

Crediting Soups 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 and preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods for grades K-12, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages. For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods for preschoolers, visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Crediting Soups in the NSLP and SBP

Overview of Crediting Requirements

The USDA has different crediting requirements for commercial soups and soups made from scratch. Soups made from scratch credit based on the amount of each meal pattern component contained in one serving of the standardized recipe. Commercial vegetable soups credit based on the yields in the USDA’s *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG). Commercial beef barley soup, chicken or turkey noodle soup, chicken or turkey rice soup, and cream vegetable soups (such as cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom) do not credit in the meal patterns for school nutrition programs.

Soups made from scratch

Soups made from scratch credit based on the amount of each meal pattern component (such as vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates) contained in one serving of the standardized recipe. Crediting information must be based on the yields in the FBG. For information on standardized recipes, visit the “[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

One serving of the standardized recipe must contain at least the minimum creditable amount of a component to credit toward the meal patterns. The minimum creditable amounts are 1/8 cup of vegetables, 1/8 cup of fruits, 1/4 ounce equivalent of grains, and 1/4 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates. If the amount of a component in the serving of soup is less than the full component, the menu must include additional foods from that component to meet the full serving for each grade group.

Allowable commercial vegetable soups

The FBG indicates that only certain types of commercial vegetable soups credit toward the vegetables component.

| Table 1. Allowable commercial vegetable soups in the NSLP and SBP | |
|---|--|
| Vegetable soups 1 cup credits as 1/4 cup of additional vegetables | Legume soups 1 cup credits as 1/2 cup of legumes subgroup |
| Minestrone soup Tomato soup Tomato soup with other basic components such as rice Vegetable soup (contains only vegetables) Vegetable soup with other basic components such as meat or poultry | Lentil soup Pea soup, e.g., split pea Bean soup, e.g., black bean, navy bean, and mixed bean |

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To credit a commercial soup not listed in table 1, school food authorities (SFAs) must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer stating the specific contribution of each vegetable subgroup per serving. The PFS must provide the information specified in the USDA's *Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs* (grades K-12) or *Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks* (preschool).

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 NSLP and SBP*, and the USDA's PFS forms and *Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement*. For additional guidance on documentation for commercial products, visit the CSDE's "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.

Training on the PFS requirements and how to evaluate a PFS 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*.

Meal Pattern Requirements for Vegetables

Soups that meet the requirements for the vegetables component may be served at any meal or ASP snack. The different meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 and preschoolers are summarized below.

- **Vegetables component for grades K-12:** The NSLP meal pattern for grades K-12 requires a daily serving of the vegetables component and weekly servings of five vegetable subgroups (dark green, red/orange, beans/peas (legumes), starchy, and other). It also includes a category of "additional" vegetables that are required to meet the minimum weekly amounts of vegetables for each grade group. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program*. The SBP meal pattern for grades K-12 does not require the vegetables component. Vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at any breakfast. The vegetables component may be served as one of the two required components in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12.
- **Vegetables component for preschoolers:** The NSLP meal pattern for preschoolers requires a serving of the vegetables component but does not require the vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends that preschool meals contain at least one weekly serving of each of the five vegetable subgroups. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program*. The SBP meal pattern for preschoolers requires a serving of vegetables,

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fruits, or both. The vegetables component may be served as one of the two required components in the ASP meal pattern for preschoolers.

Meal Pattern Contribution of Commercial Soups

The meal pattern contribution of commercial vegetable soups is indicated in the FBG:

- 1 cup of an allowable commercial vegetable soup credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component (“additional” vegetables); and
- 1 cup of a commercial bean or pea (legume) soup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component (legumes subgroup).

The 1-cup serving refers to the amount of the cooked soup, e.g., heated canned or frozen ready-to-serve soup, reconstituted dried soup, and reconstituted condensed soup. Table 2 indicates the vegetables component contribution of different serving sizes of commercial soups.

| Table 2. Crediting commercial vegetable soups in the NSLP and SBP | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Cooked serving size | | Credits as | Meets the meal pattern requirements for |
| Vegetable soup ¹ | Legume soup ² | | |
| ½ cup | ¼ cup | ⅛ cup of vegetables | Lunch for ages 1-2 |
| 1 cup | ½ cup | ¼ cup of vegetables | Breakfast for ages 1-2 Lunch for ages 3-4 |
| 2 cups | 1 cup | ½ cup of vegetables | Breakfast for ages 3-4 ASP snack for ages 1-4 |
| 3 cups | 1½ cups | ¾ cup of vegetables | Lunch for grades K-5 Lunch for grades 6-8 ASP snack for grades K-12 |
| 4 cups | 2 cups | 1 cup of vegetables | Lunch for grades 9-12 Breakfast for grades K-12 |
| <p>¹ For grades K-12 in the NSLP, vegetable soups credit only as “additional vegetables” unless a PFS documents the product’s contribution to the other vegetable subgroups (refer to “Crediting commercial soups using manufacturer documentation”).</p> <p>² For grades K-12 in the NSLP, legume soups credit as the bean/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroup.</p> | | | |

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Serving size considerations

The served portion of soup must be sufficient to provide the amount of each component being credited toward the meal patterns. Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for different grade groups. The large serving of a commercial soup that is required to provide the full vegetables component in school meals and ASP snacks might be unreasonable. For example, to provide $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component for grades K-5 and 6-8 at lunch requires 3 cups of a commercial vegetable soup or $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of a commercial legume soup.



When the serving required to provide the full vegetables component is too large, the CSDE recommends offering a smaller serving of soup and supplementing it with another food from the vegetables component. For example, a lunch for grades K-5 and 6-8 could meet the required $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup serving of the vegetables component with 1 cup of tomato soup (credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables) and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of broccoli.

Menu planners should also consider the size of the container used to serve the soup. A 1-cup container (8 fluid ounces) does not provide 1 cup of soup unless it is filled to the top, which is impractical. To avoid spilling and ensure that the served portion meets the meal pattern requirements, the container should be larger than the planned serving size of soup. For example, SFAs could use a 10-fluid ounce bowl to hold 8 fluid ounces (1 cup) of soup and a 6-fluid ounce bowl to hold 4 fluid ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of soup.

Crediting Commercial Soups Using Manufacturer Documentation

To credit an allowable commercial vegetable soup differently from the FBG yields, SFAs must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer stating the specific contribution of each vegetable subgroup in the serving. The PFS must provide the information specified in the USDA's *Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs*. (grades K-12) or *Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks* (preschool).

SFAs cannot use any other type of manufacturer product information, such as sales literature or product specification sheets, to document compliance with the vegetable subgroups. These materials do not provide the specific crediting information that is required on a PFS. Table 3 shows an example of unacceptable product information for crediting commercial soups.

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Table 3. Example of unacceptable product information for commercial soups

| Product UPC code | Description | Vegetable subgroup contribution (cups) | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------|-------------------------|---------|-------|-------|
| | | Dark green | Red/ orange | Beans/peas (legumes) | Starchy | Other | Total |
| 0-00000-00000-0 | Tomato soup, canned | | 1/2 | | | | 1/2 |
| 0-00000-00001-0 | Vegetable soup, canned | | 1/8 | | 1/8 | | 1/4 |
| 0-00000-00002-0 | Minestrone soup, canned | | 1/4 | | | 1/8 | 3/8 |

SFAs cannot use this type of product information because it is not a PFS and does not provide the specific contribution of all vegetables toward the vegetable subgroups. For example, the company information indicates that tomato soup provides 1/2 cup of the red/orange vegetable subgroup. Based on the FBG, 1 cup of commercial tomato soup credits as 1/4 cup of “additional” vegetables. Tomato soup cannot credit as the red/orange vegetable subgroup unless the manufacturer supplies a PFS with the appropriate crediting information.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

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

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#MMA>

Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Standardized_Recipe_Form_Schools.docx

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

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

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 NSLP (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>

Vegetables Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Vegetables>

What's in a Meal Module 10: 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>

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 8: Meat/Meat Alternates 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 [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers 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_Soups_SNP.pdf.

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3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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