Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. The Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP follows the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns.

For information on the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage, Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage, and the "Meal Patterns and Crediting" section of the ASP webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage and Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

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Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

Crediting Commercial Soups

Commercial vegetable soups credit based on the yields in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG). The FBG indicates that 1 cup of an allowable commercial vegetable soup credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component ("additional" vegetables) and 1 cup of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component (beans, peas, and lentils subgroup). The 1-cup serving refers to the amount of the ready-to-eat cooked soup, e.g., heated canned or frozen ready-to-serve soup, reconstituted dried soup, and reconstituted condensed soup.

To credit an allowable commercial vegetable soup differently from the FBG yields, school food authorities (SFAs) must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer that states the specific contribution of each vegetable subgroup in the serving. For more information, refer to "Crediting commercial soups not listed in FBG" in this document)

Allowable commercial vegetable soups

1 cup = ¼ cup of additional vegetables

- 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

Allowable commercial bean, pea, and lentil soups

1 cup = ½ cup of beans, peas, and lentils subgroup

- Bean soup, e.g., black bean, navy bean, and mixed bean
- Pea soup, e.g., split pea
- Lentil soup

For the NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12, vegetable soups credit only as "additional vegetables" unless a PFS documents the product's contribution to the other vegetable subgroups (refer to "Documentation for commercial soups not in the FBG" in this document).

The vegetable subgroups are required in the NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12, but not the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 for the NSLP, SBP, or ASP preschool meal patterns.

Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

Serving Size Considerations for Commercial Vegetable Soups

The served portion of a commercial vegetable soup must be sufficient to provide the vegetable subgroups being credited. Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for different grade groups, and the size of the container used to serve the soup.

Meal pattern contribution

The large serving needed for a commercial vegetable soup to provide the full serving of vegetables might be unreasonable, especially for younger children. The examples below show the meal pattern contribution of different serving sizes of commercial soups.

- The preschool lunch meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires ¼ cup of the vegetables component. This equals 1 cup of a commercial vegetable soup or ½ cup of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup.
- The lunch meal pattern for grades K-5 and 6-8 requires ¾ cup of the vegetables component. This equals 3 cups of a commercial vegetable soup or 1½ cups of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup.
- The lunch meal pattern for grades K-5 and 6-8 requires 1 cup of the vegetables component. This equals 4 cups of a commercial vegetable soup or 2 cups of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup.

When the serving of commercial soup needed 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 menu for grades K-5 and grades 6-8 could offer ¾ cup of the vegetables component from 1 cup of a commercial tomato soup (credits as ¼ cup of red/orange vegetables) and ½ cup of broccoli (credits as ½ cup of dark green vegetables).

Container size

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 prevent spills and ensure the served portion meets the meal pattern requirements, the container should be larger than the planned serving 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 (½ cup) of soup.

Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

Crediting Soups Made from Scratch

Soups made from scratch credit based on the quantity of each meal component in one serving of the standardized recipe. SFAs must determine the crediting information for each creditable soup ingredient based on the yields listed in the FBG (refer to "Documentation for soups made from scratch" in this document).

To credit toward the meal patterns, one serving of the standardized recipe must contain at least the minimum creditable amount of a meal component (⅛ cup for vegetables and fruits and ¼ oz eq for grains and MMA). If the meal component in the soup is less than the full meal pattern serving, the menu must include additional foods from that meal component to provide the full serving for each grade group.

Required Crediting Documentation for Soups

SFAs must maintain appropriate documentation that states the specific contribution of each meal component in the serving, such as vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates (MMA). For example, to credit minestrone soup as ½ cup of the vegetables component, the SFA's documentation must indicate that the serving contains ½ cup of vegetables. Documentation must be based on the food yields and crediting information in the FBG.

Documentation for commercial soups not in the FBG

Commercial soups not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) that indicates the amount of each meal component per serving. For information on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, *Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*. For guidance on how to review a PFS, visit the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement webpage.

> SFAs must obtain a PFS for all commercial processed products without a CN label that are not listed in the FBG. The USDA requires that SFAs verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. Commercial soups without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in the school nutrition programs.

Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

For more information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs*, and USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements*. Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Documentation for soups made from scratch

Soups made from scratch require a standardized recipe that indicates the contribution of each meal component in the serving. SFAs must determine the crediting information for each creditable soup ingredient based on the yields listed in the FBG.

For information on standardized recipes, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs* and visit the "Standardized Recipes" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage. Training on the requirements for standardized recipes is available in Module 7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs.*

Storing crediting documentation

SFAs must maintain all CN labels, PFS forms, standardized recipes, and other crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs*. This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.



Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

Crediting Vegetable Soups in School Meals and Afterschool Snacks

Soups that meet the requirements for the vegetables component may be served at any meal or afterschool snack. The NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal pattern requirements for the vegetables component are summarized below. Menu planners must ensure that vegetable soups served in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks meet the applicable meal pattern crediting requirements for each grade group.

Lunch for grades K-12

The NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12 require a daily serving of the vegetables component, weekly servings of the five vegetable subgroups (dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other), and weekly servings of "additional" vegetables 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*.

Breakfast for grades K-12

The vegetables component is not required in the SBP meal pattern for grades K-12. SFAs may choose to substitute vegetables for the fruits component following the requirements of the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Effective July 1, 2025, SFAs that choose to offer vegetable substitutions on one day per school week may offer any vegetables from the five subgroups. SFAs that choose to offer vegetable substitutions on two or more days per school week must offer vegetables from at least two different subgroups.

Snack for grades K-12

The ASP meal pattern requires any two of the five meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk). Vegetables (including vegetable soups) may be served as one of the two required meal components at any snack.

Lunch for preschool

The NSLP preschool meal pattern requires a serving of the vegetables component but does not require the vegetable subgroups. Vegetable soups may meet this requirement. The USDA's CACFP best practices recommend that preschool meals include 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 Child and Adult Care Food Program*.

Breakfast for preschool

The SBP preschool meal pattern requires a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both.

Snack for preschool

The ASP preschool meal pattern requires any two of the five meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, fruits, and milk). Vegetables (including vegetable soups) may be served as one of the two required meal components at any snack. The CACFP best practices recommend serving a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required snack components.

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

Accepting Product Documentation (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/accepting-product-documentation

Avoiding Common Compliance Issues with Vegetables and Fruits in the Breakfast and Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/avoiding_compliance_issues_vegetables_fruits_snp_k12.pdf

CACFP Best Practices (USDA webpage):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/cacfp/program-operator/best-practices

Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA webpage):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/tips-evaluating-pfs

Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_beans_peas_lentils_snp.pdf

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Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements

Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/standardized-recipes

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 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation

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 (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/vegetables

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What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE Training Program):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials

For more information, visit 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_ soups_snp.pdf.

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Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

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