Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

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 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.

Contents

Weekly Vegetable Subgroups at Lunch 2
- Dark Green ─ Fresh, frozen, and canned 2
- Red/Orange ─ Fresh, frozen, and canned 2
- Beans, Peas, and Lentils ─ Cooked from dry, canned, or frozen 3
- Starchy ─ Fresh, frozen, and canned 3
- Other ─ Fresh, frozen, and canned 4

Meeting the Vegetable Subgroup Requirements 5

Vegetables at Breakfast 5

Crediting Guidance for the Vegetables Component 6
- Serving size 6
- Vegetable juice 6
- Canned vegetables 6

Required Crediting Documentation for Vegetables 7
- Documentation for commercial processed products 7
- Documentation for foods made from scratch 8
- Storing crediting documentation 9

Resources 9

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 *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. These vegetable subgroups include dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other vegetables. The lists below identify common vegetables in each subgroup.

Dark Green – Fresh, frozen, and canned

- 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

Red/Orange – Fresh, frozen, and canned

- 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






Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

Beans, Peas, and Lentils — Cooked from dry, canned, or frozen

- 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

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 resource, *Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils 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)







Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

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







Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

Meeting the Vegetable Subgroup Requirements

School food authorities (SFAs) may offer the five vegetable subgroups in any order and amount throughout the week to meet the minimum weekly requirements. The vegetable subgroups do not have a daily requirement.

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 guidance on the meeting the requirements for the vegetable subgroups, refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs*.

Vegetables at Breakfast

The vegetables component is not required in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) meal pattern for grades K-12. SFAs may choose to substitute vegetables for the fruits component following the requirements of the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

SFAs that offer vegetable substitutions on one day per school week may offer any vegetables from the five subgroups. SFAs that offer vegetable substitutions on two or more days per school week must offer vegetables from at least two different subgroups.

Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch 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., ½ cup of raw leafy greens credits as ¼ 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).

- **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 12: Vegetables Component of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Vegetable juice

Vegetable juice must be pasteurized full-strength (100 percent) juice. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. 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 resources, *Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs*.

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 packing water 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 for Vegetables

SFAs must be able to document that all menu items offered in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks meet the meal pattern requirements. The guidance below summarizes the required documentation for commercial processed vegetable products and foods made from scratch that contain vegetables. These foods require crediting documentation to indicate the cups of vegetables per serving. Documentation must be based on the food yields and crediting information in the FBG.

Documentation for commercial processed products

Commercial processed vegetable products and combination foods that contain vegetables require documentation stating the cups of each vegetable subgroup per serving. Some examples include vegetable egg rolls, breaded onion rings, pizza, black bean burritos, and chili) For example, to credit chili with kidney beans as ¼ cup of the vegetables component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains ¼ cup of beans, peas, or lentils.

The acceptable types of documentation for commercial products include any of the documents below.

- **Child Nutrition (CN) label:** A CN label is a USDA-approved statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements. Allowable CN label documentation includes 1) the original CN label from the product carton; 2) a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or 3) a CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor, attached to the bill of lading (invoice). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs*.

- **Product formulation statement (PFS):** A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. The PFS must be signed by an official of the manufacturer and state the amount of each meal pattern component contained in one serving of the product. For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs.* For guidance on how to review a PFS, visit the USDA's Child Nutrition

Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement webpage.

Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks unless they are listed in FBG.

> A PFS is required for all commercial processed vegetables products that are not listed in the FBG. The USDA requires that SFAs must verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks.

For more information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs*, and USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements*. 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 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Documentation for foods made from scratch

Foods made from scratch require a standardized recipe that indicates the cups of each vegetable subgroup per serving. Some examples include tossed salad, coleslaw, potato salad, mashed potatoes, and vegetable soup.

For information on standardized recipes, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs* and the Institute of Child Nutrition's *USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs*, and visit the "Standardized Recipes" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Training on the requirements for standardized recipes is available in Module 7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus, of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs.*

Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

Storing crediting documentation

SFAs must maintain all CN labels, PFS forms, standardized recipes, and other crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *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

Avoiding Common Compliance Issues with Vegetables and Fruits in the Breakfast and Lunch Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/avoiding_compliance_issues_vegetables_fruits_snp_k12.pdf

2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and USDA):
https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/about-dietary-guidelines/previous-editions/2020-dietary-guidelines

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 Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs

Crediting Guide for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_crediting_snp.pdf

Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_juices_snp.pdf

Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_smoothies_snp.pdf

Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_soups_snp.pdf

Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg

Guide to Menu Documentation for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_menu_documentation_snp.pdf

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

Start with Half a Cup Fresh Vegetables Portioning Guide for Schools: 8½ by 14 inches (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/swhac/start_with_half_a_cup_vegetables_8_5x14.pdf

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/tips-evaluating-pfs

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation

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, 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs

USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs (Institute of Child Nutrition):
https://theicn.org/cicn/usda-recipe-standardization-guide-for-school-nutrition-programs/

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/cn_labels_snp.pdf

Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/product_formulation_statements.pdf

Vegetables Component (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 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials#module8

What's in a Meal Module 12: Vegetables Component (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials#module12

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.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email louis.todisco@ct.gov.

Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
   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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

CONNECTICUT
Education