

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

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. For information on the meal pattern requirements and crediting foods, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages.



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Overview of Crediting Requirements

Juice served in reimbursable meals for grades K-12 must be full-strength (100 percent) fruit juice, vegetable juice, or a combination of fruit and vegetable juices. Fruit juice credits toward the fruits component. Vegetable juice credits toward the vegetables component. The NSLP and SBP meal patterns require weekly juice limits (refer to [“Weekly Juice Limit at Lunch”](#) and [“Weekly Juice Limit at Breakfast”](#) in this document).

Allowable Types of Juice

Any type of pasteurized full-strength (100 percent) juice credits in the school meal patterns. Juice may be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “100 percent juice,” “reconstituted juice,” or “juice from concentrate.” The statements “natural” and “organic” do not indicate that a juice is full strength. Products that credit as 100 percent juice include:

- 100 percent juice including fresh, frozen, and made from (refer to [“Crediting Juice Concentrates”](#) in this document);
- frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice (refer to [“Crediting Frozen Juice Products”](#) in this document);
- pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies (refer to [“Crediting Pureed Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies”](#) in this document); and
- juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice (refer to [“Crediting Juice in Canned Fruit”](#) in this document).



Juice products that are less than full strength, or that contain juice concentrates that are not fully reconstituted, do not credit in the school meal patterns. Except for juice in smoothies, juice cannot credit when it is used as an ingredient in another food or beverage (refer to [“Crediting Pureed Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies”](#) in this document).

The USDA recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice. Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables.

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Juice ingredients

The ingredients in juice can vary among manufacturers and products. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) labeling regulations allow 100 percent juice to contain added ingredients and still be labeled "100% juice." Some 100 percent juices contain added ingredients such as artificial flavors, artificial colors (e.g., red 40, blue 1, yellow 5 and 6, and titanium dioxide), preservatives (e.g., sodium potassium sorbate), flavor enhancers (e.g., ethyl maltol), and emulsifiers or thickeners (e.g., glycerol esters of wood rosin and xanthan gum). The CSDE encourages menu planners to read the product's ingredients statement and choose 100 percent juices without these added ingredients.

Crediting Juice Concentrates

Juice concentrates credit only when reconstituted with water to 100 percent full-strength juice and served in the form of juice. Juice concentrates do not credit when used as an ingredient in another food or beverage product, such as gelatin or sherbet made with juice concentrates.

Juice made from concentrate is reconstituted with a volume of water that is several times the amount of the juice concentrate. A typical reconstitution ratio might be three parts water to one part concentrate, but this ratio may vary for different juice products. Commercial juice products made from concentrate will list "water" as the first ingredient followed by the type of juice concentrate, for example, "water, orange juice concentrate" and "filtered water, grape juice concentrate." Juice made from concentrate that is labeled "100 percent juice" credits when school food authorities (SFAs) follow the manufacturer's specific instructions for reconstituting.

Crediting Juice Blends

Juice blends must be a combination of full-strength (100 percent) fruit juices, full-strength vegetable juices, or full-strength fruit and vegetable juices. Crediting depends on the information provided in the manufacturer's product formulation statement (PFS). If the PFS indicates the amount of each type of juice in the blend, the SFA may credit each type accordingly. For example, if the PFS indicates that the product contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit juice and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of sweet potato juice, the product credits as $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of the fruit component and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of the red/orange vegetable subgroup. The minimum creditable amount of juice is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

Without a PFS (or if the PFS does not provide the specific crediting information for each type of juice), juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product credits as the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the "additional" vegetables requirement and cannot



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contribute to the vegetable subgroups. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a vegetable and fruit juice blend.

Ingredients: **Reconstituted vegetable juice blend** (water and concentrated juices of sweet potatoes, purple carrots, carrots), reconstituted fruit juices (water and concentrated juices of apples, white grapes, cranberries, blackberries), contains less than 2% of: natural flavoring, citric acid, lemon juice.

The first ingredient is a reconstituted vegetable juice blend. Without a PFS, this product credits as “additional” vegetables and cannot contribute to the vegetable subgroups. For information on the vegetable subgroups, refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP*.

Crediting Frozen 100 Percent Juice Products

Frozen 100 percent fruit juice products (such as frozen juice pops) credit toward the fruits component based on the fluid volume prior to freezing. SFAs must request a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer to document this information. Frozen fruit juice counts toward the juice limit (refer to “[Juice Limit](#)” in this document).

For 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 PFS form, *Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs*. For additional guidance, visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Training on the requirements for CN labels and 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*.

Crediting Apple Cider

Apple cider must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice to credit toward the fruits component. Pasteurized juice has been heat-treated to kill harmful bacteria. Menu planners must check labels, as some brands of apple cider are not pasteurized. SFAs cannot serve apple cider or any other type of juice that is not pasteurized. Apple cider counts toward the juice limit (refer to “[Juice Limit](#)” in this document). For more information, refer to “[Weekly Juice Limit at Lunch](#)” and “[Weekly Juice Limit at Breakfast](#)” in this document.

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Crediting Coconut Water

Fruit juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, credit toward the fruits component based on the volume served. Coconut water must meet the same requirements as juice and counts toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to [“Weekly Juice Limit at Lunch”](#) and [“Weekly Juice Limit at Breakfast”](#) in this document.

Crediting Juice in Canned Fruit

A serving of canned fruit may include the 100 percent juice in which the fruit is packed but cannot include water or syrup. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned peaches with juice credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. However, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned peaches with syrup does not credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component because the serving does not contain $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit. The menu planner can only credit the amount of peaches without the syrup.

The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component. For example, if a serving of canned peaches in juice credit as the fruits component at lunch, the amount of juice in the serving counts toward the weekly juice limit for the fruits component.

Juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if the juice is planned as an extra noncreditable food. An example is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned fruit portioned in a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce container with the juice added after measuring the full $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruit.

Crediting Pureed Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice in school meals and ASP snacks. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to [“Weekly Juice Limit at Lunch”](#) and [“Weekly Juice Limit at Breakfast”](#) in this document.



Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars. They do not credit as juice unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

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SFAs must document the amount of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving with a standardized recipe for smoothies made from scratch. Commercial products require a PFS. For information on standardized recipes and PFS forms, visit the “[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)” and “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)” sections of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on the requirements for standardized recipes and 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*.

The CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*, summarizes the requirements for crediting smoothies in school meals and ASP snacks.

Weekly Juice Limit at Lunch

Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount (cups) of fruits offered at lunch, and vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount (cups) of vegetables offered at lunch. For example, if a five-day lunch menu for grades K-5 offers 2½ cups of the fruits component during the week, the lunch menu may offer up to 1¼ cups of juice during the week. Menu planners must count all sources of 100 percent juice toward the weekly juice limit (refer to “[Allowable Types of Juice](#)” in this document).

[Table 1](#) shows the weekly juice limits at lunch, based on the minimum servings of the fruits component and vegetables component in the NSLP meal pattern. If SFAs serve larger amounts of fruits and vegetables, the weekly juice limit also increases.

Juice limits for grades K-5 and 6-8

For five-day lunch menus, SFAs may offer a ½-cup portion of fruit juice twice per week and a ½-cup portion of vegetable juice three times per week. For seven-day lunch menus, SFAs may offer a ½-cup portion of fruit juice three times per week and a ½-cup portion of vegetable juice five times per week. Alternatively, SFAs may serve larger quantities of juice on one or two days if the weekly total complies with the juice limit. For example, a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 could offer 1 cup of fruit juice once per week instead of ½ cup of fruit juice twice per week.

Juice limits for grades 9-12

For five-day and seven-day lunch menus for grades 9-12, SFAs may offer ½ cup of fruit juice each day and ½ cup of vegetable juice each day. However, SFAs must be careful not to exceed the weekly calorie limit of the dietary specifications when offering juice daily because juice contains more calories than whole fruits and vegetables. For example, ½ cup of grape juice contains 76 calories while ½ cup of fresh grapes contains 34 calories; and 1 cup of fresh sliced peaches contains 60 calories while 1 cup of canned sliced peaches in juice contains 109 calories.

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For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12* and visit the “Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards for School Meals)” section of the CSDE’s *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.

Table 1. Weekly limits for fruit and vegetable juice at lunch						
Grade group	Five-day week			Seven-day week		
	Required weekly servings	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup juice servings	Required weekly servings	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup juice servings
Fruits component						
K-5	2½ cups	1¼ cups	2	3½ cups	1¾ cups	3
6-8	2½ cups	1¼ cups	2	3½ cups	1¾ cups	3
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
Vegetables component						
K-5	3¾ cups	1 ⁷ / ₈ cups	3	5¼ cups	2 ⁵ / ₈ cups	5
6-8	3¾ cups	1 ⁷ / ₈ cups	3	5¼ cups	2 ⁵ / ₈ cups	5
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7

Juice limit calculation for lunch

The weekly juice limit is based on the amount of fruits or vegetables that students are allowed to select at a given meal, regardless of the number of options or variety of fruits or vegetables available. SFAs must calculate the lunch menu’s compliance with the weekly juice limit separately for fruits and vegetables.

- **Fruits component:** Divide the total amount (cups) of 100 percent fruit juice that students may select at all lunches during the week by the total amount (cups) of fruits that students may select at all lunches during the week.
- **Vegetables component:** Divide the total amount (cups) of 100 percent vegetable juice that students may select at all lunches during the week by the total amount (cups) of vegetables that students may select at all lunches during the week.

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Table 2 shows a sample calculation for determining if a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 meets the weekly fruit juice limit.

Table 2. Calculating weekly fruit juice limit for a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8	
<p>A lunch menu for grades 6-8 offers 1 cup of fruit daily. This amount provides $\frac{1}{2}$ cup more than the minimum daily $\frac{1}{2}$-cup requirement for the fruits component. Students can select up to two servings from a variety of $\frac{1}{2}$-cup fruit choices including fresh fruit, drained canned fruit ¹, and 100 percent fruit juice. Cafeteria menus and signage instruct students to select two servings of fruit, or one serving of fruit and one serving of juice.² This lunch menu meets the weekly juice limit because the amount of juice offered to students during the week ($2\frac{1}{2}$ cups) is half of the amount of fruits offered to students during the week (5 cups).</p>	
<p>1. Calculate total weekly juice offerings: Multiply the total daily amount (cups) of juice that students are allowed to select by the number of days in the week. Students may select one $\frac{1}{2}$-cup serving of fruit daily: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup multiplied by 5 days equals $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups.</p>	<div style="background-color: #006633; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">A</div> <div style="background-color: #e0f2f1; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 10px;">2.5 cups</div>
<p>2. Calculate total weekly fruit offerings: Multiply the total daily amount (cups) of fruit that students are allowed to select by the number of days in the week. Students may select two $\frac{1}{2}$-cup servings of fruit daily (1 cup total): 1 cup multiplied by 5 days equals 5 cups.</p>	<div style="background-color: #006633; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">B</div> <div style="background-color: #e0f2f1; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 10px;">5 cups</div>
<p>3. Calculate weekly percentage of juice offerings: Divide A by B and multiply by 100. $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups divided by 5 cups equals 0.5 multiplied by 100 equals 50 percent.</p>	<div style="background-color: #006633; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">C</div> <div style="background-color: #e0f2f1; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-left: 10px;">50 percent</div>
<p>4. Are the juice offerings 50 percent or less? If “yes,” the menu meets the weekly juice limit.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<p>¹ For this example, the canned fruit is drained and does not count toward the juice limit. If the menu planner credits the juice from canned fruit toward the fruits component, the juice must also count toward the weekly juice limit.</p> <p>² Students cannot choose more than one serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of juice because this would exceed the weekly juice limit.</p>	

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Weekly Juice Limit at Breakfast

Fruit juice together with vegetable juice (including fruit/vegetable juice blends) cannot exceed half of the total amount (cups) of fruits and vegetables offered at breakfast during the week.



Table 3 shows the maximum weekly contribution of juice at breakfast, based on the minimum serving of the fruits component in the SBP meal pattern. SFAs may serve ½ cup of juice daily because the SBP meal pattern requires 1 cup of fruits daily for all grade groups. If SFAs serve larger amounts of fruits and vegetables, the weekly juice limit also increases.

Table 3. Weekly limits for juice at breakfast ¹						
Grade group	Five-day week			Seven-day week		
	Required weekly fruits and vegetables	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup juice servings	Required weekly fruits and vegetables	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup juice servings
K-5	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
6-8	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
¹ The SBP meal pattern does not require the vegetables component. SFAs may substitute vegetables (including vegetable juice) for the fruits component at any time.						

Juice limit calculation for breakfast

SFAs must calculate the breakfast menu’s compliance with the weekly juice limit by dividing the total amount (cups) of fruit juice and vegetable juice that students may select at all breakfasts during the week by the total amount (cups) of fruits (and vegetables, if offered) that students may select at all breakfasts during the week. When calculating the total amount of juice available at breakfast during the week, menu planners must include 100 percent juice (fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate), frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice, juice in canned fruit, and pureed fruits/vegetables in smoothies. Refer to [table 2](#) for a sample calculation.

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Required Signage for Lunch and Breakfast

Cafeteria menus and signage must clearly indicate the specific amount of fruits, vegetables, and juice that students may select with each meal. For example, the menu could state “choose one fruit and one juice” or “choose up to two servings of fruit (no more than one juice).” For guidance on signage, refer to the CSDE’s *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12* and *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

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

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

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

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

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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 Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Veg_Subgroups_Fruits_Fillable_508.pdf

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019,, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

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Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program (CSDE):

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

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

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

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>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, 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_Juice_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf.

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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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