

# Crediting Soups 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 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 and SBP meal patterns. For information on the school meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) 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

## Meal Pattern Contribution of Commercial Soups

Commercial vegetable soups credit based on the yields in the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG). One cup of an allowable commercial vegetable soup credits as  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the vegetables component ("additional" vegetables). One cup of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the vegetables component (beans, peas, and lentils subgroup).

Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, changes the name of the previous "legumes (beans and peas)" vegetable subgroup to the "beans, peas, and lentils" vegetable subgroup.

Table 1 shows the types of commercial vegetable soups that credit as the vegetables component based on the FBG. 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 (refer to "[Crediting commercial soups not listed in FBG](#)" in this document).

**Table 1. Allowable commercial vegetable soups**

<b>Vegetable soups</b> 1 cup = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of additional vegetables	<b>Bean, pea, and lentil soups</b> 1 cup = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of beans, peas, and lentils subgroup
Minestrone soup	Bean soup, e.g., black bean, navy bean, and mixed bean
Tomato soup	Pea soup, e.g., split pea
Tomato soup with other basic components such as rice	Lentil soup
Vegetable soup (contains only vegetables)	
Vegetable soup with other basic components such as meat or poultry	

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### Crediting commercial soups not listed in FBG

Commercial soups not listed in the FBG require crediting documentation that states the specific contribution of each meal component per serving, such as vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates (MMA). Acceptable documentation includes a Child Nutrition (CN) label (available only for soups that contribute to the MMA component) or a manufacturer's PFS. For more information, 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](#).

SFAs must obtain a PFS for all commercial processed products without a CN label that are not found in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG). This documentation must be obtained and verified 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 reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks.

SFAs must maintain all crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs (refer to the CSDE's [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.

Additional guidance on the crediting documentation requirements 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 6: Meal Pattern Documentation Part B – Crediting Commercial Processed Products, 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 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. For example, the lunch meal pattern for grades K-5 and 6-8 requires  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the vegetables component. This equals 3 cups of a commercial vegetable soup or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of a commercial bean, pea, or lentil soup.

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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  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the vegetables component from 1 cup of a commercial tomato soup (credits as  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of red/orange vegetables) and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of broccoli (credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  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 ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup) of soup.

Table 2 indicates the vegetables component contribution of different serving sizes of commercial soups.

**Table 2. Crediting commercial vegetable soups**

Vegetable soup serving <sup>1</sup>	Bean/pea/lentil soup serving <sup>2</sup>	Credits as	Meets the meal pattern requirements for
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables	Lunch for ages 1-2
1 cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables	Breakfast for ages 1-2 Lunch for ages 3-5
2 cups	1 cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables	Breakfast for ages 3-5 ASP snack for ages 1-5
3 cups	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	$\frac{3}{4}$ 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

<sup>1</sup> 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 not listed in FBG](#)” in this document).

<sup>2</sup> For grades K-12 in the NSLP, bean, pea, and lentil soups credit as the beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroup. The vegetable subgroups are not required in the preschool meal patterns.

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## 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. For information on standardized recipes, visit the “[Standardized Recipes](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

To credit toward the meal patterns, one serving of the standardized recipe must contain at least the minimum creditable amount of a meal component ( $\frac{1}{8}$  cup for vegetables and fruits and  $\frac{1}{4}$  ounce equivalent (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.

## Crediting Vegetable Soups in School Meals and 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.

- **Lunch for grades K-12:** The NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12 requires 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, but the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), allows SFAs to substitute vegetables for the fruits component. Through June 30, 2025, vegetable substitutions may be from any of the five vegetable subgroups. Effective July 1, 2025, SFAs that choose to offer vegetable substitutions on one day per school week may offer any vegetable, including a starchy vegetable. SFAs that choose to offer vegetable substitutions on two or more days per school week must offer vegetables from at least two different subgroups.



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- **Snack for grades K-12:** The ASP meal pattern requires any two of the four meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables/fruits, and milk). Vegetables may be served as one of the two required meal components at any snack.

Effective with school year 2024-25 (beginning July 1, 2024), the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, aligns the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 with the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) snack meal pattern](#). The vegetables/fruits component will change to two separate components (vegetables component and fruits component) and reimbursable snacks must include two of the five meal components.

- **Lunch for preschoolers:** The NSLP preschool meal pattern requires a serving of the vegetables component but does not require the vegetable subgroups. 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 preschoolers:** The SBP preschool meal pattern requires a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both.
- **Snack for preschoolers:** The ASP preschool meal pattern requires any two of the five meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, fruits, and milk). Vegetables 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.

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.

### Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):  
[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/accepting\\_procossed\\_product\\_documentation\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/accepting_procossed_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>

## Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

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](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_beans_peas_lentils_snp.pdf)

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Grains (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

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

Meats and Meat Alternates (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/meats-and-meat-alternates>

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>

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

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/cn\\_labels\\_snp.pdf](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](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](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/vegetable_subgroups_nslp.pdf)

Vegetables (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

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

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

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

## Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs

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](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_soups_snp.pdf).

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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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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