to the menu items listed on the production records.

SFAs must ensure that food service staff include all required elements for each daily production record (refer to "Required Elements for Production Records" in this section). Food service staff must be trained in the proper procedures for completing production records.

Resources for Production Records

The websites and resources below provide guidance on developing and using production records.

- Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (ICN): https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/
- Best Practices for Completing Production Records Fact Sheet (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/wpfd_file/best-practices-for-completing-production-records-fact-sheet/
- Chapter 4 Meal Preparation Documentation (USDA's Menu Planner for School Meals): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner-school-meals
- Manager's Corner: Production Records (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/wpfd_file/production-records/
- Portion Control (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/portion-control
- Production Records for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/production-records-for-school-nutrition-programs
- Requirements for Production Records in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/prodrecord/requirements_production_records_nslp_sbp.pdf
- STAR Back to School: Completing Production Records the Best Way (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/star-back-to-school-completing-food-production-records-the-best-way-july-2021/
- What's in a Meal Module 7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials#module7

The CSDE's document, *Requirements for Production Records in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*, summarizes the requirements and guidance for using production records in the school nutrition programs.

4 — Standardized Recipes

The USDA regulations (7 CFR 210.10(b)(5)) require that SFAs develop and follow standardized recipes for all foods prepared from scratch. The USDA defines a standardized recipe as one that has been tried, adapted, and retried at least three times and has been found to produce the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized quantity recipes produce 25 or more servings.

Standardized recipes are required for all foods prepared from scratch, such as entrees like lasagna, chicken stir-fry, macaroni and cheese; baked goods like cornbread and muffins; and prepared fruits and vegetables like coleslaw, potato salad, and soups. Standardized recipes are also required for foods that require some additional processing by adding other ingredients after purchasing. Some examples include making rice or pasta with butter, sautéing vegetables in oil, adding dressing to salad, assembling a sandwich, adding eggs and oil to a muffin mix, and reconstituting canned soup with milk.

Standardized recipes are not required for commercial foods when the SFA does not add any ingredients after purchasing. Examples include fresh, canned, and frozen fruits and vegetables; breads, rolls, and baked products; and other commercially prepared products like entrees, soups, and side dishes.

Benefits of Standardized Recipes

Standardized recipes document the specific meal pattern contribution of one serving. For example, a standardized recipe for lasagna might indicate that the serving credits as 2 oz eq of the MMA component, ¼ cup of the vegetables component (red/orange subgroup), and 2 oz eq of the grains component.

In addition to documenting the meal pattern contribution, standardized recipes provide many other benefits for the school nutrition programs.

- **Consistent quality and portion size:** Standardized recipes ensure that the quality and portion size of menu items is consistent, regardless of who prepares the food. This consistency improves student satisfaction because the taste and portion size are always the same.

- **Predictable yield:** Standardized recipes ensure a predictable yield each time. This assists menu planners with controlling food costs and implementing more efficient purchasing procedures.

- **Meal pattern compliance:** Standardized recipes ensure accurate meal component contributions and document that menus meet the meal pattern requirements, which contributes to successful completion of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

- **Consistent nutrient content:** Standardized recipes provide consistent nutrient content. They also indicate the nutrition information per serving, which is essential for addressing children's special dietary concerns.

- **Staff efficiency and reduced labor costs:** Standardized recipes can help improve staff efficiency and reduce labor costs because production techniques are always the same.

- **Managing inventory:** Standardized recipes assist with managing inventory by specifying the exact ingredient quantities, which helps to prevent shortages and overstock.

- **Food safety guidance:** Standardized recipes provide guidance on food safety through preparation steps that avoid cross-contamination and ensure appropriate time and temperature controls.

For more information, refer to "Chapter 4: Meal Preparation Documentation" in the USDA's Menu Planner for School Meals and the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition's *USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs*.

Information to Include for Standardized Recipes

SFAs may standardize their own local recipes or use existing standardized recipes such as the USDA's recipes. Standardized recipes should include the following elements:

- recipe name that describes the recipe;
- recipe number that is unique to each recipe;
- recipe category classification, e.g., main dish (entree), grains, and vegetables;
- ingredients used, including the form of the food (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried) and the preparation techniques used (e.g., peeled, grated, minced, and diced) with the required size if applicable (e.g., ½-inch slices or ¼-inch diced);
- quantity (weight and volume) of each ingredient for each recipe yield (e.g., 50 servings or 100 servings);
- units of measure for each ingredient using standard abbreviations (e.g., lb = pound, oz = ounces, gal = gallon, qt = quart, Tbsp = tablespoon, and tsp = teaspoon) and a fraction format;
- preparation directions including the specific steps;
- cooking time and temperature, as required;
- food safety Critical Control Points (CCPs), i.e., time and temperature critical limits for each step of preparing, holding, serving, and storing (for more information, visit the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage);
- serving size (the weight and/or volume of a single portion);
- recipe yield (weight and/or volume and number of servings), i.e., the amount produced when production is complete;
- equipment (such as pans, steamers and mixers) and serving utensils (such as scoops, ladles, and spoodles);
- crediting information for each meal component per serving (fruits, vegetables, grains, and MMA); and
- nutrient analysis, i.e., nutrition information per serving.

For more information, refer to "Chapter 4: Meal Preparation Documentation" in the USDA's *Menu Planner for School Meals*.

Developing Standardized Recipes

The process for developing standardized recipes includes recipe verification, product evaluation, and quantity adjustment. SFAs can learn more about this process in the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition's *USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs*. This "how-to" guide describes recipe standardization techniques in detail and includes examples, practice exercises, and reference materials.

The CSDE's *Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs* provides a template that SFAs may use to develop standardized recipes. For more information, refer to "Determining Food Yields and Crediting" in section 1 and "Resources for standardized recipes" in this section.

Vendor-prepared Foods

SFAs must ensure that local menus meet all meal pattern requirements, regardless of how the food service program is operated. The meal pattern and crediting requirements are the same for all types of food service operations, including SFAs that:

- self-operate their food service program;
- contract with a food service management company (FSMC); or
- purchase vended meals.

Vendors that prepare foods for SFAs must have standardized recipes that document the meal pattern contribution per serving. SFAs are responsible for reviewing this crediting information to ensure its accuracy.

Verifying Compliance of Menus and Recipes from Other Sources

Menus and standardized recipes are often available from sources other than the USDA, such as websites, organizations, and other schools. When SFAs use non-USDA menus and recipes, menu planners should verify the accuracy of their meal pattern contribution and crediting information. Any discrepancies must be corrected before these menus and recipes can be used for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. SFAs are responsible for ensuring that their menus and standardized recipes comply with the applicable meal patterns for the school nutrition programs.

Resources for Standardized Recipes

The websites and resources below assist SFAs with developing and using standardized recipes.

- Basic Culinary Math for School Nutrition Professionals (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basic-culinary-math-for-school-nutrition-professionals
- Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/
- Chapter 4: Meal Preparation Documentation (USDA's Menu Planner for School Meals): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner-school-meals
- Child Nutrition Recipe Box (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/cnrb/
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg/training
- Manager's Corner – Standardized Recipes (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/wpfd_file/managers-corner-standardized-recipes/
- Portion Control (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/portion-control
- Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW) for Standardized Recipes (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg/webtool
- Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning#recipes
- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/resources/resources_menu_planning.pdf
- Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/standardized_recipe_form_schools.docx

- Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/standardized-recipes

- STAR Strategies for Utilizing Standardized Recipes (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/s-t-a-r-strategies-for-utilizing-standardized-recipes-may-2019/

- USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/cicn/usda-recipe-standardization-guide-for-school-nutrition-programs/

- What's in a Meal Module 7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials#module7

- Why Use Standardized Recipes? Fact Sheet (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.org/resources/527/food-service-management-skills/107291/why-use-standardized-recipes.pdf

For links to standardized recipes for the school nutrition programs, visit the "Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs" section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

5 — Overview of Crediting Commercial Processed Products

The USDA requires that SFAs must be able to document how commercial processed products credit toward the required meal components for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. Processed foods are commercially prepared foods and beverages with added ingredients. Some examples include:

- combination foods that contain more than one meal component, e.g., pizza, chicken nuggets, cheese ravioli, hummus and other bean dips, fruit and yogurt smoothies, fruit-filled pastries, and trail mixes with dried fruits and nuts;
- foods with added liquids, binders, and extenders, e.g., deli meats, hotdogs, and sausages (refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs*);
- dried meat, poultry, and seafood products, e.g., jerky and summer sausages;
- foods that are alternate protein products (APPs) or contain APPs (refer to the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs*);
- fruits and vegetables with added ingredients, e.g., breaded onion rings, french fries, hash brown patties, coleslaw, and dried soup mix; and
- WGR or enriched grain products that contain noncreditable grains (e.g., oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, and modified food starch, including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours), such as muffins, crackers, breakfast cereals, and grain-based-deserts like cookies, graham crackers, granola bars, and pastries. For a detailed list of noncreditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards*.

These types of foods require specific documentation to credit toward the meal components of the school meal patterns. This documentation must be obtained prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks.

SFAs are ultimately responsible if a menu does not meet the meal pattern requirements. The USDA requires crediting documentation to demonstrate how food items meet the requirements of the meal pattern regulations.

Acceptable Documentation for Commercial Processed Products

The acceptable types of documentation for processed foods include any of the documents below.

1. **CN label:** The original CN label from the product carton, a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton, or a CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor, attached to the bill of lading (invoice). For additional guidance, refer to section 6.

2. **PFS form:** A PFS signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the amount of each meal component contained in one serving of the product. For additional guidance, refer to section 7.

This documentation must be maintained on file by the SFA and available for the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs (refer to "Records Retention" in section 1).

> Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in reimbursable meals or afterschool snacks.

Difference Between CN Labels and PFS Forms

CN labels are the definitive documentation for verifying the meal pattern contribution of processed products. They provide a warranty against audit claims when the product is used according to the manufacturer's instructions. For detailed guidance on CN labels, refer to section 6.

PFS forms are different from CN labels. They do not provide the same guarantee of a product's meal pattern compliance.

A PFS is required for all commercial processed products without a CN label that are not found in the FBG (refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 1). The USDA requires that SFAs must verify the crediting information on PFS forms for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. For detailed guidance on PFS forms, refer to section 7.

Table 5-1. Comparison of CN labels and PFS forms

Requirements	CN label	PFS forms
Standard information required	Yes	No
Reviewed, approved, and monitored by the USDA	Yes	No
Includes USDA guarantee of meal component contribution for the Child Nutrition Programs	Yes	No
Distinct six-digit product identification number	Yes	No
SFAs must check crediting information for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks	No	Yes

Guidance and Training for Crediting Documentation

The requirements for crediting documentation for processed foods are defined in USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements*. Guidance on these requirements is provided in the CSDE's resources, *Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*. For more resources, refer to "Resources for CN labels" in section 6 and "Resources for PFS Forms" in section 7.

For additional guidance on accepting product documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs*, and visit the "Accepting Product Documentation" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

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

6 — Child Nutrition (CN) Labels

The CN Labeling Program is a voluntary federal labeling program for the Child Nutrition Programs. The CN label on a product communicates how the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements. CN labeled products provide a warranty against audit claims when the product is prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions.

The CN Labeling Program is operated by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) in collaboration with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Seafood Inspection Program (NOAA SIP). Manufacturers participating in the CN Labeling Program must have quality control procedures and inspection oversight that meet all requirements.

Eligible Products

CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that provide at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component in the USDA's meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. MMA include meat, poultry, and seafood; cheese; yogurt and soy yogurt; dry beans, peas and lentils; whole eggs; tofu; nuts and seeds; nut and seed butters; shelf-stable, dried and semi-dried meat, poultry, and seafood products; surimi seafood; and tempeh.

Examples of CN-labeled products made with MMA include beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded seafood portions. Products contributing only to the grains, fruits, and vegetables components are not eligible for CN labels.

CN labels also typically indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products. For example, CN-labeled pizza may list contributions to the MMA, grains, and vegetables components. CN-labeled breaded chicken nuggets may list contributions to the MMA and grains components.

Benefits of Using CN-labeled Products

A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. CN labeling provides a warranty that the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements when the processed product is used according to the manufacturer's instructions. CN labels also simplify cost comparisons of similar products.

Considerations for CN-labeled Products

The CN crediting statement declares the quantities of the creditable food items in a processed food that can be used to meet the meal pattern requirements. However, it does not provide any other guarantees. For example, the CN label does not indicate that the product:

- is healthier, more nutritious, or of a higher quality than a food that is not CN labeled;
- is safer to eat, or free of pathogens or allergens; or
- complies with the USDA's Buy American requirement.

School food authorities (SFAs) must obtain additional information to determine if a CN-labeled product meets the Buy American requirements and any preferred or required nutrition standards.

CN-Labeled Products Not Required

The USDA does not require that manufacturers make CN-labeled products or that schools and institutions participating in the Child Nutrition Programs purchase foods with CN labels. Purchasing decisions are at the discretion of the local school or institution. Schools and institutions that require CN-labeled products must clearly state this information in their purchasing specifications.

Identifying CN Labels

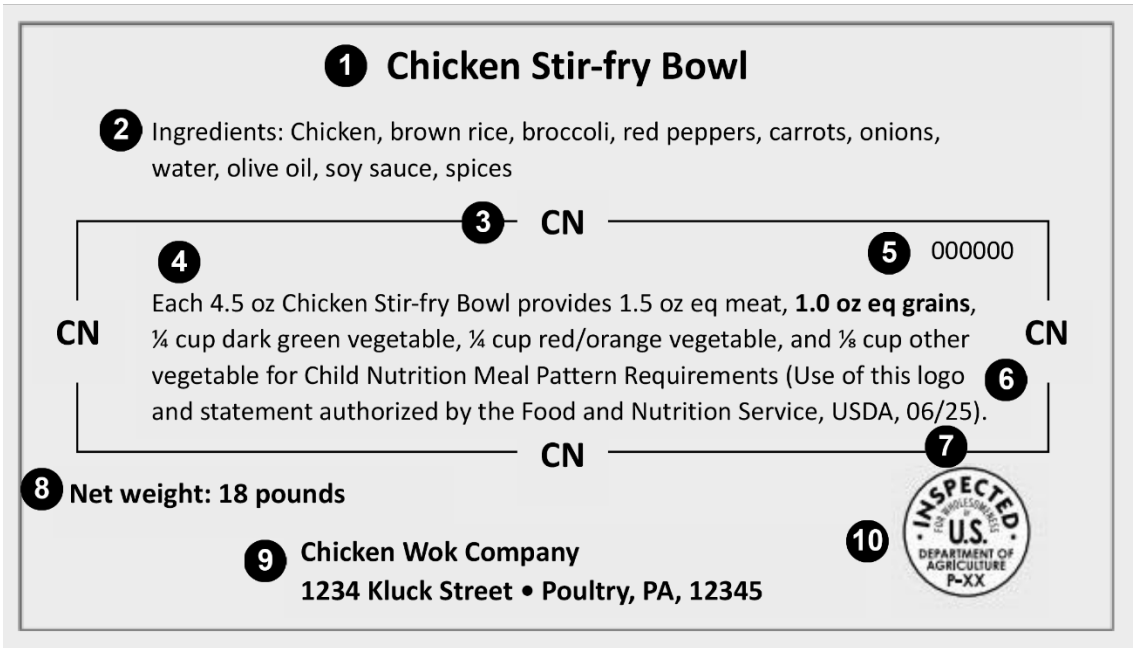
The CN label is found on the product packaging and will contain the required elements below.

- The federally required label featuring the product name, inspection legend, ingredient statement, name and address of manufacturer or distributor, and net weight.
- The CN logo, which is a distinct border with "CN" on each side surrounding the meal pattern contribution statement.
- The meal pattern contribution statement, which provides specific crediting information for the serving.
- The USDA FNS authorization statement: "Use of this logo and statement authorized by the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA." **Note:** In June 2026, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) changed to the Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA). The old FNS wording will still be on CN labels while the USDA transitions these documents to the new name.
- A unique six-digit product identification number, which is assigned by the USDA's AMS.

- The month and year of AMS approval or the NOAA SIP approval, which is listed after the FNS authorization statement. The date is written using numbers to represent the month/year of final label approval (refer to "Dates on CN Labels" in this section).

Figure 6-1 shows an example of a CN label and the required elements. For training on CN labels, refer to Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Figure 6-1. Sample CN label



Product name

1. Ingredients statement
2. CN logo
3. Meal pattern contribution statement
4. Six-digit product identification number
5. FNS authorization statement
6. Month and year of AMS approval
7. Net weight
8. Company signature/address line
9. Inspection legend

USDA's CN Label Verification System

The USDA's CN Label Verification System assists SFAs and state agency reviewers with verifying the status of a CN label, such as the crediting information, CN number, and approval date, and the validity of a CN label copied with a watermark. For example, if a manufacturer has not updated the authorization date on the CN label, the CN Label Verification Report would include the updated "Expiration" date of the label.

The CN Label Verification System publishes two monthly reports: 1) a list of products with valid CN labels (CN Label Verification Report); and 2) a list of contact information for manufacturers authorized to produce CN-labeled products (CN Label Manufacturers Report). These lists are available on the USDA's Child Nutrition Authorized Labels and Manufacturers webpage.

Dates on CN Labels

Once authorized by the USDA, CN labels are valid for five years under the condition that the manufacturer remains an authorized CN producer and the product formulation does not change. The date printed on the CN label is the original date of authorization or the date of the most recent authorization for use of that CN label. This is different from the "Expiration" date shown on the CN Label Verification Report, which indicates when the current authority to use the label expires.

Manufacturers may choose to leave the original authorization date on the label when they receive reauthorization of their CN label so that label inventories do not go to waste. For example, if a CN label was originally authorized on February 15, 2024, it is valid until February 15, 2029. The manufacturer may resubmit the same product for reauthorization of the CN label. If reauthorization is granted, the "Expiration" date is updated to five years from the most recent date of authorization on the CN Label Verification Report, but the date on the CN label may remain as "02/24."

Meal Pattern Contribution of CN Labels

CN labels indicate the meal pattern contribution of the MMA component and other meal components (such as grains, vegetables, and fruits) in one serving of the product. CN labels do not include milk component crediting. Guidance for each meal component on a CN label is summarized below.

MMA contribution

A CN-labeled product lists the serving's MMA contribution in oz eq.

Grains contribution

A CN-labeled product that contains a grain portion includes one of two crediting terms below indicate if the product credits as whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched.

- The term "oz eq grains" on the CN label indicates that the product meets the WGR criteria for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP. WGR means that the grain portion of a product is at least 50 percent whole grain with the remaining grains being enriched.
- The term "oz eq grains (enriched)" means that the grain portion of the product is primarily made from enriched grains. These products credit toward the grains component but do not meet the WGR criteria.

The NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 require that at least 80 percent of the grains offered in breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snack menus must be WGR, based on the total oz eq of the weekly offered grains. The NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns require at least one serving of WGR grains per day, between all meals and afterschool snacks served to children.

Vegetables contribution

A CN-labeled product that contains vegetables lists the serving's contribution to the five vegetable subgroups in cups (dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other). Only the NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12 require the vegetable subgroups. However, SFAs are encouraged to offer the vegetable subgroups in other meals and afterschool snacks. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program*.

As of July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, changes the previous references in the regulations for Child Nutrition Programs from "legumes (beans and peas)" to "beans, peas, and

lentils." Manufacturers may continue to use the term "legumes vegetables" on approved CN labels. At the time of application renewal or resubmission, manufacturers must update the term to "beans, peas, and lentils."

Fruits contribution

A CN-labeled product that contains fruit lists the serving's contribution to the fruits component in cups.

Acceptable Documentation

Acceptable and valid documentation for a CN label includes any of the documents below.

1. The original CN label from the product carton.
2. A photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton. CN labels that are photocopied or photographed must be visible and legible.
3. A CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor and the bill of lading (invoice).

SFAs must maintain this documentation on file with all other menu records (refer to "Storing CN Labels" in this section). For additional guidance on accepting product documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs,* and visit the "Accepting Product Documentation" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

CN labels with a watermark

Manufacturers may use a CN label with a watermark (refer to figure 6-2) when the CN logo and contribution statement are on product information other than the actual product carton. Manufacturers may provide a watermarked CN label during the bidding process. Original CN labels on product cartons will not have a watermark.

> Product information on a watermarked CN label can be changed. The USDA encourages SFAs to verify that the watermarked CN label came from a product that was purchased and accurately reflects that product.

A watermarked CN label is acceptable documentation for the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs if it is attached to a bill of lading (invoice) that contains the product name and CN number (refer to figure 6-3). Valid and acceptable documentation for the

watermarked CN label includes 1) a hard copy of the CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor; or 2) an electronic copy of the CN label with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor. For more information, refer to [USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements*](#).

Figure 6-2. Sample CN Label with a watermark

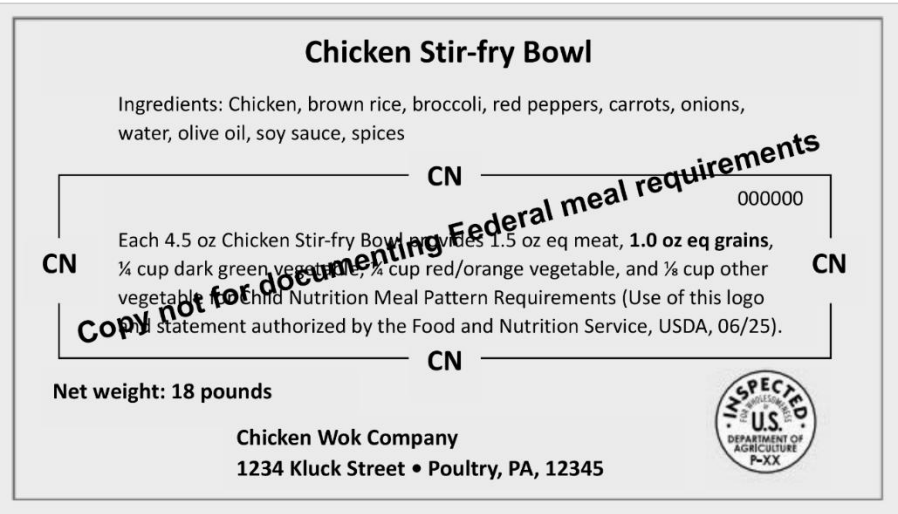
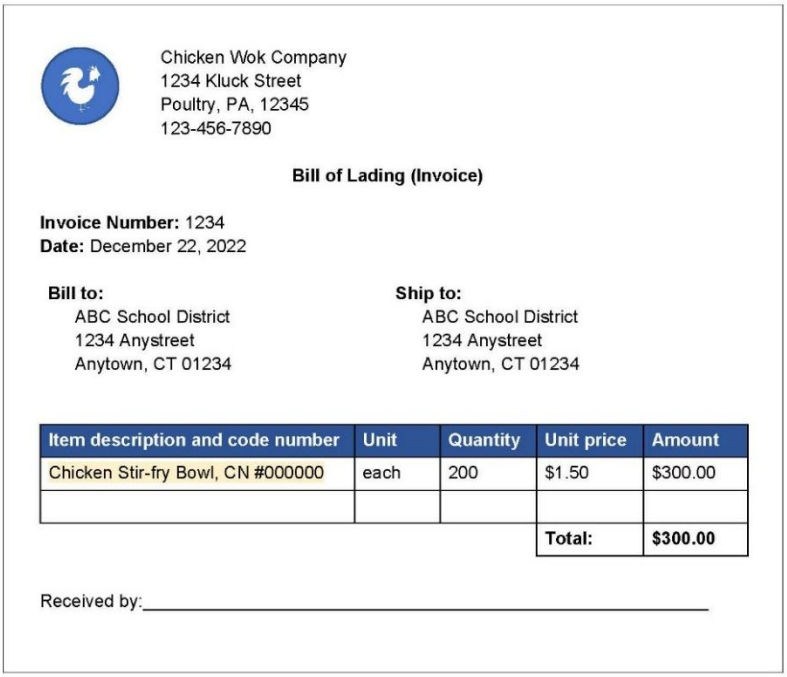


Figure 6-3. Sample bill of lading (invoice) for a CN-labeled product



Chicken Wok Company
1234 Kluck Street
Poultry, PA, 12345
123-456-7890

Bill of Lading (Invoice)

Invoice Number: 1234
Date: December 22, 2022

Bill to:
ABC School District
1234 Anystreet
Anytown, CT 01234

Ship to:
ABC School District
1234 Anystreet
Anytown, CT 01234

Item description and code number	Unit	Quantity	Unit price	Amount
Chicken Stir-fry Bowl, CN #000000	each	200	$1.50	$300.00
			Total:	**$300.00**

Received by:_____

Resources for CN Labels

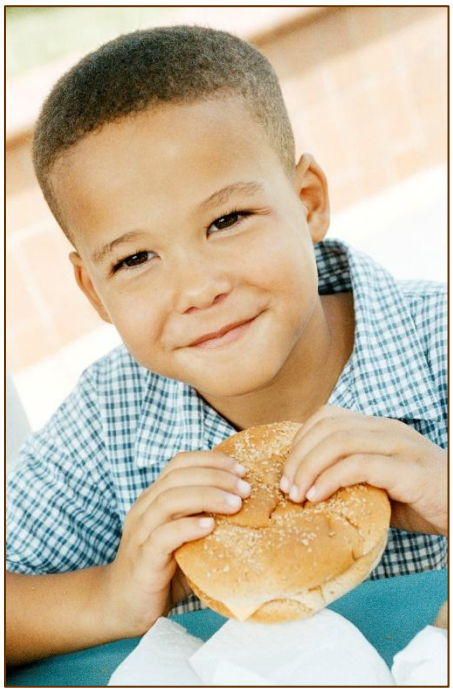
The resources below provide additional information on CN labels.

- Child Nutrition Authorized Labels and Manufacturers (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/authorized-labels-manufacturers
- Child Nutrition Programs Food Industry Toolkit: Resource Hub for Food Industry Partners (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/cnp/food-industry-toolkit
- Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Manual (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/manual
- Child Nutrition Labels (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/child-nutrition-labels
- CN Labeling Program (USDA webpage): https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling
- CN Labels and Product Formulation Statements (USDA Presentation): https://theicn.org/resources/930/march-2016/109876/manufacturers-product-formulation-statement-pfs03-31-16.pdf
- Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs#Commercial
- FBG Module 3: Product Formulation Statements (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.docebosaas.com/learn/courses/139/fbg-module-3-product-formulation-statements-pfs
- Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/records_retention_snp.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements: https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation

- Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/cn_labels_snp.pdf

- What's in a Meal Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials#module8

Additional crediting documentation resources are available on the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.



7 — Product Formulation Statements

A product formulation statement (PFS) is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. These forms generally include a detailed explanation of what the product contains and indicate the amount of each ingredient in the product by weight. Unlike CN labels, the information on PFS forms can vary among manufacturers because these forms are not reviewed, approved, or monitored by the USDA.

While only processed products that contain at least ½ oz eq of MMA are eligible for CN labels, a PFS can be used to document the meal pattern contribution for any processed food product. However, unlike CN labels, the information on PFS forms might vary among manufacturers because these forms are not reviewed, approved, or monitored by the USDA.

Figure 7-1 shows a sample PFS for commercial grilled chicken nuggets.

When a PFS is Required

SFAs must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer for all commercial processed products without a Child Nutrition (CN) label that are not listed in the USDA's FBG (refer to "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" in section 1).

To avoid additional burdens on food industry partners, SFAs cannot request a PFS or additional crediting information when a valid CN label or watermarked CN label is provided.

> Processed foods without a PFS or CN label do not credit in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks unless they are listed in the FBG.

Figure 7-1. Sample PFS for a commercial MMA product

ABC Chicken Company

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Meats/Meat Alternates (M/MA) in Child Nutrition Programs

Food manufacturers/vendors must: 1. Provide the following information on company letterhead signed by an official company representative. 2. Use the "Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs" (FBG) to fill out the tables below. 3. Provide a copy of the ingredient list from the product package.

Product Name: Grilled Chicken Nuggets Code No.: 123456

Manufacturer: ABC Chicken Company Serving Size: 4 nuggets (2.6 ounces)

I. Meats
Fill out the chart below to determine the creditable amount of meats.

DESCRIPTION OF CREDITABLE MEAT INGREDIENT PER FBG[1]	OUNCES PER RAW PORTION OF CREDITABLE MEAT INGREDIENT[2] A	MULTIPLY	FBG YIELD[3] B	CREDITABLE AMOUNT A x B
Boneless chicken without skin	2.88 ounces	x	0.73	2.1 ounces
		x		
		x		
			C. Total Creditable Meats Amount (oz)	2.1 ounces

[1] Ingredient(s) listed must match a food item found in the FBG or be a similar item that may substitute if the exact item is not listed. When searching for the food item, select the food item that most closely matches 1) the initial state of the ingredient as it is added to the formulation shown in the "Food As Purchased, AP" description and 2) the final state of the ingredient as consumed in the final product (e.g., cooked, raw, drained) shown in "Serving Size per Meal Contribution" description. Select the food item that credits as 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq).

[2] Provide the amount in ounces of the ingredient in the form that matches "As Purchased" column in the FBG (typically raw/unprocessed).

[3] The yield must match the yield provided in the FBG for the ingredient listed in the first column; the FBG yield is shown in the "Servings per Purchase Unit" column or in the "Additional Information" column.

Total weight (per portion) of product as purchased 2.6 ounces

Total creditable amount of product (per portion). **Note:** Total creditable amount (per portion) cannot exceed the total weight (per portion). 2 ounce equivalents

I certify that the above information is true and correct and that a 2.6 ounce serving of the above product (ready for serving) contains 2 ounce equivalents meat/meat alternate when prepared according to directions.

I further certify that any APP used in the product conforms to the Food and Nutrition Service Regulations (Appendix A of 7 CFR Parts 210, 220, 225, and 226) as demonstrated by the attached supplier documentation.

John Smith — Signature President — Title

John Smith — Printed Name 1/14/2026 — Date 123-456-7890 — Phone Number

Verifying PFS Forms for Accuracy

SFAs are responsible for verifying that the calculations and meal pattern contribution statement on a manufacturer's PFS are accurate. The USDA requires that SFAs must obtain and verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks.

SFAs must ensure that the PFS includes each required element and that the crediting calculations are correct. If any information is missing or incorrect, SFAs must request a revised PFS from the manufacturer, with supporting documentation if needed.

> The USDA encourages careful review of product literature. SFAs are accountable for ensuring that reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks meet the meal pattern requirements.

Required PFS Information

A PFS is an official certified document of the company. It must be on company letterhead and signed by a person of authority in the company, such as the quality control manager or the appropriate staff in nutrition or research and development. This signature may be handwritten, stamped, or electronic.

PFS forms must include specific elements to be acceptable as crediting documentation for the school nutrition programs. The product's label with the ingredients statement must also be attached.

> PFS forms that do not contain the required elements cannot be accepted as crediting documentation. SFAs must request a revised PFS from the manufacturer, with supporting documentation if needed.

Guidance on the required PFS elements is below.

1. **Product name:** The product name on the PFS must match or have a similar description to the name on the product label. Some examples are below.

Name on label	Name on PFS	Acceptable match?
Crispy breaded square chicken strips	Breaded chicken strips	Yes. The description is similar.
Crispy breaded square chicken strips	Chicken	No. “Chicken” does not indicate the type or form of the food, i.e., that the chicken is breaded or in the form of strips.
Early Harvest Green Beans	Beans	No. “Beans” does not sufficiently match the description on the product label because it does not indicate the type of beans.
Early Harvest Green Beans	Green beans	Yes. This matches the type of beans listed on the product label.

2. **Product code:** A unique identifier assigned by the manufacturer that may include numbers, letters, or a combination of both.

3. **Serving or portion size:** The serving size stated on the PFS should represent the amount of the product as purchased or ready for serving. This is the amount of food needed to provide the creditable amount stated on the PFS. The serving size may be stated as a weight or measure. Servings listed as measures should also include the weight of the measure. Some examples include one beef patty (2 ounces or 56 grams) and 2 pancakes (50 grams).

4. **Creditable ingredients:** The creditable ingredients must match or have a similar description to the ingredients listed on the product's label and a food item in the FBG.

    - The PFS must provide information about the creditable ingredients, including the specific type or form, e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, or dry.

    - The PFS must include the percentage of fat for ground beef or ground pork ingredients because this directly correlates to the cooking yield. The percentage of fat is not required for ground poultry, such as turkey and chicken.

    - If the manufacturer claims that the product provides a higher creditable amount than the amount listed in the FBG, the PFS must clarify all credited ingredients and demonstrate how the product provides that creditable amount according to the USDA's regulations, guidance, or policies.

5. **Information demonstrating meal pattern contribution:** The PFS must demonstrate how the creditable ingredients contribute to the USDA's meal patterns for the school nutrition programs.

    - **Rounding rules:** The manufacturer's crediting calculations must follow the USDA's rounding rules for the meal pattern contribution. All creditable amounts must round down to the nearest creditable amount for the specific meal component, i.e., ¼ oz eq for MMA and grains and ⅛ cup for fruits and vegetables. For example, 1.49 oz eq of grains credit as 1.25 oz eq and 2½ tablespoons of vegetables credit as 2 tablespoons (⅛ cup).

    - **Product weight versus creditable amount:** The creditable amount cannot exceed the total weight of the product. For example, a hamburger that weighs 1½ ounces cannot credit as 2 oz eq of the MMA component.

    - **Visible meal components:** The creditable meal components in the finished product must be visible (recognizable). For example, to credit toward the MMA component, the product must have a visible meat or meat alternate (such as a sausage link, beans, cheese, or peanut butter) and the PFS must specify the method for crediting these items.

      Note: Unrecognizable ingredients do not credit. Some examples include peanut butter in smoothies, pureed tofu in soups, applesauce in muffins, and pureed fruits and vegetables foods other than smoothies. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that children can easily identify the foods in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. The USDA emphasizes the importance of the nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs,

which includes the goal of helping children easily recognize the key food groups that contribute to a healthy meal.

- **Supporting documentation for APPs:** The PFS for products that contain APPs must provide supporting documentation to indicate that these ingredients meet the USDA's APP requirements (Appendix A of the NSLP and SBP regulations). Acceptable documentation includes a CN label, or a PFS from the manufacturer with supporting documentation on company letterhead that the APP ingredient meets the USDA's requirements (refer to the USDA's Sample APP Documentation). For additional guidance, visit the USDA's Alternate Protein Products webpage and refer to the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs*.

PFS forms that do not contain the required elements cannot be accepted as crediting documentation. For more detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*.

> Manufacturers are responsible for ensuring that commercial products are processed to meet the meal pattern contribution stated on the PFS. SFAs are responsible for verifying the PFS form's crediting information before serving the product and maintaining this documentation on file for the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Guidance for Reviewing PFS Forms

For guidance on how to review a PFS, visit the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement webpage. Guidance on how to review a grain PFS is available in the CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Training on PFS forms is provided in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*. Additional guidance on PFS forms is available in the "Product Formulation Statements" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Storing PFS Forms

SFAs must maintain PFS forms and crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs (refer to "Records Retention" in section 1). This documentation must be current.

The CSDE recommends maintaining PFS forms in a designated binder or folder for easy reference. Electronic copies of PFS forms should be stored in an easily accessible electronic folder. This documentation must be available for the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

USDA PFS Forms

The USDA's Product Formulation Statement Guidance and Templates for Food Manufacturers/Industry webpage provides PFS templates for the MMA, grains, fruits, and vegetables components, and resources to assist SFAs with evaluating the accuracy of a PFS. Manufacturers are not required to use the USDA forms. However, alternate PFS forms must include all required information from the USDA forms.

Manufacturers may modify the USDA's PFS forms for various types of commercial products. For example, a PFS for cheese pizza could include crediting information for the vegetables component (tomato sauce) in addition to the MMA component (cheese) and grains component (crust). Manufacturers may choose to use one PFS to document the crediting information for each meal component but must clearly identify how each component contributes to the meal pattern requirements. The PFS must include the information needed for SFAs to determine how the product credits in the school nutrition programs.

PFS forms for MMA

This PFS is used to document the oz eq of MMA in one serving of a commercial product. This form is the same for all school nutrition programs and grade groups.

- Alternate Protein Products (USDA webpage):
  https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/cnp/food-industry-toolkit/app

- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Meats/Meat Alternates (M/MA) in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
  https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-pfs-mma-template.pdf

- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Meats/Meat Alternates (M/MA) in Child Nutrition Programs: Completed Sample (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-pfs-mma-sample.pdf

PFS forms for vegetables and fruits

These PFS forms are used to document the cups of fruits and vegetables in one serving of a commercial product. They also include the meal pattern contribution of the five vegetable subgroups (dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other), which are required in the NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12. These subgroups are not required in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 or the preschool meal patterns.

- **NSLP and SBP for grades K-12:** Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-pfs-vegfruit-template-schoolmeals.pdf
    - Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs: Completed Sample for Vegetables (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-veg-fruit-pfs-sample-schoolmeals-veg-subgroup.pdf
- **NSLP, SBP, and ASP for preschool:** Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-pfs-vegfruit-template-cacfp.pdf

PFS forms for grains

This PFS is used to document the oz eq of grains in one serving of a commercial product. This form is the same for all school nutrition programs and grade groups.

- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains Ounce Equivalents in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-pfs-grains-oz-eq-template.pdf
- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains Ounce Equivalents in Child Nutrition Programs: Completed Sample (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-pfs-grains-oz-eq-sample.pdf

Sample completed PFS forms for multiple component foods

These sample completed PFS forms provide examples for combination foods that contribute to more than one meal component.

- Sample PFS for Berry Smoothie (MMA and Fruit): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-smoothie-sample-pfs-mma-fruit.pdf

- Sample PFS for Breakfast Sandwich (Grains and MMA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-sample-pfs-egg-sandwich-mma-grains.pdf

- Sample PFS for Chili (MMA and vegetable Subgroups with Beans, Peas, Lentils as Vegetable): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-sample-pfs-chili-bpl-veg.pdf

- Sample PFS for Chili (MMA and Vegetable Subgroups with Beans, Peas, Lentils as MMA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/tn-sample-pfs-chili-bpl-mma.pdf

Resources for PFS Forms

The resources below provide guidance on using PFS forms in the school nutrition programs.

- Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA webpage): https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/tips-evaluating-pfs

- FBG Module 3: Product Formulation Statements (Institute of Child Nutrition): https://theicn.docebosaas.com/learn/courses/139/fbg-module-3-product-formulation-statements-pfs

- Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement: Is it Acceptable? (ICN and USDA training): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtUo70IP9cc

- Product Formulation Statement Guidance and Templates for Food Manufacturers/Industry (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/cnp/food-industry-toolkit/pfs/guidance

- Product Formulation Statements (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements

- Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/records_retention_snp.pdf

- USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements: https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation

- Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/product_formulation_statements.pdf

- What's in a Meal Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials#module8

- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_snp.pdf

Additional crediting documentation resources are available on the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

8 — Buy American Requirement

All foods purchased using funds from the SFA's nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) must comply with the Buy American requirement. This requirement is specified in the federal regulations for the NSLP (7 CFR 210.21 (d)) and SBP (7 CFR 220.16 (d)), and the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

The Buy American requirement specifies that schools and institutions must purchase domestic commodities or products to the maximum extent practicable.

- A "domestic commodity or product" is an agricultural commodity that is produced in the United States (U.S.), and a food product that is processed in the U.S. substantially using agricultural commodities that are produced in the U.S.
- "Substantially" means that over 51 percent of the final processed product consists of agricultural commodities that were grown domestically.

SFAs are required to include language requiring the purchase of foods that meet the Buy American requirements in all procurement procedures, solicitations, and contracts.

Applicable Foods

The Buy American provision applies to all foods purchased using funds from the NSFSA. This includes foods that are part of reimbursable meals and competitive foods sold a la carte, i.e., foods and beverages sold separately from reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks.

> Section 7 CFR 210.14 (a) of the NSLP regulations and section 7 CFR 220.13(i) of the SBP regulations require SFAs to establish a NSFSA. The NSFSA is the restricted account in which all the revenue from all food service operations conducted by the SFA, principally for the benefit of school children, is retained and used only for the operation or improvement of the nonprofit school food service.

Limited Exceptions

The USDA allows only two limited exceptions to the requirement that SFAs must purchase domestic foods.

1. The product is listed on the Federal Acquisitions Regulations (FAR) Non-available Articles List (FAR 25.104) and/or is not produced or manufactured in the U.S. in sufficient and reasonably available quantities of a satisfactory quality. The Nonavailable Articles List is a list of items that are considered by the federal government to be not available in the U.S. and are therefore excepted from the Buy American statute.

2. Competitive bids reveal the costs of a U.S. product are significantly higher than the non-domestic product. The definition of “significantly higher” is not defined by the USDA. The USDA allows SFAs the discretion to define “significantly higher” to provide the appropriate flexibility needed for purchases based on SFAs’ diverse needs. The SFA is responsible for determining the dollar amount or percentage that constitutes a significantly higher cost for a domestic product and therefore permits the use of an exception.

Purchases of non-domestic foods are not permitted unless one of these exceptions applies.

Required Documentation for Non-domestic Foods

Section 7 CFR 210.21(d)(5)(iii) of the NSLP regulations and section 7 CFR 220.16(d)(5)(iii) of the SBP regulations require SFAs to maintain documentation to demonstrate the use of these two limited exceptions. This documentation must indicate that any purchases of non-domestic foods meet one of the two exceptions (refer to "Limited Exceptions" above). Two types of documentation are permitted.

1. The product is listed on the FAR Non-available Articles List. Additional documentation is not required when SFAs purchase food items found on this list. SFAs must maintain a copy of the list on file with the applicable items highlighted.

2. The SFA has completed the CSDE' *Buy American Justification Form for the School Nutrition Programs.* This form must be used to document the purchase of all non-domestic foods that are not on the FAR Non-available Articles List. SFAs must maintain this form on file with other required records in accordance with the NSLP and SBP regulations (refer to "Records Retention" in section 1).

The CSDE will evaluate the SFA's documentation and compliance with the Buy American requirement during the Administrative Review and Procurement Review of the school nutrition programs.

Annual Limit for Non-domestic Food Purchases

The USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, requires SFAs to gradually reach an annual 5 percent cap for nondomestic food purchases by school year 2031-32. The table below summarizes the required annual cap by school year.

Table 8-1. Annual cap on non-domestic food purchases by school year

School year	Annual cap
2025-2026 (beginning July 1, 2025)	10 percent
2028-2029 (beginning July 1, 2028)	8 percent
2031-2032 (beginning July 1, 2031)	5 percent

SFAs must count all excepted non-domestic foods purchased with NSFSA funds toward the cap on non-domestic purchases. This includes non-domestic foods on the FAR Nonavailable

Articles List and non-domestic foods on each *Buy American Justification Form for the School Nutrition Programs* completed by the SFA.

State Agency Monitoring

In September 2023, the USDA final rule, Child Nutrition Program Integrity, added the review of Buy American requirements to the regulations that govern state agency reviews of SFAs. State agencies will review this requirement through the Administrative Review process. In addition, during the Procurement Review, the CSDE will determine if the appropriate language for the Buy American requirement is in all solicitations and contracts.

The USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, provides states with discretion to allow an accommodation for temporary relief from this requirement while the SFA works to increase their domestic food purchases (7 CFR 210.21(d)(8)). The USDA will closely monitor implementation of the cap and provide guidance as needed to state agencies that may need to use this accommodation.

Buy American Resources

The resources below provide guidance on the Buy American provision.

- Buy American Factsheet (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/schoolmeals/buy-american-factsheet
- Buy American Justification Form (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/procure/buy_american_form.pdf
- Buy American Requirement (CSDE's Procurement for School Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/procurement-for-school-nutrition-programs/buy-american-requirement
- Buy American Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/procure/buy_american_requirements_snp.pdf
- Buy American Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE Training Module): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/procurement-for-school-nutrition-programs/buy-american-requirement#Training
- Federal Acquisitions Regulations (FAR) Non-available Articles List (FAR 25.104): https://www.acquisition.gov/far/part-25#FAR_25_104

- USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962): https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/fr-042524

- USDA SBP Regulations 7 CFR 220.16(d)(5)(iii) Buy American: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-220#p-220.16(d)

- USDA NSLP Regulations 7 CFR 210.21(d) Buy American: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.21(d)

- USDA Memo SP 32-2019: Buy American and the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018: https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/buy-american-and-agriculture-improvement-act

- USDA Memo SP 38-2017: Compliance with and Enforcement of the Buy American Provision in the NSLP: https://www.fna.usda.gov/nslp/compliance-enforcement-buy-american

For additional guidance, visit the "Buy American Requirement" section of the CSDE's Procurement for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

9 — Nutrition Information

SFAs must obtain nutrition information for all commercially processed foods served in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. If a processed product does not have a Nutrition Facts label, SFAs are responsible for obtaining the necessary information from the manufacturer. Nutrition information must be readily available for use by the CSDE when a nutrient analysis of school menus is required as part of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

In addition to CN labels and PFS forms, nutrition information helps menu planners determine if certain commercial products credit toward the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns. Nutrition information is also required to meet the USDA's requirement for providing reasonable meal modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet.

Determining Crediting Information

For many commercial processed products, SFAs will need to review the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients to determine crediting information. The examples below indicate when nutrition information is required to document crediting information for foods and beverages.

- **Crediting fluid milk substitutes (nondairy beverages):** The USDA allows SFAs to offer allowable fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons. Fluid milk substitutes are plant-based beverages like fortified soy milk that are intended to replace cow's milk. These fluid milk substitutes must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes (section 7 CFR 210.10(d)(2)(ii) of the NSLP regulations). Some fluid milk substitutes include this information on their Nutrition Facts label, while others require additional documentation from the manufacturer to determine compliance. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs*.

- **Crediting deli meats, hotdogs, sausages, and similar foods:** A PFS is required to determine crediting information for deli meats, hotdogs, sausages, and similar foods that contain binders and extenders but are not CN labeled. These foods credit based on the percentage of meat in the product formula, not the serving weight. For example, one brand of deli meat might require 1.6 ounces to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, while another brand might require 2.3 ounces. The ingredients statement indicates if the product contains added liquids, binders, and extenders. This alerts the menu planner that a PFS is required to determine the crediting information for the product. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition*

Programs and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs*.

- **Crediting tempeh:** To credit 1 ounce of tempeh as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, its ingredients must be limited to soybeans (or other beans, peas, and lentils), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs (refer to USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019, and SFSP 11-2019: *Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs*). If a tempeh product contains other ingredients, SFAs must obtain a CN label or PFS to document crediting information. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if tempeh products contain additional ingredients.

- **Crediting commercial tofu products:** To credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component, commercial tofu products and tofu and other soy products must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label to determine if a tofu product meets this requirement. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs*.

- **Oz eq contribution for commercial grain products:** To credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component, commercial grain products in groups A-G must meet the specific weight for the appropriate grain group in the USDA Exhibit A chart. Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label to determine the manufacturer's serving weight, which is required to determine the oz eq contribution. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs* and *How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs*.

- **Crediting enriched grain products for grades K-12:** To credit as the grains component in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12, enriched grain products must meet the limit for noncreditable grains, 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). Menu planners must review the ingredients statement to determine if the product contains any noncreditable grains. This alerts the menu planner if a PFS is required to determine the crediting information for the product. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards*.

- **Crediting WGR commercial grain products for grades K-12:** To credit as a WGR food in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12, commercial grain products must meet three criteria: 1) the first ingredient (excluding water) is a whole grain; 2) any other creditable grains are enriched; and 3) the combined weight of noncreditable grains does not exceed the specified grains, 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). Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if a whole grain is the first ingredient and if the product contains any noncreditable grains. This alerts the menu planner if a PFS is required to determine if the product meets the WGR criteria. For more information, 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 *Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards*.

- **Crediting WGR commercial grain products for preschool:** To credit as a WGR food in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns, commercial grain products must contain a whole grain as the first ingredient or the greatest ingredient by weight. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if commercial products meet this requirement. For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program*.

- **Crediting commercial smoothies:** Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as gingko biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if commercial smoothies contain these ingredients. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs*.

For more information, visit the "Nutrition Information" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage. For guidance on how to read food labels, 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*. Additional resources for food labels are available in the "Food Labels" section of the CSDE's Nutrition Education webpage.

Making Meal Modifications

Federal nondiscrimination laws and regulations require schools and institutions to make reasonable meal modifications on a case-by-case basis for children whose disability restricts their diet. SFAs will need to review the nutrition information for commercial products when planning meal modifications for children with special dietary concerns, such as food allergies, lactose intolerance, and celiac disease. This information is required to modify meals and afterschool snacks so they are safe for the child to eat.

The USDA considers providing nutrition information for foods served in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks to be part of reasonable meal modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet. SFAs are responsible for making nutrition information for school meals and

afterschool snacks available to students, families, school nurses and other medical professionals, and appropriate school staff, as needed. For information on the requirements for meal modifications, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs* and visit the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Nutrition Information for USDA Foods

The USDA's USDA Foods in Schools Product Information Sheets webpage provides product information sheets for USDA Foods. These sheets include the product's description, crediting and yield information, culinary tips and recipes, food safety information, and a general Nutrition Facts label. However, they do not include a product-specific Nutrition Facts label or ingredients statement.

For further processed USDA Foods, the nutrition information and ingredients for USDA direct delivery food items (brown box) may vary based on the vendor who received the bid. If SFAs require product information for students with food allergies or other dietary needs, they must obtain product-specific information from the manufacturer.

To find the nutrition information for USDA direct delivery food items, check the outside of the case or the inside packaging. If nutrition information is not available, check with the product's manufacturer. The processor's agreement with the Connecticut Food Distribution Program (FDP) requires that the processor must provide product nutrition information to SFAs upon request and make this information available on their website. For additional assistance, contact the Connecticut FDP staff.

Nutrition Disclosure for Alternate Protein Products

The NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210.10 (n)) require that schools must accurately represent foods on school menus. Menus cannot claim that a food item is beef, pork, poultry (such as chicken or turkey), or seafood (such as fish or tuna) if the food item contains more than 30 percent alternate protein products (APPs). The names used for these menu items must reflect that they are not 100 percent meat, poultry, or fish. For more information on APPs, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Nutrient Analysis of Breakfast and Lunch Menus for Grades K-12

During the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs, the CSDE must assess whether breakfast and lunch meals offered to students in grades K-12 are consistent with the USDA's weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards). If a nutrient analysis is required as part of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the SFA's school nutrition programs, it will include all foods (including condiments) and beverages offered as part of reimbursable meals during the one-week review period. Nutrition information must be available for all menu items.

> The USDA requires SFAs to follow the meal patterns to meet nutrient targets. SFAs are not required to conduct a nutrient analysis of their own menus. However, SFAs may choose to conduct a nutrient analysis to assist with ensuring that school menus meet the weekly dietary specifications. 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*.

Resources for Nutrition Information

The resources below provide guidance on obtaining nutrition information.

- Food Labeling & Nutrition (FDA):
  https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition

- Food Labels (CSDE's Nutrition Education webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/nutrition-education/food-labels

- FoodData Central (USDA):
  https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/

- Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
  https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_dietary_specifications_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf

- Nutrient Analysis of Menus (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
  https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/nutrient-analysis-of-menus

- Nutrient and Meal Pattern Analysis Resources for School Meals (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/program-operator/nutrient-meal-pattern-analysis

- Nutrition Information (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage): https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/nutrition-information

- Product Specifications & Requirements for USDA Foods (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service): https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/product-specs

- Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/app_requirements_snp.pdf

- USDA Approved Nutrient Analysis Software (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/usda-approved-nutrient-analysis-software

- USDA Foods in Schools Product Information Sheets (USDA): https://www.fna.usda.gov/usda-fis/product-information-sheets

For additional guidance, visit the "Nutrient Analysis of Menus" section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

8 — Resources

This section includes additional resources and websites to assist SFAs with meeting the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns and the crediting, documentation, and meal service requirements for the school nutrition programs. More links to information on the federal and state requirements and guidance for school meals are available on the CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs webpages. For a list of resources on the meal patterns and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's *Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs*.

Meal Components and Crediting

Child Nutrition Labels (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/child-nutrition-labels

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs

Crediting Summary Charts for the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/crediting_summary_ charts_ snp.pdf

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

Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning-guidance-for-school-meals

Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/noncreditable_foods_snp.pdf

What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials

Meal Patterns and Menu Planning

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/asp/asp_handbook.pdf

Dietary Specifications (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/dietary-specifications

Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/guide_meal_modifications_snp.pdf

Guide to Meal Service Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_meal_service_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf

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

Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_dietary_specifications_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf

Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/resources_school_meal_patterns_snp.pdf

Meal Pattern Changes (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs #Meal_Pattern_Changes

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs

Menu Planner for School Meals (USDA):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner-school-meals

Menu Planning Checklists for Lunch for Grades K-12 (CSDE's Forms for School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/forms-for-school-nutrition-programs#m

Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning

Nutrition Standards for School Meals (USDA webpage):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/schoolmeals/nutrition-standards

Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/offer-versus-serve-for-school-nutrition-programs

Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition//-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/ovs/ovs_guide_snp.pdf

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/overview_menu_ planning_ nslp_grades_k-12.pdf

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sbp/overview_menu_planning_sbp_ grades_ k-12.pdf

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/preschool-meal-pattern-training

Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/sodium_limits_nslp_sbp.pdf

What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials

Policy and Guidance

C.G.S. Section 10-221q. Sale of beverages:
https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-221q

Child Nutrition Programs Legislation and Regulations (USDA):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/legislation-regulations

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the National School Lunch Program (7 CFR 210) (USDA):
https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the School Breakfast Program (7 CFR 220) (USDA):
https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220

Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) Documents & Resources (USDA):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/resources

Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/laws-and-regulations-for-child-nutrition-programs

Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/manuals-and-guides-for-child-nutrition-programs

Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/operational-memoranda-for-school-nutrition-programs

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/program-guidance-school-nutrition-programs

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

School Lunch Tray and Table Talk (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/school-lunch-tray-and-table-talk

Training for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/training-for-child-nutrition-programs

USDA Final Rule: Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4087):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/fr-012612

USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/fr-042524

USDA FNS Instruction 786-8: Reimbursement for Off-Site Meal Consumption:
https://www.fna.usda.gov/schoolmeals/reimbursement-offsite-meal-consumption

USDA Memo SP 05-2022: Meal Requirements Under the NSLP & SBP: Q&A for Program Operators Updated to Support the Transitional Standards Effective July 1, 2022:
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/sp052022-questions-answers-program-operators

USDA Memo SP 17-2012: Procurement Questions and Answers to Assist in the Implementation of the final rule titled Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program.
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/procurement-qas-assist-implementation-final-rule

Glossary

added sugars: Sugars and syrups added to foods in processing or preparation, as opposed to the naturally occurring sugars found in nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products. Names for added sugars include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup.

Administrative Review (AR): The state agency's comprehensive offsite and onsite evaluation of all SFAs participating in the NSLP and SBP. The review cycle is every three years for each SFA and includes a review of critical and general areas. For more information, visit the CSDE's Administrative Review for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Afterschool Snack Program (ASP): The USDA's federally assisted snack program implemented through the NSLP. The ASP provides cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children in afterschool activities aimed at promoting the health and well-being of children and youth. Schools must provide children with regularly scheduled activities in an organized, structured, and supervised environment that includes educational or enrichment activities, e.g., mentoring/tutoring programs. Programs must meet state or local licensing requirements and health and safety standards. For more information, visit the CSDE's Afterschool Snack Program webpage.

afterschool snacks: Reimbursable snacks offered in the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). For more information, refer to "Afterschool Snack Program" in this section.

age/grade groups: The age or grade groups specified in the USDA's meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 include three grade groups (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). The classification of grade groups is based on children's nutritional needs and the ages that typically correspond with these grade levels (ages 5-10 for grades K-5, ages 11-13 for grades 6-8, and ages 14-18 for grades 9-12). The ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 contains only one grade group (K-12). The NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns include two age groups (1-2 and 3-5).

alternate protein products (APPs): Food ingredients processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources (e.g., dehydrated granules, particles, or flakes) that may be used alone or in combination with meat, poultry, or seafood. Some examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. The USDA has specific requirements for the crediting of APPs in Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs*.

calories: The measurement of energy provided by foods and beverages.

Child Nutrition (CN) label: A statement approved by the USDA that clearly identifies the contribution of a food product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. Products eligible for CN labels include main dish entrees that provide at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component, e.g., beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. CN labels usually indicate the contribution of other meal components (such as vegetables, grains, and fruits) that are part of these products. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the 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), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP also provides nutritious meals and snacks to the frail elderly in adult day care centers. For more information, visit the CSDE's Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

creditable food: A food or beverage that counts toward meeting the meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. For crediting guidance, visit the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage, and refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs*.

creditable grains: The ingredients in a commercial grain product or standardized recipe that credit toward the grains component. Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs*.

cycle menu: A series of menus planned for a specific period, with a different menu for each day. Cycle menus can help schools comply with the meal pattern requirements, control food cost, control inventory, improve staff efficiency, and save time and labor costs. For more information, refer to "Using cycle menus" in section 2 and visit the "Cycle Menus" section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

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

dietary specifications (apply only to the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12): The USDA's nutrition standards for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, that include weekly calorie ranges and weekly limits for saturated fat and sodium. For information on the specific dietary specifications for each grade group, visit the "Dietary Specifications" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For guidance on meeting the dietary specifications, 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*.

> Effective with school year 2026-27 (beginning July 1, 2027), the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, requires a new weekly dietary specification for added sugars (less than 10 percent of calories). For more information, visit the "Meal Pattern Changes" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

edible portion: The portion of a food that can be eaten after the nonedible parts are removed. Examples include cooked, lean meat without bone, and fruits without seeds or pits.

enriched grains: Refined grains (such as wheat, rice, and corn) and grain products (such as cereal, pasta, and bread) that have some vitamins and minerals added to replace the nutrients lost during processing. The five enrichment nutrients are added within limits specified by the FDA, and include thiamin (B_1), riboflavin (B_2), niacin (B_3), folic acid, and iron. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs*.

enrichment: Adding back nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) originally present in a food that were lost during processing. Enrichment nutrients are added back in approximately the same levels as were originally present in the food. For more information, refer to "enriched grains" in this section.

Exhibit A chart: The USDA's *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs* chart that indicates the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for different types of grain foods to provide 1 oz eq of the grains component. For guidance on applicable Exhibit A quantities and requirements for each school nutrition program, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs*.

flour: Finely ground and sifted wheat or other grains such as rye, corn, rice, or buckwheat.

fluid milk substitutes: Plant-based beverages like fortified soy milk that are intended to replace cow's milk. SFAs may choose to offer allowable fluid milk substitutes in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks for children who do not consume milk due to non-disability reasons. Fluid milk substitutes must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes Only certain brands of fluid milk substitutes meet these standards. For more information, refer to "nutrition standards for milk substitutes" in this section and the CSDE's resources, *Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Determining if Nondairy Milk Substitutes Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs*.

food item: A specific food offered within the required meal components for reimbursable meals in the USDA's school nutrition programs. A food item may contain one or more meal components or more than one serving of a single component. For example, an entree could provide 1 oz eq of the grains component and 1 oz eq of the MMA component. A 2-ounce whole grain or enriched bagel could provide 2 oz eq of the grains component.

food-based menu planning: A type of menu planning for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs that uses a meal pattern with specific meal components in certain amounts based on specific age/grade groups. For more information, refer to "meal components" in this section.

fruits component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings at lunch or breakfast. For more information, visit the "Fruits" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

full meal component: The daily quantity designated by the menu planner (no less than the established minimum) to meet the required weekly ranges.

full serving: Refer to "full meal component" in this section.

full-strength fruit or vegetable juice: An undiluted product obtained by extraction from sound fruit. Full-strength juice may be fresh, canned, frozen or reconstituted from concentrate and may be served in either liquid or frozen state or as an ingredient in a recipe. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: "full-strength juice," "single-strength juice," "100 percent juice," "reconstituted juice," or "juice from concentrate." For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs*.

grade groups: Refer to "age/grade groups" in this section.

grain-based desserts: Desserts made of grains, such as brownies, cookies, sweet crackers (e.g., graham crackers and animal crackers), cakes, cupcakes, coffee cakes, cinnamon streusel quick breads, piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, orange cranberry, and chocolate chip), sweet croissants (e.g., chocolate or almond filled), sweet rice puddings (e.g., cinnamon and vanilla), sweet bread puddings (e.g., made with cinnamon, fruits, chocolate, or icing), and sweet pita chips (e.g., cinnamon sugar). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*. **Note:** Grain-based desserts do not credit in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 or the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns.

grains: Plants in the grass family that produce a dry, edible fruit commonly called a kernel, grain, or berry.

grains component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes cereal grains and products made from their flours. Creditable grain foods include products and recipes that are WGR or enriched. Creditable cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals include products that are WGR, enriched, or fortified. For more information, visit the "Grains" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

legumes: A type of plant that includes pods, e.g., soybeans, peanuts, fresh peas, fresh beans, and pulses (beans, peas, and lentils). For more information, refer to "beans, peas, and lentils (pulses)" and "pulses" in this section.

local educational agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public or private nonprofit authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools. The term also includes any other public or private nonprofit institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a public or private nonprofit elementary school or secondary school, including residential child care institutions, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and educational service agencies and consortia of those agencies, as well as the state educational agency in a state or territory in which the state educational agency is the sole educational agency for all public or private nonprofit schools.

main dish: The main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items. Examples of main dish items include pizza, chicken stir-fry, and chef's salad with ham, hard-boiled egg, and cheese.

meal components: The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates.

meal pattern: The required meal components and minimum servings that schools and institutions participating in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and afterschool snacks served to children.

meals: Refer to "reimbursable meals" in this section.

meat alternates: Foods that provide a similar protein content to meat. Meat alternates include alternate protein products, cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans and peas, nuts and seeds and their butters (except for acorn, chestnut, and coconut), yogurt, soy yogurt, commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein in a ¼-cup (2.2 ounces) serving, and tempeh. For more information, visit the "Meats and Meat Alternates" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

meats/meat alternates (MMA) component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes meats (e.g., beef, poultry, and fish) and meat alternates, such as eggs, cheese, yogurt, beans, peas, and lentils, nuts, and seeds. For more information, visit the "Meats and Meat Alternates" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

menu item: Any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk that is part of the reimbursable meal. Menu items consist of food items. For more information, refer to "food item" in this section.

milk component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes pasteurized fluid milk that meets federal and state regulations. The milk component also includes fluid milk substitutes that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, refer to "fluid milk substitutes" and "nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes" in this section, and visit the "Milk" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to children each school day. The NSLP 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.

noncreditable foods: Foods and beverages that do not contribute toward the meal patterns for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. Noncreditable foods and beverages are either in amounts too small to credit (i.e., foods and beverages that do not provide the minimum creditable amount of a meal component) or they do not meet the crediting requirements of the meal components. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs*.

noncreditable grains: Grain ingredients that do not meet the USDA's definition of creditable grains and therefore do not contribute to the grains component. Some examples include oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours). The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 require that all creditable grain foods (WGR and enriched) cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for foods in groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for foods in groups H-I. (Groups A-I refer to the grain groups in the USDA's chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*.) For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Noncreditable Grains for the School Nutrition Programs and the Connecticut Nutrition Standards*.

nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA): The restricted account in which all the revenue from all food service operations conducted by the SFA, principally for the benefit of school children, is retained and used only for the operation or improvement of the nonprofit school food service. For more information, visit the "Nonprofit School Food Service Account (NSFSA)" section of the CSDE's Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

nutrient assessment: A review of school menu records to determine whether they meet the USDA's weekly dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For more information, refer to "dietary specifications" in this section.

nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes: The USDA's nutrition requirements for plant-based beverages like soy milk that are used as fluid milk substitutes in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA requires that any fluid milk substitutes are nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk and meet the following nutrients per cup (8 fluid ounces): 276 milligrams (mg) of calcium; 8 grams (g) of protein; 150 micrograms (mcg) retinol activity equivalents (RAE) of vitamin A; 2.5 mcg of vitamin D; 24 mg of magnesium; 222 mg of phosphorus; 349 mg of potassium; 0.44 mg of riboflavin; and 1.1 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin B-12. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs*.

offer versus serve (OVS): A provision that applies to menu planning and the determination of reimbursable meals for grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP. OVS allows students to decline a certain number of meal components or food items in the meal. SFAs must offer the required meal components to each student. For the NSLP, students must select at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables and the full serving of at least two other meal components. For the SBP, students must select at least three food items including at least ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitutions, if offered). OVS must be implemented in senior high schools for lunch but is optional for breakfast. OVS is optional for breakfast and lunch in junior high, middle, and elementary schools. OVS does not apply to the SMP or ASP, or to preschool meals in the NSLP and SBP. For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals* and visit the CSDE's OVS webpage.

ounce equivalent (oz eq): A weight-based unit of measure for the grains component and MMA component in the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. Oz eq account for dry versus cooked grains and variations in MMA. One oz eq of the MMA component is sometimes more than a measured ounce, depending on the food's density and nutritional content. One oz eq of the grains component is less than a measured ounce for some grain foods (e.g., pretzels, breadsticks, and crackers), equal to a measured ounce for some grain foods (e.g., bagels, biscuits, bread, rolls, cereal grains, and RTE breakfast cereals), and more than a measured ounce for some grain foods (e.g., muffins and pancakes). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs* and the CSDEs grains oz eq charts (refer to "Exhibit A chart" in this section).

product formulation statement (PFS): 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 SFAs must verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs*, and visit the "Product Formulation Statements" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

production record: A working tool that outlines the type and quantity of foods used to prepare school meals and afterschool snacks. Production records must demonstrate how meals contribute to the required meal components, food items or menu items for each day of operation. They must also provide sufficient documentation to determine how school meals contribute to meeting the weekly dietary specifications. The USDA's regulations require that all schools in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP must complete daily menu production records for all meals. For more information, visit the CSDE's Production Records for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

pulses: The edible dry seeds from legumes, such as beans, peas, and lentils. For more information, refer to "beans, peas, and lentils (pulses)" and "legumes" in this section.

reimbursable meals: Meals that offer the required meal components and minimum servings for each grade group of the NSLP and SBP meal patterns and are eligible for USDA reimbursement.

reimbursable snacks: Afterschool snacks that offer the required meal components and minimum servings for each grade group of the ASP meal patterns and are eligible for USDA reimbursement.

residential child care institution (RCCI): RCCIs include but are not limited to homes for the mentally, emotionally or physically impaired, and unmarried mothers and their infants; group homes; halfway houses; orphanages; temporary shelters for abused children and for runaway children; long-term care facilities for chronically ill children; and juvenile detention centers. A long-term care facility is a hospital, skilled nursing facility, intermediate care facility, or distinct part thereof, which is intended for the care of children confined for 30 days or more.

saturated fat: A type of fat that raises blood cholesterol, which is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Major sources of saturated fat include coconut oil, palm oil, palm kernel oil, butter, and beef fat. Saturated fat is also found in other animal fats, such as pork and chicken fats, and in other plant fats, such as nuts. For more information, refer to "solid fats" in this section.

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 SBP 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 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.

school nutrition programs: The USDA's school nutrition programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Special Milk Program (SMP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-risk Supper Program implemented in schools. For more information, visit the CSDE's School Nutrition Programs webpage.

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 NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns. For more information, visit the CSDE's Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP webpage.

serving size or portion: The weight, measure, number of pieces, or slices of a food or beverage. SFAs must provide the minimum serving sizes specified in the USDA meal patterns for meals and afterschool snacks to be reimbursable.

simple carbohydrates (sugars): Carbohydrates consisting of one sugar (e.g., fructose and galactose) or two sugars (e.g., lactose, maltose, and sucrose). Sugars can be naturally present in foods (such as fructose in fruit or lactose in milk) or added to foods (such as sucrose or table sugar). Foods that naturally contain simple carbohydrates (such as fruits, milk, and milk products, and some vegetables) also contain vitamins and minerals. Foods that contain large amounts of added sugars (such as cookies, candy, pastries, sweetened baked goods, regular soft drinks, and other sweetened drinks) provide calories with few, if any, nutrients. For more information, refer to "added sugars" in this section.

sodium: A mineral that helps maintain the body's fluid balance and blood pressure. Diets that are high in sodium can increase the risk of high blood pressure in individuals who are sodium sensitive.

standardized recipe: A recipe that been tried, adapted, and retried at least three times and has been found to produce the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized recipes include specific information such as ingredients, weights and measures, preparation directions, serving directions, yield, and portion size. For more information, refer to the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition's *USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs*, the CSDE's *Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs*, and 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.

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

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): The USDA’s federally assisted summer feeding program for children ages 18 and younger that provides nutritious meals when schools end for the summer. For more information, visit the CSDE’s Summer Food Service Program webpage.

tempeh: A highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other beans, peas, and lentils), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. SFA must obtain a PFS for tempeh products that contain different ingredients.

time/temperature control for safety food (TCS): Foods defined by the FDA Food Code that requires time/temperature control for safety (TCS) to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation. For more information, visit the CSDE’s Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

USDA Foods: Foods available to the USDA Child Nutrition Programs through the CSDE’s Food Distribution Program. USDA Foods are available to schools in several ways, including Direct Delivery USDA Foods, Further Processed USDA Foods, the USDA Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Pilot, and the SFSP USDA DoD Pilot. For more information, visit the USDA’s USDA Foods Programs webpage and the CSDE’s Food Distribution Program webpage.

vegetable subgroups: The five categories of vegetables within the vegetables component that are required over the week in the NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12. The subgroups include dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other vegetables. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program*, and visit the “Vegetables” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

vegetables component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice; and includes five subgroups. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings at lunch or breakfast. For more information, visit the “Vegetables” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

whole grain-rich (meal patterns for grades K-12): Foods in groups A-G and H are WGR if they meet two criteria: 1) the grain content is between 50 and 100 percent whole grain with any remaining grains being enriched; and 2) any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent of the product formula (or less than ¼ 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 group H (cereal grains). Ready-to-eat (RTE) and cooked breakfast cereals (group I) are WGR criteria if they meet three criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) added sugars do not exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. Fortification is not required for 100 whole grain cereals. For more information, 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 *Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs*, and visit "Whole Grain-rich Requirement" in the "Grains" section of the Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

whole grain-rich (preschool meal patterns): Foods in groups A-G and H are WGR if they contain 100 percent whole grain or at least 50 percent whole grains and any other grain ingredients are enriched. Ready-to-eat (RTE) and cooked breakfast cereals (group I) are WGR criteria if they meet two criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) added sugars do not exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. Fortification is not required for 100 whole grain cereals. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program* and *Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs*, and visit "Whole Grain-rich Requirement" in the "Grains" section of the Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

whole grains: Grains that consist of the entire kernel, including the starchy endosperm, the fiber-rich bran, and the nutrient-rich germ. All grains start out as whole grains, but many are processed to remove the bran and germ, which also removes many of the nutrients. Whole grains are nutrient rich, containing vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and health-enhancing phytonutrients such as lignans and flavonoids. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, whole oats, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, brown rice, whole rye, whole barley, wild rice, buckwheat, and bulgur (cracked wheat). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs*.

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

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