

Noncreditable Foods in the Preschool Meal Patterns for 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) preschool meal patterns (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. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP preschool meal patterns. The requirements for the preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns. For information on the preschool meal patterns and crediting foods, refer to the CSDE’s [Menu Planning Guide for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Noncreditable Foods in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

Definition of Noncreditable Foods

Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that do not count toward the five meal components (meats/meat alternates, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk) required by the USDA's preschool meal patterns. Noncreditable foods include:

- foods and beverages in amounts that are too small to credit (i.e., less than the minimum creditable amount required by the preschool meal patterns), such as 1 tablespoon of applesauce or 1/8 ounce of cheese; and
- foods and beverages that do not belong to the five meal components. Some examples include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water.

The list on pages 4-5 includes additional examples of noncreditable foods for the preschool meal patterns. This list is not all-inclusive.

Allowable Noncreditable Foods

School food authorities (SFAs) may serve some noncreditable foods in addition to the meal components to add variety, help improve acceptability in the meal, and satisfy appetites. Examples include maple syrup on pancakes, salad dressing on tossed greens, and condiments such as ketchup or mustard on sandwiches and other entrees.

To ensure that preschool meals and ASP snacks meet children's nutritional needs, the CSDE encourages SFAs to use discretion when serving noncreditable foods. Noncreditable foods typically contain few nutrients and are higher in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. Menu planners should read labels, be aware of the ingredients in foods, and limit the frequency and amount of less nutritious choices.

Meal Pattern Changes for School Year 2025-26

Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, [*Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*](#), revises the sugar limits for yogurt and breakfast cereals in the preschool meal patterns. The product-based limit for yogurt changes from total sugars (no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., no more than 3.83 grams per ounce) to added sugars (no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces, i.e., 2 grams of added sugars per ounce). The product-based limit for breakfast cereals changes from total sugars (no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce) to added sugars (no more

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than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce). These new sugar limits will change what types of yogurts and breakfast cereals are noncreditable foods.

Federal and State Laws for A La Carte Sales of Foods and Beverages

Some noncreditable foods (such as candy, soda, coffee, tea, and sports drinks) cannot be sold in the school nutrition programs due to federal and state requirements. Before selling any noncreditable foods and beverages to students, SFAs must make sure they comply with the applicable federal and state laws.

Some a la carte sales of foods and beverages are prohibited due to federal and state laws.

All foods available for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals (a la carte sales) must meet the [Connecticut Nutrition Standards \(CNS\)](#) or the USDA [Smart Snacks](#) nutrition standards. The CNS are required for public school districts that participate in the NSLP and choose to implement the healthy food option of [Healthy Food Certification \(HFC\)](#). The USDA Smart Snacks nutrition standards are required for non-HFC public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the NSLP.

All beverages available for sale to students as part of and separately from reimbursable meals in HFC and non-HFC public schools must comply with the state beverage requirements of [Section 10-221q](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) and the USDA Smart Snacks beverage standards. Beverages sold in private schools and RCCIs must comply with the USDA Smart Snacks beverage standards.

In addition to these nutrition standards for foods and beverages, other federal and state laws determine what and when foods and beverages may be sold or given to students on school premises, and where the income must accrue. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Competitive Foods in Schools](#) webpage and [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

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Examples of Noncreditable Foods

The foods and beverages below do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. This list is not all-inclusive. For additional guidance, refer to the menu planning notes on page 6.

Almond flour	Commercial smoothies that contain dietary or herbal supplements
Almond milk ¹	Condiments, e.g., ketchup, mustard, relish, and barbecue sauce
Bacon (pork)	Cookies ⁴ , except animal crackers and graham crackers
Bacon bits, regular or imitation	Cranberry cocktail drink
Banana chips	Cream cheese
Bread products that are not whole grain, whole grain-rich (WGR), or enriched ²	Cream soups, canned, e.g., cream of mushroom, cream of celery, and cream of broccoli
Breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat and cooked) that are not whole grain, whole grain-rich, enriched, or fortified ³	Cream, half and half
Breakfast cereals (ready-to-eat and cooked) with more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce ³	Drinkable or squeezable yogurt and yogurt drinks
Brownies ⁴	Egg whites without the yolk
Butter	Eggnog
Cake ⁴	Frozen yogurt
Candy	Fruit drink, fruit beverage, powdered fruit drink mix
Candy-coated popcorn	Fruit leathers (100 percent fruit)
Caramel popcorn	Fruit punch (not 100 percent juice)
Cashew milk ¹	Fruit snacks, e.g., fruit roll-ups, wrinkles, twists
Cereal bars ⁴	Gelatin, regular and sugar free
Chocolate milk-based drinks, e.g., Yoo-Hoo	Grain-based desserts, e.g., cookies, sweet piecrusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies ⁴
Cinnamon buns or rolls ⁴	Grains that are not whole grain, WGR, or enriched ²
Coconut flour	Granola bars ⁴
Coconut milk	Home-canned products, e.g., vegetables and fruits
Coffee (regular, decaffeinated, and iced)	Honey
Commercial processed products without a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS), e.g., entrees, smoothies, and breaded vegetables ⁵	

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Hot chocolate	Probiotic dairy drinks
Ice cream and ice cream novelties	Pudding
Ice milk	Pudding pops
Iced coffee	Puffs, fruit and vegetable
Iced tea	Rice milk ¹
Jam and jelly	Salad dressings
Ketchup	Salt pork
Lemonade	Scones, sweet, e.g., blueberry, raisin, or orange cranberry ⁴
Limeade	Scrapple
Liquid egg substitutes	Sherbet
Maple syrup	Soda, regular and diet
Margarine	Soups, commercial cream of vegetable, e.g., cream of broccoli, cream of mushroom, and cream of celery
Marshmallows	Soups, commercial non-vegetable, canned, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice
Mayonnaise	Sour cream
Milk for age 1: Plain or flavored reduced fat (2%), plain or flavored low-fat (1%), and plain or flavored fat-free	Soy milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹
Milk for ages 2-4: Plain or flavored whole, plain or flavored reduced fat (2%), and flavored low-fat (1%)	Sports drinks, regular and diet
Mustard	Spreadable fruit
Nondairy milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹	Sweet rolls ⁴
Nutritional beverage supplements, e.g., Abbott's Pediasure	Syrup
Oat milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹	Tea, regular, herbal, and iced
Pastries ⁴	Toaster pastries ⁴
Pickle relish	Tofu with less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume) ⁶
Pies, e.g., coconut, fruit, pecan ⁴	Water ⁷
Popsicles (not 100 percent juice)	Yogurt or soy yogurt with more than 3.83 grams of total sugars per ounce ⁸
Potato chips	Yogurt products, e.g., drinkable or squeezable yogurt, frozen yogurt, yogurt bars, and yogurt-covered fruits and nuts
Powdered milk beverages, e.g., Nestle's NIDO	

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Menu Planning Notes

- ¹ Milk children without a disability must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs](#)).
- ² For guidance on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and [How to Identify Creditable Grains for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- ³ For guidance on creditable breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- ⁴ Grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to the USDA's webpage, [Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP](#).
- ⁵ Commercial products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For more information, 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 [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs](#); and the USDA's [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). Additional guidance is available in the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers 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](#).
- ⁶ For guidance on crediting tofu, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- ⁷ SFAs must make drinking water available to children at no charge where meals are served during service of meals and ASP snacks. However, SFAs cannot promote or offer water or any other beverage as an alternative selection to fluid milk throughout the food service area. For more information, refer to [USDA Memo SP 49-2016 and CACFP 18-2016: Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities](#) and [USDA Memo SP 19-2018: Clarification on the Milk and Water Requirements in the School Meal Programs](#). Training on the water requirement is available in Module 14: Water Availability during Meal Service 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](#).
- ⁸ For guidance on crediting yogurt, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

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Resources

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/asp/asp_handbook.pdf

Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_snp.pdf

Competitive Foods in Schools (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/competitive-foods>

Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/connecticut-nutrition-standards>

Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_commercial_mma_snp.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 Foods in Preschool Menus (“Related resources” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/related-resources>

Crediting Summary Charts for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_snp_preschool.pdf

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Healthy Food Certification (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Healthy-Food-Certification>

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How to Identify Creditable Grains for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/list-of-acceptable-foods-and-beverages>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs/documents>

Menu Planning Guide for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/menu_planning_guide_preschool.pdf

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/preschool/resources_preschool_meal_patterns.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 49-2016 and CACFP 18-2016: Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources-making-potable-water-available-schools-and-child-care-facilities-0>

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

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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 14: Water Availability during Meal Service (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 Preschoolers 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/noncreditable_foods_snp_preschool.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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