



Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers

**in the National School Lunch Program
and School Breakfast Program**

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



Revised March 2024

**Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504
Hartford, CT 06103-1841**

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

Connecticut State Department of Education

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/
Preschool/Menu_Planning_Guide_Preschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Menu_Planning_Guide_Preschool.pdf)

Project Director: Susan S. Fiore, M.S., R.D., Nutrition Education Coordinator

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.

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.

Contents

About this Guide	x
CSDE Contact Information	xii
Abbreviations and Acronyms	xiii
1 — Preschool Meal Patterns	1
Age Groups.....	2
Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12.....	2
Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades (Co-Mingled Meals)	3
How the meal pattern of the older grades applies to co-mingled meals.....	4
Reasons to avoid co-mingled meal service	5
When the preschool meal patterns apply.....	5
Reimbursable Meals	6
Food components and food items	6
Table 1-1. Required components for the preschool meal patterns	6
Additional foods.....	7
Nutrition Standards	7
Offer versus Serve (OVS).....	7
Preschool Meal Patterns.....	7
Table 1-2. Preschool breakfast meal pattern.....	8
Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern	11
Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern	15
Overview of Preschool Meal Pattern Requirements	19
Breakfast.....	19
Lunch	20
Snack	21
Meal pattern documentation.....	22
Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs.....	24
Children with a disability.....	24
Children without a disability	24
Choking Prevention for Young Children.....	25
Foods that are choking risks.....	25
Table 1-5. Common foods that may cause choking.....	25
Safe preparation and serving techniques to reduce choking risks.....	26
Menu Planning Resources	27

2 — Menu Records	31
Table 2-1. Required documentation for preschool meal pattern compliance.....	31
Preschool Menus.....	32
Menu forms.....	32
Using cycle menus.....	33
Sample preschool menus.....	33
Production Records	34
Sample production records.....	35
Guidance for completing production records	36
Volume versus weight	37
Electronic production records	38
Administrative Review of production records.....	38
Resources for production records	38
Standardized Recipes.....	39
Benefits of standardized recipes.....	39
Information to include on standardized recipes.....	40
Vendor-prepared foods.....	41
Verifying meal pattern compliance of recipes from other sources.....	41
Resources for standardized recipes	41
Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products	42
Table 2-3. Comparison of CN labels and PFS forms.....	43
Child Nutrition (CN) Labels.....	44
Required information for CN labels.....	44
Table 2-4. Sample CN label	45
Acceptable documentation	45
Resources for CN labels.....	46
Product Formulation Statements.....	47
Required information for PFS forms	47
Table 2-5. Sample PFS for a commercial MMA product.....	48
USDA’s PFS forms for the NSLP and SBP Preschool Meal Patterns.....	49
Resources for verifying accuracy of PFS forms.....	49
Buy American Requirement	51
Resources for Buy American.....	51
Nutrition Information.....	53
Determining crediting information.....	53
Making meal modifications.....	55
Nutrition information for USDA Foods.....	55
Nutrition disclosure for APPs.....	55



Determining Food Yields and Crediting	56
Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs.....	56
Determining in-house product yields.....	57
Yield study procedures	58
3 — Meal Components	59
Creditable Foods.....	59
Minimum creditable amounts.....	60
Requirement for visible components	61
Resources for creditable foods.....	61
Noncreditable Foods.....	63
Prohibited noncreditable foods.....	64
Milk Component.....	65
Serving Size for Milk.....	65
Table 3-1. Required servings of the milk component.....	65
Allowable Types of Milk	65
Table 3-2. Allowable types of milk in the preschool meal patterns.....	66
Additional Milk Requirements for Public Schools.....	67
Transitioning from Breastmilk or Infant Formula to Whole Milk	67
Breastmilk past age 1	67
Transitioning from Whole Milk to Low-fat or Fat-free Milk	68
Menu Documentation for Milk.....	68
Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities	68
USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes	70
Table 3-3. USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes.....	70
Additional nondairy milk substitute requirements for public schools	71
Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk.....	71
Crediting Milk in Smoothies.....	72
Milk in Prepared Foods.....	72
Serving Milk from Coolers.....	72
Keeping Milk Cold.....	72
Noncreditable Foods in the Milk Component	73
Resources for Crediting Milk.....	73
Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component.....	75
MMA versus Protein.....	76
Required Daily Servings of MMA.....	77
Table 3-4. Required servings of the MMA component.....	77
Minimum creditable amount for MMA	77
Serving Size for MMA	78

Crediting Documentation for Commercial Processed Products	79
Main Dish Requirement for Lunch	79
Requirement for recognizable main dish	79
MMA at Breakfast.....	80
Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)	81
Criteria for APPs	81
Required documentation for APPs	82
Crediting Cheeses.....	83
Table 3-5. MMA contribution of cheeses.....	83
Menu items that contain cheese	84
Crediting Deli Meats, Hot Dogs, and Sausage.....	85
Liquids, binders, and extenders	86
Table 3-6. Examples of binders and extenders	86
Developing recipes for deli meats.....	87
Crediting Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products	88
Crediting Eggs	90
Menu items that contain eggs	90
Crediting Hummus as MMA	91
Crediting Legumes as MMA.....	91
Serving size for legumes as MMA.....	92
Table 3-7. MMA contribution of cooked legumes.....	92
Crediting legumes in recipes as MMA.....	92
Crediting roasted or dried legumes as MMA	93
Resources for legumes	93
Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as MMA	94
Table 3-8. MMA contribution of cooked 100 percent legume flour pasta products	94
Crediting MMA in Combination Entrees.....	95
Crediting MMA in Commercial Products	96
Crediting Nuts and Seeds.....	97
Limit for nuts and seeds at lunch.....	97
Crediting nut and seed butters	97
Table 3-9. MMA contribution of nut and seed butters	98
Serving size considerations	98
Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters in commercial products.....	99
Noncreditable nuts and seeds.....	99
Crediting Surimi Seafood	100
Table 3-10. MMA contribution of surimi seafood	100
Crediting Tempeh	101

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products.....	102
Table 3-11. MMA contribution of tofu.....	103
Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt.....	104
Serving size for yogurt.....	104
Table 3-12. MMA contribution of yogurt.....	104
Sugar limit for yogurt.....	104
Crediting fruits in yogurt.....	105
Crediting yogurt in smoothies	105
Nutrition guidance	105
Noncreditable yogurt	106
Resources for crediting yogurt	106
Noncreditable Foods in the MMA Component.....	107
Resources for Crediting MMA.....	108
Vegetables Component.....	111
Serving Size for Vegetables.....	112
Table 3-13. Required servings of the vegetables component	112
Meeting the required vegetable servings	113
Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch.....	113
Crediting Canned Vegetables	113
Crediting Dried Vegetables.....	114
Determining rehydrated volume	114
Crediting Hominy as Vegetables.....	115
Crediting Legumes as Vegetables	115
Crediting roasted or dried legumes as vegetables	116
Crediting hummus as vegetables	116
Crediting legumes in recipes as vegetables	117
Crediting documentation for commercial legume products	117
Crediting Mixed Vegetables at Lunch	117
Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour.....	118
Crediting vegetable flours as vegetables.....	118
Crediting vegetable flours from one vegetable subgroup.....	118
Crediting vegetable flours with other non-vegetable ingredients.....	119
Signage and staff training for vegetable flour pastas.....	119
Crediting Pureed Vegetables.....	120
Unrecognizable pureed vegetables.....	120
Pureed vegetables in smoothies.....	120
Crediting Raw Leafy Greens.....	121
Crediting Vegetable and Fruit Mixtures.....	121
Crediting Soups	121

Table 3-14. Allowable commercial vegetable soups in the NSLP and SBP	122
Considerations for serving size	122
Considerations for container size.....	122
Noncreditable soups	123
Crediting Vegetable Juice	123
Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies	123
Crediting Vegetables in Combination Foods	124
Crediting Vegetables with Added Ingredients	125
Produce Safety	125
Noncreditable Foods in the Vegetables Component	126
Resources for Crediting Vegetables.....	127
Fruits Component.....	129
Serving Size for Fruits	130
Table 3-15. Required servings of the fruits component	130
Meeting the required fruit servings.....	130
Crediting Canned Fruits	131
Crediting Coconut.....	132
Crediting Dried Fruits	132
Crediting Fresh Fruits.....	133
Table 3-16. Meal pattern contribution of fresh fruits	134
Crediting Frozen Fruits	135
Crediting Fruits in Commercial Products.....	136
Crediting Fruits in Grain-Based Desserts.....	136
Crediting Fruits in Yogurt.....	137
Crediting Fruits with Added Ingredients	137
Crediting Fruit Juice.....	138
Juice concentrates.....	138
Juice blends	139
Frozen juice products	139
Apple cider	139
Coconut water.....	139
Juice ingredients.....	140
Juice limit	140
Offering juice as an extra menu item	141
Crediting Pureed Fruits	142
Unrecognizable pureed fruits	142

Crediting Fruits in Smoothies.....	143
Juice limit for smoothies	143
Crediting fruits in commercial smoothies.....	143
Mixed fruits and vegetables in smoothies.....	144
Crediting other components in smoothies	144
Required documentation for smoothies	144
Noncreditable commercial smoothies.....	145
Crediting considerations for smoothies	145
Noncreditable Foods in the Fruits Component.....	147
Resources for Crediting Fruits	148
Grains Component.....	151
Overview of Crediting Requirements	152
Grain-based Desserts.....	152
Identifying grain-based desserts	152
Foods that are not grain-based desserts.....	153
Serving grain-based desserts served as extra foods	153
Resources for grain-based desserts	153
Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements.....	155
Creditable Grains.....	155
Crediting Criteria for Commercial Grain Products.....	156
Multiple creditable grains in commercial grain products.....	157
Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals	158
Crediting Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods	159
Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods	159
Multiple creditable grains in commercial combination foods.....	160
Crediting Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch	160
Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal	161
Methods for identifying nixtamalized corn.....	161
Crediting Hominy as Grains	162
Crediting Popcorn.....	163
Table 3-18. Grains contribution of popped popcorn	163
Crediting considerations for popcorn	163
Noncreditable Foods in the Grains Component.....	164
Grain Crediting Worksheets	165
Resources for Crediting Grains.....	166
Part B: WGR Requirement.....	169
Menu Planning Considerations	169
Serving the same WGR foods to preschoolers and grades K-12.....	170
Overview of Rule of Three	171
Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Grain Products	172



Multiple whole grains in commercial grain products	173
Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Cooked Breakfast Cereals.....	173
WGR Criteria for RTE Breakfast Cereals	174
Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods	175
Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods	175
Multiple whole grains in commercial combination foods	176
Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch	176
Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Combination Foods Made from Scratch	177
Required Documentation for Grains	177
Resources for WGR Criteria.....	179
Part C: Serving Size.....	180
Table 3-19. Required servings of the grains component.....	180
Meeting the Required Grain Servings	180
USDA’s Exhibit A Chart.....	181
Methods to Determine Oz Eq	182
Method 1: Weight or volume (USDA’s Exhibit A chart).....	182
Method 2: Creditable grains	182
When method 2 is required for commercial products	183
Grain crediting tools	184
Crediting Considerations for Bread.....	186
Crediting one slice of bread	186
Crediting sandwiches with two slices of bread.....	187
Resources for Oz Eq	187
4 — Meal Service.....	189
Lunch Periods.....	189
Breakfast Periods	190
Meal Schedules	190
Allowable Types of Meal Service for Preschoolers.....	191
Pre-plated meal service.....	191
Cafeteria-style meal service	191
Family-style meal service.....	191
Table 4-1. Comparison of pre-plated and family-style meal service.....	192
Combination-style meal service	193
Requirements for Family-style Meal Service.....	194
Requirement for written procedures	196
Resources for family-style meal service	197
Intent to Participate in the Meal Service	198
Table 4-2. Examples of child’s intent to eat.....	199

Classroom Meals	200
Field Trip Meals	200
Meals Consumed Off-site	201
Prohibition of Gender Separation	202
Water Availability During Meal Service	203
Examples of how to offer water	203
Field trips	204
Considerations for offering water	204
Allowable costs for offering water	205
Resources for offering water	206
5 — Resources	207
Comparison Charts	207
Crediting Requirements and Documentation	208
CSDE Guides	210
Fruits Component	211
Grains Component	212
Meal Patterns and Menu Planning	216
Meat/Meat Alternates Component	218
Milk Component	220
Regulations and Policy	221
Vegetables Component	223
Water Availability During Meal Service	225
Websites	225
Glossary	229

About this Guide

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program* contains comprehensive information and resources for school food authorities (SFAs) on planning menus to meet the requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP.

The preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children. They are defined by the USDA final rules below, and are specified in [7 CFR 210.10\(p\)](#) and [7 CFR 210.10\(o\)\(3\)](#) of the NSLP regulations and [7 CFR 220.8\(o\)](#) of the SBP regulations.

- Final Rule (81 FR 24347): *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (April 25, 2016):
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/25/2016-09412/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>
- Final Rule Correction (81 FR 75671): *CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (November 1, 2016):
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>
- Final Rule (87 FR 6984): *Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium* (February 7, 2022):
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/07/2022-02327/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium>

The USDA provides additional guidance on the meal pattern requirements through the policy memos on the USDA's [FNS Documents & Resources](#) webpage.

The contents of this guide are based on the current USDA regulations and policy as of the date of this publication. This information is subject to change. The CSDE will update this guide as the USDA issues additional policies and guidance regarding the preschool meal patterns. Please check the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage for the most current version. For more information, contact Susan S. Fiore, M.S., R.D., Nutrition Education Coordinator, at susan.fiore@ct.gov or 860-807-2075.

The mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations does not imply approval or endorsement by the CSDE or the USDA.

CSDE Contact Information

For questions regarding the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and ASP, please contact the school nutrition programs staff in the CSDE's Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs.

School Nutrition Programs Staff	
County	Consultant
Middlesex County (includes Regions 4, 13, and 17) Tolland County (includes Regions 8 and 19)	Jennifer Bove 860-807-2044 Jennifer.bove@ct.gov
Fairfield County (includes Region 9) Litchfield County (includes Regions 1, 6, 7, 12, and 14) School wellness policies	Fionnuala Brown 860-807-2129 fionnuala.brown@ct.gov
Hartford County (includes Region 10)	Teri Dandeneau 860-807-2079 teri.dandeneau@ct.gov
New Haven County (includes Regions 5, 15, and 16)	Greg King 860-713-6804 greg.king@ct.gov
New London County Windham County (includes Region 11) Claims processing	Susan Alston 860-807-2081 susan.alston@ct.gov
Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504 Hartford, CT 06103-1841	

For information on the Special Milk Program (SMP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), visit the CSDE's [Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

APP	alternate protein product
AR	Administrative Review
ASP	Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CN	Child Nutrition
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
FBG	Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA)
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FDP	Food Distribution Program
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
FR	Federal Register
HHFKA	Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296)
ICN	Institute of Child Nutrition
LEA	local educational agency
MMA	meat/meat alternates
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OVS	offer versus serve
oz eq	ounce equivalents
PFS	product formulation statement

RCCI	residential child care institution
SBP	School Breakfast Program
SSO	Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP
SFA	school food authority
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WGR	whole grain-rich
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

1 — Preschool Meal Patterns

The meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children. The current preschool meal patterns were effective October 1, 2017, as legislated by the USDA Final Rule (81 FR 24347), *CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*. This final rule updated the preschool meal patterns to align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans by including more whole grains and a greater variety of vegetables and fruits, and reducing added sugars and solid fats in preschool meals.

The NSLP regulations define the preschool lunch meal pattern ([7 CFR 210.10\(p\)](#)) and preschool snack meal pattern ([7 CFR 210.10\(o\)\(3\)](#)). The preschool breakfast meal pattern is defined by [7 CFR 220.8\(o\)](#) of the SBP regulations.

The goal of the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs is to improve and maintain children's health and nutrition while promoting the development of good eating habits. The preschool meal patterns are designed to meet the nutritional needs of young children. They help young children eat the types and amounts of foods that best support their growth and development. To receive reimbursement for meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers, school food authorities (SFAs) must provide the required food components and servings for each age group.



Age Groups

The preschool meal patterns include two age groups: ages 1-2; and ages 3-4. When a 5-year-old is in preschool or a 4-year-old is in kindergarten, SFAs may serve the appropriate meal pattern for that grade.

- If a 5-year-old is in preschool, the preschool meal patterns apply.
- If a 4-year-old is in kindergarten, the appropriate meal pattern for that school's grade grouping applies. The breakfast meal pattern grade groups could be grades K-5, grades K-8, or grades K-12. The lunch meal pattern grade groups could be grades K-5 or grades K-8. The Afterschool Snack Program meal pattern grade group is K-12.

For information on the meal patterns for grades K-12, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Serving the Same Foods to Preschoolers and Grades K-12

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) and grades K-12 have different requirements. SFAs must consider these requirements when making menu planning and purchasing decisions for school meals and ASP snacks that will be served to both groups. Foods served to both groups must comply with whichever meal pattern requirements are stricter. The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- The WGR criteria for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 are stricter than the WGR criteria for preschool meal patterns. Grain foods served to both groups must comply with the WGR criteria for grades K-12. **Note:** Grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns, even if they are WGR. For more information, refer to "[Grain-based desserts](#)" in section 3.
- The preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for yogurt and breakfast cereals, but the meal patterns for grades K-12 do not. Yogurt and breakfast cereals served to both groups must comply with the preschool sugar limits.

The only exception to this requirement is for co-mingled meals, where preschoolers and older grades (such as K-5 or K-8) are served meals or ASP snacks in the same service area at the same time. When meals are co-mingled, SFAs may serve the same foods to both grade groups.

For more information on the differences between the meal patterns for preschoolers and grades K-12, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and [Comparison of ASP Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12](#). Training is available

in “Module 3: Meal Pattern Comparison of Preschool and Grades K-12” of the CSDE’s [Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades (Co-Mingled Meals)

“Co-mingling” is the practice of serving meals to a variety of grades in the same service area at the same time, such as preschoolers and grades K-5 or preschoolers and grades K-8. This practice typically occurs due to operational constraints within a school, such as limited time and space. When students are co-mingled, the school may use the meal pattern of the older grades for preschoolers if the following criteria are met:

- the preschoolers and students from older grade groups (such as K-5, K-8, or K-12) are served meals together in the same place at the same time;
- it is hard to tell the preschoolers from older students; and
- it would be operationally difficult to serve different foods or different amounts of foods during the combined meal service.

The examples below show how these requirements apply.

- When preschoolers and grades K-5 are served lunch or breakfast in the same service area at the same time, SFAs may choose to follow the K-5 meal pattern for both groups.
- When preschoolers and grades K-8 are served lunch or breakfast in the same service area at the same time, SFAs may choose to follow the K-8 meal pattern for both groups.
- When preschoolers and grades K-12 are served ASP snack in the same service area at the same time, SFAs may choose to follow the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 for both groups.



How the meal pattern of the older grades applies to co-mingled meals

When SFAs use the meal pattern of the older grades for preschoolers during co-mingled meal service, all daily and weekly requirements of that meal pattern also apply to preschool meals. For example, the SFA's menus must meet:

- the minimum daily and weekly portions for the older grades based on the applicable meal pattern for that grade group and meal (such as the lunch meal pattern for grades K-5);
- the weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards) for the older grades for calorie ranges and limits for saturated fat and sodium;
- the weekly WGR requirement for the older grades, i.e., at least 80 percent of all grain foods at breakfast must be WGR and at least 80 percent of all grain foods at lunch must be WGR;
- the weekly juice limit at breakfast for the older grades, i.e., the total amount of all fruit and vegetable juice offered during the week cannot exceed 50 percent of the total amount of all fruits and vegetables offered during the week,
- the weekly fruit juice limit at lunch for the older grades, i.e., the total amount of all fruit juice offered during the week cannot exceed 50 percent of the total amount of all fruits offered during the week,
- the weekly vegetable juice limit at lunch for the older grades, i.e., the total amount of all vegetable juice offered during the week cannot exceed 50 percent of the total amount of all vegetables offered during the week,
- the minimum weekly servings of the five vegetable subgroups at lunch for the older grades, i.e., dark green, red/orange, legumes, starchy, and other vegetables; and
- the milk variety requirement for the older grades, i.e., schools must offer at least two different milk choices and at least one choice must be unflavored. Flavored milk is allowed as a milk choice for preschoolers when meals are co-mingled.

In addition, if the school implements offer versus serve (OVS) for the older grades at breakfast and lunch, the same OVS requirements also apply to reimbursable meals for preschoolers. This is the only situation when OVS is allowed for preschoolers. Without co-mingling, OVS is not allowed for preschool meals (refer to “[Offer versus Serve \(OVS\)](#)” in this section).

Training on co-mingled meals is available in “Module 2: Introduction to Preschool Meal Patterns” of the CSDE’s [Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Reasons to avoid co-mingled meal service

The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals and ASP snacks to preschoolers and older students to best address their nutritional needs. There are several reasons why SFAs should avoid using mingled meals, whenever possible.

1. Serving preschoolers separately from older students may allow for closer supervision of the younger children, thereby allowing staff to better assist students with food packaging and monitor mealtime behaviors that may increase the risk of choking.
2. A separate family-style meal service allows preschool children to serve themselves, which can help children develop independence and build self-confidence.
3. Younger children may feel distracted or overwhelmed by older children, which may affect the amount that they eat within the provided mealtime.
4. The preschool meal pattern provides the amounts and types of foods at meals that most younger children need for healthy growth and development.

For more information, refer to [USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers](#) and the USDA's resource, [Serving School Meals to Preschoolers](#), and visit the "[Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades \(Co-mingled Meals\)](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

The preschool meal patterns provide the amounts and types of foods that most younger children need for healthy growth and development. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals and ASP snacks to preschoolers and older students to best address their nutritional needs.

When the preschool meal patterns apply

SFAs must follow the preschool meal patterns when meals are served to preschoolers in a different area (such as a separate serving line or classroom meals) or at a different time than older grades. The USDA allows the option to serve the meal pattern of the older grades to preschoolers only when meals are served to preschoolers and older grades in the same service area at the same time.

The USDA recommends using the specific grade-appropriate meal pattern for each grade group whenever possible because this provides the most appropriate foods and portions for each grade group.

Reimbursable Meals

The preschool meal patterns consist of minimum daily servings of specific food components for each age group. Meals and ASP snacks are eligible for USDA reimbursement when they contain the minimum serving of each required food component.

Food components and food items

A food component is one of the five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates (MMA). Table 1-1 summarizes the required servings of each food component in the preschool meal patterns.

Menu items contribute to the food components. A menu item is any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk; and may contribute to one or more food components. For example, a hamburger (MMA component) on a whole-grain bun (grains component) is one menu item that contributes to two food components.

Each component has specific crediting requirements. All foods must meet these requirements to credit as a component of reimbursable meals and snacks. This includes commercial products, foods made from scratch by the SFA, and foods prepared by vendors. For more information on the crediting requirements, refer to [section 3](#).

Table 1-1. Required components for the preschool meal patterns		
Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
3 components¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Vegetables, fruits, or both • Grains² 	5 components¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • MMA • Vegetables³ • Fruits • Grains 	Choose 2 of 5 components¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • MMA • Vegetables • Fruits • Grains
<p>¹ The required serving for each component is the specified amount for each age group in the preschool meal patterns.</p> <p>² MMA may substitute for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week (refer to “MMA at breakfast” in section 3).</p> <p>³ Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at lunch. If the meal includes two servings of vegetables, they must be two different kinds (refer to “Substituting vegetables for fruits at lunch” in section 3).</p>		

Additional foods

Preschool menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of additional foods based on the nutritional needs of each age group. Preschoolers have small appetites and might not consume the nutritious meal components if the preschool menu includes additional foods.

When preschool menus include additional foods, the CSDE encourages SFAs to choose nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to the nutrition needs of each age group. Examples include vegetables; fruits; whole grains; low-fat and nonfat milk products; legumes; and lean meats, fish, poultry.

Some additional foods do not credit toward the preschool meal patterns and cannot be served or should be served only in moderation. For more information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in section 3.

Nutrition Standards

Unlike the meal patterns for grades K-12, the preschool meal patterns do not include weekly dietary specifications (nutrition standards) for calories, saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium. However, the preschool meal patterns require nutrition standards for some specific foods. These include sugar limits for yogurt and breakfast cereals and a minimum protein requirement for tofu. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt](#),” “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#),” and “[Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products](#)” in section 3. The preschool meal patterns also prohibit deep-fat drying foods on site.

Offer versus Serve (OVS)

OVS is an optional approach to menu planning and meal service that allows children in grades K-12 to decline some of the foods offered in a reimbursable meal. The USDA does not allow OVS for preschool meals in the NSLP and SBP unless the meal service is co-mingled (refer to “[Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades \(Co-Mingled Meals\)](#)” in this section). OVS is not allowed for the ASP.

Preschool Meal Patterns

The following pages include the preschool meal patterns for breakfast (table 1-2), lunch (table 1-3), and snack (table 1-4). Handouts of the preschool meal patterns are available on the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on the preschool meal patterns is available in “Module 2: Introduction to Preschool Meal Patterns” of the CSDE’s [Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Table 1-2. Preschool breakfast meal pattern

Food components ¹	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 (fl oz) (½ cup)	6 fl oz (¾ cup)
Vegetables, fruits, or portions of both ^{3, 4, 5}	¼ cup	½ cup
Grains ^{7, 8, 9, 10} Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) ¹⁰	½ oz eq ¹⁰
WGR, enriched, or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ¹¹ , cereal grain ¹² , or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup
WGR, enriched, or fortified ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal (dry, cold) ¹¹		
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup
Puffed	¾ cup	¾ cup
Granola	⅛ cup	⅛ cup
◀ Refer below for important menu planning notes ▶		
Menu planning notes for breakfast ¹ Breakfast must include the minimum serving of all three 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.		

Table 1-2. Preschool breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes for breakfast, *continued***

- 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 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 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 Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the “[Vegetables Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ⁴ 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.
- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ 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.

Table 1-2. Preschool breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes for breakfast, *continued***

- ⁷ 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 Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#) and visit the “[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ⁸ 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 Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- ⁹ Meat/meat alternates (MMA) may substitute for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. A 1-ounce serving of the MMA component substitutes for 1 oz eq of the grains component. For more information, visit the USDA’s webpage, [Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#), and the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ¹⁰ 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 the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#) 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 the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#) 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.
- ¹¹ 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 NSLP and SBP](#)).
- ¹² Examples of cereal grains include amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat.

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern

Food components ¹	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 fl oz ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)	6 fl oz ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) ³ Lean meat, poultry, or fish; cheese; alternate protein products (APPs) ⁴ ; or tempeh ⁵	1 ounce	1½ 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	$\frac{1}{2}$ 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 next page for important menu planning notes ▶		

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern, *continued***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 [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.

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes for lunch, *continued***

- 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 [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 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 Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) 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.

Table 1-3. Preschool lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes for lunch, *continued***

- 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 the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#) 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 the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#) 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.

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern

Serve any two of the five components (must be two different components) ^{1, 2}	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Milk, fluid ³ Age 1: Whole milk, unflavored Ages 2-4: Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unflavored	4 fl oz ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)	4 fl oz ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) ⁴ Lean meat, poultry, or fish; cheese; alternate protein products (APPs) ⁵ ; or tempeh ⁶	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Surimi ⁷	2 ounces	2 ounces
Tofu ⁸	1.1 ounces ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	1.1 ounces ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)
Cottage cheese	1 ounce ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	1 ounce ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)
Egg, large	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Cooked dry beans or peas ⁹	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	$\frac{1}{8}$ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut or seed butters	1 tablespoon	1 tablespoon
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds ¹⁰	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
Yogurt or soy yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened ¹¹	2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)	2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)
Vegetables ^{12, 13}	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Fruits ^{13, 14,}	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Grains ^{15, 16, 17, 18} Whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched bread or bread product, e.g., biscuit, roll, or muffin	$\frac{1}{2}$ 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 next page for important menu planning notes ▶		

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes for snack**

- ¹ Snacks must include the minimum serving of two of the five components. Only one of the two required snack components may be a creditable beverage, such as milk or juice. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving a vegetable or fruit for at least one of the two required snack 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 In addition to the ASP meal pattern requirements, ASP snacks in public schools that implement Healthy Food Certification (HFC) under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS). For more information, visit the CSDE's [HFC](#), [CNS](#), and [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpages.
- ³ 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.
- ⁴ The serving size of MMA 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 [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.
- ⁵ 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](#)).
- ⁶ 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.

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes for snack, *continued***

- ⁷ 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.
- ⁸ Tofu must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ 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](#)).
- ⁹ 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](#)).
- ¹⁰ Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts (refer to [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)). **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.
- ¹¹ 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](#)).
- ¹² 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component. 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. 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 Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "Vegetables Component for Preschoolers" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- ¹³ 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.

Table 1-4. Preschool snack meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes for snack, *continued***

- 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 Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#) 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 the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#) 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 the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#) 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.

Overview of Preschool Meal Pattern Requirements

This section summarizes the requirements for the preschool meal patterns. For information on the required records for documenting meal pattern compliance, refer to [section 2](#). For detailed guidance on the crediting requirements for each food component, refer to [section 3](#).

Breakfast

- Required components:** Breakfasts must include three components: one serving of the milk component; one serving of vegetables, fruits, or both; and one serving of the grains component. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity for each age group in the preschool breakfast meal pattern (refer to [table 1-2](#) in this section).
- Breakfast cereals:** SFAs must document whether cooked and RTE breakfast cereals are WGR, enriched, or fortified. This information may be listed on the preschool menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all cereals served in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to “[Required Documentation for Grains](#)” in “Part B: WGR Requirement” of section 3.
- Cereal with milk:** The menu must list the specific type of cereal as one component (e.g., “whole-grain granola”) and the specific type of fluid milk as another (e.g., “unflavored low-fat milk”). “Cereal with milk” does not indicate that the breakfast menu provides the required amount of cereal or the required amount and appropriate type of milk.
- Juice and fruit:** SFAs must document the specific types of juices and fruits served. For example, indicate “orange juice” instead of “juice,” and “banana or diced peaches” instead of “fresh fruit choice.” This information may be listed on the preschool menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all types of juices and fruits served in preschool meals and ASP snacks.
- Juice limit:** If the breakfast menu credits juice as the vegetables and fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at lunch, supper, or snack that same day. For more information, refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in section 3.
- Substituting MMA for grains:** The MMA component may substitute for the entire grains component at breakfast up to three times per week. A ½-ounce serving of the MMA component substitutes for ½ oz eq of the grains component. For more information, refer to “[MMA at Breakfast](#)” in section 3.

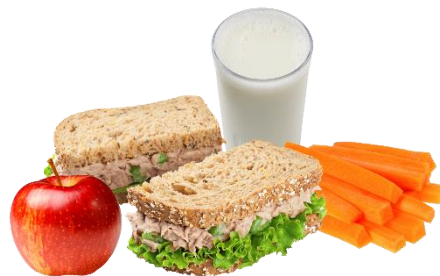


1 | Preschool Meal Patterns

- **Water availability:** SFAs must make water available during the meal service but cannot offer water in place of the required food components. For more information, refer to [“Water Availability”](#) in section 4.

Lunch

- **Required components:** Lunches must include five components: one serving of the milk component; one serving of the MMA component; one serving of the vegetables component; one serving of the fruits component (or vegetable substitutions); and one serving of the grains component. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity in the preschool lunch meal pattern (refer to [table 1-3](#) in this section).
- **Substituting vegetables for fruits:** The vegetables component may substitute for the fruits component at any lunch. Lunch menus must include one serving of the vegetables component and one serving of the fruits component, or two different servings of the vegetables component. Lunches cannot contain two servings of only the fruits component. For more information, refer to [“Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch”](#) in section 3.
- **Vegetables and fruits:** SFAs must document the specific types of vegetables and fruits served. For example, indicate “garden salad with lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, and tomatoes” instead of “salad,” and “fresh fruit salad (apples, oranges, bananas, and strawberries)” instead of “fruit salad.” This information may be listed on the preschool menu, daily production record, or other menu documentation such as a list of all types of vegetables and fruits served in preschool meals and ASP snacks.
- **Water availability:** SFAs must make water available during the meal service but cannot offer water in place of the required food components. For more information, refer to [“Water Availability”](#) in section 4.



Snack

- **Required components:** Snacks must include any two of the five components. A snack that contains two foods from the same component is not reimbursable, e.g., orange juice (fruits component) and applesauce (fruits component). However, a snack that contains orange juice (fruits component) and carrot sticks (vegetables component) is reimbursable because it contains two different components. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity in the ASP preschool meal pattern (refer to [table 1-4](#) in this section).
- **Best practice for vegetables and fruits:** Snack menus should include a vegetable or fruit as often as possible. The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend making at least one of the two required snack components a vegetable or fruit.
- **Beverage limit:** If the snack menu includes a creditable beverage (milk or juice), the other snack component cannot be a beverage. The snack menu cannot include juice when milk is the only other snack component.
- **Offering milk with yogurt:** If the snack menu includes milk, the other snack component should not be yogurt. The CSDE recommends this practice to increase nutrient variety.
- **Offering more than two food items:** If the snack menu includes more than two different food items, at least two food items must meet the required food components and servings. An example is a snack that contains yogurt (MMA component), strawberries (fruits component), and granola (grains component). The snack menu or other documentation must clearly indicate the serving size and which items contribute to the preschool meal pattern.
- **Offering noncreditable foods:** A snack menu that includes a noncreditable food must also contain the minimum required serving of at least two components. For example, a snack of strawberry gelatin (noncreditable food), whole-grain crackers (grains component), and unflavored low-fat milk (milk component) contains three food items, but only two components. To be reimbursable, this snack menu must provide the minimum serving of both milk and crackers.
- **Water availability:** SFAs must make water available during the snack service but cannot offer water in place of the required food components. Water should be offered as a beverage when the snack menu does not include milk or juice. For more information, refer to “[Water Availability](#)” in section 4.

For additional guidance, visit the USDA’s [Serving Snacks in the CACFP](#) webpage.

Meal pattern documentation

SFAs must maintain appropriate documentation to indicate that preschool meals and ASP snacks meet the meal pattern and crediting requirements.

- **Menu:** All sites must have a written menu to document that preschool meals and ASP snacks provide the required components and quantities for each age group. For more information, refer to “[Menus](#)” in section 2.
- **Production records:** SFAs must have daily production records on file for all preschool meals and ASP snacks. The production record must list all meal components and menu items, including all meal choices, food components, types of milk, leftovers, substitutions, and all other food items such as condiments and other noncreditable foods. For more information, refer to “[Production Records](#)” in section 2.
- **Commercial foods:** SFAs must maintain Child Nutrition (CN) labels or production formulation statement (PFS) forms on file to document the meal pattern contribution of all commercial foods served in preschool menus, such as entrees, grains, and vegetables and fruits with added ingredients, e.g., coleslaw, potato salad, and carrot-raisin salad. CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute to the MMA component. However, they usually indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products, such as grains, vegetables, and fruits. For more information, refer to “[Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels](#)” and “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” in section 2.
- **Foods made from scratch:** SFAs must maintain standardized recipes on file to document the meal pattern contribution of all foods prepared from scratch. Vendors that prepare foods for SFAs must also be able to document the preschool meal pattern contribution of their recipes. Examples of foods prepared from scratch include entrees, grains (such as pancakes, muffins, and breads), and vegetables and fruits with added ingredients, e.g., coleslaw, potato salad, and carrot-raisin salad. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2.
- **Alternate protein products (APPs):** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that APPs meet the requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). For more information, refer to “[Crediting Alternate Protein Products \(APPs\)](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *[Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)*.

- **Breakfast cereals:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that all breakfast cereals meet the preschool sugar limit (no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce) and that compliance was determined using one of the USDA’s three allowable methods. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.
- **Tofu and tofu products:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that tofu and tofu products contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume). For more information, refer to “[Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.
- **WGR foods:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that WGR foods were identified using one of the USDA’s six allowable methods for determining compliance with the WGR criteria. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s *Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*. **Note:** The NSLP and SBP meal patterns have different WGR criteria for preschoolers and grades K-12. Grain foods (excluding grain-based desserts) that meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 will meet the preschool WGR criteria. For more information, refer to “[Grain-based desserts](#)” and “[WGR requirement](#)” in section 3.
- **Yogurt:** SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that all yogurt and soy yogurt products meet the preschool sugar limit (no more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce). For more information, refer to “[Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.



Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs

Schools and institutions that participate in the school nutrition programs must comply with the federal nondiscrimination laws and requirements for meal modifications for children with special dietary needs. These requirements are summarized below. For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Children with a disability

The USDA requires reasonable meal modifications on a case-by-case basis for children whose disability restricts their diet, based on a medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority. "Case-by-case basis" means that the meal modifications are specific to the individual medical condition and dietary needs of each child.

The Connecticut State Department of Public Health defines a recognized medical authority as a state-licensed health care professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law. This includes licensed physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy (DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN). The CSDE's medical statements and accompanying instructions and guidance are available in the "[Medical Statements for School Nutrition Programs](#)" section of the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Children without a disability

The USDA allows, but does not require, meal modifications for children whose special dietary needs do not constitute a disability. Examples of optional modifications include requests related to religious or moral convictions, general health concerns, and personal food preferences, such as parents who prefer that their children eat a gluten-free diet or organic foods because they believe it is healthier. SFAs may choose to make these accommodations on a case-by-case basis. Meal modifications for preschoolers without disabilities must comply with the preschool meal patterns.

Choking Prevention for Young Children

Children younger than age 4 are at the highest risk of choking. SFAs should consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what foods to offer in preschool menus. This consideration is especially important when serving young children or children with a disability. Serve foods in the appropriate sizes, shapes, and textures to reduce choking risks. Avoid serving foods that are as wide around as a nickel, which is about the size of a young child's throat. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Foods that are choking risks

While nearly any food can cause choking in children, foods that are the same size and shape as a child's airway pose the greatest risk. For example, peanuts may block the lower airway. A chunk of hot dog or a whole grape may completely block the upper airway. Foods likely to cause choking are in many shapes, sizes, and textures. These include foods that are round, tube-shaped, small, hard, thick, sticky, smooth, slippery, or easily molded to stick to the airway (refer to table 1-5).

Table 1-5. Common foods that may cause choking	
Firm, smooth, or slippery foods that slide down the throat before chewing, such as:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole grapes, cherries, berries, melon balls, and cherry/grape tomatoes Hot dogs and similarly shaped foods, including sausages, meat sticks, and cheese sticks (even when cut into round slices) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peanuts, seeds, and nuts Whole beans Hard or round candy, jelly beans ¹
Small, dry, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole, such as:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Popcorn Hard pretzels and pretzel chips Potato chips, corn chips, and similar snack foods Small pieces of raw vegetables, e.g., raw carrot rounds, baby carrots, string beans, celery, and other raw or partially cooked hard vegetables Apples or other hard pieces of raw fruit, especially those with hard pits or seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooked or raw whole-kernel corn Raw green peas Peanuts, nuts, and seeds, e.g., sunflower or pumpkin seeds Plain wheat germ Whole-grain kernels such as rice or wheat berries Crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole-grain kernels Ice cubes ¹

Table 4. Common foods that may cause choking, *continued*

Sticky or tough foods that do not break apart easily and are hard to remove from the airway, such as:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters | • Fish with bones |
| • Large, hard pieces of uncooked dried fruits or vegetables | • Marshmallows ¹ |
| • Tough meat or large chunks of meat | • Chewing gum ¹ |
| • Large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese | • Chewy fruit snacks ¹ |
| | • Caramels, gum drops, and gummy candies, or other gooey or sticky candy ¹ |

¹ These foods do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

Safe preparation and serving techniques to reduce choking risks

SFAs can help reduce the risk of choking by avoiding high-risk foods; changing the shape, size, and texture of foods before offering them to children; and serving certain foods in small, manageable bites. SFAs should use the techniques below to prepare foods that are easy for young children to chew and swallow.

- Cook foods until soft enough to pierce easily with a fork.
- Cut soft food into thin slices or small pieces no larger than ½ inch.
- Cut tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving.
- Grind up tough meats and poultry.
- Cook foods such as carrots and celery until slightly soft, then cut into short strips instead of round pieces.
- Mash or puree foods until soft.
- Remove seeds, pits, and tough skins/peels from fruits and vegetables.
- Cut round foods such as grapes, cherries, berries, and melon balls in half lengthwise, and then cut into smaller pieces no larger than ½ inch.
- Grate or thinly slice cheeses.
- Chop peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grind before adding to prepared foods.

- Spread nut and seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers) crackers. Use only creamy, not chunky, nut and seed butters.
- Avoid serving foods that are as wide around as a nickel, which is about the size of a young child's throat.
- Serve shredded carrots and chopped tomatoes instead of baby carrots and cherry tomatoes.

Menu Planning Resources

The resources and websites below provide information and guidance on planning meals and ASP snacks to meet the preschool meal patterns. For detailed information on crediting foods in the preschool meal patterns, visit the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources with guidance on meeting the preschool meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE’s [Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns](#).

- Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASP_Handbook.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE training webinars):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Training Webinar Series (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-halftime-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series>
- CACFP Meal Pattern Training Slides (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/meal-pattern-training-slides-cacfp>
- CACFP Meal Pattern Training Worksheets (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp-meal-pattern-training-worksheets>
- CACFP Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>
- CACFP Training Tools (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/training-tools-cacfp>
- Choking Prevention (CSDE’s Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

- Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Comparison_Preschool_Grades_K-12_SNP.pdf
- Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/Comparison_Preschool_Grades_K-12_ASP.pdf
- Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Comparison_Grain_Crediting_SNP.pdf
- Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus (“Related Resources” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers 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
- Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.org/resources/1575/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers/118740/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers.pdf>
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>
- Menu Forms for Preschoolers (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#MenuFormsPreschoolers>
- Menu Planning Basics: A Guide for CACFP Operators in Child Care (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/menu-planning-basics-cacfp/>

- Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>
- Menu Planning for Preschoolers (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#MenuPlanningPreschoolers>
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- Reducing the Risk of Choking in Young Children at Mealtimes (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/reducing-risk-choking-young-children-mealtimes>
- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Menu_Planning.pdf
- Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Resources_Preschool_Meal_Patterns.pdf
- Serving School Meals to Preschoolers (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-school-meals-preschoolers>
- Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- USDA Memo CACFP 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements>
- USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the CACFP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp>
- USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/flexibility-co-mingled-preschool-meals-questions-and-answers>

For information on recipes, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” and “[Resources for standardized recipes](#)” in section 2. For additional resources, refer to section 5.



2 — Menu Records

SFAs must be able to document that preschool meals and ASP snacks provide the required food components and quantities. Without appropriate documentation, foods and beverages cannot credit toward reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. The CSDE will disallow reimbursement for noncompliant meals and ASP snacks.

SFAs should ensure that all appropriate staff are aware of the documents needed to demonstrate the menu's compliance with the preschool meal patterns. Staff must also understand how to complete and maintain appropriate documentation.

Table 2-1 summarizes the required documentation for preschool meal pattern compliance. SFAs must maintain these records on file for the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Table 2-1. Required documentation for preschool meal pattern compliance	
Commercial foods	Foods made from scratch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menus • Production records • Child Nutrition (CN) labels • Product formulation statement (PFS) forms • Compliance with Buy American provision • Nutrition information (Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients) ¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menus • Production records • Standardized recipes • Nutrition information
¹ Many commercial products require nutrition information to determine crediting information.	



Preschool Menus

SFAs must develop preschool menus that represent the actual food components served for each meal and snack claimed for reimbursement. The menu must identify the date of the meal service and all food items served, including the type of milk and which grain products are WGR.

Cycle menus or menus developed in advance of the meal service must specify the month and day and indicate any menu substitutions that occur. For more information, refer to “[Using cycle menus](#)” in this section. The SFA must maintain all menus on file with other required records in accordance with the NSLP and SBP regulations.

Menu forms

The menu form is an important tool to help SFAs comply with the preschool meal patterns. Using an appropriate menu form helps to ensure that preschool meals and ASP snacks include the required food components and servings. When reviewing preschool menus for meal pattern compliance, CSDE staff cannot determine if meal components are offered unless they are indicated on the menu.

The CSDE strongly discourages SFAs from using a blank calendar as a menu form because the menu planner might omit food components or provide insufficient servings. This could result in noncompliant menus. Meals with missing food components or insufficient servings are not reimbursable in the preschool meal patterns.

The CSDE’s sample preschool weekly menu forms listed below help menu planners include the required food components and servings.

- ASP Menu Form for Ages 1-2
- ASP Menu Form for Ages 3-4
- Five-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Five-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Five-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Five-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Four-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Four-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Four-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Four-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 3-4;
- Seven-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 1-2;
- Seven-day Breakfast Menu Planning Form for Ages 3-4;

- Seven-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 1-2; and
- Seven-day Lunch Planning Form for Ages 3-4.

These menu forms are available in the “[Menu Forms for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. SFAs may adapt these forms to meet individual program needs. Alternate menu formats should contain appropriate guidance regarding the required food components and servings for each preschool meal and ASP snack served to each age group.

Using cycle menus

The CSDE strongly encourages SFAs to use cycle menus for preschool meals and ASP snacks. A cycle menu is a series of menus planned for a specific period (such as four weeks) with a different menu for each day. Cycle menus can help SFAs comply with the meal pattern requirements, increase variety, control food cost, control inventory, and save time.

The CSDE recommends that cycle menus include at least four weeks. This increases the variety of preschool meals and ASP snacks offered and ensures that children are not served the same combination of foods too often.

The ICN’s [Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers](#) features four seasonal four-week cycle menus for preschoolers. For more information on cycle menus, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition’s (ICN) online learning course, [CARE Connection – Planning Cycle Menus in Child Care](#), and the CSDE’s [Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Sample preschool menus

The preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same. SFAs may use the CSDE’s sample CACFP menus for ages 3-5 listed below to provide meal and snack ideas for preschoolers.

- Sample Cold Breakfast Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Hot Breakfast Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Cold Lunch/Supper Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Hot Lunch/Supper Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes
- Sample Snack Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

These sample menus are available in the “[Sample Menus for CACFP Child Care Programs](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage. Each menu contains at least the minimum required food components and servings. Some menus include additional components or exceed the minimum serving requirements.

2 | Menu Records

Whether the local menus meet the preschool meal patterns is determined by the type of foods purchased and the recipes and preparation techniques used by the SFA. SFAs should use the FBG to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the required serving for each meal pattern component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.

For resources on menu planning, refer to “[Menu Planning Resources](#)” in this section and the CSDE’s *Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs*. Additional resources are available in the “[Menu Planning for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s *Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs* webpage.

Production Records

The USDA regulations for the NSLP ([7 CFR 210.10\(a\)\(3\)](#)) and SBP ([7 CFR 220.8\(a\)\(3\)](#)) require that SFAs must maintain daily production records for all school meals. A production record is a working tool that outlines the type and quantity of foods that need to be purchased and available for the meal service.

Production records must show how the offered meals contribute to the required food components and food quantities for each meal served to each grade group every day. In addition to documenting reimbursable meals, production records provide valuable information to help with menu planning, forecasting products and amounts, purchasing foods, controlling waste, identifying acceptable menu items; and conducting a nutrient analysis of menus.

Table 2-2 summarizes what production records should include and when food service staff should complete the information.

The USDA requires that school nutrition programs must complete daily menu production records that document the service of reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. Production records must demonstrate how meals and ASP snacks contribute to the required food components for each day of operation. SFAs must keep production records on file for three years plus the current school year.

Table 2-2. Information to include on production records

Complete before meal service	Complete after meal service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of site • Meal date • Meal type (breakfast or lunch) • All planned menu items including the specific type and amount of all meal choices, food components, types of milk, leftovers, substitutions, and all other food items such as condiments and other noncreditable foods • Recipe name and number or product name and code • Planned serving size and number of servings for reimbursable meals for each age/grade group, and if applicable, nonreimbursable meals (e.g., second meals and adult meals), and a la carte sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperatures (complete throughout meal service) ¹ • Total amount/quantity of food prepared (based on the FBG) for each food item or menu item, e.g., number of servings, pounds, cans, and pieces • Amount of leftover food for each food item or menu item • Total amount of food served • Number of reimbursable meals served to each age/grade group • Number of nonreimbursable meals served, e.g., second meals and adult meals
<p>¹ Food service staff should record temperatures throughout the meal service to ensure that hot foods are held at 135 °F or above and cold foods are held at 41 °F or below. For additional guidance, visit the CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.</p>	

Sample production records

The CSDE's sample production records listed below help SFAs document compliance with the preschool meal patterns.

- ASP Production Record for Ages 1-2
- ASP Production Record for Ages 3-4
- ASP Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Completed Sample)
- Breakfast or Lunch: Production Record for Ages 1-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP or SBP
- Breakfast or Lunch: Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP or SBP
- Breakfast: Production Record for Ages 1-4 (Preschool) in the SBP
- Breakfast: Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Preschool) in the SBP

2 | Menu Records

- Lunch: Production Record for Ages 1-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP
- Lunch: Production Record for Ages 3-4 (Preschool) in the NSLP

These forms are available in the “[Production Records for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. SFAs may adapt these forms to meet individual program needs.

Guidance for completing production records

Production records must indicate the specific type and amount of each food item and must be completed correctly to provide accurate documentation of reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. When using production records, SFAs should ensure that food service personnel follow the guidance below.

- Use a physical written production for each site, including satellite locations.
- Complete all information. Check that information is not missing or incomplete.
- Record the information legibly (handwriting can be read).
- Use the proper weight or volume measure for each food item. For example, use cups for fruits and vegetables instead of ounces (refer to “[Volume versus weight](#)”).
- Enter the number of servings, pounds, cans, or pieces (not the number of portions prepared) in the column for the total quantity of food used.
- List the specific type and amount of each food item separately. Do not indicate foods as assorted choices. For example, instead of “assorted juices,” list apple juice, orange juice, and pineapple juice. Instead of “assorted fruits and vegetables,” list fruit choices,” or “vegetable choices,” list each type of fruit and vegetable.
- List each type of milk served, e.g., low-fat milk, skim milk, and nonfat chocolate milk.
- List all condiments, e.g., ketchup, mustard, and salad dressing.
- List portion sizes accurately. Ensure that the listed portion sizes are the same as the amount being served to students.
- List all items prepared for the meal including daily items and alternate meal choices.
- Accurately record the “planned” servings for each age/grade group.
- List nonreimbursable adult meals and second student meals separately from reimbursable student meals.
- Add any extra amounts of food needed during the meal service period.
- Indicate if any substitutions are made to the planned menu items.
- Indicate if leftovers are used.

SFAs should maintain production records on file with other required documentation. The CSDE will review menu documentation during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Volume versus weight

The amounts listed in production records must reflect the servings required by the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. The meal patterns indicate the servings of the food components by weight (ounces) or volume (fluid ounces). For example, the servings for the vegetables component and fruits component are indicated by volume (cups). The servings of most foods in the MMA component are indicated by weight (ounces). However, volume is required for some MMA such as peanut butter (tablespoons), cottage cheese (cups), and legumes (cups).

Volume and weight measurements are not the same. Volume is the amount of space an ingredient occupies in a measuring container. Volume measures include teaspoon, tablespoon, fluid ounce, cup, pint, quart, and gallon.

Listing incorrect serving sizes on production records is a common compliance issue. An example is listing the serving for a fruit or vegetable as “4 ounces” instead of “½ cup.” This does not document that the fruit or vegetable serving meets the meal pattern requirements because these two measurements are not the same. A serving of 4 ounces by weight may or may not equal ½ cup of fruits or vegetables.



The weight of a specific volume of food varies depending on the density of the food. For example, a ½-cup serving of lettuce weighs less than a ½-cup serving of cooked butternut squash. A 1-cup serving of whole-grain flaked cereal weighs less than 1 cup of baked beans. For many foods, a specific measure of volume does not equal the same measure of weight. There are some exceptions, such as yogurt (a ½-cup serving of yogurt equals 4 ounces by weight) and certain types of canned fruits and vegetables. For information on the weight equivalent of servings measured by volume, refer to the USDA’s FBG.

Menu planners should use the USDA’s FBG to determine the amount of a food that meets the required meal pattern serving. Production records must reflect this amount. For example, the servings of vegetables, fruits, peanut butter, and legumes must be listed by volume, not weight. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.

For information on weights and measures, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition’s (ICN) resource, [Basics at a Glance](#), and the “[Weights and Measures](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Electronic production records

SFAs may choose to use electronic production records but must follow specific recruitments. A physical written copy of the production record and all applicable standardized recipes must be available at each site to guide the daily menu production. SFAs must regularly review and update their electronic production records to ensure accuracy and compliance with all federal and state regulations.

Administrative Review of production records

During the Administrative Review, the CSDE will evaluate the SFA's production records to ensure that they:

- include all information necessary to support the claiming of reimbursable meals, i.e., all menu items are listed and all required meal components are offered;
- are used for proper planning, such as determining meal consumption and leftovers;
- document that the prepared foods are creditable for the total number of reimbursable meals offered and served;
- document a la carte sales, adult meals, and other nonreimbursable meals (such as student purchases of second meals), including the number of portions for each of these food items;
- document that menus meet the requirements for fluid milk, the weekly whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement (at least 80 percent of all grains offered at lunch and breakfast are WGR), the weekly vegetable subgroups, the weekly juice limits, and the weekly limit for grain-based deserts at lunch;
- document that menus meet the weekly quantity requirements for fluid milk, vegetables, fruits, grains, and meats/meat alternates; and
- align with standardized recipes, i.e., the ingredients in the SFA's standardized recipes correspond to the menu items listed on the production records.

Resources for production records

The websites and resources below provide guidance on developing and using production records.

- Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (ICN):
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/>
- Production Records for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Production-Records-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- Requirements for Production Records in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/ProdRecord/Requirements_Production_Records_NSLP_SBP.pdf

- Weights and Measures (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage)
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#WeightsMeasures>

Standardized Recipes

The USDA's regulations (7 CFR 210.10(b)(5)) require that SFAs develop and follow standardized recipes for foods prepared from scratch. The USDA defines a standardized recipe as one that has been tried, adapted, and retried several times for use by a given foodservice operation and has been found to produce the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized quantity recipes produce 25 or more servings.

Standardized recipes are required for foods prepared from scratch, such as cornbread, coleslaw, potato salad, soup, lasagna, chicken stir-fry, and macaroni and cheese. They are also required for foods that require some additional processing by adding other ingredients after purchasing. Some examples include making rice or pasta with butter, sautéing vegetables in oil, adding dressing to salad, assembling a sandwich, adding eggs and oil to a muffin mix, and reconstituting canned soup with milk.

Standardized recipes are not required for commercial foods when the SFA does not add any ingredients after purchasing. Examples include fruits and vegetables (fresh, canned, and frozen); breads, rolls, and baked products; and other commercially prepared products such as entrees, soups, and side dishes.

Benefits of standardized recipes

Standardized recipes document the specific meal pattern contribution of one serving. For example, a standardized lasagna recipe might indicate that one serving credits as 1½ ounces of the MMA component, ¼ cup of the vegetables component, and ½ oz eq of the grains component. In addition to documenting the meal pattern contribution, standardized recipes provide many other benefits. Standardized recipes help school nutrition programs ensure:

- consistent food quality;
- predictable yield;
- consistent nutrient content;
- customer satisfaction;
- food cost control;
- efficient purchasing procedures;
- inventory control;

- labor cost control;
- increased employee confidence;
- reduced recordkeeping; and
- successful completion of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Information to include on standardized recipes

SFAs may standardize their own local recipes or use existing standardized recipes such as the USDA's recipes. Standardized recipes should include the following:

- recipe name that describes the recipe;
- recipe number that is unique to each recipe;
- recipe category classification, e.g., main dish, grains, and vegetables;
- recipe yield (weight and/or volume and number of servings), i.e., the amount produced when production is complete;
- ingredients used;
- ingredient amounts per yield, i.e., the quantity (weight or volume) of all ingredients for each yield, such as 50 servings or 100 servings;
- preparation equipment and utensil, such as pans, steamers and mixers;
- food safety Critical Control Points (CCPs), i.e., time and temperature critical limits for each step of preparing, holding, serving, and storing (visit the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage);
- cooking time and temperature, as required (visit the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage);
- serving size (the weight and/or volume of the single portion size);
- serving utensils such as scoops, ladles, and spoodles; and
- meal pattern component contributions per serving, e.g., fruits component, vegetables component, grains component, and meats/meat alternates component.

The CSDE's [Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs](#) provides a template that SFAs may use to develop standardized recipes. For more information, refer to "[Determining Food Yields and Crediting](#)" and "[Resources for standardized recipes](#)" in this section.

SFAs must ensure that local menus comply with the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. When using non-USDA recipes and menus, menu planners should check these resources for compliance with the meal patterns and adapt as needed.

Vendor-prepared foods

Vendors that prepare foods for SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the meal pattern contribution per serving. SFAs are responsible for reviewing the crediting information to ensure that it is accurate.

Verifying meal pattern compliance of recipes from other sources

SFAs must ensure that local menus comply with the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. When using recipes and menus from sources other than the USDA (such as websites, organizations, and other schools), menu planners should check these resources for compliance with the NSLP and SBP meal patterns and adapt as needed.

Resources for standardized recipes

The websites and resources below assist SFAs with developing and using standardized recipes.

- Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster (ICN):
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/basics-at-a-glance/>
- Child Nutrition Recipe Box (ICN):
<https://theicn.org/cnrb/>
- Crediting Foods Made from Scratch in Preschool Menus (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#ScratchFoods>
- Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW) of the FBG (USDA):
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/>
- Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning#Recipes>
- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Menu_Planning.pdf
- Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Standardized_Recipe_Form_Schools.docx
- Standardized Recipes (Chapter 4: Meal Preparation Documentation of the USDA's Menu Planner for School Meals):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner>

2 | Menu Records

- Standardized Recipes (CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#StandardizedRecipes>
- USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs (ICN):
<https://theicn.org/cicn/usda-recipe-standardization-guide-for-school-nutrition-programs/>
- Weights and Measures (CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage)
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#WeightsMeasures>
- Why Use Standardized Recipes? Fact Sheet (ICN):
<https://theicn.org/resources/527/food-service-management-skills/107291/why-use-standardized-recipes.pdf>

For more information, visit the “[Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” section of the CSDE’s Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products

SFAs must be able to document the meal pattern contribution of commercial processed foods served in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For example, to credit a breaded chicken patty product as the MMA component and grains component for ages 3-4 at lunch, the manufacturer’s documentation must indicate that one serving of the product contains 1½ ounces of cooked chicken and ½ oz eq (11 grams or 0.4 ounce) of WGR or enriched breading. The acceptable types of documentation for commercial processed foods include:

- the original CN label from the product carton or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or
- a PFS signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the amount of each meal pattern component contained in one serving of the product.

The CSDE will review product documentation during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks.

Table 2-3 compares the criteria for CN labels and PFS forms. Only CN labels provide a guarantee of the product’s contribution to the USDA’s meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. SFAs must check the crediting information on the PFS form for accuracy prior to using the product in reimbursable meals and ASP snacks.

Table 2-3. Comparison of CN labels and PFS forms		
Criteria	CN label	PFS
Standard information required	✓	
Reviewed, approved, and monitored by the USDA	✓	
Includes USDA guarantee of meal component contribution for Child Nutrition Programs	✓	
Distinct six-digit product identification number	✓	
SFAs must check crediting information for accuracy prior to use		✓

For additional guidance on accepting product documentation, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [*Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*](#), and visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Child Nutrition (CN) Labels

The USDA's CN Labeling Program is a voluntary federal labeling program for the Child Nutrition Programs. A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. CN labeling provides a warranty that the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements, as printed on the label.

CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that provide at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component of the USDA's meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. Examples include beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions.

CN labels will usually indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products. For example, CN-labeled pizza may list contributions to the MMA, grains, and vegetables components; and CN-labeled breaded chicken nuggets may list contributions to the MMA and grains components.

Required information for CN labels

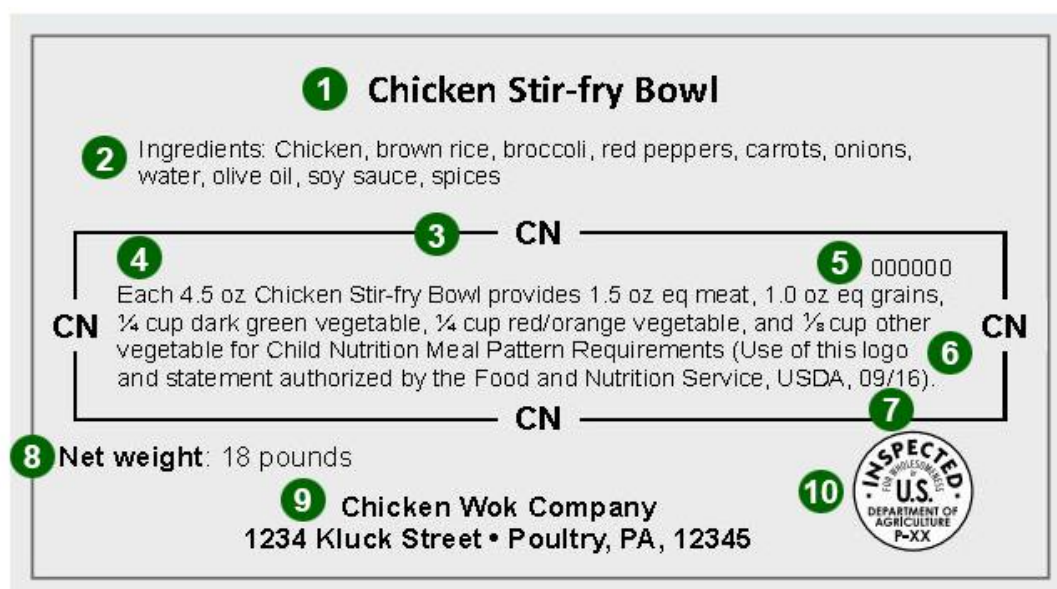
The CN label is found on the product packaging and will contain the following:

- the CN logo, which is a distinct border with “CN” on each side, surrounding the meal pattern contribution statement;
- the meal pattern contribution statement; which provides the specific crediting information for the serving;
- a six-digit product identification number, which is assigned by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of the USDA;
- the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) authorization statement;
- the month and year of AMS approval; and
- other required label features, including product name, ingredients statement, inspection legend, company signature/address line, and net weight.



Table 2-4 shows an example of a CN label and the required components. For detailed guidance, refer to Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation 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*.

Table 2-4. Sample CN label



- 1 Product name
- 2 Ingredients statement
- 3 CN logo
- 4 Meal pattern contribution statement
- 5 Six-digit product identification number
- 6 FNS authorization statement
- 7 Month and year of AMS approval
- 8 Net weight
- 9 Company signature/address line
- 10 Inspection legend

Acceptable documentation

Acceptable and valid documentation for a CN label includes 1) the original CN label from the product carton; or 2) a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton. CN labels that are photocopied or photographed must be visible and legible.

Manufacturers may use a CN label with a watermark when the CN logo and contribution statement are on product information other than the actual product carton. A watermarked CN label is also acceptable documentation for the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs when it is attached to a Bill of Lading (invoice) containing the product name. Original CN labels on product cartons will not have a watermark.

SFAs must maintain CN labels on file with all other menu records. The CSDE recommends maintaining original CN labels in a designated binder or folder for easy reference, and storing digital photos and scans of CN labels in an easily accessible electronic folder.

Resources for CN labels

The resources below provide additional information on CN labels.

- Child Nutrition (CN) Labels (CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#CNlabels>
- CN Labeling Program (USDA website):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling-program>
- Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation (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>
- USDA Memo SP 11-2015 (v2), CACFP 10-2015, and SFSP 13-2015: CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn-labels-copied-watermark-acceptable-documentation>
- USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015, and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/administrative-review-process-regarding-child-nutrition-cn-label-watermarked-cn-label-and>
- Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs (CDSE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CN_Labels_SNP.pdf

The USDA’s [Authorized Labels and Manufacturers](#) webpage lists approved CN-labeled products and manufacturers. Additional crediting documentation resources are available in the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Product Formulation Statements

A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA's meal patterns for Child Nutrition Programs. Unlike CN labels, the information on PFS forms can vary among manufacturers because these forms are not reviewed, approved, or monitored by the USDA. Table 2-5 shows an example of a PFS for a commercial MMA product.

Required information for PFS forms

A PFS is an official certified document of the company. It must be on company letterhead and signed by a person of authority in the company, such as the quality control manager or the appropriate staff in nutrition or research and development. To be acceptable as crediting documentation for the school nutrition programs, a PFS must include the information below.

1. Product name, which must match or have a similar description to the name on the product label.
2. Product code, which is unique identifier assigned by the manufacturer and may include numbers, letters, or a combination of both.
3. Serving or portion size, which must represent the amount of the product as purchased or ready for serving.
4. Creditable ingredients, which must match or have a similar description to the ingredients listed on the product's label and a food item in the FBG.
5. Information to demonstrate how the creditable ingredients contribute toward the meal pattern based on the FBG.

If the PFS does not meet these requirements, the SFA cannot accept it and the product cannot credit in school meals.

SFAs must verify the PFS for accuracy before including the commercial product in reimbursable meals and, if needed, request supporting documentation from the manufacturer. SFAs must maintain PFS forms and crediting documentation on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

For guidance on how to review a PFS, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs*](#), and Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation 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*](#). For guidance on how to review a grain PFS, refer to the CSDE's [*When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs*](#) or section 6 of the CSDE's guide, [*Meeting the Whole Grain-rich*](#)

2 | Menu Records

Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12.

Table 2-5. Sample PFS for a commercial MMA product



ABC Chicken Company

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Meats/Meat Alternates (M/MA) in Child Nutrition Programs

Program operators should include a copy of the label from the purchased product package in addition to the following information on letterhead signed by an official company representative.

Product Name: Grilled Chicken Nuggets Code No.: 123456
Manufacturer: ABC Chicken Company Serving Size: 4 nuggets (2.6 ounces)

I. Meats

Fill out the chart below to determine the creditable amount of Meats.

DESCRIPTION OF CREDITABLE MEAT INGREDIENT PER FOOD BUYING GUIDE (FBG)	OUNCES PER RAW PORTION OF CREDITABLE MEAT INGREDIENT A	MULTIPLY	FBG YIELD ¹ B	CREDITABLE AMOUNT A x B
Boneless chicken	2.88 ounces	x	.7	2.016
		x		
		x		
C. Total Creditable Meats Amount⁵				2.016

¹ FBG yield = Additional Information column.

Total weight (per portion) of product as purchased 2.6 ounces

Total creditable amount of product (per portion). (Reminder: total creditable amount (per portion) cannot exceed the total weight (per portion).) 2 ounce equivalents

I certify that the above information is true and correct and that a 2.6 ounce serving of the above product (ready for serving) contains 2 ounces of equivalent meat/meat alternate when prepared according to directions.

I further certify that any APP used in the product conforms to the Food and Nutrition Service Regulations (7 CFR Parts 210, 220, 225, 226, Appendix A) as demonstrated by the attached supplier documentation.

John Smith
Signature

President
Title

John Smith
Printed Name

12/09/2022 (800) 123-4567
Date Phone Number

USDA's PFS forms for the NSLP and SBP Preschool Meal Patterns

The USDA's [Food Manufacturers/Industry](#) website provides sample PFS templates for the MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains components. The PFS forms that apply to the NSLP and SBP preschool meal patterns are listed below.

- **Grains:** Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf
- **Grains (completed sample):** Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Example_Grains_Oz_Eq.pdf
- **MMA:** Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf
- **Vegetables and fruits:** Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Total_Veg_Fruits_Fillable_508.pdf

Manufacturers are not required to use the USDA forms. However, alternate PFS forms must include all required information from the USDA forms.

Resources for verifying accuracy of PFS forms

SFAs must verify PFS forms for accuracy before including commercial products in reimbursable meals. The resources below provide guidance on reviewing a PFS.

- FBG Module 3: Product Formulation Statements (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.docebosaas.com/learn/course/external/view/elearning/139/fbg-module-3-product-formulation-statements-pfs>
- Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement: Is it Acceptable? (ICN and USDA):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtUo70IP9cc>

- Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement: Is it Acceptable? Presentation Slides (ICN and USDA):
<https://theicn.org/resources/930/march-2016/109876/manufacturers-product-formulation-statement-pfs03-31-16.pdf>
- Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation (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>
- Product Formulation Statements (CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#PFS>
- Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Product_Formulation_Statements.pdf
- Reviewer’s Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf
- Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/manufacturePFStipsheet.pdf>
- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/When_Commercial_Grain_Products_Require_PFS_SNP.pdf

Additional crediting documentation resources are available in the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Buy American Requirement

All foods sold in the USDA’s school nutrition programs must comply with the Buy American provision under the federal regulations for the NSLP (7 CFR 210.21 (d)) and SBP (7 CFR 220.16 (d)). This provision requires that schools and institutions purchase domestic commodities or products to the maximum extent practicable.

- A “domestic commodity or product” is an agricultural commodity that is produced in the United States, and a food product that is processed in the United States substantially using agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States.
- “Substantially” means that over 51 percent of the final processed product consists of agricultural commodities that were grown domestically.

There are **very limited exceptions** to the requirement that SFAs must purchase domestic foods. Nondomestic foods are permitted only:

- after first considering domestic alternatives; and
- when domestic foods are unavailable or prohibitively expensive.

SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that any purchases of nondomestic foods meet these criteria. The CSDE’s *Buy American Justification Form* assists SFAs with meeting this requirement. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the SFA’s school nutrition programs.

SFAs must ensure that all foods purchased using funds from the nonprofit school food service account comply with the Buy American provision. This includes foods that are part of reimbursable meals and competitive foods sold a la carte, i.e., foods and beverages sold separately from reimbursable meals.

Resources for Buy American

The resources below provide guidance on the Buy American provision.

- Buy American Factsheet (USDA):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Procure/Fact_Sheet_Buy_American.pdf
- Buy American Justification Form (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Procure/Buy_American_Form.pdf

2 | Menu Records

- Letter to Industry on the Buy American Provision (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/Buy_America_Industry_Letter.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 32-2019: Buy American and the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/buy-american-and-agriculture-improvement-act-2018>
- USDA Memo SP 38-2017: Compliance with and Enforcement of the Buy American Provision in the NSLP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/compliance-enforcement-buy-american>

For additional guidance, visit the “[Buy American Provision](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Procurement for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Nutrition Information

SFAs must obtain nutrition information for all commercially prepared foods used to prepare school meals. If a processed product does not have a Nutrition Facts panel, the SFA is responsible for obtaining the necessary information from the manufacturer.

In addition to CN labels and PFS forms, nutrition information helps menu planners to determine if certain commercial products credit toward the preschool meal patterns. Nutrition information is also required to meet the USDA requirements to provide reasonable meal modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet.

Preschool meals are not included when the CSDE conducts a nutrient analysis of school meals as part of the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. The weekly dietary specifications for grades K-12 do not apply to preschool meals.

However, SFAs are still responsible for maintaining nutrition information for commercially prepared foods used to prepare preschool meals. SFAs operating the NSLP and SBP must follow the NSLP and SBP regulations. Therefore, SFAs must maintain product Nutrition Facts labels, ingredients, and recipes, as required by the USDA's regulations and policies for the NSLP and SBP.



Determining crediting information

For many commercial products, menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients to determine crediting information. Some examples of when nutrition information is required to credit commercial products toward the preschool meal patterns are listed below. These examples are not all-inclusive.

- Crediting breakfast cereals and yogurt:** The preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for breakfast cereals and yogurt. Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label for these foods to determine whether the sugars per serving complies with the preschool sugar limit. For more information, refer to “[Sugar limit for yogurt](#)” and “[Sugar limit for breakfast cereals](#)” in section 3.
- Crediting deli meats and hotdogs:** Deli meats, hotdogs, and similar foods that contain binders and extenders (but are not CN labeled) require a PFS to determine crediting information. The ingredients statement indicates if a product contains added liquids, binders, and extenders. This alerts the menu planner that a PFS is required to

determine the correct crediting information for the product. For more information, refer to [“Liquids, binders, and extenders”](#) in section 3.

- Crediting tempeh:** To credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component, tempeh ingredients must be limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If a tempeh product contains other ingredients, SFAs must obtain a CN label or PFS to document crediting. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if tempeh products contain additional ingredients. For more information, refer to [“Crediting Tempeh”](#) in section 3.
- Crediting commercial tofu products:** To credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component, commercial tofu products must contain at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (volume). Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label to determine the amount of protein per serving. For more information, refer to [“Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products”](#) in section 3.
- Crediting commercial grain products:** To credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component, a commercial grain product must meet the specific weight for the appropriate grain group in the USDA Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), [Preschool Meal Patterns](#) and [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)). Menu planners must review the Nutrition Facts label to determine the manufacturer’s serving weight, which is required to determine the oz eq contribution of the serving. For more information, refer to [“Part C: Grain Ounce Equivalents”](#) in section 3.
- Crediting WGR commercial grain products:** To credit as a WGR food, commercial grain products must contain a whole grain as the first ingredient or the greatest ingredient by weight. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if a whole grain is the first ingredient. For more information, refer to [“Part B: Whole Grain-rich Criteria”](#) in section 3.
- Crediting commercial smoothies:** Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. Menu planners must read the ingredients statement to determine if commercial smoothies contain these ingredients. For more information, refer to [“Commercial smoothies”](#) in section 3.

Making meal modifications

SFAs will need to review nutrition information when planning meal modifications for children with special dietary concerns such as food allergies, lactose intolerance, and celiac disease. In addition, the USDA considers providing nutrition information for foods served in school meals to be part of reasonable meal modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet. SFAs are responsible for making nutrition information for school meals available to children (when age appropriate), families, school nurses and other medical professionals, and appropriate school staff, as needed. For information on the requirements for meal modifications, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Nutrition information for USDA Foods

The USDA's [USDA Foods in Schools Product Information Sheets](#) webpage provides product information sheets for USDA Foods. These product information sheets include the product's description, crediting and yield information, culinary tips and recipes, food safety information, and a general Nutrition Facts label. However, they do not include a product-specific Nutrition Facts label or ingredients statement.

For further processed USDA Foods, the nutrition information and ingredients for USDA direct delivery food items (brown box) may vary based on the vendor who received the bid. If a SFA requires product information for students with food allergies or other dietary needs, the SFA must obtain product-specific information from the manufacturer.

To find the nutrition information for USDA direct delivery food items, check the outside of the case or the inside packaging. If nutrition information is not available, check with the product's manufacturer. The processor's agreement with the Connecticut Food Distribution Program (FDP) requires that the processor must provide product nutrition information to SFAs upon request and available on their website. For additional assistance, contact the [Connecticut FDP staff](#).

Nutrition disclosure for APPs

The NSLP regulations ([7 CFR 210.10 \(n\)](#)) require that schools must accurately represent foods on lunch and breakfast menus. Menus cannot claim that a food item is beef, pork, poultry (such as chicken or turkey), or seafood (such as fish or tuna) if the food item contains more than 30 percent APPs. The names used for these menu items must reflect that they are not 100 percent meat, poultry, or fish. For more information on APPs, refer to "[Alternate protein products \(APPs\)](#)" in section 3.

Determining Food Yields and Crediting

Yield refers to the amount (weight, volume, or number of servings) of a product at the completion of the preparation process. For example, 10 pounds of raw ground beef might yield 8 pounds after cooking; 5 pounds of fresh carrots might yield 3½ pounds after peeling and trimming; a vegetable soup recipe might yield 2 gallons after cooking, and a muffin recipe might yield 24 servings after baking. Yield affects how a product or recipe credits toward the school meal patterns.

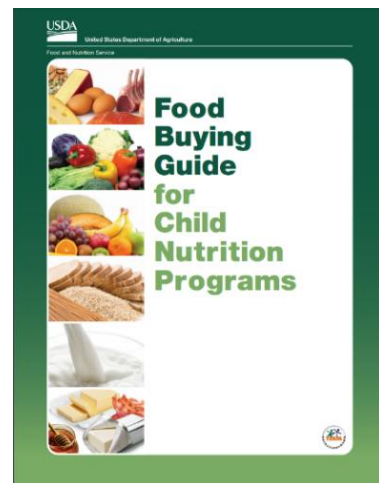
The yield of a product or recipe depends on the type of food and the preparation process. Processed fruits and vegetables yield less than the purchased amount due to peeling and trimming. Raw meats yield less than the purchased amount because moisture and fat are lost in the cooking process. Rice and pasta yield more than the purchased (dry) amount because water is absorbed during the cooking process.

The USDA's FBG is the definitive resource for determining yields and crediting information for the Child Nutrition Programs. SFAs should ensure that menu planners use this resource to plan reimbursable meals in the school nutrition programs.

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

The USDA's FBG provides yield information for common types and customary sizes of milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains, including commercially available foods and USDA Foods. The FBG helps menu planners determine:

- a food's specific contribution toward the meal pattern requirements;
- how many servings a specific quantity of food will provide;
- what quantity of raw product will provide the amount of ready-to-cook food in a recipe; and
- how much food to buy.



The FBG helps menu planners determine how recipes and purchased foods contribute to the meal patterns for school nutrition programs. For example, menu planners can use the FBG to determine how much raw broccoli provides 50 servings of ½ cup of cooked vegetable or how much uncooked brown rice provides 100 servings of ½ cup of cooked rice. This information is essential for documenting compliance with the meal patterns.

The FBG is available as an interactive web-based tool (which includes the Exhibit A Grains Tool, Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW), and Product Formulation Statement (PFS) Workbook), a mobile app, and a downloadable PDF. These resources are available on the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The FBG webpage also includes training modules and recorded webinars. The resources below provide guidance on using the FBG.

- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: Training Resources (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-training-resources>
- Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue! (USDA webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue>
- Food Buying Guide Goes Digital! (USDA webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-goes-digital>
- Navigating the Food Buying Guide FBG Calculator (USDA webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/navigating-food-buying-guide-fbg-calculator>

For additional resources, visit the “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs \(FBG\)](#)” of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Determining in-house product yields

The yield information provided in the FBG represents average yields based on research conducted by the USDA. Many factors affect yield, including:

- the quality and condition of the food purchased;
- storage conditions and handling;
- the equipment used in preparation;
- cooking method and time;
- the form in which the food is served, e.g., mashed, fried, or baked potatoes; and
- the serving utensils and portion control methods used.



If a food service operation consistently obtains a higher or lower yield for a product than the yield listed in the FBG, the SFA should conduct an in-house yield study to determine the actual number of portions of a specified size that the product provides. In-house yields are also required for products not listed in the FBG. The CSDE allows SFAs to use in-house yields if they are properly documented and follow the CSDE’s yield study procedures.

Yield study procedures

SFAs can use the procedures below to determine and document in-house yields for food products.

1. Select a day when the product is served on the menu. Use at least four separate samples of the product to determine yields. A “sample” is the product pack unit, such as number 10 cans or 5-pound bags. If the food service operation uses more samples, the yield data will be more accurate.
2. For the best yield estimate, at least two people should independently portion and count the samples. Each person completes half of the samples. For example, with a sample of four cans, each person works alone to measure and count the servings from two cans.
3. Select the appropriate measuring utensil for the portion size being served, such as a number 16 scoop/disher or ½-cup measuring spoon. For information on measuring utensils, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition’s (ICN) *Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster* and visit the “[Weights and Measures](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
4. Fill the measuring utensil level to the top of the measure.
5. Carefully count and document the number of portions in each sample.
6. Add the total number of servings from each of the samples.
7. Divide the total number of servings by the number of samples to get the average number of servings per sample.
8. Complete the CSDE’s *Yield Study Data Form for Child Nutrition Programs* and maintain on file for review by the CSDE staff during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

For additional assistance with yield studies, contact the CSDE’s [school nutrition programs staff](#).

3 — Meal Components

Each component of the USDA’s preschool meal patterns has specific criteria for determining how foods credit toward reimbursable meals and snacks. All foods (commercial products, foods made from scratch, and foods prepared by vendors) must meet these requirements to credit as a component of reimbursable meals and snacks.

The menu planning guidance in this section assists SFAs with meeting the crediting requirements for the five components of the preschool meal pattern. These components include milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains. For additional guidance on crediting foods, visit the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Creditable Foods

Creditable foods are foods and beverages that count toward the meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and snacks in the USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA considers the following factors when determining whether a food credits:

- nutrient content;
- function in a meal;
- regulations concerning the USDA Child Nutrition Programs (quantity requirements and definition);
- the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) standards of identity;
- the USDA’s standards for meat and meat products; and
- administrative policy decisions on the crediting of specific foods.



3 | Meal Components

Minimum creditable amounts

Each component requires a minimum amount to credit toward the preschool meal patterns. A food item must include at least the minimum creditable amount. Food items that contain less than the minimum amount do not credit.

- **Milk component:** The minimum creditable amount is the full serving of fluid milk. For smoothies only, the minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. If the amount of milk in a smoothie is less than the full serving, the meal or snack must include the additional amount of milk required to provide the full serving for each age group.
- **MMA component:** The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce. At lunch, the MMA component must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other food item. For more information, refer to “[Main Dish Requirement for Lunch](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section.
- **Vegetables component:** The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. Smaller amounts of vegetables used for flavorings or garnishes do not credit. The preschool menu may include more than one food item to meet the full serving of the vegetable component for each age group if each food item contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetable.
- **Fruits component:** The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. Smaller amounts of fruits used for flavorings or garnishes do not credit. The preschool menu may include more than one food item to meet the full serving of the fruits component for each age group if each food item contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit.
- **Grains component:** The minimum creditable amount $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. The preschool menu may include more than one food item to meet the full serving of the grains component for each age group if each food item contains at least $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq.

If a food item provides at least the minimum creditable amount of a component, but less than the full serving, the preschool menu must include additional foods from that component to provide the full serving for each age group. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component. If a food item provides $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables, the lunch menu must include another food item with $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables to provide the full vegetables component for ages 3-4.

Requirement for visible components

The USDA requires that foods must be visible (recognizable) to credit toward the preschool meal patterns. For example, SFAs cannot credit peanut butter in smoothies, pureed tofu in soups, applesauce in muffins, and pureed fruits and vegetables in entrees and other foods.

The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that preschool menus offer MMA in a form that is recognizable to children. For more information, refer to "[Requirement for visible components](#)" at the beginning of section 3.

The USDA allows some exceptions to this requirement, including yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and pasta made with 100 percent vegetable flour. In addition, SFAs may credit foods with pureed vegetables that also contain at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible creditable vegetables. For example, a serving of macaroni and cheese that contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of diced butternut squash (visible) and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of pureed carrots (not visible) credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables.

For more information, refer to "[Yogurt in smoothies](#)" and "[Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as MMA](#)" in the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section; "[Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies](#)" and "[Crediting Pureed Fruits](#)" in the "Fruits Component" section; and "[Crediting Pureed Vegetables](#)" and "[Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour](#)" in the "Vegetables Component" section.

Resources for creditable foods

The websites and resources below address the requirements for crediting foods in the USDA's preschool meal patterns. For a list of resources with guidance on meeting the preschool meal pattern and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns](#).

- Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus ("Related Resources" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Program>
- 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 Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know! Webinar Series (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-updates-child-nutrition-programs-be-know-webinar-series>

3 | Meal Components

- CSDE Operational Memos for School Nutrition Programs:
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Lists/Operational-Memoranda-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>
- USDA CACFP Policy Memos:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources>
- USDA CACFP Regulations (7 CFR 226):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-226>
- USDA FNS Instructions for Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/FNS-Instructions-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>
- USDA National School Lunch Program Regulations (7 CFR 210):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210>
- USDA School Breakfast Program Regulations (7 CFR 220):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220>

For additional guidance on the USDA's requirements for the NSLP and SBP, visit the CSDE's [Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Noncreditable Foods

Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that do not count toward the meal patterns for the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. Noncreditable foods include foods and beverages that do not belong to the five meal pattern components. Examples include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water.

Noncreditable foods also include foods and beverages offered in amounts too small to credit (i.e., less than the minimum creditable amount), such as 1 tablespoon of applesauce or 1/8 ounce of cheese (refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in this section).

Examples of noncreditable foods for each meal pattern component are listed in section 3. For more examples, refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.

SFAs may serve 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.



Prohibited noncreditable foods

Federal and state requirements prohibit sales of some noncreditable foods, such as candy, soda, coffee, tea, and sports drinks. For more information, refer to the CSDE's competitive foods guides ([Guide to Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools](#), [Guide to Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools](#), and [Guide to Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions](#)) and visit the CSDE's [Competitive Foods](#) webpage and [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

Snack foods sold a la carte (separately from reimbursable meals) must meet the [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) (CNS) or the USDA's [Smart Snacks](#) nutrition standards. The CNS applies to public school districts that participate in the healthy food option of [Healthy Food Certification](#) (HFC). The USDA's Smart Snacks nutrition standards apply to non-HFC public school districts, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs).

Milk Component

Milk must be pasteurized, meet all state and local requirements, and contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the FDA.

Serving Size for Milk

The preschool meal patterns require a serving of fluid milk at breakfast and lunch. A serving of milk may be one of the two required snack components. Meals and snacks with breakfast cereals may include fluid milk as a beverage, on cereal, or both. Table 3-1 summarizes the required servings of the milk component for each age group and meal.



Table 3-1. Required servings of the milk component

Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast	½ cup	¾ cup
Lunch	½ cup	¾ cup
Snack ¹	½ cup	¾ cup
¹ Only one snack component can be a creditable beverage. Milk cannot be served when juice is the only other snack component.		

Allowable Types of Milk

The preschool meal patterns require different types of milk fat content for each age group, based on the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The preschool meal patterns require unflavored whole milk for age 1, and unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or unflavored fat-free milk for ages 2-4. Other allowable types of milk include pasteurized:

- lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk;
- acidified milk;
- cultured milk;
- cultured buttermilk; and
- Ultra High Temperature (UHT) milk.

SFAs may serve any of these types of milk if they meet the fat content and flavor restrictions: Table 3-2 summarizes the allowable types of milk for each preschool age group. For additional guidance, visit the USDA’s [Serving Milk in the CACFP](#) webpage.

Table 3-2. Allowable types of milk in the preschool meal patterns			
Type of milk	Age 1	Age 2	Ages 3-4
Whole, unflavored	✓	✓ ¹	
Whole, flavored ²			
Reduced-fat (2%), unflavored		✓ ¹	
Reduced-fat (2%), flavored ²			
Low-fat (1%), unflavored		✓	✓
Low-fat (1%), flavored ²			
Fat-free (skim), unflavored		✓	✓
Fat-free (skim), flavored ²			
¹ Unflavored whole milk and unflavored reduced-fat milk can be served only during a one-month transition period when switching a 24-month-old child from whole milk to low-fat or fat-free milk. For more information, refer to “ Transitioning from Whole Milk to Low-fat or Fat-free Milk ” in this section. ² The preschool meal patterns do not allow flavored milk.			

SFAs cannot serve milk that does not comply with the required fat content of the preschool meal patterns. For example, low-fat milk, fat-free milk, and reduced-fat milk cannot be served to 1-year-olds; and whole milk and reduced-fat milk cannot be served to ages 2-4.

If a child has a disability that requires milk with a fat content that is different from the preschool meal patterns, the SFA must make the substitution prescribed in the medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority. For more information, refer to “[Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs](#)” in section 1.

Additional Milk Requirements for Public Schools

Public schools must meet additional state requirements for the milk component. Milk sold anywhere on school premises in Connecticut public schools must comply with the state beverage 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. The state beverage statute does not apply to private schools or RCCIs.

The state beverage statute requires that milk cannot contain more than 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, which includes brand-specific lists of foods that meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages that meet the requirements of the state beverage statute. For more information on the state beverage statute, visit the CSDE's [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

Transitioning from Breastmilk or Infant Formula to Whole Milk

Breastmilk is allowed at any age in the preschool meal patterns. Iron-fortified infant formula does not meet the fluid milk requirement of the preschool meal patterns. However, meals that contain an allowable iron-fortified infant formula are reimbursable for a one-month transition period when children ages 12 to 13 months are weaning (transitioning) from infant formula to whole cow's milk.

When a child is weaned from formula (or breastmilk) to cow's milk, it is common practice to provide the infant with both foods at the same meal. A small amount of whole milk is added to the iron-fortified infant formula, and gradually increased over time. This eases the transition by helping the infant to accept some of the new food.

Breastmilk past age 1

Breastmilk is allowed as the milk component in the preschool meal patterns at any age. Breastmilk may be served in combination with other types of milk. For meals and snacks to be reimbursable, the combined amount of breastmilk and milk must provide the minimum serving.

For example, the preschool breakfast meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk for age 2. If a mother provides $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of expressed breastmilk, the SFA must serve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk to make up the difference and meet the minimum $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup milk requirement. The breastmilk and milk do not need to be mixed in the same cup; they may be served separately. The SFA must provide all other required meal components for the meal or snack to be reimbursable.

Transitioning from Whole Milk to Low-fat or Fat-free Milk

The USDA allows SFAs to serve unflavored reduced-fat milk and unflavored whole milk during a one-month transition period when a 24-month-old child is switching from whole milk to low-fat or fat-free milk. The steps below can help ease a child's transition to low-fat or fat-free milk.

1. Add a small amount of reduced-fat milk to whole milk.
2. Gradually change to low-fat or fat-free milk mixed with whole milk.
3. Decrease the amount of whole milk over time so the entire serving is low-fat or fat-free milk by the end of the one-month transition period.

The preschool meal patterns do not allow whole milk for ages 2 and older.

Menu Documentation for Milk

Preschool menus must document the type of milk served to each age group. For example, the menu for ages 2-4 should state:

- “unflavored low-fat milk” or “low-fat milk, unflavored” instead of “low-fat milk;” and
- “unflavored fat-free milk” or “fat-free milk, unflavored” instead of “fat-free milk.”

The menu for age 1 should state “unflavored whole milk” or “whole, unflavored” instead of “whole milk.”



Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities

SFAs may choose, but are not required, to offer one or more allowable milk substitutes for children whose special dietary needs do not constitute a disability. The two types of allowable substitutes for children without disabilities include:

- lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk with the appropriate fat content, i.e., low-fat milk (unflavored or flavored) and fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored) (refer to “[Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk](#)” in this section); and
- nondairy milk substitutes that meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk (refer to “[USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes](#)” in this section).

SFAs cannot offer any other beverages (including water and juice) as a choice instead of milk for reimbursable meals. Juice and water are never allowable milk substitutes for children without disabilities.

Nondairy milk substitutes (such as soy milk) require a written request from the parent or guardian that identifies the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the child’s diet. A medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority is not required.

Lactose-free milk and lactose-reduced milk credit as the milk component in the preschool meal patterns and do not require a written statement from a parent or guardian. SFAs may offer lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk as a substitute for regular fluid milk at any meal or snack. For more information, refer to “[Lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk](#)” in this section.

If a child’s dietary restriction is not related to a disability, SFAs cannot substitute any other beverages for milk, even with a medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority. Examples of beverages that cannot be substituted for milk include juice, water, nutrition supplement beverages, and milk substitutes that do not comply with the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, e.g., almond milk, rice milk, cashew milk, some brands of soy milk, and most brands of oat milk. These beverages cannot replace milk unless the child has a medically documented disability that specifically requires this substitution.

For detailed guidance on the requirements for milk substitutes, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#)

USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes

SFAs that choose to offer a milk substitute as part of reimbursable meals for children without disabilities must use products that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes (refer to [table 3-3](#)). SFAs cannot offer any other nondairy milk substitutes.

Menu planners cannot determine if a product meets the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes by reading the product's packaging. The Nutrition Facts label lists only a few of the nine nutrients required by the USDA for allowable fluid milk substitutes. To determine if a product meets the USDA's nutrition standards, SFAs must obtain documentation from the manufacturer that includes the nutrition information for the nine required nutrients. Product information might list nutrient values, % Daily Value (DV) (unrounded or rounded), or both. If any nutrient values are missing, the SFA must obtain this information from the manufacturer.

Table 3-3. USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes		
Column 1	Column 2	
Nutrients per cup (8 fluid ounces)	% DV Unrounded ¹	% DV Rounded ²
Calcium: 276 milligrams (mg)	21.23%	20%
Protein: 8 grams (g)	16%	16%
Vitamin A: 500 international units (IU) or 150 micrograms (mcg) retinol activity equivalent (RAE) ³	16.67%	20%
Vitamin D: 100 IU or 2.5 micrograms (mcg) ³	12.5%	15%
Magnesium: 24 mg	5.71%	6%
Phosphorus: 222 mg	17.76%	20%
Potassium: 349 mg	7.43%	10%
Riboflavin: 0.44 mg	33.85%	35%
Vitamin B12: 1.1 mcg	45.83%	45%
¹ The unrounded % DV is the minimum nutrients per cup (column 1) divided by the current daily value for each nutrient (refer to the FDA's Reference Guide: Daily Values for Nutrients). ² The rounded % DV is based on the FDA labeling laws and is listed on the Nutrition Facts label (refer to Appendix H of the FDA's A Food Labeling Guide: Guidance for Industry). ³ The 2016 FDA final rule, Food Labeling: Revision of the Nutrition and Supplement Facts Labels , updated the Nutrition Facts label to change IUs to mcg for vitamins A and D.		

For guidance on how to determine if nondairy beverages credit as milk substitutes, refer to the CSDE's [Determining if Nondairy Beverages Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs](#).

Additional nondairy milk substitute requirements for public schools

In addition to meeting the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, nondairy milk substitutes available for sale to students in public schools must meet the state beverage requirements of [C.G.S. Section 10-221q](#). The state beverage statute does not apply to private schools or RCCIs.

The state beverage statute requires that nondairy milk substitutes cannot contain artificial sweeteners and cannot exceed 4 grams of sugar per ounce, 35 percent of calories from fat, and 10 percent of calories from saturated fat. [List 17](#) of the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage includes commercial products that meet the federal and state requirements for nondairy milk substitutes.

Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk

Children who cannot digest the lactose found in regular milk may be able to drink lactose-free milk (e.g., Lactaid) or lactose-reduced milk. These types of milk are regular fluid milk modified by the addition of lactase enzymes to reduce or eliminate lactose (milk sugar). Lactose-reduced milk has part of the lactose removed, while lactose-free milk has all lactose removed.

Lactose-free and lactose-reduced milk credits the same as regular milk. SFAs may substitute low-fat or fat-free lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk for regular fluid milk at any preschool meal or snack.

A written request from parents or guardians is not required for lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk. The CSDE encourages SFAs to make lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk available to children as needed.

In addition to meeting the preschool meal patterns, lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk available for sale to students in public schools must comply with the state beverage requirements for milk ([C.G.S. Section 10-221q](#)). [List 16](#) of the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage includes lactose-reduced and lactose-free milk that meets the federal and state requirements. Lactose-reduced milk and lactose-free milk that does not meet the state requirements cannot be sold as part of reimbursable meals or a la carte. For more information, refer to "[Additional Milk Requirements for Public Schools](#)" in this section.

Crediting Milk in Smoothies

Unflavored low-fat milk or fat-free milk credits as the milk component when served in smoothies. For smoothies only, the minimum creditable amount of milk is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. If a smoothie contains less than the full serving of milk, the preschool menu must include the additional amount of milk to provide the full milk component.



For more information on crediting smoothies, refer to “[Crediting Fruit in Smoothies](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section, “[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)” in the “Milk Component” section, and “[Crediting yogurt in smoothies](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component” section.

Milk in Prepared Foods

Only fluid milk meets the USDA’s definition for milk and the FDA’s standard of identity for milk. The preschool meal patterns require fluid milk as a beverage.

Milk does not credit when cooked in cereals, puddings, cream sauces, or other foods. For example, milk does not credit when used to make quiche or macaroni and cheese.

Foods made from milk (such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream) cannot credit as the milk component. For information on crediting cheese and yogurt as MMA, refer to the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component](#)” section.

Serving Milk from Coolers

Milk coolers cannot contain any beverages other than milk. For example, schools cannot sell water and juice from the milk cooler. SFAs cannot promote or offer water, juice, or any other beverage as an alternative selection to fluid milk throughout the food service area.

Keeping Milk Cold

Implementing procedures to keep milk cold is important for food safety and helps make milk more appealing to children. Milk must be kept at 40°F or below but tastes best at 35°F. SFAs should develop procedures to maintain milk at 35°F during all points of the meal service (receiving, storing, and serving). The U.S. Dairy’s [Milk Quality Checklist](#) helps evaluate current practices and implement procedures for keeping milk cold.

Noncreditable Foods in the Milk Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the milk component include:

- for age 1, unflavored or flavored reduced fat (2%) milk; unflavored or flavored low-fat (1%) milk, and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk;
- for ages 2-4, unflavored or flavored whole milk, unflavored or flavored reduced fat (2%) milk, flavored low-fat (1%) milk, and flavored fat-free milk;
- nondairy milk substitutes that do not meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, e.g., almond milk, cashew milk, rice milk, some brands of soy milk, and most brands of oat milk;
- for public schools only, milk and nondairy milk substitutes that do not meet the state beverage requirements of [Connecticut General Statute Section 10-221q](#);
- milk that is cooked or baked in prepared foods, such as cereals, puddings, cream sauces, and macaroni and cheese;
- foods made from milk, such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream;
- nutrition supplement beverages, such as Abbott's Pediasure; and
- powdered milk beverages, such as Nestle's NIDO.

For more examples and additional information, refer to “Noncreditable Foods” in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Resources for Crediting Milk

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting the milk component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Milk_Substitutes_SNP.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 3: Milk Component (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- Determining if Nondairy Beverages Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Determining-Allowable-Nondairy-Milk-Substitutes_SNP.pdf

- Food Buying Guide Section 5: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Milk Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section5_Milk.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 5: Yield Table for Milk (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section5_MilkYieldTable.pdf
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 4: Milk Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- Serving Milk in the CACFP (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish) (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-milk-cacfp>
- USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010, and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/qas-milk-substitution-children-medical-or-special-dietary-needs-non-disability>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Milk Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component

Meats include cooked lean meat, poultry, and fish. Meat alternates are foods that provide a similar protein content to meat, such as alternate protein products (APPs), cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans or peas (legumes), nuts and seeds and their butters, yogurt, soy yogurt, tofu, and tempeh. Legumes credit as the vegetables component or the MMA component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or ASP snack.

The USDA's [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.

Some MMA may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include nuts and seeds, e.g., peanuts, almonds and sunflower or pumpkin seeds; chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters; tough meat or large chunks of meat; fish with bones; and large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese.

Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what MMA to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cutting tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces; removing all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving; grinding up tough meats and poultry; chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grinding before adding to prepared foods; and spreading nut and seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers). For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.



MMA versus Protein

The preschool meal patterns require a specific amount of the MMA component, not a specific amount of protein. The terms “protein” and “meat/meat alternates” are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same. “Meat/meat alternates” refers to the meal component of the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. “Protein” refers to one of the key nutrients found in meats and meat alternates.

Except for commercial tofu and tofu products, protein content is not an indicator that a commercial product credits as the MMA component because the grams of protein listed on the product’s Nutrition Facts label do not correspond to the ounces of the MMA component contained in the product. A serving of meat or meat alternate contains other components in addition to protein, such as water, fat, vitamins, and minerals. Protein is also found in varying amounts in other ingredients (such as cereals, grains, and many vegetables) that may be part of a commercial meat or meat alternate product.

Menu planners cannot use the Nutrition Facts label or ingredients statement to determine the amount of the MMA component in a commercial product. The only exception is commercial tofu and tofu products, which must contain at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Commercial Tofu and Tofu Products](#)” in this section.

To credit as the MMA component, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, veggie burgers, and cheese ravioli) require a CN label or PFS to document the amount of the MMA component per serving. For more information, refer to “[Crediting MMA in Commercial Products](#)” in this section.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving Size	1 burger (64 g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	130
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 5 g	8%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 390 mg	17%
Total Carbohydrates 8g	3%
Dietary Fiber 4g	15%
Sugars 1g	
Including <1g Added Sugars	
Protein 16 g	21%
Vitamin D 0.1 mcg	
Calcium 6 0mg	
Iron 1.1mg	
Potassium 120mg	
* The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice	

Required Daily Servings of MMA

The preschool meal patterns require a serving of the MMA component at lunch and supper. The MMA component is not required at breakfast but may substitute for the entire grains component up to three times per week (refer to “[MMA at Breakfast](#)” in this section). A serving of MMA may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-4 summarizes the required servings of the MMA component for each age group and meal.

Note: While the meal patterns for grades K-12 indicate the quantities for the MMA component as oz eq, the preschool meal patterns indicate the quantities for the MMA component as ounces. The amount that credits as 1 oz eq or 1 ounce of MMA is the same.

Table 3-4. Required servings of the MMA component		
Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast	None ¹	None ¹
Lunch	1 ounce	1½ ounces
Snack ¹	½ ounce	½ ounce
¹ The MMA component is not required at breakfast but may substitute for the entire grains component up to three times per week. For more information, refer to “ MMA at Breakfast ” in this section.		

Minimum creditable amount for MMA

The minimum creditable amount for the MMA component is ¼ ounce. Meats and meat alternates offered in amounts less than ¼ ounce do not credit toward the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in the beginning of section 3.

When crediting menu items toward the MMA component, menu planners must round down to the nearest ¼ ounce. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains 0.9 ounces of cooked chicken per serving credits as 0.75 ounces of the MMA component.

Serving Size for MMA

The amounts in the MMA component 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-ounce serving of the MMA component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish;
- 3 ounces of surimi;
- 1 ounce of natural cheese, e.g., Colby, Monterey Jack, and Swiss or process cheese, e.g., American (reduced-fat or low-fat recommended for ages 2 and older);
- ¼ cup of cottage cheese (reduced-fat or low-fat recommended for ages 2 and older);
- 2 ounces of cheese food/spread or cheese substitute;
- ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes), e.g., kidney beans, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas;
- ½ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter and sunflower seed butter;
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts;
- ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (unflavored or flavored) containing no more than 23 grams of sugars per 6 ounces (3.83 grams per ounce);
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains specific ingredients (refer to “[Crediting Tempeh](#)” in this section);
- 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume) of tofu and other soy products containing at least 5 grams of protein; and
- 1 ounce of APP that meets the USDA’s APP requirements (refer to “[Crediting Alternate Protein Products \(APPs\)](#)” in this section).

The serving must contain the appropriate edible portion of MMA, excluding any other ingredients. For example, to credit as 1½ ounces of the MMA component, tuna salad must contain 1½ ounces of tuna fish, before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, celery, and seasonings.

Menu planners should consult the USDA’s FBG to determine the crediting information for foods in the MMA component (refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2).

Crediting Documentation for Commercial Processed Products

SFAs must obtain crediting documentation for commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients, such as pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli. This documentation must state the amount of the MMA component per serving. For example, to credit a commercially prepared cheese pizza as 1½ ounces of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must indicate that the serving contains 1½ ounces of cheese. For more information, refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.

Main Dish Requirement for Lunch

The daily MMA component at lunch must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other food item. The main dish is generally considered the main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items. For example, a preschool lunch menu for ages 3-4 could provide the required 1½ ounces of the MMA component from a sandwich containing 1½ ounces of tuna or a sandwich containing 1 ounce of tuna served with soup that contains ⅛ cup of legumes (½ ounce of MMA). SFAs cannot serve the daily MMA component for lunch in more than two food items.

Requirement for recognizable main dish

Foods that are not a recognizable main dish do not credit toward the MMA component. For example, SFAs cannot credit peanut butter in a muffin or smoothie, pureed beans in a spice cake, or blended soft tofu in soup. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that preschool menus offer MMA in a form that is recognizable to children. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” at the beginning of section 3.

The USDA allows two exceptions to the requirement for a recognizable main dish: yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies and pasta made with 100 percent legume flours.

- Yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies credits as the MMA component. Other MMA (such as peanut butter) served in smoothies do not credit. For more information, refer to “[Yogurt in smoothies](#)” in this section and “[Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section.
- Pasta made with 100 percent legume flours may credit as the MMA component if the menu also includes an additional meat or meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as MMA](#)” in this section.

MMA at Breakfast

The MMA component is not required at breakfast. The menu planner may choose to substitute the MMA component for the entire grains component up to three times per week. This provision applies regardless of the number of days in the week. For example, the menu planner could choose to substitute the MMA component for the entire grains component three times during a three-day week or three times during a five-day week.

A 1-ounce serving of the MMA component substitutes for 1 oz eq of the grains component. The preschool breakfast meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of the grains component. For example, the menu planner could substitute 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of cheese, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a large egg, or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of yogurt for $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of the grains component.

The USDA's [Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#) webpage contains handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish with additional guidance on serving the MMA component in preschool breakfast menus.



Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)

APPs credit as meat alternates in the meal patterns for school nutrition programs. A 1-ounce serving of a creditable APP provides 1 ounce of the MMA component. The total MMA contribution cannot exceed the weight of product.

APPs are food ingredients that may be used alone or in combination with meat, poultry, or seafood. They are processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources and may be dehydrated granules, particles, or flakes. Some examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. APPs may be used in the dry (nonhydrated), partially hydrated, or fully hydrated form.

APPs are generally used as part of a formed meat patty or in a vegetarian patty resembling a meat product. Examples of foods that might contain added APPs include beef patties, beef crumbles, pizza topping, meat loaf, meat sauce, taco filling, burritos, and tuna salad.

Criteria for APPs

APPs must meet the USDA's requirements specified in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210) and [appendix A](#) of the SBP regulations (7 CFR 220). These regulations specify that APPs may credit for part or all the MMA requirement if they meet the three criteria below.

1. The APP must be processed so that some portion of the non-protein constituents of the food is removed. This refers to the manufacturing process for APP. APPs must be safe and suitable edible products produced from plant or animal sources.
2. The biological quality of the protein in the APP must be at least 80 percent of casein (milk protein), determined by performing a Protein Digestibility Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS). The PDCAAS is a method of evaluating protein quality.
3. The APP contains at least 18 percent protein by weight when fully hydrated or formulated. "When hydrated or formulated" refers to a dry APP and the amount of water, fat, oil, colors, flavors, or any other substances that have been added.

Menu planners cannot determine if an APP product meets these criteria by reading the product's label. The labeling laws of the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) require manufacturers to list product ingredients, but percentage labeling is voluntary. For example, a product may list whey protein concentrate and hydrolyzed soy protein in the ingredients but will not indicate the percentage of these protein ingredients by weight. Therefore, manufacturers must provide the appropriate crediting documentation.

Required documentation for APPs

The FBG does not contain yield information for APPs. SFAs must obtain documentation from the manufacturer that the product meets the APP criteria. Without appropriate documentation, APPs cannot credit in the school nutrition programs.

Acceptable documentation is a CN label, or a PFS from the manufacturer with supporting documentation on company letterhead that the APP ingredient meets the USDA's requirements. Sample APP documentation is on page 6 of the USDA's [*Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products*](#).

The manufacturer's documentation should include information on the percent protein contained in the dry alternate protein product and in the prepared product. For an APP product mix, manufacturers should provide information on the amount by weight of dry APP in the package, hydration instructions, and instructions on how to combine the mix with meat or other meat alternates.

If the PFS for a commercial product lists APP ingredients that are being credited as the MMA component, the manufacturer must provide supporting documentation to indicate that the APP ingredients meet the USDA's APP requirements. APP ingredients without this supporting documentation cannot credit in the school nutrition programs.

The USDA's [*Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products \(APP\)*](#) provides additional guidance on documenting the APP requirements. For information on CN labels and PFS forms, to "[Child Nutrition \(CN\)](#)" labels and "[Product formulation statements](#)" in section 2. For more information on crediting APPs, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*](#).

Crediting Cheeses

Cheeses credit as meat alternates in the preschool meal patterns. The USDA recommends serving low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses (for ages 2 and older) and choosing natural cheeses. Natural cheeses are produced directly from milk, such as cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, mozzarella, Muenster, provolone, Swiss, feta, and brie. Natural cheeses also include pasteurized blended cheeses made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheeses.

Natural cheeses do not include pasteurized process cheeses such as American cheese, pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, and pasteurized process cheese products. Imitation cheese and cheese products do not credit as the MMA component in the preschool meal patterns.

Table 3-5 shows the amount of different types of cheeses required to credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component.

Table 3-5. MMA contribution of cheeses	
Type of cheese	1 ounce of MMA =
Natural cheese, e.g., cheddar and Swiss	1 ounce
Grated cheese, e.g., Parmesan or Romano	1 ounce ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup)
Process cheese, e.g., American	1 ounce
Cottage or ricotta cheese	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup
Process cheese food	2 ounces
Process cheese spread	2 ounces
Process cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, or process cheese spread substitute ¹	2 ounces
¹ Cheese substitutes include reduced fat, low fat, nonfat, and lite versions of cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, and cheese spread substitute. These foods must meet the FDA's standard of identity for substitute foods and must be labeled as "cheese substitute," "cheese food substitute," or "cheese spread substitute." The FDA's standard of identity requires that a cheese substitute is not nutritionally inferior to the standardized cheese for which it is substituting.	

Menu items that contain cheese

SFAs must maintain appropriate crediting documentation for menu items that contain cheese as an ingredient, such as pizza, lasagna, or macaroni and cheese. This documentation must indicate the meal pattern contribution per serving.

Commercial products require a CN label or a PFS stating the amount of cheese per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer’s PFS for accuracy prior to including the commercial product in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to [“Documentation for Commercial Products”](#) in section 2.

Menu items made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents the amount of cheese per serving. For more information, refer to [“Standardized Recipes”](#) and [“Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs”](#) in section 2.

Large chunks of cheese (such as cheese cubes or string cheese) may be a choking hazard for young children. Grate or thinly slice cheese to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, refer to [“Choking Prevention”](#) in section 1.

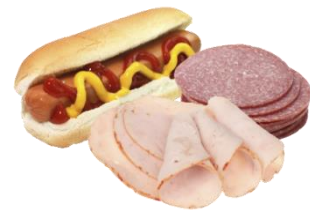


Crediting Deli Meats, Hot Dogs, and Sausage

Deli meats (such as turkey, chicken, ham, roast beef, salami, and bologna), hot dogs, and sausages credit as the MMA component in the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs. SFAs must ensure that the serving of a commercial meat product provides the amount of the MMA component being credited. The serving of deli meat or sausage that provides 1 ounce of the MMA component depends on the product's ingredients and varies between different brands and types of deli meats.

- **100 percent meat:** Products that are 100 percent meat without added liquids (such as water or broth), binders, or extenders credit on an ounce-per-ounce basis (actual serving weight). For example, 1 ounce of deli meat that is 100 percent meat credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component.
- **Added liquids, binders, and extenders:** Products with added liquids, binders, and extenders credit based on the percentage of meat in the product formula. A 1-ounce serving of these products does not credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component. Crediting depends on the amount of meat per serving, excluding added ingredients. For example, one brand of deli meat might require 1.6 ounces to credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component, while another brand might require 2.3 ounces to credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component.

SFAs must obtain appropriate crediting documentation for all meats with added liquids, binders, and extenders. Acceptable documentation includes a CN label or a manufacturer's PFS stating the amount of the MMA component contained in one serving of the product. SFAs must obtain a PFS for all commercial processed products that are not CN labeled.



USDA's [Authorized Labels and Manufacturers](#) webpage lists approved CN-labeled products and manufacturers. For more information, refer to "Child Nutrition (CN) Labels" and "Product Formulation Statements" in section 2.

Menu planners must review product labels and ingredients to determine if commercial products contain added liquids, binders, and extenders. Products with added liquids, binders, and extenders cannot credit as the MMA component without a CN label or PFS stating the amount of the MMA component per serving.

Liquids, binders, and extenders

Products with added liquids, binders, and extenders cannot credit as the MMA component without a CN label or PFS that states the amount of the MMA component per serving. The ingredients statements below show some examples of turkey breast products that contain added liquid, binders, and extenders.

- Ingredients: Turkey breast, **water**, **modified cornstarch**, contains less than 2% of sodium lactate, salt, sugar, sodium phosphates, **carrageenan**, natural flavor, sodium diacetate, potassium chloride, sodium ascorbate, sodium nitrite, caramel color.
- Ingredients: Turkey breast meat, **turkey broth**, contains 2% or less salt, sugar, **carrageenan**, sodium phosphate, sodium acetate, sodium diacetate, flavoring.

Table 3-6 lists examples of ingredients that are binders and extenders.

Table 3-6. Examples of binders and extenders ¹		
Agar-agar	Dried milk	Reduced minerals
Algin (a mixture of sodium alginate, calcium carbonate and calcium gluconate/lactic acid)	Dry or dried whey	Sodium caseinate
	Enzyme (rennet) treated	Soy flour (APP) ²
	calcium-reduced dried skim milk and calcium lactate	Soy protein concentrate (APP) ²
Bread	Gums, vegetable	Starchy vegetable flour
Calcium-reduced dried skim milk	Isolated soy protein (APP) ²	Tapioca dextrin
Carrageenan		Vegetable starch
Carboxymethyl cellulose (cellulose gum)	Locust bean gum	Wheat gluten
	Methyl cellulose	Whey
Cereal	Modified food starch	Whey protein concentrate (APP) ²
	Reduced lactose whey	Xanthan gum
¹ Binders and extenders are defined by the USDA's regulations for the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) (9 CFR 318.7). ² Products may contain these ingredients if they meet the USDA's APP requirements. For more information, refer to " Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs) " in this section.		

For more information, refer to "[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)" in section 2 and the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Deli Meats in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#), [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and [Product Formulation Statements](#).

Developing recipes for deli meats

Different brands and types of deli meat credit differently. To ensure proper crediting, SFAs should develop standardized recipes for menu items that contain deli meats, such as sandwiches and other entrees.

These standardized recipes should indicate the deli meat's contribution to the MMA component based on a specific weight of a specific brand. To make portioning simple for food service staff and ensure that the serving provides the proper crediting amount, round up the weight of the deli meat in the standardized recipe to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce. For example, the standardized recipe should list 1.2 ounces of deli meat as 1.25 ounces and 1.6 ounces of deli meat as 1.75 ounces.

If the SFA makes the same food item using different brands of deli meats that credit differently, the standardized recipe should include the specific weight of each brand. For example, if a school makes a turkey sandwich using either ABC brand turkey breast or XYZ brand turkey breast, the standardized recipe should include the required weight of ABC brand for 1 ounce of MMA and the required weight of XYZ brand for 1 ounce of MMA. Alternatively, the SFA could also choose to develop a separate standardized turkey sandwich recipe for each brand of deli meat.



For information on standardized recipes, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2. Training on standardized recipes is available in “Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation” 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*.

Hotdogs and other tube-shaped meats may be choking hazards for young children. Cut hot dogs into short strips instead of round pieces. Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer hot dogs in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

Crediting Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products

Shelf-stable, dried, and semi-dried meat, poultry, and seafood (such as jerky or summer sausage) credit as the MMA component. The USDA indicates that these products are most useful in meals served off-site, such as during field trips or picnics. However, SFAs may also credit these products in meals served on site.

Crediting of dried meat, poultry, and seafood products must follow the same crediting principles used for all other products made from meat, poultry, or seafood. SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to document the product's meal pattern contribution. The FBG does not include crediting information for dried meat, poultry, or seafood products because industry production standards for these products vary widely.

Menu planners must evaluate the dried meat product's PFS to ensure that it complies with the USDA's crediting principles below.

1. The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must match or have a similar description as the ingredient listed in the product's ingredients statement. The ingredients statement below shows an example.

Ingredients: **Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)**, water, salt, less than 2% brown sugar, spices, monosodium glutamate, sugar, flavorings, sodium nitrate.

Since this dried beef stick product lists "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)" as the first ingredient, the product's PFS must also list the crediting information for "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)."

2. The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must have a similar description to a food item in the FBG. For the example above, "Ground beef (not more than 30% fat)" matches the description for "Beef, Ground, fresh or frozen, Market Style, no more than 30% fat (Like IMPS #136), cooked lean meat" on page 1-17 of the FBG.
3. The creditable amount cannot exceed the finished weight of the product, i.e., the cooked weight ready for serving. For example, a 1-ounce serving of beef jerky cannot credit for more than 1 ounce of the MMA component.

Ground pork and beef ingredients must include the percent fat because the fat content has a direct correlation to the cooking yield. To credit in Child Nutrition Programs, the fat content of ground beef or ground pork in dried meat products cannot exceed 30 percent. Products

that do not indicate the fat percentage do not credit. The ingredients statement below shows an example.

Ingredients: **Pork**, cane sugar, garlic (garlic, citric acid, ascorbic acid), contains 2% or less of: Spanish smoked paprika (paprika, rosemary extract), sea salt, natural flavors, sherry wine vinegar, red pepper chili flakes, celery powder, in collagen casing.

This dried pork stick product does not credit as the MMA component because the creditable ingredients (pork) does not list the fat percentage and does not match a description in the FBG.

For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2. The requirements for crediting dried meat are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019, and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting dried meat products, refer to the USDA’s webinar, [Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products](#).

Dried meat products (such as jerky) may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer dried meat products in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

Crediting Eggs

Eggs credit as meat alternates in the preschool meal patterns. Only whole eggs are creditable. Half of a large egg credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component. Liquid egg substitutes are not whole eggs and are not creditable. Egg whites do not credit if served without the yolks.

Menu items that contain eggs

SFAs must maintain appropriate crediting documentation for menu items that contain eggs as an ingredient, such as quiche, scrambled eggs, frittatas, breakfast sandwiches, pre-cooked egg patties, and scrambled egg breakfast burritos. This documentation must indicate the meal pattern contribution per serving.

Commercial products require a CN label or a PFS stating the amount of eggs per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including the commercial product in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to [“Documentation for Commercial Products”](#) in section 2.

Menu items made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents the amount of eggs per serving. For more information, refer to [“Standardized Recipes”](#) and [“Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs”](#) in section 2.



Crediting Hummus as MMA

Hummus may credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or snack. To credit as the MMA component, the serving must contain at least ¼ ounce of MMA from the chickpeas/garbanzo beans (legumes) and tahini (sesame paste) combined.

- A ¼-cup serving of legumes credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is 1 tablespoon (¼ oz eq).
- Tahini credits the same as nut/seed butters. Two tablespoons of tahini credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is ½ tablespoon (¼ oz eq).

SFAs must maintain crediting documentation for hummus that indicates the amount of legumes and tahini per serving. Commercial products require a CN label (if available) or PFS. Hummus made from scratch requires a standardized recipe (refer to “[Crediting legumes in recipes as MMA](#)” in this section).

For information on crediting hummus as the vegetables component, refer to “[Crediting Legumes as Vegetables](#)” in the “Vegetables Component” section.

Crediting Legumes as MMA

Legumes include cooked dry beans and peas, such as black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), edamame (soybeans), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soybeans, split peas, and white beans. Legumes may credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or snack. Menu planners must determine in advance how to credit legumes in preschool menus.

Legumes may credit as the MMA component or the vegetables component in different meals. For example, refried beans may credit as the MMA component at one lunch and as the vegetables component at another lunch.

If a meal includes two servings of legumes, the menu planner may choose to credit one serving as the MMA component and one serving as the vegetables component. For example, a lunch or supper menu includes chili with kidney beans and a salad with garbanzo beans. The menu planner may credit the garbanzo beans as the vegetables component and the kidney beans as the MMA component.

Serving size for legumes as MMA

Legumes credit as the MMA component based on volume. A $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving (4 tablespoons) of legumes credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount of legumes is 1 tablespoon. Table 3-7 shows the MMA contribution for different serving sizes of cooked legumes. For information on crediting legumes as vegetables, refer to “[Crediting Legumes as Vegetables](#)” in the “Vegetables Component” section.

The serving size refers to the amount of cooked legumes excluding other ingredients, such as the sauce and pork fat in baked beans. For example, to credit baked beans as 1 ounce of the MMA component, the serving must contain $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of beans, not including the sauce and pork fat.

Table 3-7. MMA contribution of cooked legumes

Serving size	MMA contribution
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
3 tablespoons	$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce
4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)	1 ounce
5 tablespoons	$1\frac{1}{4}$ ounces
6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup)	$1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces
7 tablespoons	$1\frac{3}{4}$ ounces
8 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)	2 ounces

Crediting legumes in recipes as MMA

SFAs must have standardized recipes on file to document the crediting information for all legume-based foods made from scratch, such as lentil soup, bean burritos, hummus, and chili. Legume-based foods made from scratch credit based on the volume (cups) of legumes in the recipe serving. A standardized recipe must provide at least 1 tablespoon ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce) of legumes per serving to credit toward the MMA component.

The menu planner must determine the recipe's crediting information for the MMA component by dividing the cups of legumes in one serving of the standardized recipe by 0.25, then rounding down to the nearest ¼ ounce. For guidance on how to calculate the contribution of legumes in a recipe, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Legumes in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.

Crediting roasted or dried legumes as MMA

Roasted or dried legumes (such as roasted soybeans or roasted chickpeas) credit as the MMA component the same as nuts and seeds, which credit based on weight (ounces). A 1-ounce serving of roasted or dried legumes provides 1 ounce of the MMA component.

Roasted or dried legumes may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer roasted or dried legumes in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "Choking Prevention" in section 1.

At lunch, roasted or dried legumes cannot credit for more than half of the MMA component; they must be combined with another meat or meat alternate to meet the full serving for each age group. For more information, refer to "Main Dish Requirement for Lunch," "Minimum creditable amounts," and "Crediting Nuts and Seeds" in this section.

For information on crediting roasted or dried legumes as the vegetables component, refer to "Crediting Roasted or Dried Legumes as Vegetables" in the "Vegetables Component" section.

Resources for legumes

The recipes and resources below assist SFAs with incorporating legumes into preschool meals.

- Beans and Peas are Unique Foods (USDA):
<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/vegetables/vegetables-beans-and-peas>
- Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook for Schools (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbook-schools>
- Pulses in Schools (USDA Pulses):
<https://www.usapulses.org/schools/school-nutrition>

For additional resources, refer to "Recipe Resources" in section 2 and "Legumes (Dried Beans and Peas)" in the CSDE's *Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs*.

Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as MMA

Pasta products made of 100 percent legume flours (such as chickpea flour or lentil flour) credit as the MMA component. However, the legume flour pasta must be offered with an additional meat/meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. The USDA’s intent for this requirement is to ensure that preschool menus offer MMA in a form that is recognizable to children. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” at the beginning of section 3.

Table 3-8 shows the MMA contribution for different serving sizes of 100 percent legume pasta. A $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of cooked legume flour pasta credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component.

Table 3-8. MMA contribution of cooked 100 percent legume flour pasta products	
Serving size	MMA contribution
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
$\frac{1}{8}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
$\frac{3}{8}$ cup	$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup	1 ounce
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup	2 ounces

Alternatively, manufacturers and SFAs may credit legume flour pasta using the bean flour yield information on page C-1 of the FBG's [Appendix C](#), or with appropriate documentation on the manufacturer’s PFS. For more information, refer to “Product Formulation Statements” in section 2 and the USDA’s resources, *Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs* and *Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s PFS*.

Pasta made of 100 percent legumes may also credit as the vegetables component but cannot credit as both the vegetables component and MMA component in the same meal. For more information, refer to “[100 percent vegetable flours crediting as a vegetable](#)” in the Vegetables section.

The requirements for crediting pasta products made of vegetable flours are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 26-2019](#), [CACFP 13-2019](#), and [SFSP 12-2019](#): *Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*.

Crediting MMA in Combination Entrees

Combination entrees (such as tacos, lasagna, and chicken stir-fry) contain more than one food component. For example, beef lasagna contains the grains component (pasta), the MMA component (ground beef and cheese), and the vegetables component (tomato sauce). Most combination entrees cannot be separated (such as pizza or a burrito) or are not intended to be separated (such as hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich).

For foods made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the amount of meat or meat alternates per serving based on the yields listed in the FBG. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” and “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2.

For commercial products, SFAs must obtain a CN label (if available) or a PFS stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer’s PFS for accuracy prior to including the combination entree in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2.



Crediting MMA in Commercial Products

To credit as the MMA component, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. For example, to credit a commercial breaded chicken patty as 1½ ounces of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving of the product contains 1½ ounces of cooked chicken. Commercial products cannot credit as the MMA component without this documentation.

SFAs must have a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to document the meal pattern contribution of all commercial MMA products used in preschool menus. Commercial products without this documentation cannot credit in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to "[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)" in section 2.

The CSDE's resource, *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*, summarizes the requirements for crediting commercial MMA in preschool menus.



Crediting Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds and their butters credit as meat alternates in the preschool meal patterns. Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, soy nuts, and sunflower seeds. Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts, which credit as meat alternates. However, fresh soybeans (edamame) are legumes and credit as the vegetables component.

Nuts, seeds, and chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer these foods in preschool menus. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food and are ground or finely chopped. Use only creamy peanut butter (not chunky) and spread thinly to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

A 1-ounce serving of nuts and seeds credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component. Refer to the crediting guidance below and in the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Limit for nuts and seeds at lunch

Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the MMA component at lunch. They must be combined with another MMA to provide the full serving for each age group. This requirement does not apply to nut/seed butters.

For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires 1 ounce of the MMA component. A lunch for this age group cannot contain more than ½ ounce of nuts or seeds. The menu must also include ½ ounce of another meat/meat alternate, such as ¼ cup of yogurt, ½ ounce of lean meat, ½ ounce of cheese, ⅛ cup of cottage cheese, ⅛ cup of cooked legumes, or half of a large egg.

Crediting nut and seed butters

Examples of creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter credits if it meets the FDA's standard of identity for peanut butter ([21 CFR 164.150](#)), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Table 3-9 shows the MMA contribution for different amounts of nut and seed butters. The serving for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component. This crediting is the same for all types of nut and seed butters, e.g., smooth, crunchy, and natural.

Table 3-9. MMA contribution of nut and seed butters	
Serving size	MMA contribution
1 tablespoon	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce
3 tablespoons	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce
4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)	1 ounce
5 tablespoons	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces
6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup)	2 ounces

The required volume measure (tablespoons) for nut and seed butters is not the same as weight (ounces). A 1-ounce serving (weight) of a nut or seed butter does not provide 1 ounce of the MMA component. Nut and seed butters that are portioned by weight instead of volume must use the appropriate weight conversion in the USDA's FBG. The FBG indicates that 1.1 ounces of a nut or seed butter credits as 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of the MMA component. For more information, refer to "[Volume versus weight](#)" in section 2.

Serving size considerations

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the required serving for each age group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich.



The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing with another MMA to provide the full serving. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of the MMA component, which equals 3 tablespoons of peanut butter. A lunch menu could provide 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of MMA from a sandwich containing 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of peanut butter ($\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of MMA) served with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of yogurt ($\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of MMA).

Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters in commercial products

For commercial processed products (such as pre-made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or trail mix with nuts and dried fruit), SFAs must obtain a CN label (if available) or a PFS stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. For example, to credit a commercial pre-made peanut butter sandwich product as 1 ounce of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 tablespoons of peanut butter. For more information, refer to "[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)" in section 2.

Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters that are ingredients in commercial products must be visible and easily recognizable as meat substitutes to credit toward the preschool meal patterns. The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that SFAs offer foods from the MMA component in a form that is recognizable to children. Commercial products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes cannot credit as the MMA component. Some examples include peanut butter blended into other foods (such as muffins or smoothies) and chopped nuts in muffins. For more information, refer to "[Requirement for visible components](#)" at the beginning of section 3.

Chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nut or seed butters in preschool menus. Use only creamy peanut butter (not chunky) and spread thinly to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Noncreditable nuts and seeds

Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit as the MMA component.



Crediting Surimi Seafood

Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). Surimi seafood is available in many forms and shapes, including chunks, shredded, and flaked. It does not require additional preparation. Surimi seafood can be incorporated into a variety of menu items, such as seafood salads, sushi-style rolls, sandwiches, tacos, and ramen.



The amount of fish in surimi varies depending on the manufacturer and product. Surimi seafood may contain as little as one-third seafood ingredient and may include other creditable food ingredients. A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component. Table 3-10 shows the MMA contribution for different serving sizes of surimi seafood.

Table 3-10. MMA contribution of surimi seafood ¹	
Serving size	MMA contribution
1 ounce	¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
2 ounces	½ ounce
3 ounces	1 ounce
4.4 ounces	1½ ounces
6 ounces	2 ounces
¹ The crediting ratio for surimi seafood differs based on portion size due to USDA rounding rules that require rounding down to the nearest 0.25 ounce.	

SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the amount of MMA per serving based on these yields. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” and “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2.

To credit surimi seafood differently from the amounts in table 3-10, SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer’s PFS that documents how the crediting is determined. For example, a manufacturer’s PFS might document that 1 ounce of a surimi seafood product credits as ½ ounce of the MMA component. For more information, refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2.

The requirements for crediting surimi are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting surimi, refer to the USDA's webinar, [Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi](#).

Crediting Tempeh

Tempeh is a highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. Tempeh may be used as a meat alternate in a variety of recipes, including stir-fries, sandwiches, and salads. The SFA's standardized recipe must document the amount of MMA per serving.

A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If a tempeh product contains other ingredients SFAs must obtain a CN label or PFS to document crediting. For more information, refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2.

Varieties of tempeh that include other creditable foods as ingredients (such as brown rice, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, flax seed, and vegetables) may also credit as the MMA component, grains component, and vegetables component. To credit in the preschool meal patterns, this type of tempeh product must provide the minimum creditable quantities, i.e., $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of MMA, $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq of grains, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables. SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to document how much tempeh and other creditable foods these products contain.



The requirements for crediting tempeh are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019, and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting tempeh, refer to the USDA's webinar, [Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi](#).

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products

Tofu does not have a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [standard of identity](#). To credit as a meat alternate in the school nutrition programs, tofu must be commercially prepared and meet the following definition in [7 CFR 210.2](#) and [7 CFR 226.2](#): “a soybean-derived food, made by a process in which soybeans are soaked, ground, mixed with water, heated, filtered, coagulated, and formed into cakes. Basic ingredients are whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water.” In addition, tofu and tofu products must meet the two crediting criteria below.

1. **Must be easily recognizable:** The tofu or tofu product must be easily recognizable as a meat substitute to credit as the MMA component. The USDA’s intent for this requirement is to ensure that children can easily recognize that the foods in CACFP meals are part of the food groups that contribute to healthy meals. Tofu is widely recognized as a meat substitute and comes in a variety of textures such as silken, soft, firm, and extra firm. Some examples of recognizable tofu and tofu products include firm or extra firm tofu in stir-fries, omelets, miso soup, and minced in lasagna as a substitute for ricotta cheese; and commercial meat substitute products like tofu burgers and tofu sausage.

Tofu products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes cannot credit as the MMA component. Some examples include tofu blended into other foods (like smoothies, soup, and sauces), tofu baked in desserts, and tofu that does not represent a meat substitute, such as tofu noodles. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” at the beginning of section 3.

2. **Meets protein requirement:** The tofu ingredient must contain at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight (¼ cup volume equivalent) to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. Menu planners must use the Nutrition Facts panel or PFS to determine if commercial tofu meets this protein requirement. Table 3-11 shows the MMA contribution for different serving sizes of tofu and the minimum grams of protein required to credit in the preschool meal patterns.

SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that tofu products comply with these requirements. For guidance on calculating the grams of protein per serving, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

In addition, the SFA’s standardized recipe must document the amount of MMA per serving. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” and “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2.

Table 3-11. MMA contribution of tofu

Serving size	MMA contribution	Minimum protein (grams) per serving
0.55 ounce (1 tablespoon)	$\frac{1}{4}$ ounce (minimum creditable amount)	1.25 grams
1.1 ounces ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup)	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce	2.5 grams
2.2 ounces ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)	1 ounce	5 grams
3.3 ounces ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup)	$1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces	7.5 grams
4.4 ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)	2 ounces	10 grams



Crediting Yogurt and Soy Yogurt

Commercial yogurt and soy yogurt must meet the USDA’s sugar limit to credit as meat alternates in the preschool meal patterns (refer to [“Sugar Limit for Yogurt”](#) in this document). Yogurt may be unflavored or flavored; sweetened or unsweetened; whole-fat, low-fat, or nonfat; and may contain added fruit, either blended or on the bottom. Yogurt must meet the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) standard of identity for yogurt ([21 CFR 131.200](#)).

Serving size for yogurt

The required serving size for yogurt is based on volume (cups) or weight (ounces) and is the same for all types, flavors, and fat contents. A ½-cup serving (volume) or 4 ounces (weight) credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component in the preschool meal patterns. Table 3-12 shows the MMA contribution for different serving sizes of yogurt.

Table 3-12. MMA contribution of yogurt	
Serving size	MMA contribution
⅛ cup or 1 ounce	¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)
¼ cup or 2 ounces	½ ounce
½ cup (4 ounces)	1 ounce
¾ cup (6 ounces)	1½ ounces
1 cup (8 ounces)	2 ounces

Sugar limit for yogurt

Yogurt and soy yogurt must meet the preschool sugar limit of no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce). Yogurt and soy yogurt used as an ingredient in smoothies must also meet this requirement. The SFA must have documentation on file to indicate that yogurt and soy yogurt served in preschool meals and ASP snacks comply with the sugar limit. For guidance on how to determine if a product complies with the sugar limit, refer to [“Resources for crediting yogurt”](#) in this section.

The CSDE encourages menu planners to read labels and choose products without artificial and nonnutritive sweeteners (e.g., aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia), and sugar alcohols. These products are often labeled as “light” or “lite.”

Crediting fruits in yogurt

Fruits in commercially prepared yogurt (either blended or on the bottom or top) do not credit toward the fruits component. Menu planners may credit fruits offered as a separate component, such as yogurt topped with fresh blueberries or sliced strawberries in a yogurt-fruit parfait.

Crediting yogurt in smoothies

Yogurt or soy yogurt that meets the sugar limit may credit as the MMA component when used as an ingredient in a smoothie. A ½-cup serving of yogurt credits as 1 ounce of the MMA component.

SFAs must document the amount of yogurt per serving with a standardized recipe for smoothies made from scratch, and a CN label or PFS for commercial products. For example, to credit a smoothie as 1 ounce of the MMA component, the SFA's standardized recipe or the commercial product's CN label or PFS must indicate that each serving contains ½ cup of yogurt. For more information, refer to "[Standardized Recipes](#)" and "[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)" in section 2.

The addition of yogurt to a smoothie is not a substitution for fluid milk. Fluid milk must be offered at breakfast and lunch to meet the milk component requirement of the preschool meal patterns.

For more information on crediting smoothies, refer to "[Crediting Fruit in Smoothies](#)" in the "Fruits Component" section, "[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)" in the "Vegetables Component" section, and "[Crediting Milk in Smoothies](#)" in the "Milk Component" section.

Nutrition guidance

The CSDE encourages SFAs to read labels and consider fat content when purchasing yogurt for meals and snacks. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends serving low-fat and fat-free yogurt for ages 2 and older. These types of yogurts provide the same nutrients as whole milk yogurt but contain less saturated fat and fewer calories.

The CSDE encourages SFAs to choose yogurts without nonnutritive sweeteners (such as aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia) or sugar alcohols. These products are often labeled as "light" or "lite."

Noncreditable yogurt

Drinkable or squeezable yogurt and frozen yogurt do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. The FDA’s definition and standard of identity requires that yogurt must be “coagulated,” not liquid. The FDA does not have a standard of identity for frozen yogurt.

Homemade yogurt does not credit for food safety reasons. Yogurt-flavored products (such as yogurt bars and yogurt-covered fruit or nuts) do not meet the FDA’s definition and standard of identity for yogurt, and do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

Resources for crediting yogurt

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting yogurt as the MMA component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Calculating Sugar Limits for Yogurt in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-yogurt-cacfp>
- Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Sugars (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish)
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-yogurts-are-lower-sugar>
- Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Yogurt_SNP_preschool.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 02-2024, CACFP 02-2024, and SFSP 02-2024: Revised: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs, CACFP, and SFSP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Links to these resource are also available under “[Yogurt](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Noncreditable Foods in the MMA Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the MMA component include:

- Bacon (pork);
- commercial canned soups, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice;
- cream cheese;
- drinkable yogurt;
- egg whites;
- frozen yogurt;
- imitation cheese;
- pork fat;
- products made with tofu that are not easily recognized as meat substitutes;
- scrapple;
- sour cream;
- tofu that contains less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2-ounce serving by weight; and
- yogurt or soy yogurt that contains more than 3.83 grams of sugars per ounce.

For more examples and additional information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the MMA component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.



Resources for Crediting MMA

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the MMA component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Accepting_Processed_Product_Documentation_SNP.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 4: Meat/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Commercial_MMA_SNP.pdf
- Crediting Deli Meats in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Deli_SNP.pdf
- Crediting Legumes in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Legumes_SNP.pdf
- Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Nuts_SNP.pdf
- Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Tofu_SNP.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 1: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternates.pdf

- Food Buying Guide Section 1: Yield Table for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternatesYieldTable.pdf
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, 5: Meat/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>
- Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/APP_Requirements_SNP.pdf
- USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019, and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>
- USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019, and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>
- 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/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 53-2016 and CACFP 21-2016: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs and the CACFP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>

- USDA Webinar: Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products>

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Vegetables Component

The vegetables component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables; and pasteurized full-strength vegetable juice. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend that preschool menus include at least one serving per week of dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas (legumes), starchy vegetables, and other vegetables. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) also recommends incorporating seasonal and locally produced foods into meals. For more information, visit the USDA's [Farm to Preschool](#) webpage, the CSDE's [Farm to School](#) webpage and the University of Connecticut's [Put Local on Your Tray](#) webpage.

Some vegetables may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include cooked or raw whole-kernel corn, and small pieces of raw vegetables, e.g., raw green peas, whole beans, raw carrot rounds, baby carrots, string beans, celery, and other raw or partially cooked hard vegetables. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what vegetables to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.



Serving Size for Vegetables

The preschool meal patterns require a serving of the vegetables component at lunch. At breakfast, vegetables and fruits are one component and may include a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both. A serving of vegetables may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-13 summarizes the required servings of the vegetables component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-13. Required servings of the vegetables component		
Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast ¹	¼ cup	¼ cup
Lunch	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Snack	½ cup	½ cup
¹ Vegetables and fruits are one component and may include vegetables, fruits, or both.		

The amounts for the vegetables component refer to the edible portion after any applicable preparation techniques, such as peeling, trimming, and cooking. All vegetables credit based on volume (cups) with the exceptions below.

- Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (refer to “[Crediting Raw Leafy Greens](#)” in this section).
- Dried or dehydrated vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit based on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume (refer to “[Crediting Dried Vegetables](#)” in this section).

Menu planners should consult the USDA’s FBG to determine the number of servings provided by a specific quantity of vegetables. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2.



Meeting the required vegetable servings

SFAs may choose to serve a combination of several vegetables to meet the daily requirement if each serving contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables (refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in the beginning of section 3). For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 could meet the required $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of the vegetables component with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of broccoli, or $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of broccoli and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of carrots. Servings that contain less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables do not credit.

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the vegetables component, the meal must include additional vegetables to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component for ages 3-4. If a menu item contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetables to provide the full serving for ages 3-4.

When crediting menu items toward the vegetables component, menu planners must round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains $2\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of corn per serving credits as 2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup) of the vegetables component.

Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch

Vegetables may replace the fruits component at any lunch. Lunches may contain one serving of the vegetables component and one serving of the fruits component, or two different servings of the vegetables component. For example, menu planners may choose to substitute vegetables for the fruits component on Monday and Friday, or every day of the week. Lunches cannot contain two servings of only the fruits component.

Crediting Canned Vegetables

Canned vegetables must be drained. A serving of canned vegetables cannot include the packing liquid, such as water or sauce. For example, to credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component, a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of canned peas cannot include the water in which it is packed, and a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of baked beans cannot include the sauce in which it is packed. The serving must contain $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables before any added liquid.

Crediting Dried Vegetables

Dried or dehydrated vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit as the vegetables component based on their rehydrated volume. Dried vegetables used for seasonings (such as dried onion and dried parsley) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

The FBG lists yields for some dehydrated vegetables, such as pinto beans, refried beans, onions, bell peppers, potatoes, seaweed, and sweet potatoes. Dried vegetables not listed in the FBG require a PFS to determine crediting information. The PFS must provide specific documentation on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume. Menu planners should check the accuracy of the PFS prior to including foods with dehydrated vegetables in reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to [“Documentation for Commercial Products”](#) in section 2.

Determining rehydrated volume

The rehydration volume of dried vegetables often varies from brand to brand. Menu planners must use the procedures below to determine and document the rehydrated volume of dehydrated vegetable products.

1. Rehydrate (add water or liquid to) a purchase unit of the dehydrated vegetable according to the manufacturer’s directions. If the container does not include directions, request rehydration directions from the manufacturer.
2. Measure the rehydrated volume.
3. Measure the number of ¼-cup servings of rehydrated product that one purchase unit provides.
4. Keep records on file as verification. Records should include information on the size of the purchase unit, the number of ¼-cup servings of rehydrated product per purchase unit, the name of the manufacturer, and the manufacturer’s directions for rehydrating the product.

Since product rehydration volumes often vary from brand to brand, SFAs should use this procedure for each brand of dehydrated product. For more information, refer to [“Determining in-house product yields”](#) in section 2.

Crediting Hominy as Vegetables

Hominy is a traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin.

Hominy is available dried and in a fully cooked canned form. Drained canned hominy or cooked whole hominy (from dried hominy) credits toward the vegetables component as a starchy vegetable. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of canned drained hominy credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the starchy vegetables subgroup. The preschool meal patterns do not require vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend providing at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup per week.

For information on crediting hominy as the grains component, refer to “[Crediting Hominy as Grains](#)” in the “Grains Component” section.

Crediting Legumes as Vegetables

Legumes credit as the vegetables component or the MMA component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or ASP snack. The menu planner must determine in advance how to credit legumes in a meal. For information on crediting legumes as the MMA component, refer to “[Crediting Legumes as MMA](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component” section.

Legumes credit as the vegetables component based on the volume (cups) served. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of kidney beans credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component.

A serving of cooked legumes must contain the minimum required amount of beans, excluding other ingredients such as sauce and pork fat. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of baked beans that contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of sauce and pork fat credits as $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of the vegetables component. For more information, refer to “[Vegetables with Added Ingredients](#)” in this section.

A menu item must provide at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of legumes to credit toward part of the vegetables component. If the amount is less than the full preschool serving, the meal or ASP snack must include additional vegetables to meet the full serving for each age group. For more information, refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and “[Serving Size for Vegetables](#)” in this section.

Note: Peanuts are legumes that credit only as the MMA component. For more information, refer to “[Nuts and Seeds](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section.

Crediting roasted or dried legumes as vegetables

Roasted or dried legumes, such as chickpeas and soybeans, credit as the vegetables component based on the volume (cups) served. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of roasted or dried legumes credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component.

The USDA recommends that menu planners use discretion when offering snack-type legumes (such as individually wrapped soy nuts) as part of reimbursable meals, due to their perception as snack foods. While these types of products credit in school meals, they may be better suited for meals served off site, such as bagged lunches for field trips.

Considerations for serving roasted or dried legumes are similar to nuts. Roasted or dried legumes may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer roasted or dried legumes in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

For information on crediting roasted or dried legumes as the MMA component, refer to “[Crediting roasted or dried legumes as MMA](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section.

Crediting hummus as vegetables

The legumes (e.g., chickpeas/garbanzo beans) in hummus may credit as either the MMA component or the vegetables component (legumes subgroup), but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or snack. Crediting as the vegetables component is based on the amount of legumes per serving. For example, hummus that contains $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of chickpeas per serving credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

To credit hummus as the vegetable component, SFAs must maintain crediting documentation that indicates the amount of legumes per serving. Commercial products require a CN label (if available) or PFS. Hummus made from scratch requires a standardized recipe (refer to “[Crediting legumes in recipes as vegetables](#)” in this section).

For information on crediting hummus as the MMA component, refer to “[Crediting Legumes as MMA](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component” section.

Crediting legumes in recipes as vegetables

SFAs must have standardized recipes on file to document the crediting information for all legume-based foods made from scratch, such as lentil soup, bean burritos, and chili. A standardized recipe must provide at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of legumes per serving to credit toward the vegetables component. The menu planner must determine the recipe's crediting information for the vegetables component by dividing the total volume (cups) of beans in the recipe by the number of servings, then rounding down to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. For guidance on how to calculate the contribution of legumes in a recipe, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Crediting Legumes in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*](#).

Crediting documentation for commercial legume products

Commercial processed products that contain legumes (such as black bean burritos and vegetarian chili) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving (refer to "[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)" in section 2).

Crediting Mixed Vegetables at Lunch

The preschool meal patterns allow vegetables to substitute for the fruits component at any lunch. Vegetable mixtures (such as carrots, peas, and corn; three-bean salad; and a California mix of broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots) may credit toward both the vegetables component and the fruits component at lunch, if the mixture contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup each of two different kinds of vegetables.

For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 includes a vegetable mixture of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of broccoli and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cauliflower. Since vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at lunch, the menu planner may choose to credit the broccoli as the full vegetables component ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup), and use the cauliflower to replace the full fruits component ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup). The cauliflower provides the minimum $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving for the fruits component.

The crediting of mixed vegetables depends on whether the menu planner knows the amount of each type of vegetable in the mixture. If the menu planner does not know the quantities of the different vegetables in a mix (such as frozen mixed carrots and peas), the vegetable mixture credits as one serving of vegetables and cannot credit as the fruit component. In this case, the lunch or supper menu would require either a serving of the fruits component, or another serving of vegetables substituted for the fruits component. For more information, refer to "[Substituting Vegetables for Fruits at Lunch](#)" in this section.

Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour

Pasta products made of vegetable flours credit as the vegetables component if they meet the specific requirements in [USDA Memo SP 26-2019](#), [CACFP 13-2019](#), and [SFSP 12-2019](#):

Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs. These requirements are summarized below.

Pasta made of 100 percent legumes credits as the MMA component but cannot credit as the vegetables component and the MMA component in the same meal or ASP snack. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as MMA](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section.

Crediting vegetable flours as vegetables

Pasta made of one or more 100 percent vegetable flours credits toward the vegetables component, even when it is not served with another recognizable vegetable. These products credit the same as vegetables, e.g., $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pasta made of 100 percent vegetable flour credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component. The ingredients statements below show examples of pasta products that contain 100 percent vegetable flour.

- Ingredients: Red lentil flour.
- Ingredients: Green lentils, cauliflower, parsnips.

Crediting vegetable flours from one vegetable subgroup

Pasta products made of one or more vegetable flours from one vegetable subgroup may credit toward the appropriate vegetable subgroup. For example, pasta made of 100 percent red lentil flour credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the legumes subgroup.

The preschool meal patterns do not require vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend providing at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup per week.

Pasta made of 100 percent legumes may also credit as the MMA component but cannot credit as the legumes subgroup and the MMA component in the same meal. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as MMA](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section.

Crediting vegetable flours with other non-vegetable ingredients

Pasta products made of vegetable flour with other non-vegetable ingredients may credit toward the vegetables component (or in the case of 100 percent legume pasta, the MMA component) with a PFS that details the actual volume of vegetable flour per serving. This crediting does not apply to grain-based pasta products that contain small amounts of vegetable powder for color, such as spinach pasta or sun-dried tomato pasta.

The example below shows an ingredients statement for a pasta product that does not credit toward the vegetables component.

Ingredients: Semolina (wheat), durum flour (wheat), **dried spinach**, niacin, ferrous sulfate (iron), thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This product contains dried spinach in an amount that is too small to credit.

The example below shows an ingredients statement for a vegetable pasta product that might credit toward the vegetables component.

Ingredients: Semolina (wheat), durum flour (wheat), **dried carrots, dried tomato, dried spinach**, niacin, ferrous sulfate (iron), thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This product might credit toward the vegetables component depending on the amount of dried carrots, dried tomato, and dried spinach per serving. The CACFP facility must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine the crediting information for this product.

Signage and staff training for vegetable flour pastas

The USDA encourages SFAs to provide information, as age appropriate, that helps children understand what foods are in their meals and ASP snacks. For example, if meal includes 100 percent chickpea pasta as the vegetables component, the menu could list chickpea pasta with a symbol showing it to be part of the vegetables component (not the grains component) of the meal.

Menu planners should also inform serving staff when meals include pasta made with vegetable flour, so they are aware of how these foods contribute to the preschool meal patterns.

Crediting Pureed Vegetables

Pureed vegetables must be visible to credit in the CACFP meal patterns. Examples include pureed foods made from one vegetable such as tomato sauce, split pea soup, mashed potatoes, mashed sweet potatoes, and pureed butternut squash. For more information, refer to [“Requirement for visible components”](#) at the beginning of section 3.

Pureed vegetables credit based on the volume (cups) after pureeing. For example, to determine the volume of pea puree obtained from 1 cup of green peas, food service staff would puree the whole peas and measure the resulting amount of puree. Pureed vegetables typically have a smaller volume than the whole vegetable pieces. For more information, refer to [“Determining in-house product yields”](#) in section 2.



SFAs must document crediting information with a standardized recipe, PFS, or CN label (available only for foods that contain the MMA component). For more information, refer to [“Standardized Recipes”](#) and [“Documentation for Commercial Products”](#) in section 2.

Unrecognizable pureed vegetables

Foods made with pureed vegetables that are not visible (such as pureed carrots in macaroni and cheese) cannot credit as the vegetables component unless they also provide at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of a visible creditable vegetable. For example, a serving of macaroni and cheese that contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of diced butternut squash (visible) and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of pureed carrots (not visible) credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the red/orange vegetables subgroup.

Pureed vegetables do not credit when used to improve the nutrient profile of a food. For example, pureed sweet potatoes in muffins cannot credit toward the vegetables component or the MMA component. The USDA emphasizes the importance of the nutrition education aspect of the CACFP, which includes the goal of helping participants easily recognize the key food groups that contribute to a healthy meal.

Pureed vegetables in smoothies

Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice toward the vegetables component and counts toward the daily juice limit (refer to [“Juice limit”](#) in the “Fruits Component” section). Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed carrots credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetable juice. For additional guidance on crediting smoothies, refer to [“Crediting Smoothies”](#) in the “Fruits Component” section.

Crediting Raw Leafy Greens

Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ 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 such as iceberg, romaine, Boston, Bibb, red leaf, and spring mix.

Cooked leafy greens (such as spinach and kale) and roasted or dried leafy greens (such as roasted kale) credit based on the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked spinach or roasted kale credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component.

Crediting Vegetable and Fruit Mixtures

Mixtures of vegetables and fruits may credit toward both the vegetables component and fruits component if the serving contains at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible vegetables and at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible fruits. For example, a carrot-raisin salad that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of carrots and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component. Dried fruits credit as twice the volume served. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Dried Fruits](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section.



Crediting Soups

Vegetable soups made from scratch credit based on the amount of vegetables contained in one serving. SFAs must document this information with a standardized recipe based on the yields listed in the FBG. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” and “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2.

Table 3-14 summarizes the types of commercial vegetable soups that credit in the preschool meal patterns. Creditable commercial vegetable soups include lentil, pea, and bean (legumes); minestrone; tomato; tomato with other basic components such as rice; vegetable (contains only vegetables); and vegetable with other basic components such as meat or poultry.

The FBG indicates that 1 cup of a commercial legume soup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables, and 1 cup of commercial vegetable soup credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables. The serving refers to the amount of cooked soup, e.g., heated canned or frozen ready-to-serve soup, reconstituted dried soup, and reconstituted condensed soup.

To credit a commercial soup that is not listed in the FBG, SFAs must obtain a PFS stating the specific contribution of vegetables (refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2).

Table 3-14. Allowable commercial vegetable soups in the NSLP and SBP	
Vegetable soups 1 cup credits as ¼ cup of vegetables	Legume soups 1 cup credits as ½ cup of vegetables
Minestrone soup Tomato soup Tomato soup with other basic components such as rice Vegetable soup (contains only vegetables) Vegetable soup with other basic components such as meat or poultry	Lentil soup Pea soup, e.g., split pea Bean soup, e.g., black bean, navy bean, and mixed bean

Considerations for serving size

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size for preschoolers. The large serving of a commercial soup needed to provide the full vegetables component might be unreasonable, especially for younger children. For example, to provide ½ cup of the vegetables component at snack requires 2 cups of a commercial vegetable soup and 1 cup of a commercial legume soup. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Soups in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Considerations for container size

The served portion of soup (commercial or made from scratch) must be sufficient to provide the amount of each component being credited toward the meal patterns. Menu planners should consider the size of the container used to serve the soup. A 1-cup container (8 fluid ounces) does not provide 1 cup of soup unless it is filled to the top, which is impractical.

To avoid spilling and ensure that the served portion meets the meal pattern requirements, the container should be larger than the planned serving size of soup. For example, SFAs could use a 10-fluid ounce bowl to hold 8 fluid ounces (1 cup) of soup and a 6-fluid ounce bowl to hold 4 fluid ounces (½ cup) of soup.

Noncreditable soups

Commercial beef barley soup, chicken or turkey noodle soup, chicken or turkey rice soup, and cream vegetable soups (such as cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom) do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.

Crediting Vegetable Juice

Vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice or a combination of vegetable and fruit juices. It can be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate. The name of the full-strength juice on the label must include one of the following terms: “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “100 percent juice,” “reconstituted juice,” or “juice from concentrate.”

Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day.

For more information, refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section and the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies

Vegetable juice and pureed vegetables in smoothies credit as juice toward the vegetables component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of juice and pureed vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed carrots credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetable juice. Vegetable juice and pureed vegetables in smoothies count with all other juices toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section.

Smoothies that contain any combination of pureed fruits, pureed vegetables, and 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the greatest vegetable or fruit ingredient. For more information, refer to “[Mixed fruits and vegetables in smoothies](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section.

For more information on crediting smoothies, refer to “[Crediting Fruit in Smoothies](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section, “[Crediting Milk in Smoothies](#)” in the “Milk Component” section, and “[Crediting yogurt in smoothies](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section.

Crediting Vegetables in Combination Foods

Combination foods (such as pizza, lasagna, chili, vegetable egg rolls, hummus, and chicken-vegetable stir-fry) contain more than one food component. For example, cheese pizza contains the grains component (crust), the MMA component (cheese), and the vegetables component (tomato sauce).

The visible vegetable portion of a combination food credits based on the amount of vegetables per serving. For more information, refer to [“Requirement for visible components”](#) at the beginning of section 3.

For foods made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the cups of vegetables per serving based on the yields listed in the FBG. For more information, refer to [“Standardized Recipes”](#) and [“Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs”](#) in section 2.

For commercial products, SFAs must obtain a CN label (if the vegetables are part of a main dish entree that contributes to the MMA component) or a PFS stating the specific contribution of vegetables. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer’s PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to [“Documentation for Commercial Products”](#) in section 2.



Crediting Vegetables with Added Ingredients

If a commercial product or standardized recipe contains added ingredients (such as mayonnaise, yogurt, sugar, molasses, salad dressing, or breading), only the vegetable portion credits toward the preschool meal patterns. For example, to credit coleslaw as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component, the serving must contain $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of shredded cabbage and carrots, before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, sugar, and spices.

Other examples of vegetables with added ingredients include tossed salad with dressing and croutons; potato salad; sweet potato casserole with marshmallows; mashed potatoes made with butter and milk; baked beans with sauce; carrot-raisin salad; breaded vegetables; and vegetables with cheese.



SFAs must document the amount of vegetables per serving with a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (based on the vegetable yields listed in the FBG) or a PFS for commercial products. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to "[Standardized Recipes](#)," "[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)," and "[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)" in section 2.

Standardized recipes and PFS forms are not required for vegetables without added ingredients, such as whole or cut-up fresh vegetables, canned vegetables, and frozen vegetables.

Produce Safety

SFAs must ensure that all food service personnel understand how to prepare produce safely. The ICN's [Produce Safety Resources](#) webpage includes resources that describe best practices for receiving, storing, handling, and purchasing fresh and fresh-cut produce. For additional resources, visit the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) and [Resources for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpages.

Noncreditable Foods in the Vegetables Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the vegetables component include:

- chili sauce;
- dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning;
- cream vegetable soups, e.g., cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom;
- home-canned products (for food safety reasons);
- ketchup;
- pickle relish; and
- snack-type foods made from vegetables, such as potato chips and corn chips.

For more examples and additional information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *[Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)*.

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the vegetables component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.



Resources for Crediting Vegetables

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the vegetables component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 6: Vegetables Component (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA Webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs>
- Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Juice_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Crediting Legumes in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Legumes_SNP.pdf
- Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Crediting Soups in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Soups_SNP.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 2: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Vegetables Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section2_Vegetables.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 2: Yield Table for Vegetables (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section2_VegetablesYieldTable.pdf

- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 4 6: Fruits Component and Vegetables Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- Serving Vegetables in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-vegetables-cacfp>
- Start with Half a Cup: Fresh Vegetable Portioning Guide for Schools:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideVeg85x14.pdf>
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>
- 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/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>
- Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Vegetable_Subgroups_CACFP.pdf

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Vegetables Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Fruits Component

The fruits component includes fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits; and pasteurized full-strength fruit juice. The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend that SFAs:

- serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice;
- make at least one of the two required snack components a vegetable or a fruit, and
- incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.

For information on farm to school, visit the USDA's [Farm to Preschool](#) webpage, the CSDE's [Farm to School](#) webpage and the University of Connecticut's [Put Local on Your Tray](#) webpage.

Some fruits may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include whole grapes, berries, melon balls, apples and other hard pieces of raw fruit; and dried fruits. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what fruits to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.



Serving Size for Fruits

The preschool meal patterns require a serving of the fruits component at lunch. At breakfast, vegetables and fruits are one component and may include a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both. A serving of fruit may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-15 summarizes the required servings of the fruits component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-15. Required servings of the fruits component		
Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast ¹	¼ cup	¼ cup
Lunch ²	⅛ cup	¼ cup
Snack ³	½ cup	½ cup
¹ Vegetables and fruits are one component and may include vegetables, fruits, or both. ² Vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at any lunch or supper. ³ Juice cannot be served when milk is the only other snack component. Only one snack component can be a creditable beverage such as juice, a fruit smoothie, or milk.		

The amounts for the fruits component refer to the edible portion after any applicable preparation techniques, such as peeling, removing seeds and pits, and cooking. All fruits credit based on volume (cups) except for dried fruits, which credit as twice the volume served. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Dried Fruits](#)” in this section.

Menu planners should consult the USDA’s FBG to determine the number of servings provided by a specific quantity of fruit. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in section 2.

Meeting the required fruit servings

SFAs may choose to serve a combination of several fruits to meet the daily requirement if each serving contains at least ⅛ cup of fruit (refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in the beginning of section 3). For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 could meet the required ¼-cup serving of the fruits component with ⅛ cup of peaches and ⅛ cup of applesauce. Servings that contain less than ⅛ cup of fruit do not credit.

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the fruits component, the meal must include additional fruit to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the preschool lunch meal pattern requires ¼ cup of the fruits component for ages 3-4. If a menu item

contains $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit to provide the full serving for ages 3-4.

When crediting menu items toward the fruits component, menu planners must round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains $2\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of strawberries per serving credits as 2 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup) of the fruits component.

Crediting Canned Fruits

The preschool meal patterns allow canned fruit in juice, water, or syrup. Canned fruits in heavy syrup have a higher added sugar content than other types of canned fruits. The USDA recommends choosing fruits canned in juice, water, or light syrup.

A serving of canned fruit may include the 100 percent juice in which the fruit is packed but cannot include water or syrup. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned peaches in juice credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. However, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned peaches in syrup does not credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. The menu planner can credit only the amount of peaches without the syrup.

The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component (refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in this section). For example, if canned pears in juice credit as the fruits component at lunch, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at any other preschool meal or ASP snack that same day.

Juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if the juice is planned as an extra noncreditable food. For example, the juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if food service personnel portion $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned fruit in a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce container, and then add the juice after measuring the full $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruit.



Crediting Coconut

Fresh and frozen coconut credit as the fruits component based on the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fresh or frozen coconut credits as $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of the fruits component. Dried coconut credits the same as other dried fruits (twice the volume served). For example, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of dried coconut credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Dried Fruits](#)” in this section.

Coconut is high in calories and saturated fat and should be limited in preschool menus. Coconut flour, coconut oil, and coconut milk do not credit.

Juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, credit toward the fruits component based on the volume served. Menu planners must count coconut water with all other juices toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to “[Coconut water](#)” and “[Juice limit](#)” in this section.

The requirements for crediting coconut are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 34-2019](#), [CACFP 15-2019](#), and [SFSP 15-2019](#): *Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs*:

Crediting Dried Fruits

Dried fruits (such as raisins, apricots, dried cherries, dried cranberries, dried blueberries, mixed dried fruit, and dried coconut) credits as twice the volume served. For example, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component.

This crediting requirement does not apply to dried fruits in amounts less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (the minimum creditable amount). For example, $\frac{1}{16}$ cup (1 tablespoon) of raisins does not credit as $\frac{1}{8}$ cup fruit.

Dried fruits may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer dried fruits in snack menus. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

Manufacturers sometimes process dried fruits with added sugar to keep the fruit pieces separated. The CSDE encourages menu planners to read labels and choose dried fruit without added sweeteners, including sugars and nonnutritive sweeteners, e.g., aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, and stevia.

Crediting Fresh Fruits

The crediting contribution of one piece of fresh fruit (whole or cut up) varies depending on the type and size, and ranges from $\frac{1}{4}$ cup to $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups. For example, the FBG indicates that:

- one 60-count plum, one 88-count peach, and one clementine each credit as $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of fruit;
- one 100-120-count banana, one 150-count pear, one 80-count peach, one 138-count orange, and one 45-count plum each credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit;
- one 113-count and 125-count orange each credit as $\frac{5}{8}$ cup of fruit;
- one size 56-64 nectarine, one size 56 peach, and one 120-count pear each credit as $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of fruit; and
- one 125-138-count apple credits as 1 cup of fruit.

Menu planners must ensure that an individual piece of fresh fruit (whole or cut-up) provides the correct serving for each preschool meal and ASP snack. If the amount is less than the full serving, the meal or ASP snack must include additional fruit to meet the full serving. The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- The breakfast meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits, vegetables, or both. One 120-count tangerine credits as $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of fruit, which does not provide the full serving. To credit as the full component, the breakfast menu must include an additional $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruits or vegetables.
- The snack meal pattern for ages 1-2 and 3-4 requires $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the fruits component. One kiwi credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit, which does not provide the full serving. To credit as the full fruits component, the snack menu must include an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component.

Table 3-16 lists the FBG's meal pattern contribution of some fresh fruits, and the additional amount needed to provide a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving.



Table 3-16. Meal pattern contribution of fresh fruits

Fruit (one piece, whole or cut up) ¹	Meal pattern contribution from FBG	Additional amount needed for ½ cup ²
Apple, 125-138 count	1 cup	0
Apricot, medium (1 ⅜-inch diameter)	¼ cup	¼ cup
Banana, 150 count (7 to 7⅞ inch)	½ cup	0
Banana, 100-120 count, regular	½ cup	0
Clementine, whole, peeled	⅜ cup	⅛ cup
Grapefruit, 27-32 count, large	1 cup	0
Kiwi, 33-39 count	¼ cup	¼ cup
Nectarine, size 88-96 (2 ¼-inch diameter)	½ cup	0
Nectarine, size 56-64 (2 ¾-inch diameter)	¾ cup	0
Orange, Arizona or California, 113 count	⅝ cup	0
Orange, Florida or Texas, 125 count	⅝ cup	0
Orange, Arizona or California, 138 count	½ cup	0
Peach, size 88 and 84 (2 ⅛-inch diameter)	⅜ cup	⅛ cup
Peach, size 64 and 60 (2 ½-inch diameter)	⅔ cup	0
Peach, size 80	½ cup	0
Peach, size 56	¾ cup	0
Peach, size 56	¾ cup	0
Pear, 150 count	½ cup	0
Pear, 120 count	¾ cup	0
Pear, D'Anjou, Bosc, or Bartlett, 100 count	1¼ cups	0

Table 3-16. Meal pattern contribution of fresh fruits, *continued*

Fruit (one piece, whole or cut up) ¹	Meal pattern contribution from FBG	Additional amount needed for ½ cup ²
Plum, purple, red, or black, size 45 and 50 (2-inch diameter)	½ cup	0
Plum, purple, red, or black, 2 ½-inch diameter	⅝ cup	0
Plum, Japanese or hybrid, size 60 and 65	⅜ cup	⅛ cup
Tangerine, 120 count	⅜ cup	⅛ cup

¹ Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding what fruits to offer.

Prepare all fruits to reduce the risk of choking (refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1).

² A ½-cup serving of fruits is required for ages 3-4 at breakfast and for ages 1-4 at snack (if fruit is one of the two required snack components).

Some fresh fruits may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include whole grapes, berries, melon balls, and apples and other hard pieces of raw fruit. Consider children’s ages and developmental readiness when deciding what fresh fruits to offer in preschool menus. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include removing seeds and hard pits, cooking until soft, and cutting, dicing, or shredding into small pieces. For additional guidance, refer to “[Choking Prevention](#)” in section 1.

Crediting Frozen Fruits

Frozen fruits credit based on the volume served. For some frozen fruits (such as frozen sliced strawberries and frozen apricots), the serving includes the thawed liquid. For other frozen fruits (such as frozen berry blends, frozen sweet cherries, and frozen mangoes), the serving is for the thawed, drained fruit. Check the FBG for the specific serving and crediting requirements for different types of frozen fruits. The USDA recommends limiting frozen fruits with added sugars.

Crediting Fruits in Commercial Products

Commercial products that contain at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of one or more visible fruits (such as mixed berries in a yogurt-fruit parfait) credit based on the amount (cups) of fruit per serving. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2.

To credit in the preschool meal patterns, commercial products must have a CN label or PFS that documents the amount of fruits per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2.

Crediting Fruits in Grain-Based Desserts

The visible fruit portion of grain-based desserts (such as fruit crisp, fruit pies, and fruit turnovers) credits based on the amount of fruit in the serving, excluding the grain portion (such as crisp topping and piecrust). For example, a fruit turnover that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of apples credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” at the beginning of section 3.

The grain portion of grain-based desserts (such as piecrust and cobbler or crisp topping) does not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns (refer to “[Grain-based desserts](#)” in the “Grains Component” section). The large amount of a grain-based dessert needed to provide the required serving of fruit might be unreasonable, especially for younger children.

For foods made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe that documents the cups of fruit per serving based on the yields listed in the FBG. For commercial products, SFAs must obtain a manufacturer’s PFS stating the amount of fruits per serving. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer’s PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#),” “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” and “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2.

The USDA recommends limiting sweetened fruit to help reduce children’s consumption of added sugars and help children develop a taste preference for unsweetened fruit.

Crediting Fruits in Yogurt

Fruits in commercially prepared yogurt (either blended or on the bottom or top) do not credit toward the fruits component. Menu planners may credit fruits offered as a separate component, such as yogurt topped with fresh blueberries or sliced strawberries in a yogurt-fruit parfait.

Crediting Fruits with Added Ingredients

If a commercial product or preschool recipe contains added ingredients (such as yogurt, mayonnaise, sugar, butter, sauce, or toppings), only the fruit portion credits toward the preschool meal patterns. For example, to credit Waldorf salad as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component, the serving must contain $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit (e.g., diced apples, grapes, and raisins), before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, sugar, and spices. Other examples of fruits with added ingredients include yogurt-fruit parfaits, carrot-raisin salad, cottage cheese mixed with crushed pineapple, and baked apples.

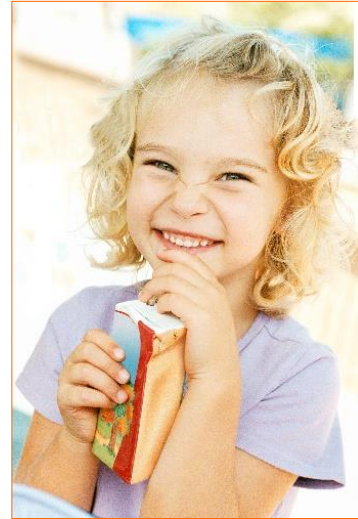
SFAs must document the amount of fruits per serving with a standardized recipe for foods made from scratch (based on the yields listed in the FBG) or a PFS for commercial products. SFAs are responsible for checking the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy prior to including commercial products in preschool meals and snacks. For more information, refer to [“Standardized Recipes,”](#) [“Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs,”](#) and [“Documentation for Commercial Products”](#) in section 2.

Standardized recipes and PFS forms are not required for fruits without added ingredients, such as whole or cut-up fresh fruits; canned fruits in juice, water, or light syrup; frozen fruits; and dried fruits.

Crediting Fruit Juice

Juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice or a combination of fruit and vegetable juices. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “100 percent juice,” “reconstituted juice,” or “juice from concentrate.” The statements “natural” and “organic” do not indicate that a juice is full strength.

Juice may be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate; and may be served liquid or frozen, e.g., full-strength frozen juice pops. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [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 recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice. Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables.

Juice concentrates

Juice concentrates credit only when reconstituted with water to 100 percent full-strength juice and served in the form of juice. Foods made with juice concentrate, such as gelatin or sherbet, do not credit as juice because they are no longer in the form of juice.

Juice made from concentrate is reconstituted with a volume of water that is several times the amount of the juice concentrate. A typical reconstitution ratio might be three parts water to one part concentrate, but this ratio may vary for different juice products.

Commercial juice products made from concentrate will list “water” as the first ingredient, followed by the type of juice concentrate, for example, “water, orange juice concentrate” and “filtered water, grape juice concentrate.” Juice made from concentrate that is labeled “100 percent juice” credits when the SFA follows the manufacturer’s specific instructions for reconstituting.

Juice blends

Juice blends must be a combination of full-strength (100 percent) fruit juices, full-strength vegetable juices, or full-strength fruit and vegetable juices. At lunch, fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product credits as the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the vegetables component. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a vegetable and fruit juice blend.

Ingredients: **Reconstituted vegetable juice blend (water and concentrated juices of sweet potatoes, purple carrots, carrots)**, reconstituted fruit juices (water and concentrated juices of apples, white grapes, cranberries, blackberries), contains less than 2% of: natural flavoring, citric acid, lemon juice.

This product credits as the vegetables component because the first ingredient is a reconstituted vegetable juice blend.

Frozen juice products

Frozen 100 percent fruit juice products (such as full-strength frozen juice pops) credit based on the fluid volume prior to freezing. SFAs must request a PFS from the manufacturer to document this information (refer to “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” in section 2). Frozen fruit juice must meet the same requirements as juice and counts toward the juice limit (refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in this section).

Apple cider

Apple cider must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice to credit toward the fruits component. Pasteurized juice has been heat-treated to kill harmful bacteria. Menu planners must check labels, as some brands of apple cider are not pasteurized. SFAs cannot serve apple cider or any other type of juice that is not pasteurized. Apple cider counts toward the juice limit (refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in this section).

Coconut water

Fruit juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, credit toward the fruits component based on the volume served. Coconut water must meet the same requirements as juice and counts toward the juice limit (refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in this section).

Juice ingredients

All pasteurized 100 percent juices meet the USDA's requirements for the fruits component, but their ingredients may vary among manufacturers. The FDA's labeling regulations allow 100 percent juice with added ingredients to be labeled "100% juice." Therefore, some 100 percent juices contain added ingredients such as artificial flavors, artificial colors (e.g., red 40, blue 1, yellow 5 and 6, and titanium dioxide), preservatives (e.g., sodium benzoate and potassium sorbate), flavor enhancers (e.g., ethyl maltol), and emulsifiers or thickeners (e.g., glycerol esters of wood rosin and xanthan gum). The CSDE encourages menu planners to read product ingredients statements and choose 100 percent juice without these added ingredients.

Juice limit

Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or snack per day. The daily juice limit includes all sources of 100 percent juice, such as fruit and vegetable juice; frozen pops made from 100 percent juice; pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies; and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice.

Drained canned fruit and canned fruit in light syrup or water do not count toward the juice limit. For more information, refer to "[Crediting Canned Fruits](#)" in this section.

If a preschool meal or ASP snack includes any type of juice as the fruits component or vegetables component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at any other preschool meal or ASP snack that same day.

The examples below show how the juice limit applies.

- The preschool lunch meal pattern requires a serving of the fruits component and a serving of the vegetables component. Lunch menus cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of fruits and vegetables because both credit as juice. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and tomato juice as the vegetables component. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable (i.e., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).
- If the preschool breakfast menu includes juice as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as either the vegetables component or fruits component at lunch or ASP snack that same day.

- If the preschool lunch menu includes canned fruit in juice as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast or ASP snack that same day.
- If the preschool ASP snack menu includes a smoothie made with pureed peaches as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast or lunch that same day. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Smoothies](#)” in this section.

Offering juice as an extra menu item

Menu planners may choose to offer juice as an extra menu item that does not credit toward the preschool meal patterns. However, the USDA encourages SFAs to limit juice in preschool menus to ensure that meals and ASP snacks meet children’s nutrition needs.

The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving a variety of fruits and choosing whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.



Crediting Pureed Fruits

Pureed fruits in foods must be visible (recognizable) to credit in the preschool meal patterns. Pureed foods made from one fruit (such as applesauce) are visible creditable fruits. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” at the beginning of section 3.

Foods made with pureed fruits cannot credit as the fruits component unless they also provide an adequate amount of a visible creditable fruit. For example, a fruit sauce on pancakes must contain at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible fruit to credit as the fruits component.

Pureed fruits credit based on the volume (cups) after pureeing. Crediting information must be documented with a standardized recipe or PFS. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” and “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2.

Unrecognizable pureed fruits

Foods made with pureed fruits cannot credit as the fruits component unless they also provide at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of a visible creditable fruit. Some examples include pureed prunes in brownies, applesauce in muffins, and pureed bananas in banana bread.

The USDA emphasizes the importance of the nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs, which includes the goal of helping children easily recognize the key food groups that contribute to a healthy meal. For more information, refer to “[Requirement for visible components](#)” at the beginning of section 3.



Crediting Fruits in Smoothies

Fruit juice and pureed fruits in commercial smoothies and smoothie recipes credit as juice toward the fruits component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of juice and pureed fruits per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice.

Juice limit for smoothies

Juice and pureed fruits in smoothies count with all other juices toward the juice limit. Juice credits as either the fruits component or the vegetables component at only one preschool meal or snack per day. For example, if the menu planner credits pureed fruit in a smoothie as the fruits component at breakfast, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at lunch, supper, or snack that same day.



In addition, lunch and supper cannot a smoothie and juice as the only servings of the fruits component and vegetables component. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and vegetable juice as the vegetables component because both credit as juice. For more information, refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in this section and the CSDE’s resources, [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](#).

Crediting fruits in commercial smoothies

Commercial smoothies made with pureed fruits credit based on the volume of fruits after pureeing and before freezing. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars. They do not credit in smoothies unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

The product label must include a statement regarding the “percent juice content,” which is required by the FDA for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or puree. For example, an 8-fluid ounce smoothie made from fruit puree labeled with “contains 50% juice” credits as 4 fluid ounces (½ cup) of juice. SFAs may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruit in the product.

Mixed fruits and vegetables in smoothies

Smoothies that contain any combination of pureed fruits, pureed vegetables, and 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the greatest fruit or vegetable ingredient. Commercial smoothies credit as the fruits component if the first juice ingredient is fruit juice or fruit puree. They credit as the vegetables component if the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice or vegetable puree. For information on crediting smoothies as the vegetables component, refer to “[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)” in the “Vegetables Component” section.

Smoothies made from scratch credit as the fruits component if fruit juice or fruit puree is the greatest juice ingredient in the standardized recipe. They credit as the vegetables component if vegetable juice or vegetable puree is the greatest juice ingredient in the standardized recipe.

Crediting other components in smoothies

Other creditable ingredients in smoothies include vegetable juice, pureed vegetables, milk, and yogurt. For guidance on crediting vegetables in smoothies, refer to “[Crediting Vegetables in Smoothies](#)” in the “Milk Component” section. For guidance on crediting milk in smoothies, refer to “[Crediting Milk in Smoothies](#)” in the “Milk Component” section. For guidance on crediting yogurt in smoothies, refer to “[Crediting yogurt in smoothies](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component” section.

Required documentation for smoothies

SFAs must have documentation on file that indicates the quantity of all creditable ingredients per serving, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, juice, yogurt, and milk. The total creditable amount in a smoothie cannot exceed the volume served. For example, a ½-cup serving of a commercial smoothie cannot credit as 1 cup of juice.

Commercial smoothies require a PFS (or a CN label, if available, for commercial smoothies that contain yogurt). Smoothies made from scratch require a standardized recipe. For more information, refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” and “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2.

Noncreditable commercial smoothies

Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the school meal patterns. Noncreditable commercial smoothies also include probiotic dairy drinks, drinkable yogurt, and yogurt drinks.

Crediting considerations for smoothies

Menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when including smoothies in preschool meals and ASP snacks. The USDA recommends not offering smoothies at more than one meal or snack per day.

- **Breakfast:** Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as juice toward the entire vegetables and fruits component, if the serving provides the required amount. For example, a serving of smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed mangoes and carrots credits as the fruits component for ages 3-5 at breakfast. If the smoothie contains less than the required amount, the breakfast menu must include additional vegetables and fruits to meet the full requirement.
- **Lunch:** The preschool lunch meal pattern requires a serving of vegetables and a serving of fruits. Menu planners cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of vegetables and fruits at lunch. Since both foods credit as juice, they exceed the juice limit. At least one of the required lunch servings of the vegetables component and fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable (fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).
- **Snack:** The preschool snack meal pattern requires two of the five components. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as either the entire fruits component or the entire vegetables component but cannot credit as both components in the same snack. Smoothies containing juice and milk may credit as either juice or milk, but not both in the same snack. If the amount of milk or juice in the smoothie is less than the full serving, the snack menu must include additional foods to provide the full component. The snack menu cannot include juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) when milk is the only other snack component. The crediting examples in table 3-17 show how these requirements apply.



Table 3-17. Crediting examples for smoothies at preschool snack ¹

Snack for ages 1-4 must include two of the five components: ½ cup of milk; ½ ounce of MMA; ½ cup of vegetables; ½ cup of fruits; and ½ oz eq of grains.

Example 1: A smoothie recipe contains ½ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and ½ cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving.

The menu planner may choose to credit the smoothie as either the full fruits component or the full milk component, but not both components in the same snack. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., MMA, grains, or vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include a 1-ounce whole-grain corn muffin (grains component) as the second component.

Example 2: A smoothie recipe contains ½ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and ¼ cup of unflavored low-fat milk per serving.

The pureed fruit provides the full fruits component. However, the milk does not credit as the full milk component because it is less than ½ cup. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component that is not juice, fruit, or milk (i.e., MMA, grains, or vegetables). For example, the snack menu could include ½ cup of diced cucumbers (vegetables component) as the second component.

¹ The smoothies in these examples cannot credit as the milk component for age 1 because the preschool meal patterns require whole milk for age 1.

The CSDE's resource, [*Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*](#), summarizes the requirements for crediting smoothies in preschool meals and ASP snacks. For additional guidance, refer to [USDA Memo SP 40-2019](#), [CACFP 17-2019](#), and [SFSP 17-2019: *Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs*](#).

Noncreditable Foods in the Fruits Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the fruits component include:

- banana chips;
- fruit snacks (e.g., fruit roll-ups, fruit leathers, fruit wrinkles, fruit twists, yogurt-covered fruit snacks);
- home-canned products (for food safety reasons);
- jams, jellies, and preserves; and
- juice drinks that are not 100 percent juice such as grape juice drink, orange juice drink, pineapple-grapefruit drink, cranberry juice cocktail, and lemonade.

For more examples and additional information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *[Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)*.

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the fruits component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.



Resources for Crediting Fruits

The resources below assist menu planners with crediting foods as the fruits component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Accept_Documentation_SNP.pdf
- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 5: Fruits Component (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Juice_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 3: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Fruits Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section3_Fruits.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 3: Yield Table for Fruits (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section3_FruitsYieldTable.pdf
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 4 6: Fruits Component and Vegetables Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- Start with Half a Cup: Fresh Fruit Portioning Guide for Schools:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideFruit85x14.pdf>
- Start with Half a Cup: Fresh Fruit Portioning Guide for Schools:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideFruit85x14.pdf>

- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>
- USDA Memo SP 10-2014, CACFP 05-2014, and SFSP 10-2014 (v3): Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>
- Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>
- Webinar: Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs>

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Fruits Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Grains Component

The grains component for the preschool meal patterns includes a variety of foods, such as:

- breads, biscuits, bagels, rolls, tortillas, and muffins;
- snack products, such as crackers (including sweet crackers, such as animal crackers and graham crackers), hard pretzels, hard breadsticks, tortilla chips; and popcorn;
- cereal grains, such as buckwheat, brown rice, bulgur, and quinoa;
- RTE breakfast cereals, such as puffed cereals, whole-grain round or flaked cereal, and granola;
- cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular), such as oatmeal, farina, and cream of wheat;
- bread products used as an ingredient in another menu item, such as combination foods, e.g., breading on fish or poultry and pizza crust in pizza; and
- pasta products, such as macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, orzo, and couscous.



To credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns, grain menu items must be WGR or enriched. Breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified. Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains.

Preschool menus must include at least one serving of WGR grains per day, between all meals and ASP snacks served to children. Products that are 100 percent whole grain, such as whole-wheat bread and brown rice, provide the best nutrition and should be served most often.

Some grains may be choking hazards for young children. Examples include plain wheat germ; whole-grain kernels such as rice or wheat berries; crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole-grain kernels such as wheat berries; breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels, and hard chunks (such as granola); and popcorn. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what grains to offer in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Overview of Crediting Requirements

There are two steps to determine if grains credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks. These steps apply to all grain menu items, including commercial grain products and foods prepared from scratch using standardized recipes.

The first step is to determine if the grain menu item meets the crediting criteria. To credit as the grains component, the grain menu item must be WGR or enriched. These crediting criteria are addressed in [Part A: Crediting Requirements](#) and [Part B: WGR Criteria](#).

Once the menu planner has determined that the grain is creditable, the second step is to determine the oz eq contribution of the planned serving. For guidance on determining a grain menu item's oz eq contribution, refer to [Part C: Serving Size](#).

Grain-based Desserts

Grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns. Examples of grain-based desserts include breakfast bars, brownies, cakes (including cupcakes and coffee cakes), cereal bars, cinnamon rolls, cinnamon streusel quick breads, cookies (all kinds, including vanilla wafers), doughnuts, gingerbread, granola bars, ice cream cones, marshmallow cereal treats, pastries (such as cinnamon buns, Danish, sweet buns, sweet rolls, and eclairs) piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), sweet biscotti (such as those made with fruits, chocolate, or icing) sweet bread pudding, sweet croissants (e.g. chocolate filled), sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), rice pudding, and toaster pastries.

Identifying grain-based desserts

The USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) identifies creditable grain-based desserts in red. If a product is not listed on the Exhibit A chart, the menu planner may decide if a food is a grain-based dessert by considering the common perceptions of the food and how it's typically served. The questions below help menu planners determine if the product is a grain-based dessert.

- Is the food thought of or served as a dessert?
- Is it frosted, iced, or dessert-flavored, like chocolate, caramel, or butterscotch?
- Does it contain custard filling or candy?
- Is it in the shape of a cookie or packaged like a dessert?

Menu planners should not rely on a product's name to determine if it is grain-based dessert because cookies and similar grain-based desserts do not have an FDA standard of identity.

This means that manufacturers may use terms in their product names or labels that might be misleading. Some examples include “breakfast rounds” for oatmeal raisin cookies, “breakfast bars” for cereal bars, and “super stars” for doughnut holes. Regardless of the name on its label, these types of foods are still grain-based desserts.

Foods that are not grain-based desserts

Grain-based desserts do not include sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers), muffins, quick breads, e.g., banana bread and zucchini bread (except for cinnamon streusel), cornbread, pancakes, waffles, French toast, savory scones (such as cheese and herb), and piecrusts in entrees such as quiche, meat pies, and chicken potpie.

As a best practice, the USDA encourages preschool menus to limit sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers) because of their higher sugar content. The CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers.

Serving grain-based desserts served as extra foods

SFAs may choose to serve grain-based desserts as an additional food item that does not credit toward the preschool meal patterns. Examples include serving cake or cookies at special celebrations. However, to ensure that children’s nutritional needs are met, the USDA and CSDE encourage SFAs to use discretion when serving noncreditable foods and beverages (refer to “[Noncreditable foods](#)” at the beginning of section 3).

Resources for grain-based desserts

The resources below provide guidance on the requirements for grain-based desserts.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7A: Grains Component Crediting Requirements (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish)
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grain-based-desserts-cacfp>

- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 7: Grains Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program>
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>

Links to these resources are also available under “[Grain-based Desserts](#)” in the “Grains Component for Preschoolers” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.



Part A: Crediting Requirements

Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements

This section addresses the crediting requirements for the grains component of the preschool meal patterns. All grain items served in preschool menus must comply with these requirements, including commercial grain products and grain foods made from scratch.

Creditable Grains

To credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns, grain products and standardized recipes must be made with creditable grains. Breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified; and must meet the sugar limit (refer to “[Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this section).

Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran), and germ (such as wheat germ). Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains. For information on identifying whole and enriched grains, refer to the CSDE’s resources, *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*. For guidance on the steps for identifying creditable grains, refer to the CSDE’s resource, *How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.



This section summarizes the different crediting requirements for commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, cooked breakfast cereals, RTE breakfast cereals, and grain foods made from scratch.

Groups A-E and H-I refer to the grain groups in the USDA’s Exhibit A chart. For more information, refer to “[Part C: Serving Size for Grains](#)” in this section.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

Crediting Criteria for Commercial Grain Products

Commercial grain products in groups A-E (baked goods, such as breads, rolls, muffins, crackers, and waffles) and group H (pasta and cereal grains, such as quinoa, rice, and millet) credit as the grains component if a creditable grain is the first ingredient, or water is the first ingredient and a creditable grain is the second ingredient. The ingredients statements below show some examples of creditable commercial grain products. Whole grains are in bold and enriched grains are in italics.

Ingredients: *Enriched wheat flour (flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid)*, canola and/or sunflower oil, salt, contains 2% or less of: yeast, nonfat milk, sugar, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, paprika, spices, celery, onion powder.

This product is enriched because the first ingredient is enriched flour.

Ingredients: Water, **whole-wheat flour**, yeast, wheat gluten, contains less than 2% of each of the following: soybean oil, sugar, salt, calcium propionate (preservative), fumaric acid, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, calcium sulfate, ammonium sulfate.

This product is whole grain because whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient after water and is the only grain ingredient.

Ingredients: Water, *enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, vitamin B1 [thiamin mononitrate], vitamin B2 [riboflavin], folic acid)*, **whole-wheat flour**, vegetable oil (soybean, palm, and/or canola oil), egg whites, *wheat bran*, sugar, contains 2% or less of leavening (baking soda, sodium aluminum phosphate, monocalcium phosphate), salt, malt flavoring, whey, soy lecithin.

This product is enriched because enriched flour is the first ingredient after water.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

The CSDE’s *Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP* provides more examples of how to determine if commercial grain products are creditable. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE’s Excel worksheet, *Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*, to determine if commercial grain products comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to “[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)” in this section.

Multiple creditable grains in commercial grain products

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the commercial grain product contains more than one creditable grain, the SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information. To credit in the preschool meal patterns, the product’s PFS must document that the combined weight of all creditable grains in the product is the greatest ingredient by weight. For information on PFS forms, refer to “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” in section 2.



Part A: Crediting Requirements**Crediting Criteria for Breakfast Cereals**

RTE breakfast cereals in group I (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereal, and granola) and cooked breakfast cereals in group H (including instant and regular, such as oatmeal, farina, and cream of wheat) credit as the grains component if 1) the first ingredient is a creditable grain or the cereal is fortified; and 2) the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce.

The CSDE recommends that menu planners review the sugar content of breakfast cereals before reviewing the ingredients statement for creditable grains. If a breakfast cereal exceeds the sugar limit, it cannot credit in the preschool meal patterns, even if it contains creditable grains or is WGR.

The CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*, provides examples of how to determine if breakfast cereals are creditable. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheets, *Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* and *Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*, to determine if breakfast cereals comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)" in this section.

Breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels such as wheat berries, and hard chunks (such as granola) may be choking hazards for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding what types of breakfast cereals to offer in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.



Part A: Crediting Requirements**Crediting Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods**

Commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E (such as pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs) or groups H-I (such as noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes) credit as the grains component if the first **grain** ingredient is a creditable grain. The ingredients statement below shows an example for breaded chicken nuggets.

Ingredients: Boneless, skinless chicken breast with rib meat, water, **whole-wheat flour**, contains 2% or less of the following: dried garlic, dried onion, salt, sea salt, soybean oil, spice, sugar, torula yeast, turmeric, yeast, yeast extract. Breading set in vegetable oil.

This product credits toward the grains component because the first grain ingredient (whole-wheat flour) is a creditable grain. A PFS is required to determine the serving's meal pattern contribution.

Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods

A commercial combination food that lists the ingredients for the grain portion separately credits as the grains component if a creditable grain is the first ingredient in the grain portion, or water is the first ingredient in the grain portion and a whole grain is the second ingredient in the grain portion. The ingredients statement below shows an example for cheese ravioli.

Ingredients: **Filling:** Fat-free ricotta cheese (whey, skim milk [made from nonfat dry milk powder], vinegar, xanthan gum, carrageenan), water, egg, low moisture part skim mozzarella cheese (cultured part skim milk, salt, enzymes), whey protein isolate, sodium caseinate, Romano cheese made from cow's milk (cultured milk, salt, enzymes), bleached wheat flour, garlic salt (salt, dehydrated garlic), salt, corn starch, sugar, dehydrated garlic. **Pasta:** **Whole-wheat flour**, enriched durum wheat flour (wheat flour, niacin, ferrous sulfate, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), water, egg.

This product credits toward the grains component because the first ingredient (whole-wheat flour) in the pasta (grain portion) is a creditable grain. A PFS is required to determine the serving's meal pattern contribution.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

Multiple creditable grains in commercial combination foods

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain portion of a combination food contains more than one creditable grain, the SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information. To credit in the preschool meal patterns, the product's PFS must document that the combined weight of all creditable grains in the grain portion of the product is the greatest ingredient by weight in the grain portion.

For information on PFS forms, refer to “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” in section 2. For examples of how to determine if commercial combination foods are creditable, refer to the CSDE’s *[Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#)*.

Crediting Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch

Grain foods made from scratch (such as breads, rolls, muffins, waffles, and pancakes) must be made with creditable grains. They credit toward the grains component based on the amount of creditable grains per serving of the recipe.

Combination foods made from scratch that contain a grain portion (such as pizza, lasagna, and breaded chicken) credit toward the grains component based on the amount of creditable grains per serving in the grain portion of the recipe.

The CSDE’s *[Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#)* provides examples of how to determine if grain foods made from scratch are creditable. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE’s Excel worksheets, *[Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)* or *[Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)*, to determine if grain foods made from scratch comply with the CACFP crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to “[Grain Crediting Worksheets](#)” in this section.

SFAs must have a standardized recipe on file that documents the crediting information for foods prepared from scratch. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal

Corn ingredients credit as the grains component if they are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized. Nixtamalization is the process of soaking and cooked dried corn in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process results in a product with nutrition content similar to whole-grain corn.

Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, masa harina (corn flour), corn masa (dough from masa harina), and certain types of cornmeal. Masa harina is used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales.



Methods for identifying nixtamalized corn

Menu planners may use the two methods below to identify commercial products made with nixtamalized corn.

1. **Corn is treated with lime:** If the ingredients statement indicates that the corn is treated with lime (such as “ground corn with trace of lime” and “ground corn treated with lime”), the corn ingredient is nixtamalized. The ingredients statements below show examples of commercial nixtamalized corn products. These products credit as 100 percent whole grains.
 - Ingredients: *Corn masa flour*, water, contains 2% or less of: cellulose gum, guar gum, amylase, propionic acid, benzoic acid, and phosphoric acid (to maintain freshness).
 - Ingredients: *Whole-white corn*, vegetable oil (contains soybean, corn, cottonseed, and/or sunflower oil), salt, *lime/calcium hydroxide* (processing aid).
 - Ingredients: *Limed whole-grain white corn*, palm oil, salt, TBHQ (preservative).
 - Ingredients: *Whole-grain yellow corn*, high oleic canola oil, water, *corn flour*, salt, *hydrated lime*.

If the ingredients statement does not provide sufficient information (such as “cornmeal” and “yellow corn flour”), SFAs must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer stating that the ingredients are whole grain, enriched, or nixtamalized. For information on PFS forms, refer to “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” in section 2.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

2. **Product includes FDA-approved whole grain health claim:** If a commercial product made with corn includes one of two FDA-approved whole grain health claims on its packaging, the corn in the product is nixtamalized and the product provides at least 50 percent whole grain. These health claims are not common.
- **Low-fat claim:** “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.”
 - **Moderate-fat claim:** “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease.”

Crediting information for corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal is summarized in [USDA Memo SP 34-2019](#), [CACFP 15-2019](#), and [SFSP 15-2019](#): *Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs*.

Crediting Hominy as Grains

Hominy is a traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin.

Hominy is available dried and in a fully cooked canned form. Dried hominy (such as grits) credits as a whole grain. A ½-cup serving of cooked hominy grits or 1 ounce (28 grams) of dry hominy grits credits as one serving of the grains component.

For information on crediting hominy as the vegetables component, refer to “[Crediting Hominy as Vegetables](#)” in the “Vegetables Component” section.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

Crediting Popcorn

Popcorn is a whole-grain food. Three cups (1 ounce) serving of plain popped popcorn credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq). Table 3-18 summarizes the grains contribution of popped popcorn.

Table 3-18. Grains contribution of popped popcorn		
Cups (popped)	Weight (popped)	Grains contribution
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	0.25 ounces or 7 grams	$\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq (minimum creditable amount)
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups	0.5 ounces or 14 grams	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq
2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups	0.75 ounces or 21 grams	$\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq
3 cups	1 ounce or 28 grams	1 oz eq

Crediting considerations for popcorn

For developmentally ready children, menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when including popcorn in preschool meals and snacks.

- Consider the appropriateness of the serving size for each age group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of the grains component from popcorn, due to the large volume required for crediting. The CSDE recommends providing a smaller serving of popcorn and supplementing with another food from the grains component. For example, a snack mix that contains $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of popcorn ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq) and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of enriched or WGR round cereal ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq) credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of the grains component.

Popcorn may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer popcorn in preschool menus. For additional guidance, refer to "[Choking Prevention](#)" in section 1.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

- Foods that contain popcorn as an ingredient (such as a popcorn snack mix or popcorn balls) require documentation to determine the crediting information. SFAs must obtain a PFS for commercial products and a standardized recipe for foods prepared from scratch. For more information, refer to “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” and “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2.
- Popcorn sometimes includes ingredients and toppings such as salt, caramel, cheese, and butter. The USDA strongly encourages healthier alternatives, such as seasoning the popcorn with herb blends or serving fresh, plain popcorn.
- Popcorn that is an ingredient in grain-based desserts does not credit in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to “[Grain-based Desserts](#)” in this section.

The requirements for crediting popcorn are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 23-2019](#), [CACFP 10-2019](#), and [SFSP 09-2019](#): *Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs*.

Noncreditable Foods in the Grains Component

Examples of foods that do not credit as the grains component include:

- commercial grain products that are not WGR or enriched;
- breakfast cereals that are not WGR, enriched, or fortified;
- breakfast cereals that contain more than 6 grams of sugars per ounce; and
- foods made from scratch that are not WGR or enriched;
- grain-based desserts such as brownies, cookies, cake, coffee cake, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple and pecan), rice pudding, and sweet bread pudding (refer to “[Grain-based Desserts](#)” in this section).

For more examples and additional information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Menu planners should use the FBG to identify foods that credit as the grains component. For more information, refer to “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” in this section.

Part A: Crediting Requirements

Grain Crediting Worksheets

Menu planners may use the CSDE’s CACFP crediting worksheets to evaluate grain-based foods for compliance with the preschool crediting, WGR, and serving requirements.

- Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Links to these worksheets are available under “Grain Crediting Worksheets” in the “[Related Resources](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Part A: Crediting Requirements**Resources for Crediting Grains**

The resources below assist menu planners with identifying foods that credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7A: Grains Component Crediting Requirements (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Cereals_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Crediting Enriched Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Enriched_Grains_SNP.pdf
- Crediting Whole Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Whole_Grains_SNP.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 4: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Grains Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section4_Grains.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 4: Yield Table for Grains (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section4_GrainsYieldTable.pdf
- How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Identify_Creditable_Grains_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 7: Grains Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

Part A: Crediting Requirements

- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains_Oz_Eq_Fillable_508.pdf
- Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in Child Nutrition Programs – Completed Sample (USDA):
https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Example_Grains_Oz_Eq.pdf
- USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>
- USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019, and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs>
- Using the WIC Food Lists to Identify Grains for the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-wic-food-lists-identify-grains-cacfp>
- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/When_Commercial_Grain_Products_Require_PFS_SNP.pdf

For additional crediting resources, visit the “[Grains Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Part A: Crediting Requirements



Part B: WGR Requirement

Part B: WGR Requirement

“Whole grain-rich” for the preschool meal patterns means a food that contains at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients are enriched, bran, or germ. All WGR foods credit in the preschool meal patterns but not all creditable grains are WGR. The WGR criteria are different for commercial products and foods made from scratch. This section summarizes these requirements.

Menu Planning Considerations

Preschool menus must include at least one serving of WGR grains per day, between all meals and ASP snacks served to children. The USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. SFAs may serve a WGR food at any preschool meal or ASP snack.

- If the SFA serves only one preschool meal per day (breakfast or lunch), the grain served at that meal must be WGR.
- If the SFA serves only breakfast and chooses to substitute MMA for the grains component at breakfast (allowed up to three times per week), a WGR food is not required.
- The grains component is not required at ASP snack but may be served as one of the two required snack components. If the SFA serves only ASP snack and offers a grain as one of the two snack components, the grain must be WGR.

The WGR requirement applies to the school nutrition programs, not to each child. If the SFA serves more than one meal, and two different groups of children are at each meal (such as one group of children at breakfast and another group of children at lunch), only one meal must contain a WGR food.



The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to vary the meals and ASP snacks that include a WGR item. For example, the preschool menu could include whole-grain toast at breakfast on Monday and brown rice at lunch on Tuesday. This helps to ensure that all children are served a variety of whole grains, and benefit from the important nutrients these foods provide.

Part B: WGR Requirement**Serving the same WGR foods to preschoolers and grades K-12**

The NSLP and SBP WGR criteria are different for preschoolers and grades K-12. Except for grain-based desserts, grain foods that meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 also meet the preschool WGR criteria. However, grain foods that meet the preschool WGR criteria may or may not meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12.

If SFAs serve the same grain foods to preschoolers and grades K-12, these foods must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12. If SFAs serve the same cooked and RTE breakfast cereals to preschoolers and grades K-12, these cereals must meet the WGR criteria for grades K-12 and the preschool sugar limit. SFAs cannot serve the same grain-based desserts to preschoolers and grades K-12 because grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns (refer to “[Grain-based Desserts](#)” in “Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements.”).

The only exception to this requirement is for co-mingled meals, where preschoolers and older grades (such as K-5 or K-8) are served meals or ASP snacks in the same service area at the same time. When meals are co-mingled, SFAs may serve the same foods to both grade groups.

For more information on the meal pattern requirements for preschoolers and grade K-12 eating together, refer to “[Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades \(Co-Mingled Meals\)](#)” in section 1. For information on the differences between the grains component for preschoolers and grades K-12, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs](#).



Part B: WGR Requirement

Overview of Rule of Three

The USDA allows six methods for determining if grain foods meet the preschool WGR criteria. The Rule of Three is the most common method for commercial products. The CSDE's *Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP* provides guidance on these methods and includes examples of evaluating grain products for compliance with the Rule of Three WGR criteria.

SFAs cannot use the Rule of Three to evaluate commercial products for compliance with the WGR criteria for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. The meal patterns for grades K-12 require different WGR criteria.

The Rule of Three reviews the product's ingredients statement and looks at the first three grain ingredients. The Rule of Three applies only to commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, and cooked breakfast cereals. **Note:** The Rule of Three does not apply to RTE breakfast cereals in group I, such as puffed cereals, flaked or round cereals, and granola.

The Rule of Three requires that the first ingredient (excluding water) is a whole grain, and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are creditable grains. When reviewing a commercial product's ingredients statement for compliance with the Rule of Three criteria, the following requirements apply:

- a whole grain must be the first ingredient, and may be the second or third grain ingredients;
- an enriched grain may be the second or third grain ingredients;
- bran and germ may be the second or third grain ingredients; and
- noncreditable grains cannot be any of the first three grain ingredients. Examples of noncreditable grains for the preschool meal patterns include legume flours, corn flour, corn grits, farina, malted barley flour, milled corn, nut or seed flours, oat fiber, potato flour, potato starch, rice, soy fiber, soy flakes, wheat flour, and yellow corn flour. For additional examples and more information, refer to the CSDE's *Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP*.

If a food meets the Rule of Three, the menu planner does not need to check any other grain ingredients further down on the ingredients statement. The Rule of Three WGR criteria are different for commercial grain products, commercial combination foods, cooked breakfast cereals, RTE breakfast cereals, and foods made from scratch. These requirements are summarized below.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Grain Products

Under the Rule of Three, commercial grain products in groups A-E (baked goods, such as breads, rolls, muffins, crackers, waffles, and pancakes) and group H (pasta and cereal grains, such as quinoa, rice, and millet) are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient); 2) the second grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3) the third grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ.

The ingredients statements below show some examples of commercial grain products that meet the Rule of Three WGR criteria. Whole grains are in bold and enriched grains are in italics.

Ingredients: **Whole-wheat flour**, sugar, wheat gluten. Contains 2% or less of each of the following: honey, salt, yeast, molasses, diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono-diglycerides (datem), ascorbic acid, mono-and diglycerides, l-cysteine, enzymes.

Whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient and the only grain ingredient. This product is 100 percent whole grain.

Ingredients: Water, **whole-wheat flour**, yeast, wheat gluten, contains less than 2% of each of the following: soybean oil, sugar, salt, calcium propionate (preservative), fumaric acid, baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, calcium sulfate, ammonium sulfate.

Whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient after water and the only grain ingredient. This product is 100 percent whole grain.

Ingredients: **Whole-wheat flour**, *enriched flour (wheat flour, niacinamide, reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate [vitamin B1], riboflavin [vitamin B2], folic acid)*, soybean oil with TBHQ for freshness, salt, contains 2% or less of corn syrup, baking soda, yeast, soy lecithin.

Whole-wheat flour is the first ingredient. Enriched flour is the second and only other grain ingredient.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Multiple whole grains in commercial grain products

If a whole grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain product contains more than one whole grain, the adult day care center must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer stating the combined weight of all whole grains. The ingredients statement below shows an example. Whole grains are in bold and enriched grains are in italics.

Ingredients: *Unbleached enriched wheat flour* [flour, malted barley flour, reduced iron, niacin, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid], water, **whole-wheat flour, whole oats**, sugar, yeast, soybean oil, salt.

To meet the WGR criteria, the product's PFS must document that the combined weight of the two whole grains (whole-wheat flour and whole oats) is more than the weight of the first ingredient (unbleached enriched wheat flour). For information on PFS forms, refer to "[Product Formulation Statements](#)" in section 2.

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Cooked Breakfast Cereals

Under the Rule of Three, cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular, such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina) are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain; 2) the next two grain ingredients (if any) are whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3) the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to "[Sugar limit for breakfast cereals](#)" in this section. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a whole-grain breakfast cereal.

Ingredients: **Whole-grain rolled oats**, sugar, natural flavors, salt.

This cooked breakfast cereal is 100 percent whole grain because the first and only grain ingredient (whole grain rolled oats) is a whole grain. To credit as the grains component, this breakfast cereal must also comply with the preschool sugar limit. For more information, refer to "[Sugar limit for breakfast cereals](#)" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements."

Part B: WGR Requirement

For examples of how to determine if cooked breakfast cereals are WGR, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheet, *Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*, to determine if cooked breakfast cereals comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in this section.

WGR Criteria for RTE Breakfast Cereals

The Rule of Three does not apply to RTE breakfast cereals. RTE breakfast cereals are WGR if they meet two criteria: 1) the first ingredient is a whole grain and the cereal is fortified, or the cereal is 100 percent whole grain; and 2) total sugars do not exceed 6 grams per dry ounce (refer to "Sugar limit for breakfast cereals" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements"). The ingredients statement below shows an example of a whole-grain fortified RTE breakfast cereal that meets the WGR criteria.

Ingredients: **Whole-grain oat flour**, sugar, corn flour, whole-wheat flour, rice flour, salt, calcium carbonate, disodium phosphate, reduced iron, niacinamide, zinc oxide, BHT (a preservative), thiamin mononitrate, pyridoxine hydrochloride, riboflavin, folic acid.

This RTE breakfast cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients. It is WGR because whole-grain oat flour is the first ingredient and the cereal is fortified. This RTE breakfast cereal credits as a WGR food if it meets the sugar limit (refer to "Sugar limit for breakfast cereals" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements").

For examples of how to determine if RTE breakfast cereals are WGR, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*. Since the preschool and CACFP meal pattern requirements are the same, menu planners may use the CSDE's Excel worksheet, *Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat (RTE) Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*, to determine if RTE breakfast cereals comply with the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. For more information, refer to "Grain Crediting Worksheets" in this section.

Part B: WGR Requirement**Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Commercial Combination Foods**

Under the Rule of Three, commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E (such as pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs) or groups H-I (such as noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes) are WGR if they meet the following criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient); 2) the second grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3) the third grain ingredient (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ. The ingredients statement below shows an example of breaded chicken nuggets.

Ingredients: Boneless, skinless chicken breast with rib meat, water, **whole-wheat flour**, contains 2% or less of the following: dried garlic, dried onion, salt, sea salt, soybean oil, spice, sugar, torula yeast, turmeric, yeast, yeast extract. Breeding set in vegetable oil.

This product meets the Rule of Three WGR criteria because whole-wheat flour is the first and only grain ingredient.

Separate grain portion in commercial combination foods

A commercial combination food that lists the ingredients for the grain portion separately is WGR if it meets the following criteria: 1) a whole grain is the first ingredient in the grain portion (or water is the first ingredient and a whole grain is the second ingredient); 2) the second grain ingredient in the grain portion (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ; and 3) the third grain ingredient in the grain portion (if any) is whole, enriched, bran, or germ. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a breaded chicken patty that lists the grain portion separately.

Ingredients: Chicken, water, salt, and natural flavor. **Breaded with: white whole-wheat flour**, water, salt, *enriched yellow corn flour*, dried onion, dried garlic, dried yeast, brown sugar, extractives of paprika, and spices. Breeding set in vegetable oil.

This product meets the Rule of Three WGR criteria because the first grain ingredient in the breading (grain portion) is a whole grain, and the second and only other grain ingredient is an enriched grain.

Part B: WGR Requirement

Multiple whole grains in commercial combination foods

If a whole grain is not the first ingredient, but the grain portion of the combination food contains more than one whole grain, the SFA must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to determine crediting information. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a breaded chicken patty.

Ingredients: Chicken, water, salt, and natural flavor. **Breaded with:** *unbleached enriched wheat flour [flour, malted barley flour, reduced iron, niacin, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid]*, water, **whole-wheat flour, whole oats**, dried onion, dried garlic, dried yeast, brown sugar, extractives of paprika, and spices. Breading set in vegetable oil.

The grain portion (breading) contains enriched flour as the first ingredient and contains two whole grains (whole-wheat flour and whole oats). To meet the WGR criteria, the product's PFS must document that the combined weight of the two whole grains in the breading is the greatest ingredient by weight in grain portion. For information on PFS forms, refer to "[Product Formulation Statements](#)" in section 2.

Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Grain Foods Made from Scratch

Grain foods made from scratch (such as breads, rolls, muffins, waffles, and pancakes) are WGR if a whole grain is equal to or more than the combined weight of all other creditable grains in the recipe, or the combined weight of all whole grains is equal to or more than the combined weight of all other creditable grains in the recipe. The examples below are recipes that meet the preschool WGR criteria.

- A muffin recipe contains 2 pounds of whole-wheat flour and 2 pounds of enriched flour. This recipe is WGR because the weight of the whole grain and enriched flour are equal.
- A bread recipe contains $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of whole-grain flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of rolled oats, and 1 pound of enriched flour. This recipe is WGR because the combined weight ($1\frac{1}{4}$ pounds) of the two whole grains (whole-grain flour and rolled oats) exceeds the weight of the enriched flour.

For examples of how to determine if grain foods made from scratch are WGR, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#).

Part B: WGR Requirement**Rule of Three WGR Criteria for Combination Foods Made from Scratch**

The Rule of Three WGR criteria apply only to the grain portion of combination foods made from scratch. Examples of combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups A-E include pizza crust in pizza and baked fish coated with breadcrumbs. Examples of combination foods that contain a grain portion from groups H-I include noodles in lasagna and baked chicken coated with crushed cereal flakes.

The grain portion of a recipe for a combination food is WGR if the combined amount of whole grains in the grain portion is equal to or more than the combined amount of all other creditable grains in the grain portion.

Menu planners must review recipes to determine if the grain portion credits as WGR or enriched grains.

Required Documentation for Grains

SFAs must maintain documentation on file to indicate that grain products and recipes comply with the preschool crediting and WGR requirements. Acceptable documentation for commercial products includes CN labels (if the grain portion is part of a CN-labeled meat or meat alternate) and PFS forms. Recipes are required for foods made from scratch. The CSDE will review this documentation as part of the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. For more information, refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” and “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2.

The CSDE recommends that preschool menus include information about the type of grain items served for each meal and snack. This helps to document meal pattern compliance and provide information for families. For example, the menu planner could list:

- “whole-wheat bread,” “whole grain-rich bread,” or “enriched white bread” instead of “bread;
- “brown rice” or “enriched rice” instead of “rice;”
- “enriched spaghetti” instead of “spaghetti;”
- “whole-corn tortilla” instead of “tortilla;” and
- “fortified whole-grain cereal” instead of “breakfast cereal.”

Other acceptable methods for indicating which grains on preschool menus are WGR include

Part B: WGR Requirement

using abbreviations, such as “WW bread” for whole-wheat bread or “WGR blueberry muffin” for a WGR blueberry muffin; symbols to indicate WGR foods; or a check box to signify that a food is WGR. When the menu includes abbreviations or symbols, SFAs should include information on what they mean.

SFAs should indicate the crediting and WGR information for the grains component on the daily production record (if used), or provide other menu documentation, such as:

- a binder of nutrition information for commercial products that includes Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients statements;
- a list of all grain products served and whether they are WGR (including 100 percent whole grain products), enriched, or fortified (breakfast cereals only);
- recipes for foods made from scratch; and
- CN labels and PFS forms for commercial foods.

SFAs must also maintain documentation on file to indicate that all breakfast cereals meet the preschool sugar limit. Documentation should include the products’ Nutrition Facts label and the SFA’s calculation showing that the cereal contains no more than 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to “[Sugar limit for breakfast cereals](#)” in “Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements.”



Part B: WGR Requirement**Resources for WGR Criteria**

The resources below assist menu planners with identifying foods that meet the preschool WGR criteria.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7B: Grains Component Whole Grain-rich Requirement (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/WGR_Requirement_CACFP.pdf
- How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-spot-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>
- Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish)
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/identifying-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>
- Is My Recipe Whole Grain-Rich in the CACFP? (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/my-recipe-whole-grain-rich-cacfp>
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 7: Grains Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/When_Commercial_Grain_Products_Require_PFS_SNP.pdf

For additional resources, visit the “[Grains Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Part C: Serving Size

Part C: Serving Size

The required quantities for the grains component are in oz eq. The preschool meal patterns require a serving of the grains component at breakfast and lunch. A serving of the grains component may be one of the two required snack components. Table 3-19 summarizes the required servings of the grains component for each age group and meal.

Table 3-19. Required servings of the grains component		
Meal	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-4
Breakfast	½ oz eq	½ oz eq
Lunch	½ oz eq	½ oz eq
Snack	½ oz eq	½ oz eq

Meeting the Required Grain Servings

Menu planners may choose to serve one grain or a combination of several grains to meet the minimum daily requirement if each serving contains at least ¼ oz eq of grains (refer to “[Minimum creditable amounts](#)” in the beginning of section 3). For example, a lunch menu for ages 3-4 could provide the required ½ oz eq of the grains component from ¼ cup of brown rice (½ oz eq), or ⅛ cup of brown rice (¼ oz eq) and a ¼-ounce serving of a whole-grain roll (¼ oz eq). Servings that contain less than ⅛ oz eq of grains do not credit.

If a menu item contains less than the full serving of the grains component, the meal must include additional grains to meet the full serving for each age group. For example, the breakfast meal pattern requires ½ oz eq of the grains component. If a menu item contains ¼ oz eq of grains, the menu planner must include another menu item with at least ¼ oz eq of grains to provide the full serving.

When crediting menu items toward the grains component, menu planners must round down to the nearest ¼ oz eq. For example, a standardized recipe or commercial product that contains 0.49 oz eq of grains per serving credits as 0.25 oz eq of the grains component.

Part C: Serving Size

USDA's Exhibit A Chart

The USDA's document, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#), summarizes the grain oz eq for nine groups (A-I) of creditable grain foods. Each group contains products with similar grain content.

The Exhibit A grain quantities are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because the meal patterns are different. The CSDE's resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#), lists the Exhibit A grain oz eq that apply to the preschool meal patterns. Groups F and G (grain-based desserts) are not included because grain-based desserts do not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns.

The amount of a creditable grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains.

- **Groups A-E** include baked goods, such as crackers, animal and graham crackers, breads, rolls, taco shells, muffins, waffles, and pancakes. The amount that provides 1 oz eq ranges from 22 grams (0.8 ounce) for foods in group A to 69 grams (2.4 ounces) for foods in group E. **Note:** Foods in groups F and G (grain-based desserts) do not credit as the grains component in the preschool meal patterns. For more information, refer to "[Grain-based Desserts](#)" in "Part A: Grain Crediting Requirements."
- **Group H** includes cereal grains, such as pasta, cooked breakfast cereals, and other cereal grains, e.g., amaranth, barley, buckwheat, cornmeal, corn grits, farina, kasha, millet, oats, quinoa, wheat berries, and rolled wheat. These foods require ½ cup cooked or 28 grams (1 ounce) dry to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. **Note:** Cereal grains typically credit based on the cooked serving, but menu planners may choose to credit cereal grains using the dry uncooked weight. Dry cereal grains used as an ingredient in a recipe (such as rolled oats in bread) require 16 grams of creditable grains to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. For guidance on crediting cooked breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).
- **Group I** includes RTE cold breakfast cereals. These foods require 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. A 1-ounce serving equals 1 cup of flaked or round cereal, 1½ cups of puffed cereal, and ¼ cup of granola. For guidance on crediting RTE breakfast cereals, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Part C: Serving Size

For more information, visit the “[Ounce Equivalents](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus webpage.

Methods to Determine Oz Eq

The USDA allows two methods for determining the oz eq of creditable grain products and standardized recipes. SFAs may use either method but must document the crediting information for commercial products and foods made from scratch. These methods are summarized below.

Method 1: Weight or volume (USDA’s Exhibit A chart)

Method 1 uses the USDA’s chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs* (Exhibit A) to determine the required weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) for the grain group where the commercial product or standardized recipe belongs. This method is used for commercial grain products and may also be used for recipes if the menu planner knows the weight (grams or ounces) of the prepared (cooked) serving.

For detailed guidance on determining the oz eq of a grain menu item, refer to the CSDE’s resources, *Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns* and *How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*, and module 13 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*.

Method 2: Creditable grains

Method 2 determines oz eq from the weight (grams) of creditable grains per serving. This method is used for standardized recipes and may also be used for commercial grain products with a PFS stating the weight of creditable grains per serving. The required grams of creditable grains for 1 oz eq depend on whether the grain food is enriched or WGR.

- **Creditable foods:** To credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component, foods in groups A-E of the USDA’s Exhibit A chart must contain 16 grams of creditable grains and foods in groups H-I must contain 28 grams of creditable grains.
- **WGR foods:** To credit as 1 oz eq of a WGR food, foods in groups A-E of the USDA’s Exhibit A chart must contain 16 grams of creditable grains (including at least 8 grams of whole grains) and foods in groups H-I must contain 28 grams of creditable grains (including at least 14 grams of whole grains).

Part C: Serving Size

For commercial products, SFAs must obtain a PFS from the manufacturer that documents the weight of the creditable grains per serving (refer to “[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)” in section 2). For guidance on evaluating a grain product’s PFS, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s guide, *Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*.

For foods made from scratch, SFAs must have a standardized recipe on file that indicates the weight of each grain ingredient (refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2). The grams of creditable grains per serving are determined from the weight of each grain ingredient listed in the standardized recipe. If the recipe lists grain ingredients only by volume (e.g., cups and quarts), the SFA must calculate the equivalent weight (grams) for each grain ingredient.

When method 2 is required for commercial products

SFAs may need to obtain additional information to determine the crediting information for some commercial grain products. A PFS is required for commercial products when any of the situations below apply. If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS, or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the product cannot credit as the grains component in preschool meals and snacks.

1. The first ingredient is not a creditable grain, but the product contains more than one creditable grain. The PFS must indicate that the combined weight of all creditable grains is the greatest ingredient by weight.
2. *Applies only to WGR foods:* The first ingredient is not a whole grain, but the product contains more than one whole grain. The PFS must indicate that the combined weight of all whole grains is the greatest ingredient by weight.
3. *Applies only to WGR foods:* The first ingredient is a whole grain, and the product contains two or more enriched grains. The PFS must indicate that the weight of the whole grain is equal to more than the combined weight of the enriched grains.
4. *Applies only to WGR foods:* The first ingredient is a flour blend of whole and enriched flour. The PFS must indicate one of the following: 1) the whole grain content is at least 8 grams per oz eq (groups A-E); or 2) the weight of the whole grain in the flour blend is more than the first ingredient (excluding water) listed *after* the flour blend.
5. A combination food that contains a grain portion does not have a CN label. The PFS must indicate the following: 1) the weight (grams) of each creditable grain per serving; and 2) how the product provides that amount according to the USDA’s *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) or USDA’s regulations, guidance, or policies.

Part C: Serving Size

6. The manufacturer claims that the product's serving size is less than the required weight or volume in the USDA's Exhibit A chart. The PFS must indicate the following: 1) the weight (grams) of each creditable grain per serving; and 2) how the product provides that amount according to the FBG or USDA's regulations, guidance, or policies.
7. The product is not listed in the USDA's Exhibit A chart. The PFS must indicate the following: 1) the weight (grams) of each creditable grain per serving; and 2) how the product provides that amount according to the FBG or USDA's regulations, guidance, or policies.

For specific guidance and examples, refer to the CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs*. The CSDE will review crediting documentation during the Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. For more information, refer to "[Documentation for Commercial Products](#)" in section 2.

Grain crediting tools

The tools below help menu planners determine the oz eq contribution of creditable grain products and recipes.

- **USDA's Exhibit A Grains Tool for commercial grain products:** This [online tool](#) of the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) determines the oz eq of commercial grain products. For more information, watch the USDA's webinars, *Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue* and *How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool*.
- **CSDE's CACFP crediting worksheets:** These Excel worksheets determine if grain products and recipes meet the CACFP crediting requirements and WGR criteria (which are the same as the preschool meal patterns) and calculate the oz eq contribution of the serving.
 - Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
 - Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
 - Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

The CACFP grain crediting worksheets are available in the "[Documents/Forms](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.

Part C: Serving Size

- **How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the NSLP and SBP:** The CSDE's resources, [*How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*](#), reviews the steps for using the Exhibit A quantities to determine the meal pattern contribution of three types of commercial products and standardized recipes. These include grain menu items in groups A-E that contain multiple small pieces per serving (e.g., crackers, hard pretzels, and animal crackers), multiple large pieces per serving (e.g., pancakes, slices of bread, and waffles), and one piece per serving (e.g., muffins, bagels, and rolls).
- **USDA's Recipe Analysis Workbook:** The FBG's online [Recipe Analysis Workbook](#) allows menu planners to search for ingredients, develop a standardized recipe, and determine the recipe's meal pattern contribution per serving. To access this tool, users must create a free account on the USDA's FBG website.



Part C: Serving Size

Crediting Considerations for Bread

Menu planners should consider the crediting requirements below when determining the appropriate serving size for grain products and recipes.

Crediting one slice of bread

Bread is in group B of the USDA's Exhibit A chart and requires 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. The weight of one slice of bread varies greatly among different types of bread products. For many types of breads, one slice weighs more or less than 1 ounce.

Menu planners must check the serving size on the Nutrition Facts label to determine the weight of one slice of bread, which is required to calculate the oz eq contribution per slice. To determine the weight of one slice, divide the serving weight by the number of slices per serving, the round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq (refer to “[Meeting the Required Grain Servings](#)” in this section). The example below illustrates this calculation.

The serving size for a multigrain bread is 2 slices and weighs 44 grams, which equals 22 grams per slice. Since 22 grams is less than 28 grams, one slice of bread does not credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component.

To determine the grain oz eq per slice, divide the grams per slice by 28. For this multigrain bread, 22 grams divided by 28 grams equals 0.78 oz eq, which rounds down to 0.75 oz eq of the grains component.

Multigrain Bread**Nutrition Facts**

Serving Size 2 slices (44g)
Servings per container about 26

Amount per serving

Calories 45



Part C: Serving Size**Crediting sandwiches with two slices of bread**

The oz eq contribution of a sandwich is determined by adding the weight of both slices together before rounding down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq. The example below illustrates this calculation.

A sandwich contains two slices of WGR bread. Each slice weighs 26 grams. To determine the total weight of the bread, multiply 26 grams by 2, which equals 52 grams.



Bread (group B) requires 1 ounce (28 grams) to credit as 1 oz eq of the grains component. Divide the weight of the bread (52 grams) by 28, which equals 1.86 oz eq. Round down to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ oz eq, which equals 1.75 oz eq.

If the menu planner rounds down the weight of each slice first, the crediting is incorrect. This would equal 1.5 oz eq per sandwich (26 grams divided by 28 equals 0.93, which rounds down to 0.75 oz eq per slice).

Resources for Oz Eq

The resources below assist menu planners with determining the oz eq contribution of a grain product or recipe.

- Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children – Module 7C: Grains Component Ounce Equivalents (CSDE training webinar):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>
- CACFP Grains Ounce Equivalents Resources (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grains-ounce-equivalents-resources-cacfp>
- Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Grain_Calculation_SNP_preschool.pdf
- Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue>

Part C: Serving Size

- Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>
- Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index>
- Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Grain_Oz_Eq_SNP_preschool.pdf
- How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA webinar):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-maximize-exhibit-grains-tool>
- How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/How_to_Use_Ounce_Equivalents_Chart.pdf
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 7: Grains Component (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- USDA Final Rule (84 FR 50287): Delayed Implementation of Grains Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/25/2019-20808/delayed-implementation-of-grains-ounce-equivalents-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>
- Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-ounce-equivalents-grains-cacfp>
- When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/When_Commercial_Grain_Products_Require_PFS_SNP.pdf

For additional resources, visit the “[Grains Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

4 — Meal Service

SFAs must comply with the USDA’s regulations and policies regarding meal service and Connecticut’s statute regarding lunch periods. This section addresses the federal and state meal service requirements for the NSLP and SBP, including meal periods and schedules, the allowable types of meal service for preschoolers (pre-plated, cafeteria style, family style, and combination style), children’s intent to participate in the meal service, classroom meals, field trip meals, meals consumed off site, prohibition of gender separation, and water availability during the meal service.

Lunch Periods

Lunch periods in Connecticut schools are governed by federal and state laws. The CSDE’s [Circular Letter C-9: Federal and State Requirements for Provision and Timeframe of Daily Lunch Period for Students](#), summarizes these requirements.

- The USDA’s NSLP regulations ([7 CFR 210.10\(d\)\(1\)](#)) specify that schools and institutions participating in the NSLP must serve lunches during the period from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. If lunches will be served before or after this time, the SFA must submit a written waiver request to the CSDE for the alternate lunch time. The exemption request must be submitted by July 1 for the upcoming school year.
- C.G.S. [Section 10-221o](#) requires that all public schools must provide a minimum 20-minute daily lunch period for full-day students. This 20-minute lunch period is not required on half days or early dismissal days since school is not operating a full day.

For more information, refer to [the CSDE’s Circular Letter C-9: Federal and State Requirements for Provision and Timeframe of Daily Lunch Period for Students](#) and the CSDE’s memos, [Operational Memorandum No. 10-19: Requirements for Lunch Periods in the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#) and [Operational Memorandum No. 02-23: Mealtime Requirements for Regular and Half Days](#).

C.G.S. Section 10-221o applies only to full-day students. It does not apply to half-day students, such as preschoolers in a half-day program.

Breakfast Periods

The USDA's SBP regulations do not state a specific time period for breakfast but require that breakfast shall be served at or close to the beginning of the child's day at school (7 CFR 220.2 "Breakfast"). The CSDE recommends that scheduled mealtimes provide students with at least 10 minutes to eat after sitting down for breakfast. This time does not include the time needed to walk to the cafeteria from the classroom, select and pay for the meal, sit down at a table, and walk back to the classroom after the meal.

Meal Schedules

SFAs should schedule meal services to ensure good nutrition practices and minimize food waste. Generally, most children need to eat within 3 to 4 hours of their last meal. Young children may need to eat more frequently. The CSDE recommends that preschool programs follow the guidelines below.

- Schedule meal and snack periods at appropriate times that are not too close together or too far apart, e.g., at least two but no more than three hours apart. When the time span is too short, children will not be hungry. When the time span is too long, children can experience hunger symptoms (such as fatigue, irritability, inability to concentrate, weakness, and stomach pains) that can interfere with daily activities and learning.
- Offer food at least every three hours so that children's hunger does not overwhelm their ability to self-regulate food intake.
- To encourage meal consumption and improve children's behavior, schedule mealtimes after structured physical activity or active play.
- Provide adequate time to allow all children to eat and socialize. Scheduled mealtimes should provide children with at least 20 minutes to eat breakfast or snack, and at least 30 minutes to eat lunch, after the children are sitting at the table. SFAs should adjust these times as needed to ensure that all preschoolers have enough time to eat until they are no longer hungry.

SFAs should work with their school administrators to determine the appropriate timing and scheduling of preschool meals and ASP snacks that best meet children's nutrition needs. For additional guidance, refer to "Meal Schedules" in the CSDE's *Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies*.

Allowable Types of Meal Service for Preschoolers

The four types of allowable meal service for preschoolers include pre-plated, cafeteria style, family style, and combination style. SFAs may use any type of meal service based on the individual needs and logistics of each school.

Pre-plated meal service

With pre-plated meal service, staff pre-plate the minimum portion of each component, based on the meal pattern requirements for each age group. For example, staff prepare each child's plate for lunch with the minimum serving of meat/meat alternates, grains, vegetables, and fruits, and portion each child's cup with the minimum serving of milk.

Cafeteria-style meal service

Cafeteria-style meal service is common in school settings. Children go through the cafeteria serving line and are served the food components of their meal by food service staff. Children may also self-serve some foods, such as selecting a carton of milk or a piece of fresh fruit. Some young children may require assistance from a supervising adult to safely carry their tray to a cafeteria table.

Family-style meal service

The USDA recommends family-style meal service for ages 3-4. Family-style meal service allows children to serve themselves from communal platters or bowls of food with assistance, if needed, from supervising adults who sit with the children. This approach allows children to identify and be introduced to new foods, new tastes, and new menus; while developing a positive attitude toward healthy foods, sharing in group eating situations, and developing good eating habits. Family-style meal service also helps young children develop motor skills and the dexterity and hand strength needed to serve foods.

Unlike pre-plated meal service or cafeteria-style meal service, family-style meals allow some latitude in the initial serving sizes because additional servings of each food are readily available at each table, and more can be served at any time. When a complete family-style service is not possible or practical, it may be useful to offer some meal components in a family-style manner, particularly when serving smaller children or introducing a new food item (refer to "[Combination-style meal service](#)" in this section).

Table 4-1 compares the requirements and best practices for pre-plated meals and family-style meals. For additional guidance, refer to "[Requirements for Family-style Meal Service](#)" in this section.

Table 4-1. Comparison of pre-plated and family-style meal service

Pre-plated meal service: The minimum portion sizes of all meal pattern components are pre-plated or packaged as a unit.

Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meal or snack must provide the minimum portion size of all required components at the same time.
Best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare plates and cups before children are seated. Measure out portions with appropriate serving utensils, e.g., scoops (dishers) and serving spoons. For more information, visit the “Portion Control” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage. Provide supervising adults with appropriate training and guidance to ensure portions meet the minimum requirements. Examples of resources include the preschool meal patterns, crediting guides, completed menu forms, production records, and standardized recipes. Refer to section 5 for resources.

Family-style meal service: Children serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance, if needed, from supervising adults who sit with the children.

Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foods must be served in communal bowls or dishes. The minimum portion sizes of prepared foods and milk must be available for each child at the table and supervising adults who eat with the children. Children must be allowed to serve the food components themselves, except for beverages such as milk and juice. Supervising adults are responsible for actively encouraging (but not requiring) each child to serve themselves the full-required portion. If a child refuses or takes less than the full-required portion, the supervising adult should offer the component to the child again.
Best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place components in communal bowls or dishes on the table before children are seated. Use appropriately sized bowls, dishes, and serving utensils (such as tongs or spoons) for children to serve themselves. Serve milk in child-sized pitchers. Have staff sit with the children and assist with serving.

Combination-style meal service

Combination-style meal service combines pre-plated meal service and family-style meal service. Some foods in the meal are pre-plated while others are served family style.

Combination-style meal service is a good option when a meal contains foods that cannot be easily or safely passed in common serving dishes from one child to another, such as heavy or hot foods and liquids like soup, juice, and milk. The example below shows how a SFA could implement combination-style meal service for a preschool meal.

The preschool lunch menu includes a turkey sandwich, vegetable soup, garden salad, diced peaches, and milk. The vegetable soup and milk are pre-plated and the turkey sandwich, garden salad, and diced peaches are served family style. The supervising adult portions the minimum required amount of vegetable soup into each child's bowl and the minimum required amount of milk into each child's cup. The turkey sandwich, garden salad, and diced peaches are offered in in common serving dishes that are passed around the table so children may serve themselves.

SFAs that use combination-style meal service must ensure that staff meet the requirements for both types of meal service. For all pre-plated foods, the quantities placed on plates and in cups by the supervising adult must meet the minimum serving size for each age group. For all family-style foods, the quantities available in the common serving dishes provided by the food service staff must provide the minimum serving size for each child seated at the table.



Requirements for Family-style Meal Service

SFAs that implement family-style meal service for preschoolers must follow the guidelines below to ensure compliance and eligibility for reimbursement.

- **Offering minimum portions:** A sufficient amount of prepared food and the appropriate type of milk (unflavored low-fat or fat-free) must be placed on each table to provide the full serving (minimum meal pattern amount) of each food component (lunch) or food item (breakfast) for all preschoolers at the table. The examples below illustrate this requirement.
 - The preschool lunch menu provides the required $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of the fruits component from $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sliced apples. If four preschoolers sit at the table, the communal serving plate or bowl must contain at least 1 cup of apple slices.
 - The preschool breakfast and lunch meal patterns require $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk. If four preschoolers sit at the table, the milk pitcher must contain at least 3 cups of milk; or that amount must be readily available nearby. If the required amount of milk makes the pitcher too heavy for young children, the pitcher can initially contain less milk if the remaining required quantity is readily available nearby.
- **Offering food components or food items:** While family style meal service allows children to make choices in selecting foods, the supervising adults should initially offer all children the full-required portion of each food component. Preschoolers may select an initial serving that is less than the full-required portion, except for at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables or fruits. Supervising adults should encourage additional portions and selections to meet the full serving, as appropriate.
 - **Selecting fruits and vegetables:** Preschoolers must take (but are not required to consume) at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetable or fruit for a reimbursable meal. If a preschooler chooses not to self-serve a vegetable or fruit, the meal is not reimbursable. The preschool breakfast meal pattern must offer at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables, fruits, or both. The preschool lunch meal pattern must offer at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component and at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the fruits component.



- **Selecting MMA, grains, and milk:** Preschoolers may select an initial serving that is less than the full-required portion. If a preschooler chooses not to self-serve or consume the full-required portion, the meal is still reimbursable.
- **Role of supervising adults:** During the meal, the supervising adults are responsible for actively encouraging each preschooler to accept service of the full-required portion of each food component. For example, if a child initially refuses a food component or does not accept the full-required portion, the supervising adult should offer the food component to the child again. As a reminder, preschoolers may select an initial serving that is less than the full-required portion, except for at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables or fruits.
- **Second meals and servings:** Second meals and second servings cannot be claimed for reimbursement. SFAs can claim only one reimbursable breakfast and one reimbursable lunch for each preschooler per day.
- **Using the meal pattern for older grades:** Preschoolers must select $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits or vegetables when three conditions apply: 1) the preschoolers are comingled with older students (such as grades K-5 or grades K-8), i.e., both groups are served together in the same service area at the same time; 2) the SFA chooses to use the meal pattern for the older grades (such as grades K-5 or grades K-8) for both groups; and 3) the SFA implements OVS. Under these circumstances only, all preschoolers must take at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits or vegetables, and the full serving of at least two other components, for a reimbursable meal. For more information on serving preschoolers and grades K-5 together, refer to “[Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades \(Co-Mingled Meals\)](#)” in section 1.

SFAs must ensure that family-style meal service is strictly supervised to ensure that school staff serve reimbursable meals and follow adequate daily collection procedures. An adult must be present and monitor the entire process at each table to ensure that children take a reimbursable meal. The adult must track children each day to determine who ate lunch in each meal eligibility category (free, reduced, and paid), without overt identification of the child’s eligibility status.

The CSDE has observed many compliance issues with family-style meal service in schools. SFAs must carefully consider whether the preschool program has the capacity to implement family-style meal service correctly and ensure that reimbursable meals are served.

Requirement for written procedures

Schools that choose to implement family-style meal service for preschoolers must develop written procedures for complying with the requirements for family-style meal service. These procedures must indicate how the school will implement family-style meal service and provide assurances that:

- SFAs will prepare, and supervising adults will offer, the minimum serving for each required component in the preschool meal patterns;
- reimbursable meals will be monitored by a trained supervising adult who sits with the children at each table;
- meals will be counted at the point of service and SFAs will claim reimbursable meals based on a child's free, reduced, or paid status;
- supervising adults and other applicable staff will prevent overt identification of children's meal eligibility status during family-style meal service;
- SFAs will conduct and document adequate training for all supervising adults, including guidance on meeting the preschool meal patterns and what constitutes a reimbursable meal with family-style meal service (refer to the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage), proper meal counting procedures at the point of service (refer to the CSDE's [Meal Counting and Claiming for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage), and the civil rights requirements (refer to the "[Civil Rights Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs](#)" section of the CSDE's Civil Rights for Child Nutrition Programs webpage).

SFAs must share these procedures with all staff and supervising adults involved in implementing family-style meal service. These procedures must be maintained on file for the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs.

Resources for family-style meal service

The resources below provide information on family-style meal service for preschoolers in the school nutrition programs.

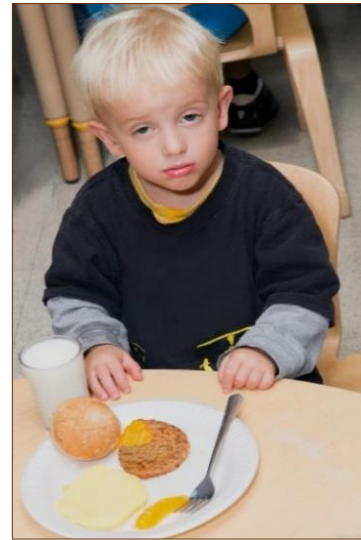
- CACFP and Family Style Meal Service (ICN):
https://theicn.org/wpfd_file/cacfp-and-family-style-meal-service/
- Meal Service in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE’s Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#MealService>
- Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 8: Meal Service for Preschoolers (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>
- Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Supplement E: Support Family Style Meals (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/tn/Supplement_E.pdf
- Serving School Meals to Preschoolers (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-school-meals-preschoolers>
- USDA Memo SP 01-2018: Updated Infant and Preschool Meal Patterns in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Questions and Answers:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/updated-infant-and-preschool-meal-patterns-national-school-lunch-program-and-school-breakfast>

For additional resources, visit the “[Meal Service for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For technical assistance, contact the SFA’s assigned [CSDE school nutrition consultant](#).

Intent to Participate in the Meal Service

For SFAs to claim reimbursement for preschool meals and ASP snacks, children must participate in the meal service or have the intent to participate in the meal service. A child who makes no attempt (i.e., has no intent) to join other children at the meal or snack cannot be included in the reimbursable meal count, even if they were asked by the supervising adult to participate.

The USDA regulations allow for reimbursement of meals that are served to and eaten by children. They do not allow for reimbursement of ordered or plated meals. If SFAs use pre-plated meals, or supervising adults serve the children, it may be difficult to judge the child's intent to participate in the meal service.



If a child refuses a meal that is pre-plated or served by a staff member, the SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement. The child must show intent to eat, such as coming willingly to the table; helping himself or herself to food or asking to be served; and attempting to eat the meal. The child does not have to *eat* the meal for the SFA to claim reimbursement, but the child must demonstrate the *intent* to eat.

When a child who clearly has no intent to participate is forced to come to the table or forced to put food on his or her plate, the SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement. A child might not have the intent to participate in a meal for many reasons, such as behavior issues or being sick, tired, angry, or upset. The scenarios in table 4-2 illustrate the principle of a child's intent to eat, and when SFAs can claim preschool meals and ASP snacks.

Table 4-2. Examples of child's intent to eat

Scenario	Can the SFA claim the meal?
A child typically chooses not to participate in the meal service. A teacher forces the child to come and sit at the table and serves the child some food. The child does not eat.	<p>No. The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child has not chosen (i.e., has no intent) to participate in the meal. Since the teacher knows this child typically does not eat, it would be clear that the child did not intend to participate in the meal.</p> <p>If the child willingly comes to the table, chooses to take a serving of food, but then does not eat, the meal is reimbursable. In this case, the child has the intent to eat, even if he or she did not follow through.</p>
A child who normally participates in the meal service comes to the table then chooses not to take any food.	No. The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child has chosen not to participate.
At snack time, a child is crying and upset over an altercation with another child. The teacher asks her to come to the table but she refuses.	No. The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child has chosen not to participate.
A child willingly comes to the table at mealtime. He helps himself to several meal components, takes one bite, and then stops eating because he does not feel well.	Yes. The SFA may claim the meal for reimbursement because the child chose to participate and had the intent to eat, even though he changed his mind when he did not feel well.
A child gets sick just before lunch. She is lying on a cot, waiting for her parent to pick her up.	No. The SFA cannot claim the meal for reimbursement because the child does not have the intent to participate in the meal.

Classroom Meals

Serving meals in the classroom is an allowable meal service method for the NSLP and SBP. Classroom meals could be pre-plated or served family style or combination style.

SFAs must ensure that all food service and non-food service staff (such as teachers, teacher aides, and other applicable classroom staff) involved with classroom meals understand and implement the USDA’s requirements for reimbursable meals in the classroom. The CSDE strongly recommends that SFAs develop standard operating procedures (SOP) for classroom meals. For information on the requirements for classroom meals and how to avoid common meal pattern compliance issues, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [*Requirements for Classroom Meals in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*](#).

Field Trip Meals

Meals offered to students for school-supervised field trips are reimbursable if they meet the daily meal pattern requirements for each grade group and are served and consumed as part of a school-related function. These functions must be part of the curriculum, as defined by the CSDE, and cannot be extracurricular events.

SFAs must offer the full quantities of all required components for each meal, including fluid milk. SFAs cannot substitute juice or water for milk on field trips. SFAs may want to consider using aseptically packaged milk for field trips.

Field trip meals must comply with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). The SFA’s standard operating procedures (SOP) for field trip meals must include appropriate food safety procedures (such as ice packs and coolers) to ensure that field trip meals stay at proper temperatures.

SFAs are not required to adjust the planned weekly menu to account for occasional field trips or pack the same vegetable offering from that day’s “hot” lunch menu for a field trip. SFAs have the option to offer a different vegetable from another subgroup or a different vegetable from the same subgroup. For example, if the regular menu includes cooked carrots (red/orange subgroup), the field trip lunch could include raw carrot sticks (red/orange subgroup) or celery (“other” subgroup).

SFAs must include field trip meals when planning meals that meet the minimum weekly requirements for the grains component and



MMA component, and the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, refer to section 6.

For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Field Trip Meals in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Meals Consumed Off-site

The USDA requires that reimbursable meals must be served and consumed as part of the school program on school premises or school-related premises. School meals given to children to take home are not reimbursable. Meals consumed off-site are not reimbursable because children who have left the premises is no longer participating in the activities of the school.

If a child leaves the meal service early, uneaten meal or snack components cannot be packed “to go.” By leaving the school and consuming the food off site, the child is not participating in the meal or ASP snack service with the rest of the group. SFAs cannot claim these meals and ASP snacks for reimbursement.

The school nutrition programs are congregate feeding programs intended to provide meals that are consumed on site unless children are on an approved field trip (refer to “[Field Trip Meals](#)” in this section). Meals served on field trips are reimbursable if they meet the meal pattern requirements and are served and consumed as part of a related function of the school or institution. For more information, refer to USDA’s [FNS Instruction 786-8: Reimbursement for Off-Site Meal Consumption](#).

Prohibition of Gender Separation

In general, the USDA's nondiscrimination laws and policies in 7 CFR Parts 15, 15a, and 15b do not permit SEAs participating in the USDA's school nutrition programs to separate children on any protected basis during meal service. Federal law prohibits discrimination based on gender at any educational institution receiving federal assistance. The USDA allows two exceptions to the prohibition of gender-separated meal service.

1. **Coeducational schools and school-based sites:** The USDA recognizes religious exemptions granted by the federal Department of Education (ED) without prior express approval. ED guidelines allow school and school-based sites to apply for an exemption when federal law prohibiting gender separation is inconsistent with the institution's religious tenets. These exemptions apply broadly to operations, including the meal service at a given site, such as a faith-based school. Additionally, ED guidelines specifically allow for the approval of gender-separate instruction at public primary and secondary non-vocational schools that could take a variety of forms. Since the general rule is that gender separation during meal service is prohibited, a coeducational school may not use limited ED approval of gender-separate instruction to justify blanket gender separation during meal service. Limited exemptions in these situations must be approved by the USDA.
2. **Other institutions and organizations:** State agencies may approve exemptions allowing separation by gender during meal service without express prior approval from the USDA in the following circumstances:
 - meal service at religious institutions operating under the dictates of the religion with which they are affiliated;
 - meal service at juvenile correctional facilities where combining members of the opposite gender would present a potential safety risk; and
 - meal service at facilities that fully separate by gender as part of their normal operations, e.g., gender-separated summer camps.

The local educational agency (LEA) must submit the request in writing to the CSDE. LEAs must specify which reason applies and why separation by gender is necessary. For more information on the exemption process, refer to [CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 30-15: Guidance on Prohibition of Separation by Gender during Child Nutrition Program Meal Service](#).

The two exceptions described above are the only acceptable situations for gender separation during meal service in the USDA's school nutrition programs. The USDA strictly prohibits any gender separation that is not based on the ED or USDA approval processes. Situations that do not clearly fit into any of the exemptions outlined above may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the CSDE in direct consultation with the USDA Food and Nutrition Services

(FNS) Regional Office, including the FNS Civil Rights Office and appropriate FNS National Office Child Nutrition Program staff.

Water Availability During Meal Service

The NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210.10(a)(1)(i)) and SBP regulations (7 CFR 220.8(a)(1)) require that schools must make plain potable water available without restriction to children at no charge during the meal service. This means that children can freely access the water in the location where the meals are served. For example, if the SFA meets the water requirement with a water fountain that's in the cafeteria or immediately adjacent, children must be allowed to leave their tables to access the water fountain during the meal service.

The requirements for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP are summarized below.

- **NSLP (including SSO school sites):** Water must be available at any location where lunch is served. This includes the cafeteria and any other meal service areas outside of the cafeteria, such as lunch carts, meals served in the classroom, and meals served during in-school suspension.
- **SBP (including SSO school sites):** Water must be available when breakfast is served in the cafeteria. The water requirement does not apply to breakfast meal service outside of the cafeteria, such as breakfast in the classroom.
- **ASP:** Water must be available during the snack service.

All schools implementing the NSLP, SBP, and ASP must meet these requirements.

Water is not a meal pattern component and is not part of the reimbursable meal or ASP snack.

Examples of how to offer water

SFAs may implement the water requirement in a variety of ways. Some examples are listed below.

- Offer water pitchers and cups on tables or in an area that is easily accessible to all students during meals and ASP snacks.

4 | Meal Service

- Provide a water fountain or a faucet that allows unrestricted access for children to fill their own bottles or cups with drinking water. This option must comply with the requirements below.
 1. The location of the water fountain or faucet must be in the foodservice area or immediately adjacent. An example is a water fountain that is right outside the door to the foodservice area and accessible to all children during the meal period.
 2. The water fountain or faucet must be operational.
 3. Staff members who supervise students in the cafeteria, such as lunch aides or paraprofessionals, must allow students to leave their tables to access the water fountain or faucet during the meal service, and should be trained on this requirement. Children do not have unrestricted access to water if their requests to get a drink of water are denied.
- Offer bottled water. When SFAs choose to offer bottled water, it must be provided at no cost to students.



Field trips

The water requirement does not apply to field trips where reimbursable meals are served. However, the USDA encourages schools to make water available for all school-related functions, including field trips.

Considerations for offering water

There are some important considerations to keep in mind when offering water to students during the meal service.

- Avoid serving young children too much water before and during mealtimes. Excess water may reduce the amount of food and milk that children consume at mealtimes.
- While water must be made available to students during meal service, water is not a meal pattern component and is not part of reimbursable meals or ASP snacks. Students are not required to take water.

- SFAs cannot promote or offer water or any other beverage as an alternative selection to fluid milk throughout the food service area. Commercially packaged water and potable water should not be made available in any manner that interferes with children's selection of the components of reimbursable meals, including low-fat or fat-free milk.



Allowable costs for offering water

The USDA does not provide any separate funding or reimbursement for the water requirement and SFAs cannot claim reimbursement for water. However, SFAs may use funds from the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) to cover the allowable costs of providing potable water to students. An allowable cost is one that's considered reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the school nutrition programs. Some examples of possible allowable costs associated with providing potable water to students are listed below:

- Purchasing pitchers or cups that would be filled with water from the faucet or provided to students to fill with water from the faucet.
- Purchasing a 5-gallon dispenser for water. This cost would be allowable if the SFA has determined that this method of providing water is cost efficient and practical.
- Covering the cost of testing tap water and water fountains that will be used by students. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that all schools routinely test drinking water for lead and perform regular maintenance to ensure that drinking water is safe.

The determination of whether these costs are allowable for an individual SFA depends on their specific circumstances. Costs related to the purchase of potable water for consumption by students must always be reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the school nutrition programs. An allowable cost for one SFA might not be an allowable cost for another. For

guidance on how to determine allowable costs for the NSFS, refer to the “General Criteria for Allowable Costs” section (page 13) of the USDA’s manual, *Indirect Costs: Guidance for State Agencies & School Food Authorities*.

Resources for offering water

The websites and resources below address the requirement for offering water to students during the meal service.

- Indirect Costs: Guidance for State Agencies & School Food Authorities (USDA): <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/SP60-2016a.pdf>
- USDA Memo SP 28-2011: Water Availability During NSLP Meal Service: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/water-availability-during-nslp-meal-service>
- USDA Memo SP 39-2019: Clarification on the Milk and Water Requirements in the School Meal Program: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/clarification-milk-and-water-requirements-school-meal-program>
- USDA Memo SP 49-2016 and CACFP 18-2016: Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources-making-potable-water-available-schools-and-child-care-facilities-0>
- What’s in a Meal Module 14: Water Availability During Meal Service (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>

For additional guidance and resources, visit the “[Water Availability During Meal Service](#)” section of the CSDE’s Program Guidance 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*.

5 – Resources

This section includes links to resources and websites that assist SFAs with meeting the NSLP and SBP meal patterns and crediting requirements for preschoolers. Topics include crediting and meal pattern components, CSDE guides and resource lists, meal patterns and menu planning, and USDA regulations and policy.

More links to information on the federal and state requirements and guidance for school meals are available on the CSDE's [Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources on the preschool meal patterns and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns](#).

Comparison Charts

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/Comparison_Preschool_Grades_K-12_ASP.pdf

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Comparison_Preschool_Grades_K-12_SNP.pdf

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

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Comparison_Grain_Crediting_SNP.pdf

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

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Comparison_Milk_Requirements_SNP.pdf

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 3: Meal Pattern Comparison of Preschool and Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

Crediting Requirements and Documentation

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Accepting_Processed_Product_Documentation_SNP.pdf

Crediting Foods in Preschool Menus (“Related Resources” section of CSDE Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents>

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

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SNP_Preschool.pdf

Crediting Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know! Webinar Series (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-updates-child-nutrition-programs-be-know-webinar-series>

Crediting Worksheets for CACFP Child Care Programs (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents#CreditingWorksheets>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: Training Resources (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-training-resources>

Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Noncreditable_Foods_SNP_preschool.pdf

Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA’s Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-interactive-web-based-tool>

Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Standardized_Recipe_Form_Schools.docx

Standardized Recipes (“Related Resources” section of CSDE Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#StandardizedRecipes>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturePFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015, and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/administrative-review-process-regarding-child-nutrition-cn-label-watermarked-cn-label-and>

USDA Memo TA 07-2010 (v.3): Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/TA07-2010v3os.pdf>

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

Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-nutrition-facts-label-cacfp>

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/When_Commercial_Grain_Products_Require_PFS_SNP.pdf

Yield Study Form for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Yield_Study_Form.pdf

CSDE Guides

Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWP/Action_Guide.pdf

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASP_Handbook.pdf

Guide to Competitive Foods in HFC Public Schools (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/Competitive_Foods_Guide_HFC.pdf

Guide to Competitive Foods in Non-HFC Public Schools (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/Competitive_Foods_Guide_NonHFC.pdf

Guide to Competitive Foods in Private Schools and Residential Child Care Institutions (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CompFoods/Competitive_Foods_Guide_Private_RCCI.pdf

Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Guide_Meal_Modifications_SNP.pdf

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Menu_Planning_Guide_Preschool.pdf

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/OVS_Guide_SNP.pdf

Fruits Component

Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Juice_SNP_preschool.pdf

Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_SNP_preschool.pdf

Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs>

Food Buying Guide Section 3: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Fruits Component (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section3_Fruits.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 3: Yield Table for Fruits (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section3_FruitsYieldTable.pdf

Fruits Component for Preschoolers (“Related Resources” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Fruits>

Offering Smoothies as Part of Reimbursable School Meals (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-smoothies-part-reimbursable-school-meals>

Portion Guide for Fresh Fruits (Start with Half a Cup):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWHAC/PortionGuideFruit85x14.pdf>

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 6: Fruits Component and Vegetables Component (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>

USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-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-child-nutrition-programs>

Grains Component

Adding Whole Grains to Your CACFP Menu (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/adding-whole-grains-your-cacfp-menu>

CACFP Grains Ounce Equivalents Resources (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grains-ounce-equivalents-resources-cacfp>

Calculating Sugar Limits for Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-breakfast-cereals-cacfp>

Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Grain_Calculation_SNP_preschool.pdf

Child Care Worksheet 1: Crediting Commercial Grain in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CACFP_Child_Care_Worksheet1_Crediting_Commercial_Grains.xlsx

Child Care Worksheet 2: Crediting Ready-to-eat Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CACFP_Child_Care_Worksheet2_Crediting_RTE_Breakfast_Cereals.xlsx

Child Care Worksheet 3: Crediting Cooked Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CACFP_Child_Care_Worksheet3_Crediting_Cooked_Cereals.xlsx

Child Care Worksheet 4: Crediting Family-size Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CACFP_Child_Care_Worksheet4_Crediting_Grains_Family_Size_Recipes.xlsx

Child Care Worksheet 5: Crediting Quantity Recipes for Grains in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CACFP_Child_Care_Worksheet5_Crediting_Grains_Quantity_Recipes.xlsx

Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-breakfast-cereals-are-lower-sugar>

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Cereals_SNP_preschool.pdf

Crediting Enriched Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Enriched_Grains_SNP.pdf

Crediting Single-Serving Packages of Grains in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-single-serving-packages-grains-cacfp>

Crediting Whole Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Whole_Grains_SNP.pdf

Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index>

Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue>

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>

Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index>

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Grains

Component (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section4_Grains.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 4: Yield Table for Grains (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section4_GrainsYieldTable.pdf

Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Grain_Oz_Eq_SNP_preschool.pdf

Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grain-based-desserts-cacfp>

Grains Component for Preschoolers (“Related Resources” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Grains>

Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/WGR_Requirement_CACFP.pdf

How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Identify_Creditable_Grains_SNP_preschool.pdf

How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-spot-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>

How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/How_to_Use_Grain_Ounce_Equivalents_Chart_NSLP_SBP.pdf

Identifying Whole Grain-rich Foods for the CACFP (USDA handouts and webinars in English and Spanish)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/identifying-whole-grain-rich-foods-cacfp>

Is My Recipe Whole Grain-Rich in the CACFP? (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/my-recipe-whole-grain-rich-cacfp>

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 7: Grains Component (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

Recipe Analysis Workbook (USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-interactive-web-based-tool>

USDA Final Rule (84 FR 50287): Delayed Implementation of Grains Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/25/2019-20808/delayed-implementation-of-grains-ounce-equivalents-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>

USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019, and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs>

Using Ounce Equivalents for Grains in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-ounce-equivalents-grains-cacfp>

Using the WIC Food Lists to Identify Grains for the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-wic-food-lists-identify-grains-cacfp>

Webinar: Exhibit A Grains Tool to the Rescue (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/exhibit-grains-tool-rescue>

Webinar: How to Maximize the Exhibit A Grains Tool (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/how-maximize-exhibit-grains-tool>

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/When_Commercial_Grain_Products_Require_PFS_SNP.pdf

Meal Patterns and Menu Planning

Choking Prevention (CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

Menu Forms for Preschoolers ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Menu Planning for Preschoolers (CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs#MenuPlanningPreschoolers>

Methods for Healthy Cooking (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/methods-healthy-cooking>

Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Noncreditable_Foods_SNP_preschool.pdf

Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>

Preschool Production Records for Lunch and Breakfast (CSDE's Production Records for School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Production-Records-for-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

Preschool Production Records for the Afterschool Snack Program (“Documents/Forms” section of the CSDE’s Afterschool Snack Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents>

Requirements for Production Records in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/ProdRecord/Requirements_Production_Records_NSLP_SBP.pdf

Sample CACFP Menus (CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Documents#SampleMenus>

Serving Snacks in the CACFP (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-snacks-cacfp>

USDA Memo CACFP 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp>

USDA Memo SP 01-2019 and CACFP 01-2019: Guidance for FY19: Updated CACFP Meal Patterns and Updated NSLP and SBP Infant and Preschool Meal Patterns:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/guidance-fy19-updated-cacfp-meal-patterns-and-updated-nslp-and-sbp-infant-and-preschool-meal>

USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/flexibility-co-mingled-preschool-meals-questions-and-answers>

Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/using-nutrition-facts-label-cacfp>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component

Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/additional-meat-meat-alternate-tempeh-and-surimi>

Calculating Sugar Limits for Yogurt in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/calculating-sugar-limits-yogurt-cacfp>

Choose Yogurts that are Lower in Sugar (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-yogurts-are-lower-sugar>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Commercial_MMA_SNP.pdf

Crediting Deli Meats in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Deli_SNP.pdf

Crediting Legumes in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Legumes_SNP.pdf

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Nuts_Seeds_SNP.pdf

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Tofu_SNP.pdf

Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Yogurt_SNP_preschool.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 1: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternates.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 1: Yield Table for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section1_MeatsAndMeatAlternatesYieldTable.pdf

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers (“Related Resources” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#MMA>

Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products>

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 5: Meat/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/APP_Requirements_SNP.pdf

Reviewer’s Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-and-meat-alternates-breakfast>

Serving Meats and Meat Alternates at Lunch and Supper in the USDA CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-meat-alternates-lunch-supper-cacfp>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

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

- USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019, and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>
- USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019, and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019, and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>
- 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/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019, and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>
- USDA Memo SP 02-2024, CACFP 02-2024, and SFSP 02-2024: Revised: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs, CACFP, and SFSP:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>

Milk Component

- Allowable Milk Substitutions for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Milk_Substitutes_SNP.pdf
- Determining if Nondairy Beverages Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Determining_Allowable_Nondairy_Milk_Substitutes_SNP.pdf
- Food Buying Guide Section 5: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Milk Component (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section5_Milk.pdf

Food Buying Guide Section 5: Yield Table for Milk (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section5_MilkYieldTable.pdf

Milk Component for Preschoolers (“Related Resources” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Milk>

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 4: Milk Component (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

Serving Milk in the CACFP (USDA handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-milk-cacfp>

USDA Memo SP 07-2010, CACFP 04-2010, and SFSP 05-2010: Questions and Answers: Fluid Milk Substitutions:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/qas-milk-substitution-children-medical-or-special-dietary-needs-non-disability>

Regulations and Policy

C.G.S. Section 10-221o. Lunch Periods and Recess:

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-221o

C.G.S. Section 10-221q. Sale of beverages:

https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm#sec_10-221q

CACFP Policy Memos (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources>

CACFP Regulations (USDA):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-226>

Child Nutrition Programs Legislation & Regulations (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/program-legislation-regulations>

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the CACFP (USDA):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-226>

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the School Breakfast Program (7 CFR 220) (USDA):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220>

- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the Special Milk Program (7 CFR 215) (USDA):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-215>
- CSDE Circular Letter C-9: Federal and State Requirements for Provision and Timeframe of Daily Lunch Period for Students:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Circular-Letters/circ07-08/C9.pdf>
- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 02-23: Mealtime Requirements for Regular and Half Days:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2023/OM02-23.pdf>
- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 10-19: Requirements for Lunch Periods in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2019/OM10-19.pdf>
- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 13-17: Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2017/OM13-17.pdf>
- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 31-11: Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Water Availability during National School Lunch Program Meal Service:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OMEarlierYears/OM31-11.pdf>
- FNS Instruction 783-13, Revision 3: Variations in Meal Requirements for Religious Reasons: Jewish Schools, Institutions and Sponsors.
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/FNSInstruction/783-13.pdf>
- Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Laws-and-Regulations-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>
- USDA Final Rule (81 FR 24347): Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (April 25, 2016):
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/25/2016-09412/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>
- USDA Final Rule (84 FR 50287): Delayed Implementation of Grains Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (September 25, 2019):
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/25/2019-20808/delayed-implementation-of-grains-ounce-equivalents-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>
- USDA Final Rule (87 FR 6984): Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium:
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/02/07/2022-02327/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium>

USDA Final Rule Correction (81 FR 75671): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (November 1, 2016):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

USDA Final Rule Correction (87 FR 52329): Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/08/25/2022-18220/child-nutrition-programs-transitional-standards-for-milk-whole-grains-and-sodium-correction>

USDA Memo CACFP 05-2017: Offer Versus Serve and Family Style Meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/offer-versus-serve-and-family-style-meals-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Vegetables Component

Crediting Juice in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Juice_SNP_preschool.pdf

Crediting Legumes in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditLegumesSNP.pdf>

Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_Preschool.pdf

Crediting Soups in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Soups_SNP.pdf

Crediting Vegetable Noodles and Coconut in the Child Nutrition Programs (USDA Webinar):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-vegetable-noodles-and-coconut-child-nutrition-programs>

Food Buying Guide Section 2: Overview of Crediting Requirements for the Vegetables Component (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/USDA_FBG_Section2_Vegetables.pdf

5 | Resources

Food Buying Guide Section 2: Yield Table for Vegetables (USDA):

https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/files/Reports/USDA_FBG_Section2_VegetablesYieldTable.pdf

Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs, Module 6: Fruits Component and Vegetables Component (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/How-To>

Serving Vegetables in the CACFP (USDA handouts in English and Spanish):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-vegetables-cacfp>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>

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-child-nutrition-programs>

Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Vegetable_Subgroups_CACFP.pdf

Vegetables Component for Preschoolers (“Related Resources” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Vegetables>

Water Availability During Meal Service

USDA Memo SP 28-2011: Water Availability During National School Lunch Program Meal Service:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/water-availability-during-nslp-meal-service>

USDA Memo SP 39-2019: Clarification on the Milk and Water Requirements in the School Meal Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/clarification-milk-and-water-requirements-school-meal-program>

USDA Memo SP 49-2016 CACFP 18-2016: Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources-making-potable-water-available-schools-and-child-care-facilities-0>

Water Availability (CSDE's Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Program-Guidance-School-Nutrition-Programs#WaterAvailability>

What's in a Meal Module 14: Water Availability During Meal Service (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>

Websites

Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program>

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE training webinars):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>

CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Training Webinar Series (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-halftime-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series>

CACFP Handbooks (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/cacfp-handbooks>

CACFP Training Tools (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-training-tools>

Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Child-Care-Nutrition-and-Physical-Activity-Policies>

5 | Resources

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/child-nutrition-cn-labeling-program>

Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Child-Nutrition-Programs>

Choking Prevention (CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Competitive Foods in Schools (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Competitive-Foods>

Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Milk in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Eligibility-for-Free-and-Reduced-price-Meals-and-Milk-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-to-preschool>

Farm to School (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Farm-to-School>

FNS Instructions for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/FNS-Instructions-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>

Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>

Healthy Food Certification (CSDE):

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

Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Laws-and-Regulations-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>

Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Manuals-and-Guides-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage)

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>

Operational Memos for the CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Lists/Operational-Memoranda-for-the-CACFP>

Procurement for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Procurement-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Production Records for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Production-Records-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Program-Guidance-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Resources for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Resources-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs>

Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Glossary

a la carte sales: Foods and beverages that are sold separately from reimbursable meals in the USDA school nutrition programs.

added sugars: Sugars and syrups added to foods in processing or preparation, as opposed to the naturally occurring sugars found in foods like fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products. Names for added sugars include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, sugar, and syrup.

Administrative Review (AR): The state agency’s comprehensive offsite and onsite evaluation of all SFAs participating in the NSLP and SBP. The review cycle is every three years for each SFA and includes a review of critical and general areas. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Administrative Review for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Afterschool Snack Program (ASP): The USDA’s federally assisted snack program implemented through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The ASP provides cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children in afterschool activities aimed at promoting the health and well-being of children and youth. Schools must provide children with regularly scheduled activities in an organized, structured, and supervised environment that includes educational or enrichment activities, e.g., mentoring/tutoring programs. Programs must meet state or local licensing requirements and health and safety standards. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Afterschool Snack Program](#) webpage.

alternate protein products (APPs): APPs are generally single ingredient powders that are added to foods. Examples include soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. APPs include vegetable protein products. The USDA has specific requirements for crediting APPs in Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to “Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

artificial sweeteners: A category of nonnutritive sweeteners used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. The six artificial sweeteners approved by the FDA include acesulfame potassium (Ace-K) (e.g., Sweet One®, Sunett®, and Sweet & Safe®); advantame; aspartame (e.g., Nutrasweet®, Equal®, and Sugar Twin®; neotame (e.g., Newtame®); saccharin (e.g., Sweet and Low®, Sweet Twin®, and Necta Sweet); and sucralose (Splenda®). These nonnutritive sweeteners are calorie-free except for aspartame, which is very low in

calories. For more information, refer to “nonnutritive sweeteners” in this section.

beans and peas (legumes): Refer to “legumes” in this section.

bran: The seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Examples include oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran. Bran credits the same as enriched grains.

CACFP meal patterns: The required food components and minimum serving sizes that facilities participating in the CACFP must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children. The CACFP meal patterns apply to children ages 1-12; children ages 15 and younger of migrant workers; children of any age with disabilities; and children through age 18 in at-risk afterschool care centers and emergency shelters. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#). **Note:** The preschool meal patterns for ages 1-4 are the same as the CACFP meal patterns for ages 1-2 and 3-5.

cereal grains: The seeds that come from grasses. Cereal grains can be whole grain (such as amaranth, barley, buckwheat, corn, millet, oats, quinoa, rice, rolled wheat, rye, sorghum, triticale, wheat, and wheat berries) or enriched (such as enriched cornmeal, corn grits, and farina).

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): The USDA’s federally assisted meal program providing nutritious meals and snacks to children in child care centers, family day care homes, and emergency shelters, and snacks and suppers to children participating in eligible at-risk afterschool care programs. The CACFP also provides meals and snacks to adults who receive care in nonresidential adult day care centers. For more information, visit the USDA’s [CACFP](#) webpage and the CSDE’s [CACFP](#) webpage.

Child Nutrition (CN) label: A statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a food product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA’s evaluation of the product’s formulation. Products eligible for CN labels include main dish entrees that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component, e.g., beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions. CN labels usually indicate the contribution of other meal components (such as vegetables, grains, and fruits) that are part of these products. For more information, refer to “Child Nutrition (CN) labels” in section 2, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the USDA’s [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling](#) webpage.

Child Nutrition Programs: The USDA’s federally funded programs that provide nutritious meals and snacks to children, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP also provides nutritious meals and snacks to the frail elderly in adult day care centers. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

co-mingling: The practice of serving meals to a variety of grades in the same service area at the same time, such as preschoolers and grades K-5. This practice typically occurs due to operational constraints within a school, such as limited time and space.

combination foods: Foods that contain more than one food component, such as pizza, burritos, and smoothies made with milk and fruit. For example, macaroni and cheese contains pasta (grains) and cheese (meat/meat alternate). Combination foods generally cannot be separated (such as pizza and burritos) or are not intended to be separated (such as a hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich).

combination-style meal service: A method of meal service that combines pre-plated meal service and family-style meal service. Some foods in the meal are pre-plated while others are served family style. For more information, refer to “[Combination-style meal service](#)” in section 4.

competitive foods: Any foods and beverages sold to students anytime on school premises other than meals served through the USDA’s school meal programs. Competitive food sales include, but are not limited to, cafeteria a la carte sales, vending machines, school stores, and fundraisers. For more information, refer to “a la carte sales” in this section and visit the CSDE’s [Competitive Foods in Schools](#) webpage.

Connecticut Nutrition Standards: State nutrition standards developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education per Section 10-215e of the Connecticut General Statutes. These standards apply to all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals. They focus on limiting fat, saturated fats, trans fats, sodium, and added sugars, moderating portion sizes, and increasing consumption of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and legumes. All schools in any district that chooses to comply with the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all sources of food sales to students, including school cafeterias, vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, and any other sources. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards also apply to all snacks served in the Afterschool Snack Program. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) webpage.

Glossary

corn masa: Dough made from masa harina that is used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales. Corn masa is nixtamalized and credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to “nixtamalization” in this section.

cornmeal: Meal made from ground, dried corn.

creditable food: A food or beverage that counts toward the meal pattern requirements for a reimbursable meal or snack in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For more information, refer to section 3 and visit the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

creditable grains: The ingredients in a commercial grain product or standardized recipe that credit toward the grains component. Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ.

cycle menu: A series of menus planned for a specific period, with a different menu for each day. Cycle menus can help SFAs to increase variety, control food cost, and save time. For more information, refer to “[Using cycle menus](#)” in section 2.

deep-fat frying: Cooking by submerging food in hot oil or other fat. The preschool meal patterns prohibit deep-fat frying foods on site.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans: A federal document that provides science-based advice for Americans ages 2 and older to promote health and reduce risk for chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture jointly publish the *Dietary Guidelines* every five years. This document forms the basis of federal food, nutrition education and information programs. For more information, visit the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) webpage.

disability: A condition in which a person has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#).

edible portion: The portion of a food that can be eaten after the nonedible parts are removed, for example, cooked lean meat without bone, and fruit without seeds or pits.

endosperm: The soft, white inside portion of the whole-grain kernel. The endosperm contains starch, protein, and small amounts of B vitamins.

enriched grains: Refined grains (such as wheat, rice, and corn) and grain products (such as cereal, pasta, and bread) that have some vitamins and minerals added to replace the nutrients lost during processing. The five enrichment nutrients are added within limits specified by the

FDA, and include thiamin (B₁), riboflavin (B₂), niacin (B₃), folic acid, and iron. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Enriched Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

enrichment: Adding back nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) originally present in a food that were lost during processing. Enrichment nutrients are added back in approximately the same levels as were originally present in the food. For more information, refer to “enriched grains” in this section.

Exhibit A chart: A USDA chart that indicates the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for a grain food to provide 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) or 1 serving of the grains component in the Child Nutrition Programs. The required quantities for the grains component in Exhibit A are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because each program has a different meal pattern. The CSDE’s resource, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#), lists the Exhibit A grain oz eq that apply to preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP. This chart may be used to determine the grain oz eq for commercial grain products and for standardized recipes that indicate the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. For more information, refer to “USDA’s Exhibit A Chart” in “Part C: Serving Size for Grains” of section 3, and the USDA’s [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

family-style meal service: A method of meal service that allows children to serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance from supervising adults, if needed. For more information, refer to “[Family-style Meal Service](#)” in section 4.

flour: Finely ground and sifted wheat or other grains such as rye, corn, rice, or buckwheat.

fluid milk substitutes: Nondairy beverages (such as soy milk) that can be used as a substitute for fluid milk in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. For reimbursable meals and ASP snacks, nondairy beverages served to children without disabilities must comply with the USDA nutrition standards for milk substitutes. For more information, refer to “[USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs](#).

food components: The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates. For information on the individual food components, refer to [section 3](#) and visit the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

food item: A specific food offered within the food components that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA’s school nutrition programs. A food item may contain one or more food

components or more than one serving of a single component. For example, an entree could provide 1 oz eq of the grains component and 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component, and a 2-ounce whole grain or enriched bagel could provide 2 oz eq of the grains component.

food-based menu planning: A type of menu planning for the USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs that uses a meal pattern with specific food components in certain amounts based on specific age/grade groups. For more information, refer to “food components” in this section and the meal patterns in section 1.

fortification: Adding nutrients (usually vitamins or minerals) that were not originally present in a food or beverage or adding nutrients at levels that are higher than originally present. Fortification is used for naturally nutrient-rich products based on scientifically documented health needs (e.g., fortifying milk with vitamin D to increase the body’s absorption of calcium), or to enhance the perceived nutritional value of products with little or no natural nutritional value, e.g., an “energy” bar made from processed flour that is fortified with multiple vitamins and minerals. Fortification nutrients are added to products in varying amounts, from small percentages up to amounts greater than recommended intakes.

fruits component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. For more information, refer to “[Fruits Component](#)” in section 3 and visit the “[Fruits Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

full component: The daily quantity designated by the menu planner (no less than the established minimum) to meet the required weekly ranges.

full serving: Refer to “full component” in this section.

full-strength fruit or vegetable juice: An undiluted product obtained by extraction from sound fruit. Full-strength juice may be fresh, canned, frozen or reconstituted from concentrate and may be served in either liquid or frozen state. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “100 percent juice,” “reconstituted juice,” or “juice from concentrate.” **Note:** The preschool meal patterns allow pasteurized full-strength juice to credit as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day. For more information, refer to “[Juice limit](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *[Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)*.

germ: The vitamin-rich sprouting section of the whole-grain kernel. Germ credits the same as enriched grains.

grains: Plants in the grass family that produce a dry, edible fruit commonly called a kernel, grain, or berry.

grains component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of cereal grains and products made from their flours. Creditable grain foods include products and recipes that are whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched. Creditable cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals include products that are WGR, enriched, or fortified. For more information, refer to “[Grains Component](#)” in section 3 and visit the “[Grains Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP): A preventative food safety program to control food safety hazards during all aspects of food service operations. HACCP reduces the risk of foodborne hazards by focusing on each step of the food preparation process from receiving to service.

Healthy Food Certification: A state statute (Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes) that requires each board of education or governing authority for all public schools participating in the NSLP to certify annually to the CSDE whether they will follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) for all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals. Districts that choose to implement the CNS receive additional funding per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free, and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year. For more information, refer to “Connecticut Nutrition Standards” in this section and visit the CSDE’s [Healthy Food Certification](#) webpage.

hominy: A traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures that is commonly served as a vegetable or milled grain product, e.g., hominy grits. Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). This process removes the hull and germ, causes the corn to puff up to about double its normal size, and increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients, such as calcium and niacin. For crediting information, refer to “[Crediting Hominy as Vegetables](#)” and “[Crediting Hominy as Grains](#)” in section 3.

juice drink: A product resembling juice that contains full-strength juice along with added water and possibly other ingredients, such as sweeteners, spices, or flavorings. Juice drinks do not credit toward the meal pattern requirements.

lactose: The naturally occurring sugar found in milk. Lactose contains glucose and galactose. For more information, refer to “simple carbohydrates (sugars)” in this section.

lean meat and poultry: Defined by the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) as meat and poultry that contains less than 10 grams of fat, no more than 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and less than

95 milligrams of cholesterol per 100 grams and per labeled serving size, based on the USDA's definitions for food label use. Examples include 95% lean cooked ground beef, beef top round steak or roast, beef tenderloin, pork top loin chop or roast, pork tenderloin, ham or turkey deli slices, skinless chicken breast, and skinless turkey breast.

legumes: Plants that grow in pods. Legumes include pulses, which are the edible dried seeds of plants in the legume family, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas. Pulses include all beans, peas, and lentils cooked from dry, canned, or frozen, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, pink beans, black-eyed peas, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), split peas, pigeon peas, mung beans, and lentils. The meal patterns for Child Nutrition Programs allow legumes to credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetable component. For more information, refer to "[Crediting Legumes as Meat/Meat Alternates](#)" and "[Crediting Legumes as Vegetables](#)" in section 3.

local educational agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public or private nonprofit authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public or private nonprofit elementary schools or secondary schools. The term also includes any other public or private nonprofit institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a public or private nonprofit elementary school or secondary school, including residential child care institutions, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and educational service agencies and consortia of those agencies, as well as the state educational agency in a state or territory in which the state educational agency is the sole educational agency for all public or private nonprofit schools.

main dish: The main dish is generally considered the main food item in the menu, which is complemented by the other food items. Examples of main dish items include pizza, chicken stir-fry, and chef's salad with ham, hard-boiled egg, and cheese.

masa harina: Corn flour used for making corn products such as tortillas, tortilla chips, and tamales. Masa harina is nixtamalized and credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to "nixtamalization" in this section and "[Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal](#)" in section 3.

meal pattern: The required food components and minimum servings that schools and institutions participating in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children. For more information, refer to the preschool breakfast, lunch, and snack meal patterns in section 1.

meal: A grain made by coarsely grinding corn, oats, wheat, or other grains. Whole grain, enriched, or fortified meal credits toward the grains component of the USDA’s meal patterns

meals: Refer to “reimbursable meals” in this section.

meat alternates: Foods that provide similar protein content to meat. Meat alternates include alternate protein products, cheese, eggs, cooked dry beans or peas, nuts and seeds and their butters (except for acorn, chestnut, and coconut), tofu and other soy products containing at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces (weight) or ¼ cup (volume), tempeh, and yogurt (unflavored or flavored) containing no more than 23 grams of sugars per 6 ounces. For more information, refer to “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component](#)” in section 3 and visit the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

meat/meat alternates component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes meats (e.g., beef, poultry, and fish) and meat alternates, such as eggs, cheese, yogurt, beans and peas (legumes) nuts, and seeds. For more information, refer to “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component](#)” in section 3 and visit the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

medical statement: A document that identifies the specific medical conditions and appropriate dietary accommodations for children with special dietary needs. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

menu item: Any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk that is part of the reimbursable meal. Menu items consist of food items.

milk component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that includes pasteurized fluid milk that meets the fat content and flavor requirements of the USDA regulations. The allowable types of milk for preschoolers include unflavored low-fat milk and unflavored fat-free milk. The milk component also includes fluid milk substitutes that meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, refer to “[Milk Component](#)” in section 3 and visit the “[Milk Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

MyPlate: Released in June 2011, MyPlate is the USDA’s food guidance system to translate the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) into a healthy eating plan. MyPlate emphasizes consuming more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. For more information, visit the USDA’s [Choose MyPlate](#) website.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP): The USDA’s federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions. The NSLP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. It was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [National School Lunch Program](#) webpage.

natural cheese: Cheese that is produced directly from milk, such as cheddar, Colby, Monterey Jack, mozzarella, muenster, provolone, Swiss, feta, and brie. Natural cheese also includes pasteurized blended cheese made by blending one or more different kinds of natural cheese. Natural cheeses do not include pasteurized process cheese (e.g., American), pasteurized process cheese food, pasteurized process cheese spread, or pasteurized process cheese products. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Cheeses](#)” in section 3.

nixtamalization: A process in which dried corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients and results in a product with nutrition content similar to whole-grain corn. Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, masa harina (corn flour), corn masa (dough from masa harina), and certain types of cornmeal. Nixtamalized corn credits as a whole grain. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal](#)” in section 3.

noncreditable foods: Foods and beverages that do not contribute toward the meal patterns for the USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs. Noncreditable foods and beverages are either in amounts too small to credit (i.e., foods and beverage that do not provide the minimum creditable amount of a food component), or they do not fit into one of the meal pattern components. For more information, refer to “[Noncreditable Foods](#)” in the beginning of section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *[Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)*.

noncreditable grains: Grain ingredients and products that do not contribute toward the grains component of the preschool meal patterns. Examples include fiber and modified food starch (including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours). For a list of noncreditable grains for the preschool meal patterns, refer to the CSDE’s *[Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#)*.

nonnutritive sweeteners: Ingredients without calories that are hundreds of times sweeter than sugars and that are used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. Nonnutritive sweeteners include the six FDA-approved artificial sweeteners (acesulfame potassium (Ace-K), advantame, aspartame, neotame, saccharin, and sucralose) and three plant-based sweeteners (stevia, monk fruit, and thaumatin) that are [Generally Recognized as Safe \(GRAS\)](#) by the FDA. For more information on nonnutritive sweeteners, refer to “[Additional Information about High-Intensity Sweeteners Permitted for Use in Food in the United States](#)” on the FDA’s webpage.

nutrient-dense foods: Foods and beverages that provide vitamins, minerals, and other substances that contribute to adequate nutrient intakes or may have positive health effects, and contain little or no solid fats, added sugars, refined starches, or sodium. Ideally, these foods and beverages are also in forms that retain naturally occurring components, such as dietary fiber. Examples include all vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry (when prepared with little or no added solid fats, sugars, refined starches, and sodium). The term “nutrient dense” indicates the nutrients and other beneficial substances in a food have not been “diluted” by the addition of calories from added solid fats, sugars, or refined starches, or by the solid fats naturally present in the food.

nutrient-rich foods: Refer to “nutrient-dense foods” in this section.

nutritive sweeteners: Sugars and sweeteners that contain calories and are used to sweeten foods and beverages. Examples include brown rice syrup, brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, dextrin, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, maple syrup, nectars (e.g., peach nectar, pear nectar), raw sugar, sorghum syrup, sucrose, and syrup. For more information, refer to “added sugars” and “simple carbohydrates (sugars)” in this section.

nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes: The nutrition requirements for nondairy beverages (such as soy milk) used as fluid milk substitutes in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. The USDA requires that any fluid milk substitutes are nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk and meet the following nutrients based on a 1-cup serving (8 fluid ounces): 276 milligrams (mg) of calcium; 8 grams (g) of protein; 500 international units (IU) of vitamin A; 100 IU of vitamin D; 24 mg of magnesium; 222 mg of phosphorus; 349 mg of potassium; 0.44 mg of riboflavin; and 1.1 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin B-12. For more information, refer to “[USDA’s Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s resource, *Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs*.

offer versus serve (OVS): A provision that applies to menu planning and the determination of reimbursable meals for grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP. OVS allows students to decline a certain number of food components or food items in the meal. OVS is not allowed for preschool meals in the NSLP and SBP or preschool snacks in the ASP.

ounce equivalent (oz eq): A weight-based unit of measure for the grains component and MMA component of the NSLP and the SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 and the grains component of the preschool NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns. The amount of a grain food that provides 1 oz eq varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. One oz eq of the MMA component is sometimes more than a measured ounce, depending on the food’s density and nutrition content. One oz eq of the grains component is less than a measured ounce for some grain foods (such as pretzels, breadsticks,

and crackers), equal to a measured ounce for some grain foods (such as bagels, biscuits, bread, rolls, cereal grains, and RTE breakfast cereals), and more than a measured ounce for some grain foods (such as muffins and pancakes). For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#) and [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Preschool Meal Patterns](#). **Note:** The grains/breads component of the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 requires servings instead of oz eq.

point-of-service meal count: The point in the food service operation where a determination can accurately be made that a reimbursable free, reduced-price, or paid lunch has been served to an eligible child.

potable water: Water that is safe for human consumption.

pre-fried foods: Commercially prepared foods such as meats, poultry, fish, and vegetables that are fried by the manufacturer during preparation. These foods are usually cooked by the food service operation in the oven or microwave. Pre-fried foods include refrigerated or frozen items that are breaded or battered, most frozen potato products, and most frozen products described as “crispy” or “crunchy.” Examples include chicken nuggets, chicken patties, fish sticks, french fries, tater tots, hash browns, and onion rings.

pre-plated meal service: A method of meal service where staff pre-plate each child’s plate and cup with the minimum portion of each component, based on the meal pattern requirements for each age group. For more information, refer to “[Pre-plated meal service](#)” in section 4.

preschool meal patterns: The required food components and minimum servings that SFAs participating in the NSLP and SBP must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals served to children ages 1-4. For more information, refer to [section 1](#).

primary grain ingredient: The greatest grain ingredient by weight. For commercial grain foods, this is the first ingredient (excluding water) listed in the product’s ingredients statement. For commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion, this is the first grain ingredient (excluding water) listed in the product’s ingredients statement. For commercial combination foods that contain a grain portion listed separately, this is the first ingredient (excluding water) listed in the grain portion of the product’s ingredients statement. For more information, refer to “[Grains Component](#)” section 3.

product fact sheet: Refer to “product specification sheet” in this section.

product formulation statement (PFS): An information statement obtained from the manufacturer that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the

USDA’s meal pattern requirements, and documents how this information is obtained citing Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations. All creditable ingredients in this statement must match a description in the USDA’s *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*. The PFS must be prepared on company letterhead with the signature of a company official and the date of issue. Unlike a CN label, a PFS does not provide any warranty against audit claims. SFAs must check the manufacturer’s crediting information for accuracy prior to including the product in reimbursable meals and ASP snacks. For more information, refer to “[Product Formulation Statements](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resources, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs* and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program*.

product specification sheet: Manufacturer sales literature that provides various information about the company’s products. These materials do not provide the specific crediting information that is required on a product formulation statement and cannot be used to determine a product’s contribution toward the USDA meal pattern components.

production record: A working tool that outlines the type and quantity of foods used to prepare school meals. Production records must demonstrate how meals contribute to the required food components, food items or menu items for each day of operation. They must also provide sufficient documentation to determine how school meals contribute to meeting the weekly dietary specifications. The USDA’s regulations require that all schools in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP must complete daily menu production records for all meals. For more information, refer to “[Production Records](#)” in section 2.

pulses: The edible dry seeds from legumes, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, and split peas. For more information, refer to “legumes” in this section.

recognizable food item: A food that is visible in the offered meal or snack and allows students to identify the food groups and amounts recommended for consumption at mealtime. Foods must be recognizable to credit in the preschool meal patterns. The USDA allows some exceptions, such as yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and pasta made with 100 percent vegetable flour. For more information, refer to “[Yogurt in smoothies](#)” and “[Crediting Legume Flour Pasta Products as Meat/Meat Alternates](#)” in the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component” section; “[Crediting Fruit and Vegetable Smoothies](#)” and “[Crediting Pureed Fruits](#)” in the “Fruits Component” section; and “[Crediting Pureed Vegetables](#)” and “[Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour](#)” in the “Vegetables Component” section.

recognized medical authority: A state-licensed health care professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law and is recognized by the State Department of Public Health (DPH). In Connecticut, recognized medical authorities include physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy

(DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN), i.e., nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse anesthetists who are licensed as APRNs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#).

refined grains: Grains that have been processed to remove the bran and germ, making the product less nutritious than whole grains. Refined grains may or may not be enriched. For more information, refer to “enriched grains” in this section.

reimbursable meals: Meals and snacks that meet the meal pattern requirements of the USDA regulations and are eligible for USDA funds. Reimbursable meals contain the minimum serving of each required food component.

residential child care institution (RCCI): RCCIs include but are not limited to homes for the mentally, emotionally or physically impaired, and unmarried mothers and their infants; group homes; halfway houses; orphanages; temporary shelters for abused children and for runaway children; long-term care facilities for chronically ill children; and juvenile detention centers. A long-term care facility is a hospital, skilled nursing facility, intermediate care facility, or distinct part thereof, which is intended for the care of children confined for 30 days or more.

saturated fats: Types of fat that raise blood cholesterol, which is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Major sources of saturated fats include coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils, butter, and beef fats. Saturated fats are also found in other animal fats, such as pork and chicken fats, and in other plant fats, such as nuts. For more information, refer to “solid fats” and “trans fats” in this section.

School Breakfast Program (SBP): The USDA’s federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools, and residential child care institutions. The SBP provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free breakfasts to children each school day. The program was established under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to ensure that all children have access to a healthy breakfast at school to promote learning readiness and healthy eating behaviors. For more information, visit the CSDE’s [School Breakfast Program](#) webpage.

school food authority (SFA): The governing body that is responsible for the administration of one or more schools and that has the legal authority to operate the school meals programs in those schools.

school nutrition programs: The USDA’s school nutrition programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Special Milk Program (SMP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) At-risk Supper Program implemented in schools. For more information, visit the

CSDE's [School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP: The USDA's federally assisted summer feeding program that combines features of the NSLP, SBP, and SFSP, and serves meals free of charge to children ages 18 and younger from low-income areas. School districts participating in the NSLP or SBP are eligible to apply to the CSDE to participate in the SSO. SSO meals follow the NSLP and SBP meal patterns. For more information, visit the [Seamless Summer Option of the NSLP](#) webpage.

serving size or portion: The weight, measure, or number of pieces or slices of a food or beverage. For meals to be reimbursable, SFAs must provide the minimum servings specified in the preschool meal patterns.

simple carbohydrates (sugars): Carbohydrates consisting of one sugar (e.g., fructose and galactose) or two sugars (e.g., lactose, maltose, and sucrose). Sugars can be naturally present in foods (such as fructose in fruit or lactose in milk) or added to foods (such as sucrose or table sugar). Foods that naturally contain simple carbohydrates (such as fruits, milk, and milk products, and some vegetables) also contain vitamins and minerals. Foods that contain large amounts of added sugars (such as cookies, candy, pastries, sweetened baked goods, regular soft drinks, and other sweetened drinks) provide calories with few, if any, nutrients. For more information, refer to “added sugars” in this section.

sodium: A mineral that helps maintain the body's fluid balance and blood pressure. Diets that are high in sodium can increase the risk of high blood pressure in individuals who are sodium sensitive.

solid fats: Fats that are usually not liquid at room temperature. Solid fats are found in most animal foods but also can be made from vegetable oils through hydrogenation. Some common solid fats include butter, beef fat (tallow, suet), chicken fat, pork fat (lard), stick margarine, coconut oil, palm oil, and shortening. Foods high in solid fats include full-fat (regular) cheese, cream, whole milk, ice cream, well-marbled cuts of meats, regular ground beef, bacon, sausages, poultry skin, and many baked goods (such as cookies, crackers, donuts, pastries, and croissants). Solid fats contain more saturated fats and/or trans fats. For more information, refer to “saturated fats” and “trans fats” in this section.

standard of identity: The mandatory government requirements that determine what a food product (like whole-wheat bread) must contain or may contain to be marketed under a certain name in interstate commerce. These standards protect consumers by ensuring that a label accurately reflects what is inside. For example, mayonnaise is not an imitation spread, and ice cream is not a similar, but different, frozen dessert. The USDA develops standards for meat and poultry products. The FDA develops standards for other food products.

standardized recipe: A recipe that a given food service operation has tested and adapted for use. This recipe produces the same good results and yield every time when the exact procedures are used with the same type of equipment, and the same quantity and quality of ingredients. Standardized recipes include specific information such as ingredients, weights and measures, preparation directions, serving directions, yield, and portion size. For more information, refer to “[Standardized Recipes](#)” in section 2 and the CSDE’s resource, *Standardized Recipe Form for School Nutrition Programs*.

sucrose: Another name for table sugar. Sucrose contains glucose and fructose. For more information, refer to “simple carbohydrates (sugars)” in this section.

sugar alcohols (polyols): A type of carbohydrate used as sugar substitutes to sweeten foods and beverages. Sugar alcohols are incompletely absorbed and metabolized by the body and contribute fewer calories than most sugars. They also perform other functions such as adding bulk and texture to foods. Common sugar alcohols include sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, maltitol syrup, lactitol, erythritol, isomalt, and hydrogenated starch hydrolysates (HSH). Products with sugar alcohols are often labeled “sugar free.” Large amounts of sugar alcohols may cause bloating, gas, or diarrhea. For more information, refer to “nonnutritive sweeteners” in this section.

sugars: Refer to “added sugars” and “simple carbohydrates” in this section.

surimi: Pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood product usually made from pollock (fish). A 3-ounce serving of surimi credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Surimi](#)” in section 3.

tempeh: A highly nutritious fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Tempeh](#)” in section 3.

USDA Foods: Foods available to the USDA Child Nutrition Programs through the CSDE’s Food Distribution Program. USDA Foods are available to schools in several ways, including Direct Delivery USDA Foods, Further Processed USDA Foods, the USDA Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Pilot, and the SFSP USDA DoD Pilot. For more information, visit the USDA’s [USDA Foods Programs](#) webpage and the CSDE’s [Food Distribution Program](#) webpage.

vegetable subgroups: The five categories of vegetables within the vegetables food group that are recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The subgroups include dark green, red/ orange, beans and peas (legumes), starchy, and other vegetables. The preschool meal patterns do not require vegetable subgroups. However, the USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend providing at least one serving of each vegetable subgroup per week. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s CACFP resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

vegetables component: The meal component of the USDA meal patterns that is comprised of vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and pasteurized full-strength juice. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. For more information, refer to “[Vegetables Component](#)” in section 3 and visit the “[Vegetables Component for Preschoolers](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

wheat bread: Bread that often has wheat flour or enriched wheat flour (not whole-wheat flour) as an ingredient. Wheat bread is not whole grain unless it is labeled “whole-wheat bread.” Wheat bread is low in fiber unless the manufacturer has added fiber.

whole foods: Foods that are unprocessed or minimally processed, and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, and sodium.

whole fruits and vegetables: Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables that are unprocessed or minimally processed, and do not contain added ingredients such as fat, sugars, and sodium.

whole grain-rich (WGR): For the preschool meal patterns, WGR foods contain 100 percent whole grain or contain at least 50 percent whole grains and any other grain ingredients are enriched. For more information, refer to “[Whole grain-rich \(WGR\) requirement](#)” in section 3 and the CSDE’s [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#). **Note:** The WGR definition for the preschool meal patterns is different from the WGR definition for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12.

whole grains: Grains that consist of the entire kernel, including the starchy endosperm, the fiber-rich bran, and the nutrient-rich germ. All grains start out as whole grains, but many are processed to remove the bran and germ, which also removes many of the nutrients. Whole grains are nutrient rich, containing vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and health-enhancing phytonutrients such as lignans and flavonoids. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, whole oats, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, brown rice, whole rye, whole barley, wild rice, buckwheat, and bulgur (cracked wheat). For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Whole Grains in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#).

Glossary

whole-grain flour: Flour made by grinding the entire whole-grain kernel, including the fiber-rich bran, nutrient-rich germ, and starchy endosperm. Flour or meal that does not contain all parts of the grain is not whole grain, e.g., degermed corn, milled rice, and wheat flour.

whole-wheat bread: Bread that contains the whole grain, including the fiber-rich bran, nutrient-rich germ, and starchy endosperm. Whole-wheat flour will be listed as the first grain ingredient.



CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION