

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

School Year 2025-26 (July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026)

This guidance helps school food authorities (SFAs) meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 and encourage student selections of reimbursable meals with offer versus serve (OVS). The NSLP meal patterns also apply to the [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP.

For detailed guidance on the NSLP meal pattern 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 CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#), provides comprehensive guidance on the meal pattern and crediting requirements.



Contents

Lunch Meal Patterns	2
Crediting Documentation	2
Milk Component	3
Additional milk requirements for public schools	3
Vegetables Component	4
Fruits Component	4
Fruit and vegetables juices.....	4
Grains Component.....	5
Whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement.....	5
WGR criteria.....	5
Required ounce equivalents (oz eq) of grains.....	6
MMA Component.....	7
Required oz eq of MMA.....	7
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards)	8
Offer versus Serve (OVS) at Lunch	9
Table 1. Sample OVS daily lunch menu for grades 9-12	9
Staff training for OVS	9
Required Cafeteria Signage.....	10
Resources	11

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Lunch Meal Patterns

The NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12 use a food-based menu planning approach for three required grade groups (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). The lunch meal patterns for each grade group require minimum daily and weekly amounts of five meal components, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates (MMA).



The weekly requirements for vegetables, fruits, and milk are the sum of the daily requirements. The weekly requirements for grains and MMA are ranges; menus must provide at least the minimum but may exceed the maximum. The maximum provides a guide for planning meals that meet the dietary specifications.

School food authorities (SFAs) may offer larger amounts of any meal component if the weekly lunch weekly menu meets the dietary specifications (refer to “[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards\)](#)” in this document).

The NSLP meal patterns are available in the “[Lunch Meal Patterns](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For guidance on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Crediting Documentation

SFAs must use the USDA’s [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine how foods credit and the amount that provides the required serving of each meal component. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information.

For information on crediting documentation, 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](#).

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

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*.

Milk Component

Allowable types of milk include low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk, either unflavored or flavored. Effective July 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, requires that flavored milk in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces. Flavored milk sold as a competitive food in middle and high schools cannot exceed 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.

Lunch menus must offer at least 1 cup daily for all grades and must include a variety of at least two different milk choices. At least one milk choice must be unflavored.

For more information on the milk component, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Comparison of the Milk Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs*, and [USDA Memo SP 01-2025: Fluid Milk Requirements for School Meals](#), and visit the "Milk" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Additional milk requirements for public schools

Milk available for sale to students in public schools must also meet the requirements of [Section 10-221q](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.). The state beverage requirements apply to milk sold as part of and separately from reimbursable meals and snacks in the school nutrition programs. The state beverage statute does not apply to private schools or residential child care institutions (RCCIs). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Allowable Beverages for Connecticut Public Schools*, and visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

The state beverage statute requires that milk cannot exceed 4 grams of sugars per ounce. Products that meet the federal and state requirements for milk are in [list 16](#) on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. This webpage includes brand-specific lists of foods that meet the [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) and beverages that meet the requirements of the state beverage statute.

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Vegetables Component

The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent vegetable juices. Vegetable juices cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings (refer to “[Fruit and vegetables juices](#)” in this document).

Lunch menus must offer at least $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of vegetables daily for grades K-5 and 6-8, and at least 1 cup daily for grades 9-12. Lunch menus for each grade group must also include minimum weekly amounts of the five vegetable subgroups (dark green, red/orange, beans, peas, and lentils, starchy, and other). For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program](#).

All vegetables credit based on volume except raw leafy greens, which credit as half the volume served. For example, 1 cup of spinach or lettuce credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component.

The meal pattern serving refers to the amount of vegetables before added ingredients, such as the sauce in baked beans or mayonnaise in potato salad. A serving of canned vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. For more information on the vegetables component, visit the “[Vegetables](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Fruits Component

The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, and dried fruits; canned fruits in juice, water, or light syrup; and pasteurized 100 percent fruit juices. All fruits credit based on volume except dried fruits, which credit as twice the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins or dried apricots credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component.

Lunch menus must offer at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits daily for grades K-5 and 6-8, and at least 1 cup daily for grades 9-12. For more information on the fruits component, visit the “[Fruits](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Fruit and vegetables juices

Fruit and vegetable juices must be pasteurized 100 percent juices. Fruit juices cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings and vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. For example, if a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 offers $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of the fruits component, the weekly amount of all offered fruit juices cannot exceed $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups.

The juice limit applies to all sources of 100 percent juice served at lunch during the week, including fruit and vegetable juices, frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

fruits and vegetables in smoothies. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Grains Component

Commercial grain products and grain foods made from scratch must be whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched. Cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified, and cannot exceed 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. For more information on the grains component, visit the "Grains" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement

At least 80 percent of the grains offered at lunch must be WGR based on the total oz eq of all offered grains (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). Grains that are not WGR must be enriched and cannot exceed 20 percent of the offered weekly grains (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). For more information on the WGR requirement and criteria, visit "[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)" in the "Grains" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

WGR criteria

The WGR criteria depend on the grain group where the grain item belongs in the USDA's chart, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#). The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#), indicates the applicable Exhibit A quantities and requirements.

- **Commercial grain products (groups A-H):** Grain products in groups A-G (such as breads, muffins, pancakes, and crackers) and group H (such as rice, pasta, and quinoa) must meet two WGR criteria: 1) the product is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for group H.
- **RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** RTE breakfast cereals must meet three WGR criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) added sugars cannot exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. Fortification is not required for

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

RTE breakfast cereals that are 100 percent whole grain. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

- **Cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** Cooked breakfast cereals must meet three WGR criteria: 1) the product is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; 2) noncreditable grains cannot exceed 6.99 grams per portion; and 3) added sugars cannot exceed 6 grams per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- **Commercial combination foods containing a grain portion from groups A-I:** The grain portion (such as pizza crust in pizza, noodles in lasagna, and breading on chicken nuggets) must meet two WGR criteria: 1) the grain portion is 100 percent whole grain or contains a blend of whole and enriched grains that is at least 50 percent whole grain; and 2) noncreditable grains in the grain portion cannot exceed 3.99 grams per portion for groups A-G or 6.99 grams per portion for groups H-I.

For comprehensive guidance on the WGR criteria, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Required ounce equivalents (oz eq) of grains

Lunch menus must offer at least 1 oz eq of grains daily for grades K-5 and 6-8, and at least 2 oz eq daily for grades 9-12. The weekly five-day menu must offer at least 8 oz eq of grains for grades K-5 and 6-8, and at least 10 oz eq for grades 9-12. The weekly seven-day menu must offer at least 1 oz eq of grains for grades K-5 and 6-8, and at least 14 oz eq for grades 9-12. The weekly maximum oz eq are not required but provide a guide for planning meals that meet the dietary specifications (refer to "[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards\)](#)" in this document).

The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#), indicates the Exhibit A oz eq for the grains component. The serving size of commercial grain products and standardized recipes used in school lunch menus must meet the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) in the USDA's Exhibit A chart or provide the minimum creditable grains. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resources, [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#), [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

MMA Component

MMA must be served in a main dish or a main dish and one other food item. Lunch menus must offer at least 1 oz eq of MMA daily for grades K-5 and 6-8, and at least 2 oz eq daily for grades 9-12. The weekly five-day menu must offer at least 8 oz eq of MMA for grades K-5, at least 9 oz eq for grades 6-8, and at least 10 oz eq for grades 9-12. The weekly seven-day menu must offer at least 11 oz eq for grades K-5, at least 12½ oz eq for grades 6-8, and at least 14 oz eq for grades 9-12. The weekly maximum oz eq are not required but provide a guide for planning menus that meet the dietary specifications (refer to “[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards\)](#)” in this document).

Required oz eq of MMA

The MMA quantities in the NSLP meal patterns refer to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-oz eq serving of the MMA component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish without added liquid, binders, and extenders (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs](#));
- 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended);
- 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food/spread, or cheese substitute (low-fat recommended);
- ¼ cup of cooked beans, peas, and lentils (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the School Nutrition Programs](#));
- ½ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, and sunflower seed butter (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the School Nutrition Programs](#));
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the School Nutrition Programs](#));
- ¼ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#));
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains only soybeans (or other beans, peas, and lentils), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs ingredients (tempeh products with other ingredients require a CN label or PFS);
- 3 ounces of surimi (alternate crediting amounts must be documented with a PFS);
- ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt that does not exceed 2 grams of added sugars per ounce (refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Yogurt in the School Nutrition Programs](#)); and

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

- 1 ounce of alternate protein product (APP) that meets the USDA's APP requirements (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#)).

Commercial processed products (such as combination foods, deli meats, and sausages) do not credit based on weight; 1 ounce does not equal 1 oz eq of MMA. These foods require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information (refer to "Crediting Documentation" in this document and the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs](#)).

For more information on the MMA component, visit the "Meats and Meat Alternates" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards)

Lunch menus for each grade group must meet the weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. These nutrition standards are indicated at the bottom of each NSLP meal pattern. When selecting food items to help school lunch menus meet the dietary specifications, menu planners should consider nutrition information and limit noncreditable foods (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#)).

For information on the nutrition standards for calories and sodium, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Weekly Calorie Ranges for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) and [Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#). For additional guidance on the dietary specifications, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) and visit the "Dietary Specifications" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Effective with school year 2027-28 (July 1, 2027), the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), requires a new dietary specification for added sugars in school meals (less than 10 percent of calories) and the final sodium limit applies. Schools must implement a 15 percent reduction for lunch from the current sodium limits.

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Offer versus Serve (OVS) at Lunch

OVS is a concept that applies to menu planning and the determination of reimbursable meals for grades K-12 in the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP). It allows students to decline a certain number of meal components in the meal and select the foods they prefer to eat, while reducing food cost and waste.

OVS at lunch is required for senior high schools but is optional for all other grades. For reimbursable meals with OVS, lunch menus must offer all five meal components and students must select at least three meal components, including at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables and the full serving of at least two other meal components. Except for fruits and vegetables, student selections of less than the minimum daily serving do not count as a meal component for reimbursable meals with OVS. The table below shows a sample OVS lunch menu for grades 9-12.

Table 1. Sample OVS daily lunch menu for grades 9-12

Entrees: MMA and grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Milk
Choose 1 Baked chicken with enriched cornbread Hamburger on whole grain-rich bun Southwest chili with whole-grain roll	Choose up to 2 Carrot sticks Broccoli florets Garden salad Green beans Seasoned corn	Choose up to 2 Apple Banana Blueberries Green grapes Sliced peaches	Choose 1 Fat-free milk Low-fat milk Low-fat chocolate milk (≤ 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces)

For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Overview of Offer Versus Serve \(OVS\) in the National School Lunch Program](#) and [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#), and visit the CSDE's [OVS](#) webpage. Training on the OVS requirements for lunch is available in Module 17: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the NSLP, of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Staff training for OVS

SFAs must provide adequate training for school food service staff on how to recognize reimbursable meals with OVS. In addition to regular training, a recommended best practice for cafeteria managers is conducting a daily pre-service meeting with cashiers and servers to

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

review each menu choice and what students must select for a reimbursable meal. This helps to ensure that all food service staff (including substitutes) can accurately identify reimbursable meals.

Required Cafeteria Signage

SFAs are required to post two different types of cafeteria signage for lunch. This signage must clearly indicate the meal components for each daily menu choice and what students may select for a reimbursable meal.

1. **Signage to identify the foods and amounts offered for all planned reimbursable meals:** SFAs must post signage to identify all planned reimbursable meals (i.e., offered full meals), including the meal components and portions and any choices or combination of choices available within each meal component. This signage must be located near or at the beginning of each serving line. This requirement applies to all schools, including schools that do not implement OVS and schools that implement family-style meal service.
2. **Signage that indicates the required student selections for reimbursable meals with OVS:** SFAs must post signage that indicates the required student selections for all reimbursable meal choices with OVS. This signage must be located at all applicable points in the serving line where the meal components are available. For example, if the lunch menu for grades 9-12 offers all fruits in $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings, the serving line signage must indicate that students may select up to two choices but must select at least one choice. This requirement applies only to schools that implement OVS.

For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), and visit the "Required Signage for OVS" section of the CSDE's Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

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

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Comparison of the Grains Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Comparison of the Milk Component Requirements in the Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

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 Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_cereals_snp.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 Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_deli_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 Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

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 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 Nuts and Seeds in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

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

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

Crediting Yogurt in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_dietary_specifications_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf

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

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_meal_patterns_nslp_sbp_k12.pdf

How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Instructions for the Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

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

Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/meal_pattern/resources_school_meal_patterns_snp.pdf

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Noncreditable Foods in the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/offer-versus-serve-for-school-nutrition-programs>

Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/ovs/ovs_guide_snp.pdf

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Overview of OVS in the National School Lunch Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/ovs/overview_ovs_nslp.pdf

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

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

Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/ovs/signage_requirements_nslp_sbp.pdf

Sodium Limits for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/sodium_limits_nslp_sbp.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 01-2025: Fluid Milk Requirements for School Meals:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fluid-milk-requirements-schools>

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

Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program (CSDE):

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

Weekly Calorie Ranges for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/calorie_ranges_nslp_sbp.pdf

What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE Training Program):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

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

Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program

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/mealpattern/overview_menu_planning_nslp_grades_k-12.pdf.

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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

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