

Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

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

This guidance applies to the meal patterns for grades K-12 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For information on the NSLP and SBP meal patterns and crediting requirements 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 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.



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Overview of Ounce Equivalents (Oz Eq) Chart

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#), summarizes the required quantities for nine groups (A-I) of grain foods. These quantities are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because the meal patterns are different. The chart in this document lists the Exhibit A oz eq that apply to creditable grain foods in the meal patterns for grades K-12.

Groups A-G include baked goods such as crackers, breads, rolls, taco shells, muffins, waffles, pancakes, and grain-based desserts, e.g., cookies, cake, granola bars, and pastries. Group H includes cereal grains like pasta, cooked breakfast cereals, and other cereal grains, e.g., amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, farina, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat. Group I includes ready-to eat (RTE) cold breakfast cereals.

The amount of a creditable grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. For example, to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component, a roll (group B) must weigh 28 grams or 1 ounce and a blueberry muffin (group D) must weigh 55 grams or 2 ounces. The minimum amount that credits toward the grains component is $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq.



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Creditable Grain Foods

To credit as the grains component, commercial grain products and foods made from scratch must be made with creditable grains. Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran), and germ (such as wheat germ). Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains.

- Creditable foods include commercial grain products and foods made from scratch that are whole-grain rich (WGR) or enriched. For guidance on the grain crediting requirements and how to identify WGR and enriched grains, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- Creditable cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals include WGR, enriched, and fortified cereals. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Effective with school year 2024-25 (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 breakfast cereals. Breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Additional resources on the grains component of the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, visit the "[Grains Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement

At least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered at lunch and breakfast must be WGR. Grains that are not WGR must be enriched and cannot exceed 20 percent of the offered grains. WGR foods include 100 percent whole grains and foods that contain a blend of whole (at least 50 percent) and enriched grains. For guidance on identifying WGR foods, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

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Limit for Noncreditable Grains

To credit in school meals, all commercial WGR and enriched grain products must comply with the limit for noncreditable grains. Noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H. For guidance on meeting the limit for noncreditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Grain-based Desserts

Grain-based desserts are in groups B-G and are indicated in blue or red. Only certain grain-based desserts are allowed at breakfast and lunch.

- **Breakfast and lunch:** Grain-based desserts in blue (footnote 1) are allowed at lunch and breakfast. Examples include sweet crackers (e.g., animal crackers and graham crackers), coffee cakes, cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, and fruit turnovers.
- **Lunch only:** Grain-based desserts in red (footnote 2) are allowed only at lunch. Examples include cookies, cakes, cupcakes, plain brownies, and piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan).

The lunch meal pattern requires a weekly limit of no more than 2 oz eq, including all WGR and enriched grain-based desserts. For example, the lunch menu may include a 2-oz eq grain-based dessert once per week or a 1-oz eq grain-based dessert twice per week. Graham crackers (or any other grain-based desserts) cannot be offered as the grains component of daily alternate lunch choices because this exceeds the 2 oz eq weekly limit.

The breakfast meal pattern does not require a weekly limit for grain-based desserts but restricts the types that are allowed. The CSDE recommends limiting grain-based desserts at breakfast. Menus that frequently include grain-based desserts might not meet the weekly dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

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Using the Grain Oz Eq Chart

The oz eq chart in this document (refer to pages 5-6) indicates the required weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H and I) for each group of grain products to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. It also indicates the required quantities for $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq, and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq (the minimum creditable amount).

School food authorities (SFAs) must know the grain item's serving weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H and I) to use this chart. Oz eq are calculated by dividing the *grain item's serving weight/volume* by the *required weight/volume for 1 oz eq* of the applicable grain group.

- The serving weight/volume for commercial products is listed on the Nutrition Facts label or product formulation statement (PFS).
- The serving weight/volume for foods made from scratch is determined from the SFA's standardized recipe. If the standardized recipe does not provide this information, SFAs must either determine the average serving weight/volume by weighing or measuring several portions (refer to the CSDE's [Yield Study Data Form for Child Nutrition Programs](#)) or use the creditable grains method for determining oz eq (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#)).

The steps for using the oz eq chart are indicated in the CSDE's resource, [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#). Training is available in module 13 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](#).

For detailed guidance on both methods for determining the oz eq of commercial grain products and standardized recipes, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

When a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) is Required

The oz eq chart can only be used for creditable grain foods. A manufacturer's PFS is required when a commercial product's ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if it meets the crediting criteria. For guidance on when a PFS is required and what it must include, refer to the CSDE's resources, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#). Additional guidance on PFS forms is available in the "Product Formulation Statements" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

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Grain Oz Eq Chart

This chart includes the required quantities for nine groups (A-I) of grain foods in the USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#). Grain-based desserts in groups B-G are indicated in blue or red. Grain-based desserts in **blue** (footnote 1) are allowed at lunch and breakfast. Grain-based desserts in **red** (footnote 2) are allowed only at lunch and cannot exceed 2 oz eq per week.

Group A	Group A Servings
Bread-type coating Breadsticks, hard Chow Mein noodles Crackers, savory, e.g., saltines and snack crackers Croutons Pretzels, hard Stuffing, dry (weights apply to bread in stuffing)	1 oz eq = 22 grams or 0.8 ounce $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq = 17 grams or 0.6 ounce $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq = 11 grams or 0.4 ounce $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq = 6 grams or 0.2 ounce
Group B	Group B Servings
Bagels Batter-type coating Biscuits Breads, e.g., white, wheat, whole wheat, French, Italian Buns, hamburger and hot dog Crackers, sweet, e.g., graham crackers and animal crackers, all shapes ¹ Egg roll skins English muffins Pita bread Pizza crust Pretzels, soft Rolls Taco shells Tortilla chips Tortillas	1 oz eq = 28 grams or 1 ounce $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq = 21 grams or 0.75 ounce $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq = 14 grams or 0.5 ounce $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq = 7 grams or 0.25 ounce

¹ Allowed at lunch in the NSLP and breakfast in the SBP. The weekly total of all grain-based desserts at lunch cannot exceed 2 oz eq.

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Group C	Group C Servings
Cookies, plain, including vanilla wafers ² Cornbread Corn muffins Croissants Pancakes Piecrust (dessert pies ² , cobblers ² , fruit turnovers ¹ , and meat or meat alternate pies) Waffles	1 oz eq = 34 grams or 1.2 ounces $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq = 26 grams or 0.9 ounce $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq = 17 grams or 0.6 ounce $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq = 9 grams or 0.3 ounce
Group D	Group D Servings
Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars, plain ¹ Doughnuts, cake and yeast raised, unfrosted ¹ Muffins, all except corn Sweet rolls, unfrosted ¹ Toaster pastries, unfrosted ¹	1 oz eq = 55 grams or 2 ounces $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq = 42 grams or 1.5 ounces $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq = 28 grams or 1.0 ounce $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq = 14 grams or 0.5 ounce
Group E	Group E Servings
Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars, with nuts, dried fruit, and/or chocolate pieces ¹ Cookies, with fillings or coverings, nuts, raisins, chocolate pieces, and/or fruit purees ² Doughnuts, cake and yeast raised, frosted or glazed ¹ French toast Sweet rolls, frosted ¹ Toaster pastries, frosted ¹	1 oz eq = 69 grams or 2.4 ounces $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq = 52 grams or 1.8 ounces $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq = 35 grams or 1.2 ounces $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq = 18 grams or 0.6 ounce
Group E	Group E Servings
Cake, plain, unfrosted ² Coffee cake ¹	1 oz eq = 82 grams or 2.9 ounce $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq = 62 grams or 2.2 ounce $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq = 41 grams or 1.5 ounce $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq = 21 grams or 0.7 ounce
Group G	Group G Oz Eq
Brownies, plain ² Cake, all varieties, frosted ²	1 oz eq = 125 grams or 4.4 ounces $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq = 94 grams or 3.3 ounces $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq = 63 grams or 2.2 ounces $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq = 32 grams or 1.1 ounces

¹ Allowed at lunch in the NSLP and breakfast in the SBP. The weekly total of all grain-based desserts at lunch cannot exceed 2 oz eq.

² Allowed only at lunch in the NSLP. The weekly total of all grain-based desserts at lunch cannot exceed 2 oz eq.

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Group H	Group H Servings
Barley Breakfast cereals, cooked ³ Bulgur or cracked wheat Cereal grains, e.g., amaranth, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, farina, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat Macaroni, all shapes Noodles, all varieties Pasta, all shapes Ravioli, noodle only Rice, brown or enriched white	1 oz eq = ½ cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) dry ½ oz eq = ¼ cup cooked or ½ ounce (14 grams) dry
Group I	Group I Servings
Ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals (cold dry) ³	1 oz eq = 1 cup or 1 ounce for flakes and rounds 1¼ cups or 1 ounce for puffed cereal ¼ cup or 1 ounce for granola ½ oz eq = ½ cup or ½ ounce for flakes and rounds ¾ cup or ½ ounce for puffed cereal ⅛ cup or ½ ounce for granola

³ RTE breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified. Effective 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 breakfast cereals: no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs...](#)

Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

Resources

Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

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

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

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

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

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

Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

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

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

Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>

Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue>

Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-interactive-web-based-tool>

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Grains Component (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section4_Grains.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Yield Table for Grains (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section4_GrainsYieldTable.pdf

Grains 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/#Grains>

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Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

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

How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-maximize-exhibit-grains-tool>

How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

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

Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning-guide-for-school-meals>

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs – Completed Sample (USDA):

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

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

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 05-2022: Meal Requirements Under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Questions and Answers for Program Operators Updated to Support the Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Effective July 1, 2022:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/sp052022-questions-answers-program-operators>

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USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-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

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 11: Grains 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 12: Whole Grain-rich Requirement (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 13: Grains Ounce Equivalents (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>

Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/whole-grain-resource-national-school-lunch-and-breakfast-programs>

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in School Lunch and Breakfast Menus for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/worksheet_calculate_wgr_percentage_snp_grades_k-12.xlsx

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For more information, visit the “[Grains Component for Grades K-12](#)” section of 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/nspl/crediting/grain_oz_eq_snp_grades_k-12.pdf.

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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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