

Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

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 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP follows the NSLP meal patterns. For information on the NSLP meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#). 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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Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

Weekly Vegetable Subgroups at Lunch

The NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12 require weekly servings of the five vegetable subgroups recommended by the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). The chart below identifies common vegetables in each subgroup (dark green; red/orange; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy; and other). 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.

Dark Green Fresh, frozen, and canned	Red/Orange Fresh, frozen, and canned	Beans, Peas, and Lentils Cooked from dry, canned, or frozen
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arugula• Beet greens• Bok choy• Broccoli• Broccoli rabe (rapini)• Broccolini• Butterhead lettuce (Boston, Bibb)• Chicory• Cilantro• Collard greens• Endive• Escarole• Fiddle heads• Grape leaves• Kale• Mesclun• Mustard greens• Parsley• Spinach• Swiss chard• Red leaf lettuce• Romaine lettuce• Turnip greens• Watercress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acorn squash• Butternut squash• Carrots (orange only)• Cherry peppers• Hubbard squash• Orange peppers• Pimientos• Pumpkin• Red chili peppers• Red peppers• Salsa (100% vegetables)• Spaghetti squash• Sweet potatoes• Tomatoes• Tomato juice• Winter squash• Yams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black beans• Black-eyed peas (mature, dry)• Cowpeas• Edamame• Fava beans• Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)• Great northern beans• Kidney beans• Lentils• Lima beans (mature, dry)• Mung beans• Navy beans• Pink beans• Pinto beans• Red beans• Refried beans• Soybeans (mature, dry)• Split peas• White beans <p>Note: The beans, peas, and lentils subgroup does not include immature (fresh) beans and peas, such as green beans, green lima beans, and green (string) beans. For more information on this subgroup, refer to the CSDE’s Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the School Nutrition Programs.</p>

Vegetable Subgroups in the School Nutrition Programs

Starchy Fresh, frozen, and canned

- Black-eyed peas, fresh (not dry)
- Cassava
- Corn
- Cowpeas, fresh (not dry)
- Field peas, fresh (not dry)
- Green bananas
- Green peas
- Hominy, whole (canned, drained)
- Jicama
- Lima beans, green (not dry)
- Parsnips
- Pigeon peas, fresh (not dry)
- Plantains
- Poi
- Potatoes
- Taro
- Water chestnuts
- Yautia (tannier)



Other Fresh, frozen, and canned

- Artichokes
- Asparagus
- Avocado
- Bamboo shoots
- Bean sprouts, cooked only (for food safety), e.g., alfalfa, mung
- Beans, green and yellow
- Beets
- Breadfruit
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage (green, red, celery, Napa)
- Cactus (nopales)
- Carrots, rainbow (e.g., pink, purple, red, white, and yellow)
- Cauliflower
- Celeriac
- Celery
- Chayote (mirliton)
- Chives
- Cucumbers
- Daikon (oriental radish)
- Eggplant
- Fennel
- Garlic
- Green chili peppers
- Green onions (scallions)
- Green peppers
- Horseradish
- Kohlrabi
- Leeks
- Mushrooms
- Okra
- Olives
- Onions (white, yellow, red)
- Peas in pod, e.g., snap peas, snow peas
- Pepperoncini
- Pickles (cucumber)
- Purple peppers
- Radishes
- Rhubarb
- Rutabagas
- Sauerkraut
- Seaweed
- Shallots
- Snap peas
- Snow peas
- Tomatillo
- Turnips
- Wax beans
- White sweet potatoes
- Yellow peppers
- Yellow summer squash
- Zucchini squash



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Meeting the Vegetable Subgroup Requirements

School food authorities (SFAs) may offer the five vegetable subgroups in any order and amount throughout the week if the lunch menu meets the minimum weekly requirements. If a school has multiple serving lines, each serving line must offer the minimum amount of each vegetable subgroup on a weekly basis. The example below illustrates this requirement:

Example: A school has a hot lunch line, a deli line, and a grill line. Monday's hot lunch menu offers baked beans (beans, peas, and lentils subgroup) as the daily vegetable. To meet the weekly requirements, baked beans (or another vegetable from the beans, peas, and lentils subgroup) must also be available on the other two serving lines. For example, Monday's menu for the deli line and grill line must include baked beans or another food from the beans, peas, and lentils subgroup, such as garbanzo beans or lentils. It is not acceptable for the SFA to post signs on the deli line and grill line directing students to select the vegetable subgroup choice from a **different** serving line. Each serving line must offer the full reimbursable meal, including all vegetable subgroups on a weekly basis.

At lunch, all students must have access to the required quantities of the five vegetable subgroups each week on each serving line.

For detailed guidance on the meeting the requirements for the vegetable subgroups, refer to section 3 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Crediting Guidance for the Vegetables Component

The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables, and 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice.

Serving size

Vegetables credit based on the yields and crediting information in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG). All vegetables credit based on volume (cups) with the exceptions below.

- **Raw leafy greens** credit as half the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of raw leafy greens credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component. Examples of raw leafy greens include kale, greens (e.g., beet, collard, mustard, and turnip), spinach, arugula, and lettuce (e.g., iceberg, romaine, Boston, Bibb, red leaf, and spring mix).

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- **Dried or dehydrated vegetables** (like potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume. A product formulation statement (PFS) is required to document crediting information (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

For more information on crediting vegetables, visit the “[Vegetables](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on the vegetables component is available in Module 10: Vegetables Component 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*.

Vegetable juice

Vegetable juice must be pasteurized full-strength (100 percent) juice. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice (refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Smoothies in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). At lunch, vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount (cups) of the offered vegetables. At breakfast, the combined weekly amount of all offered fruit and vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the total weekly offerings of fruits and vegetable substitutions. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Crediting Juice in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#).

Canned vegetables

A serving of canned vegetables must be drained; it cannot include the packing liquid, such as water or sauce. For example, to credit as ½ cup of the vegetables component, ½ cup of canned peas cannot include the water in which it is packed and ½ cup of baked beans cannot include the sauce in which it is packed. The serving must contain ½ cup of vegetables before any added liquid.

Required Crediting Documentation

Commercial processed vegetable products (such as vegetable egg rolls and breaded onion rings) and vegetables prepared from scratch with added ingredients (such as coleslaw, mashed potatoes, and carrot-raisin salad) require crediting documentation to indicate the amount of vegetables per serving. Commercially prepared foods with added ingredients require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or PFS stating the specific contribution of each vegetable subgroup per serving.

For information on CN labels and PFS forms, 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 [Product Formulation Statement for Documenting](#)

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Vegetables and Fruits in School Meal Programs and *Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement*. For additional guidance on the required documentation for commercial products, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Foods made from scratch require a standardized recipe that indicates the amount of each vegetable subgroup per serving. For information on standardized recipes, visit the "Standardized Recipes" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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.

Resources

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

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Crediting Juice in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

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

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

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

Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 07-19: Compliance Issues with the Vegetables and Fruits Components for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/memos/om2019/om07-19.pdf>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/fbg>

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>

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Start with Half a Cup Fresh Vegetable Portioning Guide for Schools (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/portion-control>

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>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (CSDE):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

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 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019, and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered>

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

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 Module 10: Vegetables 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>

Vegetable Subgroups in the School Nutrition Programs

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and [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/vegetable_subgroups_nslp.pdf.

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