

# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Summer Food Service Program

This guidance applies to meals and snacks served in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). For information on the SFSP meal patterns and the grains/breads component, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) resource, *Requirements for the Grains/Breads Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns*, and visit the “Meal Patterns for the SFSP” and “Crediting Foods in the SFSP” sections of the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) SFSP webpage.



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# Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the SFSP

## Definition of Breakfast Cereals

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations ([21 CFR 170.3\(n\)\(4\)](#)) define breakfast cereals as ready-to-eat (RTE) cereals (such as puffed cereals, round or flaked cereals, and granola) and instant and regular hot cereals (such as oatmeal, cream of wheat, and farina). RTE breakfast cereals can be eaten as sold and are typically fortified with vitamins and minerals.

## 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. Breakfast cereals may be offered as the grains/breads component at any meal or snack.

## Overview of Crediting Requirements

For breakfast cereals to credit as the grains/breads component, the first ingredient must be creditable grain or the cereal must be fortified. Creditable grains include whole grains, enriched grains, bran, and germ (refer to “[Creditable Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this document).

In addition, the serving must provide the minimum required volume or weight. The required quantities to credit as one serving of the grains/breads component are:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup or 1 ounce (whichever is less) for cold RTE breakfast cereals; and
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked or 25 grams dry for cooked breakfast cereals (e.g., oatmeal).

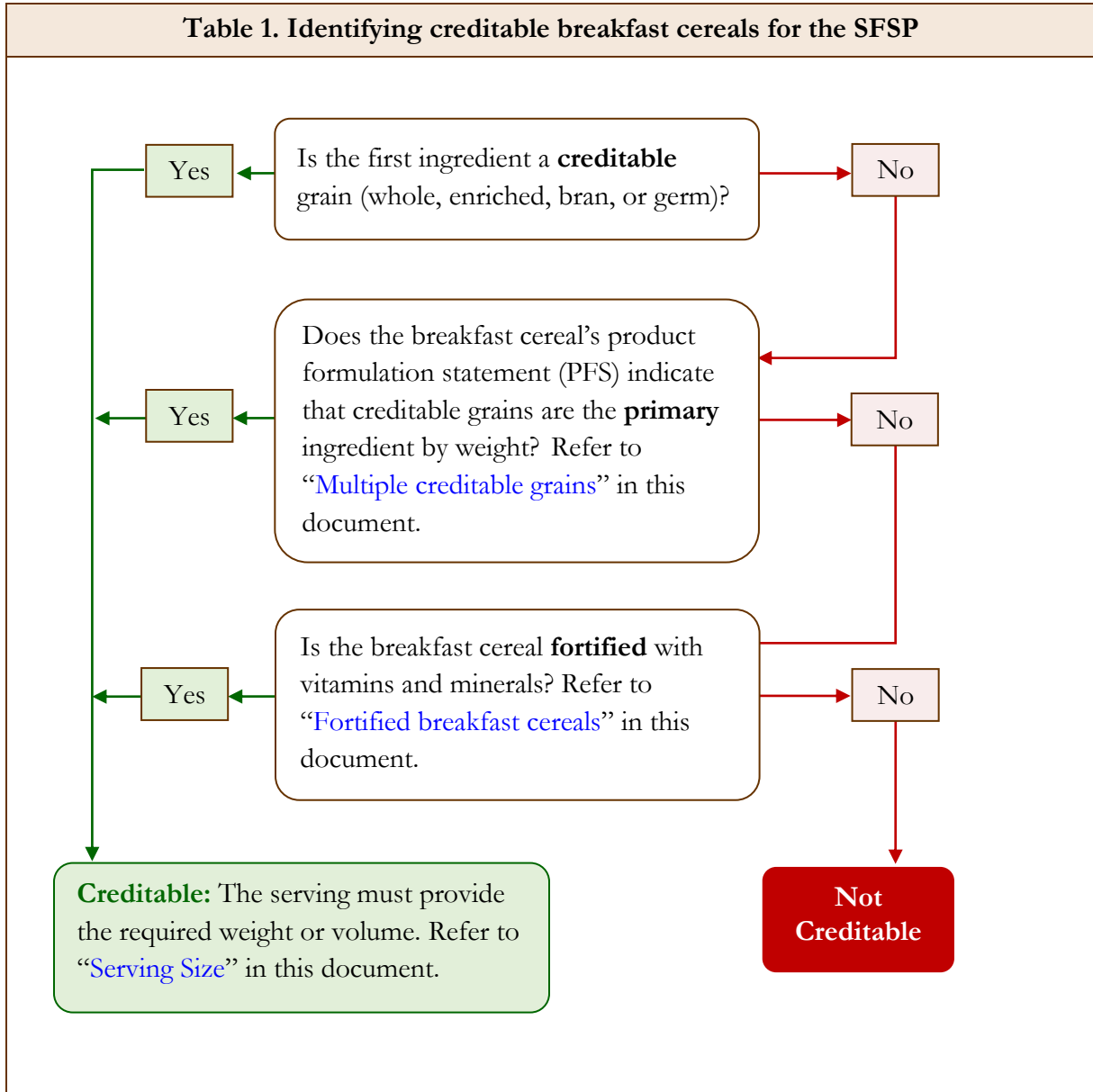
For more information, refer to “[Serving Size](#)” in this document.

Table 1 summarizes the steps for determining if breakfast cereals credit as the grains/breads component in the SFSP meal patterns. Creditable breakfast cereals may be served as the grains/breads component at any SFSP meal or snack.



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**Table 1. Identifying creditable breakfast cereals for the SFSP**



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## Creditable Breakfast Cereals

To credit as the grains/breads component in the SFSP meal patterns, breakfast cereals must contain a creditable grain as the first ingredient (or greatest ingredient by weight) or be fortified. 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). The three types of RTE and cooked breakfast cereals that credit in the SFSP meal patterns include whole-grain breakfast cereals, enriched breakfast cereals, and fortified breakfast cereals.

### Whole-grain breakfast cereals

Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel or kernel (starchy endosperm, fiber-rich bran, and nutrient-rich germ) after removing the inedible outer husk or hull. A 100 percent whole-grain cereal lists a whole grain as the first ingredient and contains only whole grains. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a whole-grain breakfast cereal.

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

This cereal is 100 percent whole grain because a whole grain is the first and only grain ingredient.

For information on identifying whole grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Whole Grains in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

### Enriched breakfast cereals

Enriched breakfast cereals contain five vitamins and minerals added in amounts required by the FDA to replace some of the nutrients lost during processing. The enrichment nutrients include thiamin (vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, thiamin mononitrate, or thiamin hydrochloride); riboflavin (vitamin B<sub>2</sub>); niacin (vitamin B<sub>3</sub> or niacinamide); folic acid (folate); and iron (reduced iron, ferrous sulfate, or ferric orthophosphate). A breakfast cereal is enriched if the food is labeled as "enriched" or an enriched grain is the first ingredient. The ingredients statement below shows an example of an enriched breakfast cereal.

Ingredients: **Puffed rice**, ferrous sulfate (a source of iron), niacinamide, citric acid, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid.

This puffed rice breakfast cereal is enriched because the ingredients statement lists the five enrichment nutrients (ferrous sulfate, niacinamide, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, and folic acid).

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For more information on identifying enriched grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Enriched Grains in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

### Fortified breakfast cereals

Fortified breakfast cereals have nutrients added by the manufacturer that were not originally present, or that are at higher levels than originally present. Manufacturers may choose which additional nutrients to use for fortification. Fortified breakfast cereals typically contain the five enrichment nutrients plus other vitamins and minerals that do not exist naturally in grains.

Different cereal brands may list different fortification nutrients. The USDA does not specify a minimum number of nutrients or a minimum percentage for the level of fortification for breakfast cereals in Child Nutrition Programs. A fortified breakfast cereal is not required to be enriched.



A breakfast cereal is fortified if the food is labeled as “fortified” or the ingredients statement lists the vitamins and minerals added to the product. These nutrients are typically listed after “Vitamins and Minerals.” The ingredients statements below show some examples of fortified breakfast cereals.

Ingredients: **Milled corn**, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Iron, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate, ascorbic acid), niacinamide, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B12.

This breakfast cereal is fortified because it contains nutrients listed after the statement, “Vitamins and Minerals.”

Ingredients: **Whole-grain wheat**, raisins, wheat bran, sugar, brown sugar syrup, contains 2% or less of salt, malt flavor. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Potassium chloride, niacinamide, reduced iron, vitamin B<sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine hydrochloride), zinc oxide, vitamin B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin), vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>.

This breakfast cereal contains a whole grain (whole-grain wheat) as the first ingredient and is fortified.

If the ingredients statement does not list any vitamins and minerals, the breakfast cereal is not fortified. To credit as the grains/breads component in the SFSP meal patterns, breakfast cereals that are not fortified must contain a creditable grain (whole, enriched, bran, or germ) as the first

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ingredient or the greatest ingredient by weight. If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the breakfast cereal contains more than one creditable grain, the SFSP sponsor must obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer. The PFS must indicate that the combined weight of all creditable grains is the greatest ingredient by weight. For more information, refer to “[Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals](#)” in this document.

### Bran and germ

Bran and germ credit the same as enriched grains. Bran (such as oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran) is the seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Germ (such as wheat germ) is the vitamin-rich embryo of the grain kernel. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a creditable breakfast cereal that contains wheat bran as the first ingredient.

Ingredients: **Wheat bran**, sugar, malt flavor, contains 2% or less of salt. **Vitamins and Minerals:** Calcium carbonate, vitamin C (sodium ascorbate and ascorbic acid), reduced iron, niacinamide, vitamin B<sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin), folic acid, vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, vitamin D.

This breakfast cereal is creditable because the first ingredient (wheat bran) is a creditable grain, and the cereal is fortified.

### Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals

SFSP sponsors must be able to document that all breakfast cereals served in reimbursable meals and snacks meet the meal pattern crediting requirements. A PFS from the manufacturer is required if the product’s ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if the product meets the SFSP crediting criteria. For guidance on when a PFS is required, the information it must include, and 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](#)*.

SFSP sponsors must verify the accuracy of the PFS before including the commercial grain product in reimbursable meals and must maintain crediting documentation on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the SFSP.

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 the SFSP meals and snacks.

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For more information on PFS forms, visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)” section of the CSDE’s SFSP webpage and refer to the CSDE’s resources, *Using Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program* and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service Program*, and 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*.

Training on the requirements for 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*.

### Serving Size

The USDA’s chart, *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*, summarizes the required quantities for nine groups (A-I) of creditable grain foods. Cooked breakfast cereals (regular and instant) are in group H and RTE breakfast cereals are in group I.

Breakfast cereals must provide the minimum quantities required by the SFSP meal patterns. The required amount for the grains/breads component is in servings. The minimum amount that credits toward the grains/breads component is  $\frac{1}{4}$  serving.

- **Group H (cereal grains):** Cereal grains (such as oats, buckwheat, farina, and quinoa) require  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked or 25 grams dry to credit as one serving of the grains/breads component. Cereal grains typically credit based on the cooked serving, but menu planners may choose to use the dry uncooked weight.
- **Group I (RTE breakfast cereals):** RTE breakfast cereals require 1 ounce (28 grams) or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (whichever is less) to credit as one serving of the grains/breads component. If the appropriate volume of cereal weighs less than 28 grams, it still credits as one serving. For example,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of cereal that weighs 26 grams credits as one serving.



The required quantities listed in Exhibit A are not the same for all Child Nutrition Programs because the meal patterns are different. 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.

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## Nutrition Guidance

Whole-grain, low-sugar cereals provide the best nutrition, and should be served most often. Many breakfast cereals contain added sugars and refined grains. The USDA encourages SFSP sponsors to read labels and choose whole-grain, low-sugar breakfast cereals. For guidance on identifying whole grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Crediting Whole Grains 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 Sugar](#) webpage.

## Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. 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 age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of breakfast cereals 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/CreditingSFSP/Accepting\\_Processed\\_Product\\_Documentation\\_SFSP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/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/CreditingSFSP/Grain\\_Calculation\\_SFSP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Grain_Calculation_SFSP.pdf)

Choose Breakfast Cereals that are Lower in Sugar (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/choose-breakfast-cereals-are-lower-sugar>

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

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit\\_Enriched\\_Grains\\_SFSP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/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/CreditingSFSP/Credit\\_Whole\\_Grains\\_SFSP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Whole_Grains_SFSP.pdf)

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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



## Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the SFSP

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>

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>

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains/Breads Servings 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\\_Grains-Breads\\_Servings\\_Fillable\\_508.pdf](https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains-Breads_Servings_Fillable_508.pdf)

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains/Breads Servings in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks: Completed Sample (USDA):

[https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS\\_Grains-Breads\\_Servings\\_Fillable\\_508.pdf](https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Grains-Breads_Servings_Fillable_508.pdf)

Requirements for the Grains/Breads Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Component\\_Grains\\_Breads\\_SFSP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Component_Grains_Breads_SFSP.pdf)

Resources for the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/MealPattern/Resources\\_SFSP\\_Meal\\_Patterns.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/MealPattern/Resources_SFSP_Meal_Patterns.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](https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition//-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/MealPattern/Servings_Grains_Breads_SFSP.pdf)

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

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.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](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](https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/MealPattern/When_Commercial_Grain_Products_Require_PFS_SFSP.pdf)

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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/CreditingSFSP/Credit\\_Cereals\\_SFSP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Cereals_SFSP.pdf).

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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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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