

Requirements for the Grains/Bread Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns

This document provides guidance on meeting the meal pattern and crediting requirements for the grains/breads component of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\) meal patterns](#). For information on the SFSP meal patterns and the grains/breads component, visit the “[Meal Patterns for the SFSP](#)” and “[Grains/Breads Component for the SFSP](#)” sections of the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) SFSP webpage.



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Overview of Meal Pattern Requirements

The SFSP meal patterns require one serving of the grains/breads component at breakfast, lunch, and supper. One serving of the grains/breads component may be offered as one of the two required snack components. For guidance on the required amounts for one serving, refer to “[Serving Size](#)” in this document.

Allowable Foods

The grains/breads component includes a wide variety of foods, such as:

- breads, biscuits, bagels, rolls, tortillas, and muffins;
- snack products, such as crackers (including animal crackers and graham crackers), hard pretzels, hard bread sticks, tortilla chips, and popcorn;
- grain-based desserts, such as cookies, granola bars, cereal bars, cake, and pastries (breakfast and snack only);
- cereal grains, such as buckwheat, brown rice, bulgur, and quinoa;
- ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals;
- cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular), such as oatmeal;
- 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/breads component in the SFSP meal patterns, grain products and recipes must be made with creditable grains. 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).

Creditable foods for the SFSP meal patterns include commercial grain products and foods made from scratch that are whole grain, enriched, or contain a blend of whole and enriched grains. Creditable cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals include products that are whole grain, enriched, or fortified.

Grain foods vary in nutritional content. Serve whole grains most often for more nutritious meals.

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Required Crediting Documentation

SFSP sponsors must be able to document the meal pattern contribution of all grain products and recipes used for reimbursable meals and snacks. Menu planners should use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine food yields and crediting information for grain menu items.

Commercial grain products

Acceptable documentation includes a Child Nutrition (CN) label or a manufacturer's product formulation statement (PFS). Grain items cannot have a CN label unless they are part of main dish entrees that contain at least ½ ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component.

A PFS from the manufacturer is required if a CN label is not available and the product's ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if the product meets the crediting criteria for the grains/breads component. A PFS is required when any of the situations below apply. **Note:** When reviewing the first ingredient on the product's label, water is ignored. For combination foods such as pizza or breaded chicken nuggets, these requirements apply only to the grain portion.

1. The first ingredient is not a creditable grain, but the product contains more than one creditable grain.
2. A commercial combination food that contains a grain portion does not have a Child Nutrition (CN) label.
3. The manufacturer claims that the product's serving size is less than the required weight or volume in the USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (Exhibit A chart).
4. The product is not listed in the Exhibit A chart.

The PFS must indicate the specific crediting information for the product, including the weight (grams) of each creditable grain per serving and 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.

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

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For specific guidance, examples, and information on how to review a grain product's PFS, refer to the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program](#). For information on how to determine a product's grains/breads servings, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings in the Summer Food Service Program](#) and [How to Use the Grains/Breads Servings Chart for the Summer Food Service Program](#).

If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS, or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the product cannot credit as the grains/breads component in SFSP meals and snacks.

For more information on crediting documentation for the SFSP meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program](#) and [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service Program](#); the USDA's [Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains/Breads Servings in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks](#) and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#); and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.

Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms 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](#).

Grain foods made from scratch

SFSP sponsors must be able to document that grain foods made from scratch meet the crediting requirements of the SFSP meal patterns. SFSP sponsors must have recipes on file that document the crediting information for all grain foods made from scratch, including foods made on site by the SFSP sponsor and foods prepared by vendors. The USDA encourages SFSP sponsors to use standardized recipes to ensure accurate crediting information. Menu planners should use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine food yields and crediting information for SFSP recipes. For more information on standardized recipes, refer to the CSDE's [Standardized Recipe Form for the Summer Food Service Program](#) and visit the "Standardized Recipes" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.

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Recipes credit as the grains/breads component based on the amount of creditable grains per serving. Menu planners must determine the recipe's grains/breads servings using one of the following methods: 1) the grams of creditable grains; or 2) if the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving is known, the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for the appropriate grain group in the USDA's Exhibit A chart where the grain food belongs.

Crediting Requirements

Grain products and recipes must meet specific criteria to credit as the grains/breads component in the SFSP meal patterns. The guidance below addresses the crediting requirements for the grains/breads component. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#).

Creditable grains

Grains and breads must be whole grain, enriched, or contain a blend of whole and enriched grains. Bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran) and germ (such as wheat germ) credits the same as enriched grains. 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. For information on how to identify creditable grains, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Whole Grains in the Summer Food Service Program](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

Crediting breakfast cereals

Cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals must be whole grain, enriched, or fortified. The minimum serving for RTE breakfast cereals is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup or 1 ounce, whichever is less. The minimum serving for cooked breakfast cereals is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked or 25 grams dry. Choose whole-grain, low-sugar cereals most often. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

Crediting corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal

Commercial corn products such as tortilla chips, taco shells, and tamales credit as whole grains if the product is labeled "whole grain," or the corn ingredient is nixtamalized (treated with lime). Nixtamalization is the process of soaking and cooked dried corn in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process results in a product with a similar nutrition content 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 is used for making tortilla chips, taco shells,

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tamales, pupusas, and other popular corn products. Hominy, corn masa, and masa harina credit as whole

Ingredients labeled as hominy, corn masa, or masa harina are nixtamalized and credit as whole grains. The ingredients statements below show some examples of nixtamalized products.

- 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).

For more information, refer to [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 grain-based desserts

Grain-based desserts cannot credit at lunch or supper. Only certain grain-based desserts are allowed at snack and breakfast. Allowable grain-based desserts are in groups C-G and are indicated in red in the CSDE's [Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

- **Snack:** Grain-based desserts with footnote 1 are allowed at snack. Examples include cookies, cakes, cupcakes, unfrosted brownies, and piecrusts in sweet pies, e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan.
- **Breakfast and SNACK:** Grain-based desserts with footnote 2 are allowed at breakfast and snack. Examples include coffee cakes, cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, raisin, and orange cranberry), rice pudding, and sweet bread pudding.

Sweet crackers (such as animal crackers and graham crackers) credit at all meals and snacks.

Grain-based desserts often contain more fat and added sugars than traditional grains. The CSDE recommends limiting the total servings of all grain-based desserts and animal/graham crackers to no more than twice per week, between all SFSP meals and snacks served to children. For example, a SFSP menu that offers cookies at snack on Monday and granola bars at breakfast on Thursday should not include any other grain-based desserts that week.

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Crediting hominy

Hominy is made from whole kernels of maize (dried field corn) that have been soaked in an alkaline solution (nixtamalized). Milled hominy credits as the grains/breads component. Hominy offered in a dried, milled form (such as grits) credits as a whole grain. A ½-cup cooked or 25 grams dry credits as one serving of the grains/breads component.

In its whole form, hominy credits as a starchy vegetable. For information on crediting hominy as the vegetables/fruits component, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for the Vegetables/Fruits Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#).

Crediting popcorn

Popcorn credits as a whole-grain food. Three cups (1 ounce) of plain popped popcorn credit as one serving of the grains/breads component. The minimum creditable amount is ¾ cup (¼ serving). Table 1 summarizes the grains/breads contribution of popped popcorn.

Table 1. Grains contribution of popped popcorn

Cups (popped)	Weight (popped)	Grains/breads contribution
¾ cup	0.25 ounces or 7 grams	¼ serving (minimum creditable amount)
1½ cups	0.5 ounces or 14 grams	½ serving
2¼ cups	0.75 ounces or 21 grams	¾ serving
3 cups	1 ounce or 28 grams	1 serving

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the serving size. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of the grains/breads 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/breads component. For example, a snack mix that contains 1½ cups of popcorn (½ serving) and ¾ cup of enriched or whole-grain cereal (½ serving) credits as one serving of the grains/breads component.

SFSP sponsors must maintain crediting documentation for foods that contain popcorn as an ingredient, such as a popcorn snack mix (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document). Crediting information for popcorn is summarized in [USDA Memo SP 23-2019](#), [CACFP 10-2019](#), and [SFSP 9-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs](#).

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Popcorn may be a choking hazard for young children. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer popcorn in SFSP menus. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Noncreditable grains/breads

Examples of foods that do not credit include but are not limited to commercial products that do not contain a creditable grain as the greatest ingredient by weight; breakfast cereals that are not whole grain, enriched, or fortified; recipes that are not made with creditable grains; and grain-based desserts at lunch or supper. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

Serving Size for Grain Products and Recipes

Creditable commercial grain products and foods made from scratch must provide the minimum quantities required by the SFSP meal patterns for each meal and snack. The required quantities for the grains/breads component are in servings. The minimum amount that credits toward the grains/breads component is $\frac{1}{4}$ serving.

The amount of a grain food that provides one serving varies because different types of foods contain different amounts of creditable grains. For example, to credit as one serving of the grains/breads component, a roll must weigh 25 grams or 0.9 ounce, a corn muffin must weigh 31 grams or 1.1 ounce, and a blueberry muffin must weigh 50 grams or 1.8 ounces.

The USDA allows two methods for determining the servings of a creditable grain product or recipe. SFSP sponsors may use either method but must document how the crediting information was obtained. These methods are summarized below. For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

Method 1: 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-G) or volume (groups H-I) for the grain group where the product or 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 some commercial grain products, method 2 is required and

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the SFSP sponsor must obtain a PFS (refer to [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program](#)).

The required quantities are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because the meal patterns are different. The CSDE's [Serving Sizes for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program](#) lists the Exhibit A servings that apply to the SFSP meal patterns.

Method 2: creditable grains

Method 2 determines the SFSP grains/breads servings from the weight (grams) of creditable grains per serving. This method is used for recipes. It may also be used for commercial grain products with a PFS stating the weight of creditable grains per serving.

To credit as one serving of the grains/breads component, grain foods in groups A-G of the USDA's Exhibit A chart must contain 14.75 grams of creditable grains and grain foods in group H must contain 25 grams of creditable grains. The grams of creditable grains are listed in commercial product's PFS or calculated from the grain quantities in the SFSP sponsor's recipe.



Grain crediting tools

The tools below help menu planners determine the meal pattern 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 grains/breads servings 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](#).
- **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.
- **How to Use the Grains/Breads Servings Chart for the SFSP:** The CSDE's resource, [How to Use the Grains/Breads Servings Chart for the Summer Food Service Program](#), reviews the steps for using the Exhibit A quantities to determine the grains/breads

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servings of three types of commercial products and standardized recipes. These include grain menu items in groups A-G 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).

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Examples of grain foods that may cause choking include hard pretzels; pretzel chips; corn chips; breakfast cereals that contain nuts, whole-grain kernels (such as wheat berries), and hard chunks (such as granola); and crackers or breads with seeds, nut pieces, or whole-grain kernels.

Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of grain foods to offer in SFSP menus; and modify foods and menus as appropriate. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/accepting_processed_product_documentation_sfsp.pdf

Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/grain_calculation_sfsp.pdf

Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/credit_cereals_sfsp.pdf

Crediting Enriched Grains in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/credit_enriched_grains_sfsp.pdf

Crediting Foods in the SFSP ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/Documents>

Crediting Whole Grains in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/credit_whole_grains_sfsp.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Grains/Breads Component for the SFSP (Documents/Forms section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/documents#GrainsBreads>

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How to Use the Grains/Breads Servings Chart for the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/mealpattern/credit_how_to_use_grains_breads_servings_chart_sfsp.pdf

Meal Patterns for the SFSP (“How To” Section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/how-to#MealPatterns>

Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/noncreditable_foods_sfsp.pdf

Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/mealpattern/servings_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf

Standardized Recipe Form for the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/standardized_recipe_form_sfsp.docx

Standardized Recipes (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/documents#StandardizedRecipes>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

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

USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019, and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/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 Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Product_Formulation_Statements_SFSP.pdf

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/mealpattern/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_sfsp.pdf

What’s in a Meal 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>

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For more information, visit the [Meal Patterns for the SFSP](#) and [Crediting Foods in the SFSP](#) sections of the CSDE's SFSP webpage or contact the [Summer Meals staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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