

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Meal Pattern for Preschoolers

School Year 2023-24 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024)

Food components ¹	Minimum quantities	
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Milk, fluid ² Age 1: Whole milk, unflavored Ages 2-4: Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unflavored	4 fluid ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)	6 fluid ounces ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
Meat/meat alternates (MMA) ³ Lean meat, poultry, or fish; cheese; alternate protein products (APPs) ⁴ ; or tempeh ⁵	1 ounce	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces
Surimi ⁶	3 ounces	4.4 ounces
Tofu ⁷	2.2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)	3.3 ounces ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup)
Cottage cheese	2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)	3 ounces ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup)
Egg, large	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{3}{4}$
Cooked dry beans or peas ⁸	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	$\frac{3}{8}$ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut or seed butters	2 tablespoons	3 tablespoons
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds ⁹	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce = 50%	$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce = 50%
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened ¹⁰	4 ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)	6 ounces ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
Vegetables ^{11, 12}	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Fruits ^{12, 13, 14}	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Grains ^{15, 16, 17, 18} Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalent (oz eq) ¹⁸	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq ¹⁸
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ¹⁹ , cereal grain ²⁰ , or pasta	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold) ¹⁹		
Flakes or rounds	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Puffed	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
Granola	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup

◀ Refer to page 2 for important menu planning notes ▶

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Menu planning notes for lunch

- ¹ Lunches must include the minimum serving of all five components. Use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine how foods credit and the amount that provides the required meal pattern serving. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For information on crediting documentation, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, *Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs*, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*, and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Made from Scratch" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ² Flavored milk cannot be served. For more information on the milk component, visit the "Milk Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ³ The MMA component must be served in a main dish or a main dish and one other food item. The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products that contain added ingredients (such as combination foods, deli meats, hot dogs, and sausages) require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information (refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program* and *Crediting Deli Meats in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*). The USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) best practices recommend serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese. For more information, visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ⁴ APPs must meet the requirements in appendix A of the NSLP regulations 7 CFR 210 (refer to the CSDE's *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*).
- ⁵ For a 1-ounce serving of tempeh to credit as 1 ounce of MMA, the product's ingredients must include only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. Tempeh products that contain other ingredients require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information.
- ⁶ Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A CN label or PFS is required for commercial products that indicate a different crediting amount.
- ⁷ Tofu must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (¼ cup) to credit as 1 ounce of MMA (refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*).
- ⁸ Cooked dry beans and peas (legumes) credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal (refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Legumes in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*).
- ⁹ Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts (refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*). Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the MMA component at lunch; they must be combined with another MMA to meet the total requirement. **Note:** Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food and are ground or finely chopped.
- ¹⁰ Yogurt and soy yogurt cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce (refer to the CSDE's *Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*).
- ¹¹ The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens such as lettuce and spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. A serving of canned vegetables must be

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Menu planning notes for lunch, *continued*

- drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend that preschool menus include at least one serving per week of each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes), starchy, and other). For more information on the vegetables component, refer to the CSDE's [Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP](#) and visit the "[Vegetables Component for Preschoolers](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- 12 Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or snack per day. The juice limit includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies. The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component or the vegetables component. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and [Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#). The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.
 - 13 Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at lunch. If the lunch menu includes two servings of vegetables, they must be different kinds.
 - 14 The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, and dried fruits, canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits such as raisins credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information, visit the "[Fruits Component for Preschoolers](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
 - 15 Grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains, i.e., whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ. For information on identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's [How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), and visit the "[Grains Component for Preschoolers](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
 - 16 At least one serving of grains per day must be WGR. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. For the preschool meal patterns, WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and visit the "[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
 - 17 Grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers such as graham crackers and animal crackers are not grain-based desserts. However, the CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, [Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP](#).
 - 18 Grain products and recipes must provide the required serving weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) in the USDA's Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE's [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)) or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving (refer to the CSDE's [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#)). For more information, visit the "[Ounce Equivalents](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
 - 19 Breakfast cereals cannot contain more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce, i.e., no more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal (refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)).
 - 20 Examples of cereal grains include amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat.

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For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program* and 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/Preschool/Lunch_Meal_Pattern_Preschool.pdf.

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