

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

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) preschool meal patterns (ages 1-5) for 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. The requirements for the preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children.

For information on the preschool meal patterns, 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. 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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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 3-6 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 sugars limits for yogurt and breakfast cereals in the preschool meal patterns. The product-based limit for yogurt changes from total sugars (no more 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 sugars limits will change what types of yogurts and breakfast cereals are noncreditable foods.

Federal and State Laws for Foods and Beverages

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

- **Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Public Schools:** All foods available for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks (a la carte sales) and all foods served in afterschool snacks must comply with the [Connecticut Nutrition Standards \(CNS\)](#). All beverages available for sale to students as part of and separately from reimbursable and all beverages served in afterschool snacks 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.
- **Non-HFC public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs):** All foods available for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks must comply with the USDA [Smart Snacks](#) nutrition standards. All beverages served in afterschool snacks and sold separately from afterschool snacks must comply with the state beverage requirements and the Smart Snacks beverage standards. The USDA Smart Snacks food standards do not apply to the ASP.

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.

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 7.

- Almond flour
- Almond milk ¹
- Bacon (pork)
- Bacon bits, regular or imitation
- Banana chips

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

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- Gelatin, regular and sugar free
- Grain-based desserts, e.g., cookies, sweet piecrusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies ⁴
- Grains that are not whole grain, WGR, or enriched ²
- Granola bars ⁴
- Home-canned products, e.g., vegetables and fruits
- Honey
- Hot chocolate
- Ice cream and ice cream novelties
- Ice milk
- Iced coffee
- Iced tea
- Jam and jelly
- Ketchup
- Lemonade
- Limeade
- Liquid egg substitutes
- Maple syrup
- Margarine
- Marshmallows
- Mayonnaise
- Milk for age 1: Plain or flavored reduced fat (2%), plain or flavored low-fat (1%), and plain or flavored fat-free
- Milk for ages 2-5: Plain or flavored whole, plain or flavored reduced fat (2%), and flavored low-fat (1%)
- Mustard
- Nondairy milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹
- Nutritional beverage supplements, e.g., Abbott's Pediasure
- Oat milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹
- Pastries ⁴
- Pickle relish
- Pies, e.g., coconut, fruit, pecan ⁴
- Popsicles (not 100 percent juice)
- Potato chips

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- Powdered milk beverages, e.g., Nestle's NIDO
- Probiotic dairy drinks
- Pudding
- Pudding pops
- Puffs, fruit and vegetable
- Rice milk ¹
- Salad dressings
- Salt pork
- Scones, sweet, e.g., blueberry, raisin, or orange cranberry ⁴
- Scrapple
- Sherbet
- Soda, regular and diet
- Soups, commercial cream of vegetable, e.g., cream of broccoli, cream of mushroom, and cream of celery
- Soups, commercial non-vegetable, canned, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice
- Sour cream
- Soy milk that does not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes ¹
- Sports drinks, regular and diet
- Spreadable fruit
- Sweet rolls ⁴
- Syrup
- Tea, regular, herbal, and iced
- Toaster pastries ⁴
- Tofu with less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume) ⁶
- Water ⁷
- Yogurt or soy yogurt with more than 3.83 grams of total sugars per ounce ⁸
- Yogurt products, e.g., drinkable or squeezable yogurt, frozen yogurt, yogurt bars, yogurt-covered breakfast bars, and yogurt-covered fruits and nuts

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Menu Planning Notes

- ¹ Milk children without a disability must meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the "Milk Substitutes" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- 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, visit 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 afterschool 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 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](#).
- 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 during service of meals and afterschool 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 the CSDE's [Water Availability for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. 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 Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons in the 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 Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program (CSDE webpage):

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

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>

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Guide to Meeting the Preschool Meal Patterns and Crediting Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Healthy Food Certification (CSDE webpage):

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

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>

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>

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

Water Availability for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/water-availability-for-school-nutrition-programs>

What's in a Meal Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation, Part B – Crediting Commercial Processed Products (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
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