Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to the meal patterns for grades K-12 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For information on the meal patterns for grades K-12, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For additional guidance on the grains component, refer to the CSDE's Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 and visit the "Grains Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

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Definition of Breakfast Cereals

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations (21 CFR 170.3(n)(4)) define breakfast cereals as ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereals, and granola) and instant and regular hot cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina). RTE breakfast cereals can be eaten as sold and are typically fortified with vitamins and minerals.

Overview of Crediting Requirements

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 and the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 have different crediting requirements for breakfast cereals.

- To credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, breakfast cereals must be whole grain-rich (WGR), enriched, or fortified and cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. WGR breakfast cereals count toward the minimum weekly WGR requirement for school meals (refer to "Weekly WGR Requirement" below)
- To credit in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12, breakfast cereals must contain a
 creditable grain (whole, enriched, bran, or germ) as the first ingredient or the cereal must be
 fortified.

Creditable breakfast cereals may be served as the grains component at any meal or ASP snack.

Weekly WGR requirement and limit for enriched grains

WGR foods are required in the NSLP and SBP but not the ASP. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains and meet the limit for noncreditable grains. Examples of noncreditable grains include oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours).

- NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12: The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 require that at least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered at lunch and breakfast must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched and cannot exceed 20 percent of the grains offered each week. Enriched breakfast cereals count with all other enriched grains toward this weekly limit. This includes fortified breakfast cereals that are not WGR, bran cereals that are not WGR, and cereals containing germ that are not WGR.
- **ASP meal pattern for grades K-12:** The ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 does not have a WGR requirement or a limit for enriched grains. As a best practice, the CSDE encourages school food authorities (SFAs) to serve WGR grains in the ASP.

For guidance on the different NSLP, SBP, and ASP requirements for the grains component, refer to the CSDE's Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in the School Nutrition Programs.

Creditable Breakfast Cereals

The three types of RTE and cooked breakfast cereals that credit in the school meal patterns include whole-grain breakfast cereals, enriched breakfast cereals, and fortified breakfast cereals. Crediting guidance for each type of breakfast cereal is summarized below. Table 1 shows examples of crediting RTE breakfast cereals for grade K-12.

WGR breakfast cereals

WGR breakfast cereals credit as the grains component in the meal patterns for all school nutrition programs. The WGR criteria for RTE and cooked breakfast cereals are different.

- Cooked breakfast cereals such as oatmeal (including regular and instant) meet the WGR criteria if: 1) the cereal is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion (½ cup cooked or 28 grams dry).
- RTE breakfast cereals meet the WGR criteria if: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains do not exceed 6.99 grams per portion. Fortification is not required for RTE breakfast cereals that are 100 percent whole grain.

Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel (starchy endosperm, fiber-rich bran, and nutrient-rich germ) after removing the inedible outer husk or hull. A 100 percent whole-grain cereal lists a whole grain as the first ingredient and contains only whole grains. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a whole-grain breakfast cereal.

Ingredients: Whole-grain rolled oats, sugar, natural flavors, salt.

This cereal is 100 percent whole grain because a whole grain is the first and only grain ingredient.

For information on identifying whole grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, Crediting Whole Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.







Enriched breakfast cereals

Enriched breakfast cereals credit as the grains component in the meal patterns for all school nutrition programs. To credit in the NSLP and SBP, enriched breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion. The limit for noncreditable grains does not apply to the ASP.

Enriched breakfast cereals count with all other enriched grains toward the NSLP and SBP 20 percent weekly limit for enriched grains (refer to "Weekly WGR requirement and limit for enriched grains" in this document). The weekly limit for enriched grains does not apply to the ASP.

Enriched breakfast cereals contain five vitamins and minerals added in amounts required by the FDA to replace some of the nutrients lost during processing. The enrichment nutrients include thiamin (vitamin B₁, thiamin mononitrate, or thiamin hydrochloride), riboflavin (vitamin B₂); niacin (vitamin B₃ or niacinamide), folic acid (folate), and iron (reduced iron, ferrous sulfate, or ferric orthophosphate).

A breakfast cereal is enriched if the food is labeled as "enriched" or an enriched grain is the first ingredient. The ingredients statement below shows an example of an enriched breakfast cereal.

Ingredients: Puffed rice, ferrous sulfate (a source of iron), niacinamide, citric acid, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This cereal is enriched because the ingredients statement lists the five enrichment nutrients (ferrous sulfate, niacinamide, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, and folic acid). This breakfast cereal credits in all school nutrition programs and counts toward the weekly limit for enriched grains in the NSLP and SBP.

For information on identifying enriched grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Enriched Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.*

Fortified breakfast cereals

Fortified breakfast cereals credit as the grains component in the meal patterns for all school nutrition programs. To credit in the NSLP and SBP, fortified breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6.99 grams of noncreditable grains per portion.

Fortified breakfast cereals that are not WGR count with all other enriched grains toward the weekly than 20 percent limit for enriched grains in the NSLP and SBP (refer to "Weekly WGR requirement and limit for enriched grains" in this document). The limit for enriched grains does not apply to the ASP.

Fortified breakfast cereals contain nutrients added by the manufacturer that were not originally present, or that are at higher levels than originally present. Manufacturers may choose which additional nutrients to use for fortification. Fortified breakfast cereals typically contain the five enrichment nutrients plus other vitamins and minerals that do not exist naturally in grains.

Different cereal brands may list different fortification nutrients. The USDA does not specify a minimum number of nutrients or a minimum percentage for the level of fortification for breakfast cereals in Child Nutrition Programs. A fortified breakfast cereal is not required to be enriched.

A breakfast cereal is fortified if the food is labeled as "fortified" or the ingredients statement lists the vitamins and minerals added to the product. These nutrients are typically listed after "Vitamins and Minerals." The ingredients statements below show some examples of fortified breakfast cereals.

Ingredients: Milled corn, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Iron, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate, ascorbic acid), niacinamide, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B12.

This cereal is fortified and creditable because it contains added nutrients (listed after "Vitamins and Minerals") and it does not contain any noncreditable grains. However, it is not WGR because milled corn is not a whole grain. This cereal credits in all school nutrition programs and counts toward the weekly limit for enriched grains in the NSLP and SBP.

Ingredients: Whole-grain wheat, raisins, wheat bran, sugar, brown sugar syrup, contains 2% or less of salt, malt flavor. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Potassium chloride, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin B_6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), zinc oxide, vitamin B_2 (riboflavin), vitamin B_1 (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B_{12} .

This cereal is fortified and credits as a WGR food because it contains added nutrients (listed after "Vitamins and Minerals"), it does not contain any noncreditable grains, and whole-grain wheat is the first ingredient. This cereal credits in all school nutrition programs and counts toward the weekly WGR requirement in the NSLP and SBP.

If the ingredients statement does not list any vitamins and minerals, the breakfast cereal is not fortified. To credit in the NSLP and SBP, breakfast cereals that are not fortified must contain a creditable grain as the first ingredient (or the greatest ingredient by weight) and noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion.

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the breakfast cereal contains more than one creditable grain, the SFA must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer. The PFS must indicate that the combined weight of all creditable grains is the greatest ingredient by weight. For more information, refer to "Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals" in this document.

Bran and germ

Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains in all school nutrition programs. Bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran) is the seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Germ (such as wheat germ) is the vitamin-rich embryo of the grain kernel. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a creditable breakfast cereal that contains wheat bran as the first ingredient.

Ingredients: Wheat bran, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Calcium carbonate, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate and ascorbic acid), reduced iron, niacinamide, vitamin B_6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B_2 (riboflavin), folic acid, vitamin B_1 (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B_{12} , vitamin D.

This cereal is fortified and creditable because it contains added nutrients (listed after "Vitamins and Minerals") and it does not contain any noncreditable grains. However, it is not WGR because wheat bran credits the same as enriched grains. This cereal credits in all school nutrition programs and counts toward the weekly limit for enriched grains in the NSLP and SBP.

Bran cereals that are not WGR count with all other enriched grains toward the weekly limit for enriched grains in the NSLP and SBP (refer to "Weekly WGR requirement and limit for enriched grains" in this document). The limit for enriched grains does not apply to the ASP.



Table 1. Crediting RTE breakfast of	cereals in the N	ISLP, SBP, and AS	SP
Ingredients	Type of cereal	Meets noncreditable grains limit for NSLP/SBP?	Creditable
Whole-grain wheat, raisins, wheat bran, sugar, brown sugar syrup, contains 2% or less of salt, malt flavor. Vitamins and Minerals: Potassium chloride, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin B ₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), zinc oxide, vitamin B ₂ (riboflavin), vitamin B ₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B ₁₂ .	✓ WGR☐ Enriched✓ Fortified	☑ Yes ¹ ☐ No	Yes
Milled corn, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. Vitamins and Minerals: Iron, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate, ascorbic acid), niacinamide, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B12.	□ WGR□ Enriched☑ Fortified	✓ Yes¹ □ No	Yes ²
Wheat bran, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. Vitamins and Minerals: Calcium carbonate, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate and ascorbic acid), reduced iron, niacinamide, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), folic acid, vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B12, vitamin D.	□ WGR □ Enriched ☑ Fortified	☑ Yes¹☐ No	Yes ²
Puffed rice, ferrous sulfate (a source of iron), niacinamide, citric acid, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.	□ WGR☑ Enriched□ Fortified	✓ Yes ¹ □ No	Yes ²
Whole grain rolled oats, sugar, natural flavors, salt.	✓ WGR☐ Enriched☐ Fortified	✓ Yes ¹ □ No	Yes

² Enriched breakfast cereals and fortified breakfast cereals that are not WGR count toward the 20 percent weekly

limit for enriched grains in the NSLP and SBP.

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Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals

SFAs must be able to document that all breakfast cereals served in reimbursable meals and ASP snacks meet the meal pattern crediting requirements. A PFS from the manufacturer is required if the product's ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if the product meets the crediting or WGR criteria. For guidance on when a PFS is required and the information it must include, refer to the CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs*.

SFAs must verify the accuracy of the PFS before including the breakfast cereal in reimbursable meals and snacks. Crediting documentation must be maintained on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the breakfast cereal cannot credit as the grains component in school meals and ASP snacks.

For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs and Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, and the USDA's handouts, Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs and Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement. The steps for how to evaluate a grain product's PFS are available in the CSDE's resource, When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs.

Training on the requirements for PFS forms is available in Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation of the CSDE's training program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12.



Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals

The USDA's chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*, summarizes the required quantities for nine groups (A-I) of creditable grain foods. Cooked breakfast cereals (regular and instant) are in group H and cold RTE breakfast cereals are in group I. The required quantities in Exhibit A are listed in ounce equivalents (oz eq) or servings, depending on the school nutrition program.

- **NSLP, SBP, and SSO:** The required quantities for the grains component are in oz eq. The CSDE's *Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program* lists the Exhibit A grain ounce equivalents that apply to the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.
- **ASP:** The required quantities for the grains/breads component are in servings. The CSDE's *Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the ASP* lists the Exhibit A grains/breads servings that apply to the ASP meal patterns for grades K-12. One grains/breads serving is slightly less than 1 oz eq. ASP sponsors may choose to use grain oz eq for grades K-12 to simplify menu planning and provide consistency across the school nutrition programs.

Table 2 summarizes the required quantities for breakfast cereals in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grade K-12. The minimum creditable amount is ½ oz eq or ½ serving.

Table 2. Required quantities of breakfast cereals for grades K-12					
Type of breakfast cereal		NSLP and SBP	ASP		
		1 oz eq	1 serving		
Group H	Cooked hot	½ cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) dry 1	½ cup cooked or 25 grams (0.9 ounce) dry 1		
Group I	RTE flakes or rounds	1 cup or 1 ounce ²	³ / ₄ cup or 1 ounce ²		
	RTE puffed	1 ¹ / ₄ cups or 1 ounce ²	³ / ₄ cup or 1 ounce ²		
	RTE granola	¹ / ₄ cup or 1 ounce ²	³ / ₄ cup or 1 ounce ²		

¹ Cereal grains typically credit based on the cooked serving but menu planners may choose to use the dry uncooked weight.

² The serving is based on weight or volume, whichever is less. If the appropriate volume of cereal weighs less than 1 ounce (28 grams), it still credits as 1 oz eq. For example, 1 cup of flaked cereal that weighs 26 grams credits as 1 oz eq.

Resources

Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Calculate_WGR_Percentage_SNP.pdf

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Grain_Calculation_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf

Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/Grain_Calculation_ASP_grades_K-12.pdf

Crediting Enriched Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Enriched_Grains_SNP.pdf

Crediting Whole Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Whole_Grains_SNP.pdf

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 11-19: Weekly Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2019/OM11-19.pdf

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf

Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Grain_Oz_Eq_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf

Grains Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#Grains

Grains/Breads Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage):

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents#GrainsBreadsK12

Grains/Breads Servings for Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/Grain_Servings_ASP_grades_K-12.pdf

Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/
WGR_Criteria_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf

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 6: Meal Pattern Documentation (CSDE's Training Program,

What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials

What's in a Meal Module 11: Grains Component (CSDE's Training Program,

What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials

What's in a Meal Module 12: Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE's Training Program,

What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials

What's in a Meal Module 13: Grains Ounce Equivalents (CSDE's Training Program,

What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials

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

Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in School Lunch and Breakfast Menus for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Worksheet_Calculate_WGR_Percentage_SNP_grades_K-12.xlsx



For more information, visit the "Grains Component" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage or contact the school nutrition programs staff at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Cereals_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf.

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- 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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