

Crediting Smoothies in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

School Year 2024-25 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025)

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), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Creditable Ingredients

Smoothie ingredients that credit toward the meal patterns for grades K-12 include full-strength vegetable juice and pureed vegetables (vegetables component); full-strength fruit juice and pureed fruits (fruits component); low-fat or fat-free milk (milk component); and yogurt or soy yogurt (meats/meat alternates (MMA) component).



Creditable ingredients in smoothies must provide at least the minimum creditable amount to credit toward the meal patterns for grades K-12. The minimum creditable amounts are:

- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup for the vegetables component;
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup for the fruits component;
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup for the milk component (applies only to milk in smoothies); and
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce) for yogurt.

If a smoothie contains less than the full serving of a component, the menu must include an additional food from that meal component to meet the full requirement.

School food authorities (SFAs) must maintain appropriate documentation to indicate the crediting information for smoothies. For example, to credit a strawberry-yogurt smoothie as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component and 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of the MMA component, the SFA's documentation must indicate that the serving contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt (refer to "Required Crediting Documentation" below).

Required Crediting Documentation

To credit smoothies made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that indicates the meal pattern contribution of each component in the serving. For information on standardized recipes, visit the "[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

To credit commercial smoothies, SFAs must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS). A Child Nutrition (CN) label may be available for some commercial smoothies that contain yogurt. For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#); and the USDA's PFS forms and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). Additional guidance on documentation for commercial products is available in the "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in School](#)

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[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](#).

Recommended Daily Limit for Smoothies

The USDA recommends limiting smoothies to one meal or ASP snack per day. For example, if a smoothie is served at breakfast, the school menus for lunch and ASP snack should not include a smoothie.

Crediting Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice toward the vegetables component or fruits component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains ½ cup of pureed strawberries credits as ½ cup of fruit juice. SFAs must document the amount of juice and pureed fruits and vegetables per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document). Menu planners must follow the guidance below when crediting fruits and vegetables in smoothies.

Juice limit

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the juice limit with all other types of 100 percent juice. At lunch, fruit juice (including pureed fruit in smoothies) cannot exceed half of the total fruits offered during the week, and vegetable juice (including pureed vegetables in smoothies) cannot exceed half of the total vegetables offered during the week. At breakfast, fruit juice together with vegetable juice and vegetable/fruit juice blends (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) cannot exceed half of the total fruits offered during the week. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Juice in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).



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Vegetable subgroups

Vegetable smoothies credit toward the vegetable subgroups at lunch. Smoothies that contain one vegetable or one vegetable juice credit toward that subgroup. For example, a smoothie made with pureed carrots or 100 percent carrot juice credits toward the red/orange subgroup. The crediting of smoothies that contain two or more different pureed vegetables or vegetable juices depends on whether the vegetables are from the same or different subgroups.

- **Same subgroup:** Smoothies that contain pureed vegetables and vegetable juice from the same subgroup credit toward that vegetable subgroup. For example, a smoothie that contains pureed carrots and tomatoes, or a 100 percent carrot/tomato juice blend, credits toward the red/orange vegetable subgroup because both vegetables are from the red/orange vegetable subgroup.
- **Different subgroup:** Smoothies that contain vegetables and vegetable juice from more than one subgroup credit only toward the “other” vegetable subgroup. For example, a smoothie that contains pureed carrots (red/orange), spinach (dark green), tomato (red/orange), and watercress (dark green); or a 100 percent vegetable juice blend that contains carrots, spinach, tomato, and watercress; credits toward the “additional” vegetable subgroup.

Mixed fruits and vegetables

Smoothies that contain a mix of pureed fruits and vegetables, or 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends, credit based on the greatest fruit or vegetable ingredient. Commercial smoothies credit as the fruits component if the first juice ingredient is fruit juice or fruit puree, and credit as the vegetables component if the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice or vegetable puree. Smoothies made from scratch credit as the fruits component if the greatest juice ingredient in the standardized recipe is fruit juice or fruit puree, and credit as the vegetables component if vegetable juice or vegetable puree is the greatest juice ingredient.

Smoothies at Breakfast

The breakfast meal pattern requires 1 cup of vegetables, fruits, or both. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as the entire vegetables and fruits component at breakfast. For example, a serving of smoothie that contains 1 cup of pureed strawberries credits as the full fruits component.

Smoothies at Lunch

The lunch meal pattern requires a serving of the fruits component and a serving of vegetables component. Lunch menus cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of fruits

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and vegetables because both credit as juice and would exceed the juice limit. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and tomato juice as the vegetables component. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable (i.e., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).

Smoothies at Snack

Vegetables and fruits are one component in the [ASP meal pattern for grades K-12](#). The ASP meal pattern requires two of the four components (milk, MMA, vegetables/fruits, and grains/breads). Smoothies that contain $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables) may credit as the entire vegetables/fruits component at snack. Smoothies containing juice and milk may credit as either juice or milk but cannot credit as both components in the same snack. The snack menu cannot include juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) when milk is the only other snack component. The examples below show how these requirements apply.

- **Example 1:** A standardized smoothie recipe's serving contains $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and 1 cup of unflavored low-fat milk. The menu planner may choose to credit the smoothie as either the fruits component or the milk component but cannot credit the smoothie as both components in the same snack. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component, i.e., MMA or grains.
- **Example 2:** A standardized smoothie recipe's serving contains $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of unflavored low-fat milk. The pureed fruit credits as the fruits component. However, the milk cannot credit as the full milk component because the serving is less than 1 cup. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component, i.e., MMA or grains.

Crediting Milk in Smoothies

Milk in smoothies credits as the milk component based on the amount per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the milk component. SFAs must document the amount of milk per serving (refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" in this document).

Allowable types of milk

The allowable types of milk for grades K-12 include low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk, either unflavored or flavored.

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Minimum creditable amount

The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. SFAs must have a standardized recipe or PFS to document the type and amount of milk per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

Milk variety

When smoothies contain milk, the USDA’s requirement for a variety of milk options in the NSLP and SBP still applies. Schools must offer at least two different choices of fluid milk on the serving line and at least one choice must be unflavored. A variety of milk is not required for the ASP.

Crediting Yogurt in Smoothies

Yogurt and soy yogurt used as an ingredient in smoothies credits as the MMA component based on the amount per serving. A $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of yogurt credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

Effective with school year 2025-26 (beginning July 1, 2025), the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), establishes a sugar limit for yogurt of no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce). Yogurt and soy yogurt used in smoothies must meet this limit.

SFAs must document the amount of yogurt or soy yogurt per serving with a standardized recipe for smoothies made from scratch and a PFS for commercial products (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document). For information on the crediting requirements for yogurt, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. Fluid milk must be offered in all lunches and breakfasts to meet the milk component requirement. To meet the USDA’s requirement for a variety of milk options, schools must also offer fluid milk on the serving line in the required quantity (refer to “[Milk variety](#)” in this document).

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Additional Ingredients

Smoothies may include additional ingredients to improve flavor and consistency, such as oatmeal and peanut butter. These ingredients do not credit toward the school meal patterns but count toward the weekly dietary specifications for lunch and breakfast. Their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the weekly limits for calories, saturated fats, and sodium. For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and the "Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards for School Meals)" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Smoothie Crediting Example

The example below shows how to credit a smoothie made with blueberry puree, low-fat yogurt, fat-free milk, and oatmeal. This smoothie recipe credits toward the fruits, MMA, and milk components for grades K-12.

Ingredient	Meal pattern contribution
Frozen blueberry puree, ½ cup	½ cup of fruit juice (fruits component) ¹
Low-fat blueberry yogurt, ½ cup	1 oz eq of MMA
Low-fat milk, 4 fluid ounces	4 fluid ounces of milk ²
Oatmeal, 2 tablespoons	None (does not credit in smoothies)

- ¹ Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Juice in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- ² The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is ¼ cup.



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Commercial Products

Commercial smoothies credit the same as smoothies made from scratch. However, product formulation and labeling can vary greatly because commercial smoothies do not have a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) standard of identity. To credit commercial smoothies in school meals and ASP snacks, SFAs must obtain a PFS (or CN label, if available) stating the amount of all creditable ingredients per serving, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, juice, yogurt, and milk (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document) and follow the guidance below.

Crediting pureed vegetables/fruits

Commercial smoothies made with juice or pureed fruits/vegetables credit only as juice toward the fruits component or vegetables component. Crediting is based on the volume of fruits/vegetables after pureeing and before freezing. The product label must include a statement regarding the “percent juice content,” which is required by the FDA for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or puree. For example, an 8-fluid ounce smoothie made from fruit puree that is labeled with “contains 50% juice” credits as 4 fluid ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of juice. SFAs may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruit in the product.

Note: Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars and do not credit in smoothies unless reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

Crediting milk

The type of milk used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies must be consistent with the meal pattern requirements (refer to “[Allowable types of milk](#)” in this document). The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. The manufacturer’s product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with milk are made using ingredients that meet federal, state, and local definitions for fluid milk.

Crediting yogurt

Yogurt and soy yogurt credit as the MMA component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies. The minimum creditable amount is amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq, which equals $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of yogurt. The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with yogurt are made in compliance with the federal definition for yogurt.

Limit for crediting amount

The total creditable amount in a smoothie cannot exceed the volume served. For example, a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of a commercial smoothie cannot credit as 1 cup of juice.

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Noncreditable commercial smoothies

Probiotic dairy drinks, drinkable yogurt, and yogurt drinks are not smoothies, and do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the school meal patterns.

Review accuracy of PFS

Prior to including commercial smoothies in reimbursable meals, SFAs must check the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy. Check that the listed volumes of pureed fruits and vegetables are prior to freezing. Check that milk and yogurt (if included) meet the meal pattern requirements, i.e., milk is low-fat or fat-free and yogurt meets the federal definition for yogurt.

Signage Requirement

The USDA's regulations require SFAs to identify the meal components offered to students. Schools serving smoothies should inform students about the components included by listing the type of smoothie on the menu and serving line signage, e.g., "peach and milk smoothie" or "strawberry, yogurt, and milk smoothie." For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#). For sample signage templates, visit New England Dairy's [Smoothies](#) webpage.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Crediting Foods Made from Scratch (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs#ScratchFoods>

Crediting Juice in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Crediting Yogurt in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Fruits Component ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/documents#Fruits>

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Meats/Meat Alternates Component (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/documents/#MMA>

Offering Smoothies as Part of Reimbursable School Meals (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-smoothies-part-reimbursable-school-meals>

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf

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

Reviewer’s Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products

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

Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/ovs/signage_requirements_nslp_sbp.pdf

Smoothies (New England Dairy):

<https://www.newenglanddairy.com/smoothies/>

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 Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/#StandardizedRecipes>

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

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

Upcoming 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#Upcoming_Meal_Pattern_Changes

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USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/Documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/Child-Nutrition-Programs-Meal-Patterns-Consistent-With-The-2020-2025-Dietary-Guidelines-For>

USDA Memo SP 02-2024, CACFP 02-2024, and SFSP 02-2024: Revised: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs, CACFP, and SFSP:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>

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 Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

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

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

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

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

Vegetables Component (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/documents/#Vegetables>

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 7: Milk 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 8: Fruits 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 9: Vegetables 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>

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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/ns/p/crediting/credit_smoothies_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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