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, visit the "Meal Patterns" section of the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) SFSP webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage and Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Contents

Overview of Meal Pattern Requirements 2
Allowable Foods 2
- Include whole grain-rich (WGR) foods in SFSP menus 2

Required Crediting Documentation 3
- Documentation for commercial processed products 3
- Documentation for grain foods made from scratch 4
- Storing crediting documentation 5

Crediting Requirements 5
- Creditable grains 5
- Crediting breakfast cereals 5
- Crediting corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal 6
- Crediting grain-based desserts 7
- Crediting hominy 7
- Crediting popcorn 8
- Noncreditable grains/breads 9

Serving Size for Grain Products and Recipes 9
- Method 1: USDA's Exhibit A chart 9
- Method 2: creditable grains 10
- Grain crediting tools 10

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children 11
Resources 12

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

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 meal components at snack. For guidance on the required amounts for one grains/breads serving, refer to "Serving Size for Grain Products and Recipes" 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 (allowed only for breakfast and snack);
- 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.

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.

Include whole grain-rich (WGR) foods in SFSP menus

Grain foods vary in nutritional value. WGR foods include products and recipes that are 100 percent whole grain or that contain a blend of at least 50 percent whole grains and enriched grains. While the SFSP meal pattern does not require WGR foods, the USDA encourages SFSP sponsors to serve whole-grain menu items most often for more nutritious meals and snacks.

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

Required Crediting Documentation

SFSP sponsors must be able to document that all grain menu items in reimbursable meals and snacks meet the SFSP meal patterns. 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.

Documentation for commercial processed products

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

- **Child Nutrition (CN) label:** A CN label is a USDA-approved statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements. Grain items are not eligible for a CN label unless they are part of main dish entrees that contain at least ½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) of the meats/meat alternates (MMA) component. Allowable CN label documentation includes 1) the original CN label from the product carton; 2) a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or 3) a CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor, attached to the bill of lading (invoice). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Summer Food Service Program*.

  Note: The SFSP meal patterns indicate the quantities for the MMA component in ounces instead of oz eq. The amount that credits as 1 oz eq or 1 ounce of MMA is the same.

- **Product formulation statement (PFS):** A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. The PFS must be signed by an official of the manufacturer and state the amount of each meal pattern component contained in one serving of the product. For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program*. For guidance on when a PFS is required and the information it must include, refer to the CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program*.

  N**ote:** A PFS is required if the grain product's ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if the product meets the crediting criteria for the SFSP meal patterns. This documentation must be obtained and verified for

accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and snacks.

For more information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service Program*, and USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: *Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements*. Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Training on the documentation requirements is available in the CSDE's Summer Meals annual training module, Crediting Documentation for Summer Meals. Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, *What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs*.

Documentation for grain foods made from scratch

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 because they ensure accurate meal component contributions and document that menus meet the meal pattern requirements. For more information, visit the "Standardized Recipes" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

> The USDA defines a standardized recipe as one that has been tried, adapted, and retried at least three times 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.

Recipes credit as the grains/breads component based on the grams of creditable grains per serving. If the recipe indicates the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving, menu planners may use the required weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for the applicable grain group in the USDA's Exhibit A chart. For guidance on determining grains/breads servings, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings in the Summer Food Service Program*.

Storing crediting documentation

SFSP sponsors must maintain all CN labels, PFS forms, recipes, and other crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the SFSP. This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the SFSP. For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Records Retention Requirements for the Summer Food Service Program*.

Crediting Requirements

Commercial grain products and SFSP 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 more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *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 ¾ cup or 1 ounce, whichever is less. The minimum serving for cooked breakfast cereals is ½ 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*. For guidance on choosing low-sugar breakfast cereals, visit the USDA's Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

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

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 cooking 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, 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 Corn Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*.






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

Crediting grain-based desserts

Grain-based desserts do not credit at lunch or supper. Only certain grain-based desserts are allowed at breakfast and snack. Allowable grain-based desserts are indicated in groups C-G of the CSDE's *Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program*.

- **Breakfast and snack:** Examples of allowable grain-based desserts for breakfast and snack include coffee cakes, cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, and fruit turnovers.

- **Snack:** Examples of grain-based desserts allowed only at snack include cookies, cakes, cupcakes, plain brownies, and piecrusts in sweet pies like apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan.

Sweet crackers (like graham crackers and animal crackers) are grain-based desserts that may be served as the grains/breads component at any SFSP meal or snack. As a best practice, the USDA encourages SFSP menus to limit sweet crackers due to their higher sugar content.

Grain-based desserts often contain more fat and added sugars than traditional grains. The CSDE encourages SFSP sponsors to limit all grain-based desserts (including sweet crackers) to no more than twice per week and offer nutrient-dense whole grains instead. For example, if the SFSP menu includes cookies as a snack on Monday and granola bars for breakfast on Thursday, no other grain-based desserts should be served during that week.

For more information on grain-based desserts, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program*.

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). The table below 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 (3 cups equal one serving).

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 ⅜ 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*.

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 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 creditable amount is ¼ 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 and described in detail in 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* (known as 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 the SFSP sponsor must obtain a PFS (refer to CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program*).

The required Exhibit A grain quantities for the SFSP are different from the other Child Nutrition Programs. The CSDE's resource, *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 grains/breads servings from the weight (grams) of creditable grains in one serving of the product or recipe. 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.

To credit as one serving of enriched grains, foods in groups A-G of the USDA's Exhibit A chart must contain 14.75 grams of enriched grains and foods in group H must contain 25 grams of enriched 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.

> There are some situations when SFSP sponsors must use method 2 and a PFS is required. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, *When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program*.

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:** The FBG's online *Exhibit A Grains Tool* determines the grains/breads servings of commercial grain products.

- **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.

- **CSDE's resource for using the Exhibit A Grain Chart:** 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 meal pattern contribution 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).

For additional guidance, visit the "Serving Requirements" in the "Grains and Breads" a section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage.

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.

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

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/accepting_processed_product_documentation_sfsp.pdf

Calculation Methods for Grains/Breads Servings for the Summer Food Service Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/grain_calculation_sfsp.pdf

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

Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/credit_cereals_sfsp.pdf

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

Crediting Enriched Grains in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/credit_enriched_grains_sfsp.pdf

Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-summer-food-service-program

Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/credit_grain_based_ desserts_sfsp.pdf

Crediting Whole Grains in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/credit_whole_grains_sfsp.pdf

Exhibit A Grains Tool of the Food Buying Guide (USDA):
https://www.fna.usda.gov/tn/fbg/webtool

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/Exhibit_A_Grain_Requirements_For_Child_Nutrition_Programs.pdf

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

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

Grains and Breads Component (CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-summer-food-service-program/grains-and-breads

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 (CSDE's SFSP webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/meal-patterns

Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/noncreditable_foods_ sfsp.pdf

Records Retention Requirements for the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/records_retention_sfsp.pdf

Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/servings_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf

Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/standardized-recipes

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

USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019, and SFSP 09-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:
https://www.fna.usda.gov/cn/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs

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

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.fna.usda.gov/cn/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-masa-harina-child-nutrition-programs

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Summer Food Service Program (CDSE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingsfsp/cn_labels_sfsp.pdf

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

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

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

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

For more information, visit the "Meal Patterns" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage and the CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program 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/creditingsfsp/component_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf.

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

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