USDA Meal Pattern Compliance for the Administrative Review

School Year 2026-27

October 1, 2026

CONNECTICUT Education

Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs

What's in a Meal Training Modules

- 1: Introduction to Training
- 2: Introduction to School Meal Patterns
- 3: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Meal Pattern
- 4: School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Pattern
- 5: Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern
- 6: Dietary Specifications
- 7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus
- 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products
- 9: Milk Component
- 10: Meats/Meat Alternates Component
- 11: Fruits Component
- 12: Vegetables Component
- 13: Grains Component
- 14: Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement
- 15: Grain Ounce Equivalents
- 16: Water Availability During Meal Service
- 17: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the NSLP
- 18: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the SBP

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials

Terms to Know

Meal Pattern Compliance

The planned menu meets the daily and weekly meal pattern for the specific grade group

Menu Compliance Based On

- Offered menus, not served food
  - What a child selects
- All serving lines
- All reimbursable meals offered

Importance of Menu Compliance

- Ensures schools prepare, offer, and serve meals that meet meal pattern for appropriate age/grade groups
- Ensures every reimbursable meal service line meets daily and weekly meal pattern
- Noncompliant meals may be disallowed and fiscal action applied

Materials Needed to Determine Menu Compliance

- One-week menu
- Portion sizes for all menu items
- Meal pattern contribution information
- Standardized recipes
- Production records
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs
- Meal pattern compliance tool or approved software tool

Helpful Hints for Preparing Menu Week

- Use cycle menus
- Complete USDA Meal Pattern Compliance worksheets before implementing the week
- Compile all supporting documentation

https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.21(h)

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Helpful Hints for Preparing Menu Week, continued

- Must include separate menus for each age/grade group
- Menus must list
  - all reimbursable meals including fruit, vegetable, milk, and alternate meal options
  - variety of milk served
  - vegetable subgroups

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Supporting Documentation for Meal Compliance

- Menus correspond to each completed Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheet
- Completed production records
- Recipes for all items served
- Food labels
- Crediting information

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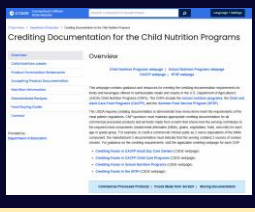
CSDE Webpage: Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs

- Child Nutrition labels
- Product formulation statements
- Nutrition information
- Accepting product documentation
- Standardized recipes
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs



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

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CSDE Resource: Menu Planning Checklists for Lunch for Grades K-12

- Grades K-5
- Grades 6-8
- Grades 9-12
- Grades K-8

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/forms-for-school-nutrition-programs#MenuPlanningChecklistsLunchGradesK-12

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Example of Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern

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Alternate Meal Offered Daily (Monday-Friday) for K-5 Meal Pattern

- Turkey and cheese chef's salad
- Whole-grain bread stick
- Orange smiles
- Milk choice

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Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern

Menu item	Meal component
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	Meats/meat alternates (MMA)
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) and cherry tomatoes (¾ cup)	Vegetables
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk

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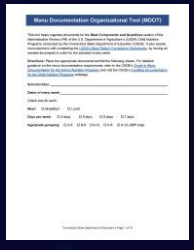
Menu Documentation Organizational Tool (MDOT)

- Helps organize documents for review of meal components and quantities
- Assists menu planners in completing USDA Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheets by having all needed documents in order for selected week


Menu Documentation Organizational Tool (MDOT)

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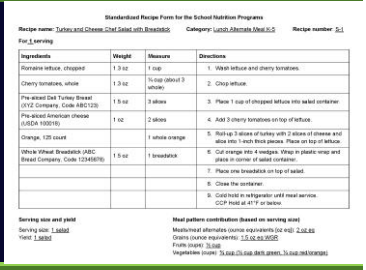
Standardized Recipe for Alternate Meal K-5

- Includes all meal components except milk


Standardized Recipe Form for the School Nutrition Programs

Recipe name: Turkey and Cheese Chef Salad with Breadstick Category: Lunch Alternate Meal K-5 Recipe number: SC-1

For 1 serving

Ingredients	Weight	Measure	Directions
Romaine lettuce, chopped	1.3 oz	1 cup	1. Wash lettuce and cherry tomatoes.
Cherry tomatoes, whole	1.3 oz	¾ cup (about 3 whole)	2. Chop lettuce.
Pre-sliced Deli Turkey Breast (XYZ Company, Code ABC123)	1.5 oz	3 slices	3. Place 1 cup of chopped lettuce into salad container.
Pre-sliced American cheese (USDA 100016)	1 oz	2 slices	4. Add 3 cherry tomatoes on top of lettuce.
Orange, 125 count		1 whole orange	5. Roll up 3 slices of turkey with 2 slices of cheese and slice into 1-inch thick pieces. Place on top of lettuce.
Whole Wheat Breadstick (ABC Bread Company, Code 12345678)	1.5 oz	1 breadstick	6. Cut orange into 4 wedges. Wrap in plastic wrap and place in corner of salad container.
			7. Place one breadstick on top of salad.
			8. Close the container.
			9. Cold hold in refrigerator until meal service. CCP Hold at 41°F or below.

Serving size and yield

Serving size: 1 salad

Yield: 1 salad

Meal pattern contribution (based on serving size)

Meats/meat alternates (ounce equivalents (oz eq)): 2 oz eq

Grains (ounce equivalents): 2.5 oz eq WGR

Fruits (cups): ½ cup

Vegetables (cups): ½ cup (¾ cup dark green, ¼ cup red/orange)

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How to Credit Turkey

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Product Information for Sliced Turkey Breast

- XYZ Company Sliced Turkey Breast, 0.5 oz, Code ABC123

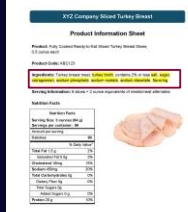
XYZ Company Sliced Turkey Breast

Product Information Sheet

Connecticut State Department of Education

Turkey Ingredients Statement

- Ingredients: Turkey breast meat, turkey broth, contains 2% or less salt, sugar, carrageenan, sodium phosphate, sodium acetate, sodium diacetate, flavoring

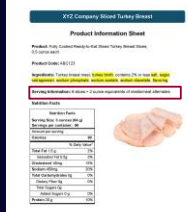

XYZ Company Sliced Turkey Breast

Product Information Sheet

Connecticut State Department of Education

Manufacturer's Crediting Information for Turkey

- 6 slices = 2 ounce equivalents (oz eq) MMA
- Requires Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS)

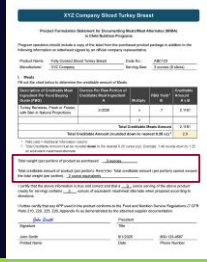

XYZ Company Sliced Turkey Breast

Product Information Sheet

Connecticut State Department of Education

PFS for ABC Company Turkey Breast

- PFS indicates 3 ounces of turkey = 2 oz eq
- ½-ounce serving (3 slices) = 1 oz eq MMA


XYZ Company Sliced Turkey Breast

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CSDE Resource

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

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

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Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern: MMA from Turkey

Menu item	Meal component
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 1 oz eq
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) and cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk

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How to Credit Cheese

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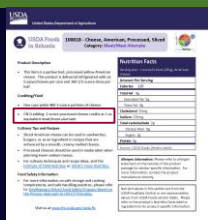
Product Information for USDA Foods American Cheese

- USDA Foods 100018 Cheese, American, Processed, Sliced
- 1-ounce serving (2 slices) = 1 oz eq MMA



https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-fis/usda-foods-product-information-sheets

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Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern: MMA from Cheese

Menu item	Meal component
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 1 oz eq MMA: 1 oz eq
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) and cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk

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How to Credit Breadstick

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Breadstick Must Meet Limit for Noncreditable Grains

- Cannot exceed 3.99 grams

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Breadstick Ingredients Statement

- Ingredients: White whole wheat flour, whole wheat flour, sugar, soybean oil, salt, yeast, modified food starch, corn flour, contains 2% or less of each of the following: malted barley flour, monoglycerides, ascorbic acid (vitamin C), wheat starch, calcium propionate (preservative)

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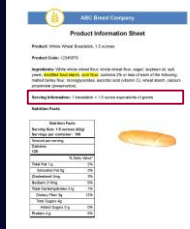
Manufacturer's Crediting Information for Breadstick

- 1 breadstick = 1.5 oz eq of grains
- But PFS required since product contains noncreditable grains



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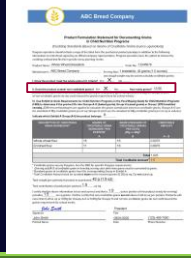
Noncreditable Grains on Breadstick PFS

- PFS indicates ≤ 3.99 grams noncreditable grains


ABC Bread Company

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Step 1 to Determine Breadstick Oz Eq

- Determine product weight from PFS
  - 1.5 ounces (42 grams)

ABC Bread Company

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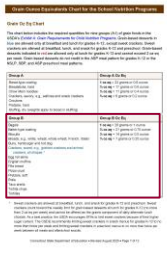
Step 2 to Determine Breadstick Oz Eq

- Find grain group in oz eq chart and compare product weight with required weight
  - Group B (breads, all types) 1 oz eq = 28 gram (1 ounce)
  - Ounces: 1½ ounces = 1½ oz eq
  - Grams: 42 grams ÷ 28 grams = 1½ oz eq


Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs

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More Information About Using the Grains Ounce Equivalents Chart

- How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs

How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs

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

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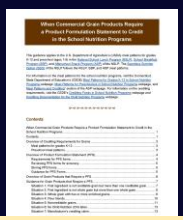
More Information About PFS for Grains

- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs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Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern: Grains

Menu item	Meal component
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 1 oz eq MMA: 1 oz eq
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains: 1½ oz eq
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) and cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk

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How to Credit Salad

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How to Credit Romaine Lettuce

- Use crediting rules for raw leafy greens
  - Half volume served
- 1 cup lettuce = ½ cup dark green vegetable

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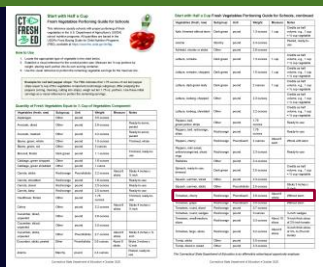
How to Credit Cherry Tomatoes

- Use Start with Half a Cup Portioning Guide
  - ½ cup = 2.6 ounces (about 6 whole)
  - ¼ cup = 1.3 ounces (about 3 whole) = ¼ cup red/orange subgroup



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Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern: Vegetables

Menu item	Meal component
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 1 oz eq MMA: 1 oz eq
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains :1½ oz eq
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) and cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables: ½ cup dark green Vegetables: ¼ cup red/orange
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk

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How to Credit Oranges

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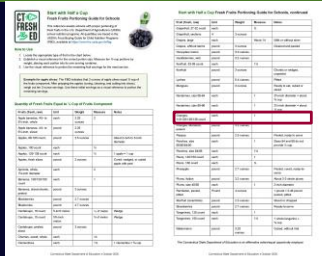
Use Start with Half a Cup Portioning Guide for Fresh Fruits

- ½ cup = 1 whole orange (113/125/138 count)



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Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern: Fruits

Menu item	Meal component
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 1 oz eq MMA: 1 oz eq
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains: 1½ oz eq
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) and cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables: ½ cup dark green Vegetables: ¼ cup red/orange
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits: ½ cup
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk

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How to Credit Milk

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Must Offer Milk Variety

- At least 2 different choices of fat-free, low-fat (1%), reduced fat (2%), or whole milk
- At least 1 unflavored choice
- 8 fluid ounce carton = 1 cup milk

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Alternate Meal Offered Daily for K-5 Meal Pattern: Milk

Menu item	Meal component
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 1 oz eq MMA: 1 oz eq
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains :1½ oz eq
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) and cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables: ½ cup dark green Vegetables: ¼ cup red/orange
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits: ½ cup
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk: 1 cup

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Does Alternate Meal Meet Daily K-5 Meal Pattern?

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Alternate Meal's Daily Meal Pattern Compliance

Menu item	Meal component	Daily minimum	Complies
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 2 oz eq	1 oz eq	Yes
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains: 1½ oz eq	1 oz eq	Yes
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) Cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables: ¾ cup	¾ cup	Yes
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits: ½ cup	½ cup	Yes
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk: 1 cup	1 cup	Yes

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Does Alternate Meal Weekly Daily K-5 Meal Pattern?

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Alternate Meal's Weekly Meal Pattern Compliance

Menu item	Meal component	Weekly minimum	Complies
Turkey (1½ ounces) and American cheese (1 ounce)	MMA: 2 oz eq 2 x 5 = 10 oz eq	8 oz eq	Yes
Whole-grain bread stick (1½ ounces)	Grains: 1½ oz eq 1.5 x 5 = 7.5 oz eq	8 oz eq	No
Romaine lettuce (1 cup) Cherry tomatoes (¼ cup)	Vegetables: ¾ cup ¾ x 5 = 3 ¾ cups	3¾ cups	Yes
Orange smiles (½ cup)	Fruits: ½ cup ½ x 5 = 2 ½ cups	2½ cups	Yes
Milk choice (1 cup)	Milk: 1 cup 1 x 5 = 5 cups	5 cups	Yes

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How to Comply with Weekly K-5 Meal Pattern

- **Add another breadstick**
  - 1.5 oz eq x 2 = 3 oz eq
- **Replace breadstick with least 1.75 oz eq item**
  - 1.75 oz eq x 5 = 8.75

- **Add 11 grams (0.4 ounce) croutons**
  - Grain Oz Eq Chart Group A: 0.5 oz eq = 11 grams (0.4 ounce)
  - 1.5 oz eq + 0.5 oz = 2 oz eq grains

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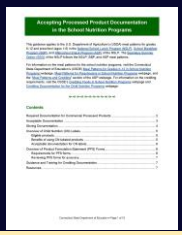
CSDE Resource

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs



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

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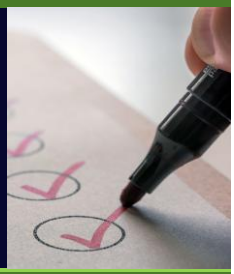
When Meal Does Not Meet Daily/Weekly Requirements

- Revise menu
- Revise recipe
- Develop new production record
- Check additional meals for compliance
- Enter information into USDA Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheet



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CSDE Webpage: Production Records for School Nutrition Programs

- Training resources
- CSDE production record template

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/production-records-for-school-nutrition-programs

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Sample Completed Production Records

- Sample Completed National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Production Record for Grades 6-8

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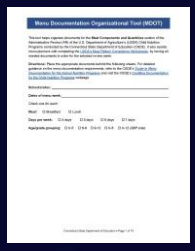
MDOT Includes

- All meal pattern compliance documents



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Meal Pattern Certification

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Established by Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2012

- Required state agencies to certify school food authorities (SFA) were compliant with new meal pattern and nutrition standards

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Certified SFAs

- Receive additional 6 cents per reimbursable lunch meal
- Increases
  - October 1, 2019: 7 cents
  - July 1, 2022: 8 cents
  - July 1, 2024: 9 cents
- Can be "turned off" if CSDE finds systemic issues in meal pattern compliance during administrative review

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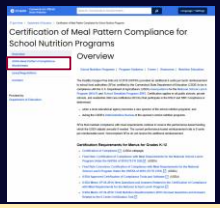
CSDE Webpage: Certification of Meal Pattern Compliance for School Nutrition Programs

- Certification requirements and guidance
- USDA Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheets



https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/certification-of-meal-pattern-compliance

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Available USDA Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheets

- Shorter or longer weeks
  - 3-day week
  - 4-day week
  - 5-day week
  - 6-day week
  - 7-day week

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Choose Correct Grade Level for Each Reviewed Site

Examples

- Breakfast worksheet for grades K-5
- Lunch worksheet for grades 9-12

https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/certification-compliance-worksheets-5-day-schedule

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Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheets Include

- Lunch and breakfast
- Grade groupings
  - K-5
  - K-8
  - 6-8
  - 9-12
  - K-12 (breakfast only)

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Overview of Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheet

- Must complete separate menu worksheet for each grade group
- Must have distinct menu for breakfast and lunch

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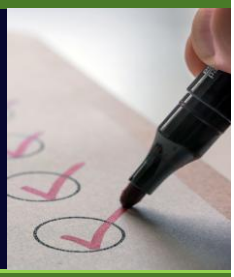
Required Information to Complete Worksheets

- One week menu
- Portion sizes for all reimbursable menu items
- Meal pattern contribution information
- Standardized recipes



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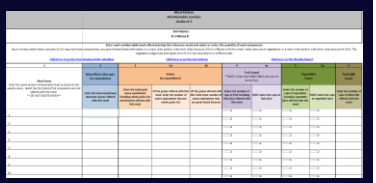
USDA Meal Pattern Compliance Worksheets

- May be helpful to open up in computer and follow along



https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/certification-of-meal-pattern-compliance/usda-meal-pattern-compliance-worksheets

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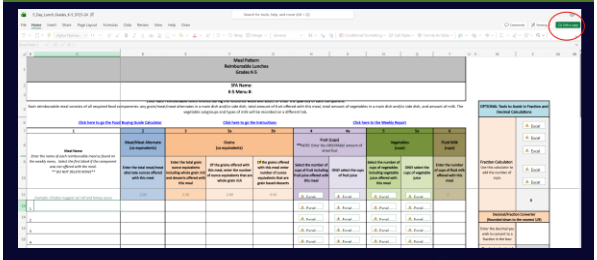
Downloading Form for Editing



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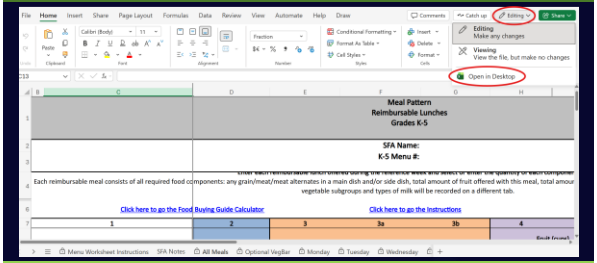
Edit in Desktop Excel



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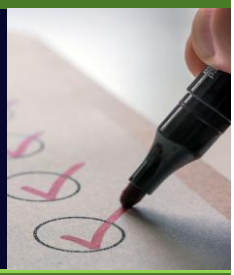
Three Worksheet Topic Areas

- Worksheet Instructions
- Menu Worksheets
  - All meals
  - Days of week
  - Weekly report
- Simplified Nutrient Assessment
  - Not required



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Worksheet Instructions

- Read instructions tab before entering information

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Worksheet Navigation

- Use left/right and up/down
- keyboard arrows to move around
- Top few rows are frozen to view headings
- Scrolling will not cause entered information to be lost
- Use drop down arrows to select information in certain cells

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Editing Drop Downs

- Use arrow tabs to navigate within drop down menus

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Worksheet Hyperlinks

- Hyperlinks and tabs allow maneuvering through worksheet
- Hyperlinks embedded for easy access to
  - Food Buying Guide
  - Food Buying Guide Calculator
- Weekly report has links to go back to each daily tab

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12 Worksheet Tabs

- Menu worksheet instructions
- SFA note page
- All meals tab
- Optional vegetable bar tab
- Tabs for each day of week
- Weekly report Summary
- Nutrient Instructions
- Simplified Nutrient Assessment

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All Meals Tab

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Sets Up All Other Tabs

- Enter all reimbursable meals offered during week
- Enter meal name in column 1 as it appears on menu
- Enter minimum quantities of all items offered as part of each reimbursable meal

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Meals Entered Into Worksheet

- Based on offered meals not served food (what child selects)
- Must enter all reimbursable meal selections offered on all serving lines in a grade group

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Enter All Unique Reimbursable Meals

Examples

- Pizza station
- Sandwich bar
- Premade Salads

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Entering Grain Equivalents

- Must round down all grains to nearest ¼ oz eq
  - Example: 1.7 oz eq rounds down to 1.5 oz eq
- Enter Whole grain rich rounded down to nearest ¼ oz eq.
- If any is Grain Based Dessert enter oz eq.

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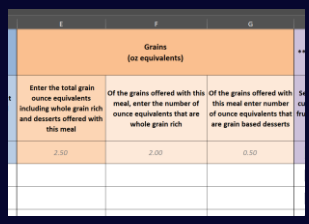
Rounding of Grains

- Must round down all grains to nearest ¼ oz eq
  - Example: 1.7 oz eq rounds down to 1.5 oz eq



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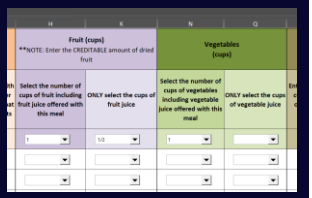
Minimum Quantities for Fruits/Vegetables

- If offer 1 cup of fruit each day but only allow students to take ½ cup, enter ½ cup
- If offer 2 cups of assorted vegetables each day but allow students to choose only 1 cup, enter 1 cup



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Offering Same Menu Item with Different Quantities Fruits/Vegetables

- Must enter as two separate meals
- Example
  Turkey Sandwich on Monday and Wednesday

Monday

- Offered with 1 1/4 cups vegetables (½ cup cup of broccoli and 3/4 cup of carrots)

Wednesday

- Offered with 1 cup of vegetables (½ cup of corn and ½ cup of carrots)

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Vegetable Bar Tab

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When to Use Vegetable Bar Tab

- Vegetable trays or salad bars that offer same vegetable subgroup offerings for entire week

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Daily Tabs

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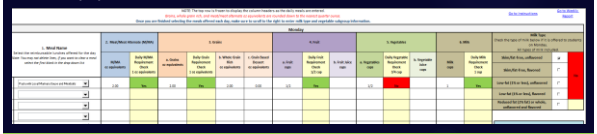
Using the Daily Tabs

- Select reimbursable meals offered that day from drop-down boxes
- Meal information will populate from All Meals tab
- Select types of milk offered
- Identifies if minimum daily requirements are met



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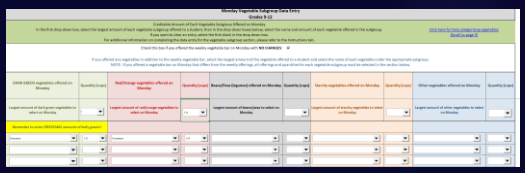
Daily Tabs: Vegetable Subgroups

- Each daily tab contains vegetable subgroup section
- Enter only vegetables available to all students



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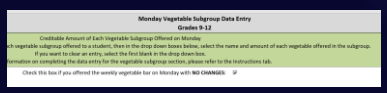
Daily Tabs: Vegetable Subgroups,

- Check box located at top of vegetable subgroup section each day weekly vegetable tray is offered



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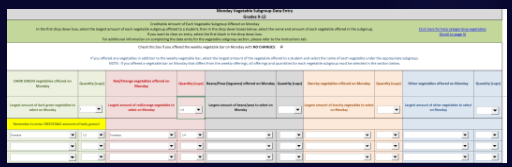
Daily Tabs: Vegetable Subgroups, continued

- Select largest amount of each vegetable subgroup offered to students
- Select name and quantity of each vegetable offered from drop-down options



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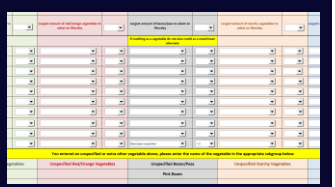
When Vegetable Subgroups Not Listed in Drop-Down

- Select **unspecified** and write the vegetable under that subgroup section
- Crediting tips pop up



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Weekly Report

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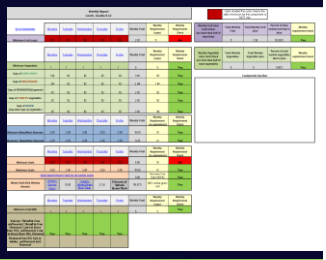
Example of Weekly Report

- Summarizes daily and weekly quantities and identifies compliance issues
  - Daily quantities not in compliance flagged red
  - Weekly requirements flagged with "yes" or "no"



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Example of Weekly Report, continued

- Should not have red cells (boxes) on certification worksheet submitted for review unless exceed
- Maximum weekly MMA
- Maximum weekly grains

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Sample Menu: CSDE Elementary School Grade K-5

Main Meal

- Chicken Patty on WGR Bun
- Sweet Potato Fries
- Rainbow Vegetable Tray
- Assorted Fresh Fruit
- Milk Variety

Alternate Meal

- Turkey and Cheese Chef Salad with 2 breadsticks

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Organize Crediting Documentation While Completing USDA Worksheets

- Use MDOT
  - CN Labels
  - Product formulation statements

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Nutrition Facts Statement Alone is Not Sufficient

- Does not provide USDA required crediting information

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Documents Not Needed

- Multiple copies for same ingredient
- Product information for fresh fruits and vegetables
- Nutrition information for condiments

Questions

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

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