

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, visit the “[Meal Patterns](#)” section of the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) SFSP webpage and refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for the Grains/Breads Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#). 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.



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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 Crediting Requirements

Breakfast cereals offered in SFSP meals and snacks 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, and germ (refer to "[Creditable Breakfast Cereals](#)" in this document).

The serving must provide the minimum required volume or weight (refer to "[Serving Size](#)" in this document). 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).



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Steps to identify creditable breakfast cereals

SFSP sponsors may use the steps below to determine if breakfast cereals credit in the SFSP.

1. Is the first ingredient a creditable grain (whole, enriched, bran, or germ)?
 - Yes: The cereal is creditable.
 - No: Go to step 2.
2. Does the breakfast cereal's product formulation statement (PFS) indicate that creditable grains are the primary ingredient by weight? Refer to "[Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals](#)" in this document.
 - Yes: The cereal is creditable.
 - No: Go to step 3.
3. Is the breakfast cereal fortified with vitamins and minerals? Refer to "[Fortified breakfast cereals](#)" in this document.
 - Yes: The cereal is creditable.
 - No: The cereal is not creditable.

SFSP sponsors may serve creditable breakfast cereals as the grains/breads component at any meal or snack.

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Creditable Breakfast Cereals

The three types of creditable RTE and cooked breakfast cereals for the SFSP programs include whole grain-rich (WGR) breakfast cereals, enriched breakfast cereals, and fortified breakfast cereals. Crediting guidance and examples for each type of breakfast cereal are indicated below.

WGR breakfast cereals

WGR breakfast cereals include cereals that are 100 percent whole grain and cereals that contain a blend of at least 50 whole grains with enriched grains. Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel (starchy endosperm, fiber-rich bran, and nutrient-rich germ) after removing the inedible outer husk or hull. For information on identifying whole grains, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Whole Grains in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

The ingredients statements below show some examples of WGR breakfast cereals.

- **Example 1: 100 percent whole-grain 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 is a whole grain (whole grain rolled oats).

- **Example 2: WGR cereal**

Ingredients: Whole-grain oat flour, sugar, enriched corn flour (corn flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin, enzyme, folic acid), salt, calcium carbonate, disodium phosphate.

This RTE cereal is WGR because the first ingredient is a whole grain (whole grain rolled oats) and the other grain ingredient is an enriched grain (enriched corn flour)

While the SFSP meal pattern does not require WGR foods, serving whole grains more often helps provide more nutritious meals (refer to "[Nutrition Guidance](#)" in this document).

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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 B₁, thiamin mononitrate, or thiamin hydrochloride), riboflavin (vitamin B₂); niacin (vitamin B₃ 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.

- **Example of enriched breakfast cereal**

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

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

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



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Fortified breakfast cereals

Fortified breakfast cereals contain 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 the 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.

- **Example 1: Fortified breakfast cereal**

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 cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients (listed after “Vitamins and Minerals”) but it is not WGR because milled corn is not a whole grain.

- **Example 2: Fortified breakfast cereal**

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 B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), zinc oxide, vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, folic acid, vitamin D, vitamin B₁₂.

This cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients (listed after “Vitamins and Minerals”). It is WGR because whole-grain wheat is the first ingredient.

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If the ingredients statement does not list any vitamins and minerals, the breakfast cereal is not fortified. Breakfast cereals that are not fortified must contain a creditable grain as the first ingredient (or the greatest ingredient by weight).

If a creditable grain is not the first ingredient, but the cereal contains more than one creditable grain, the SFA 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 is the seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Some examples include oat bran, wheat bran, corn bran, rice bran, and rye bran. Germ (such as wheat germ) is the vitamin-rich embryo of the grain kernel. The ingredients statement below shows an example of a bran breakfast cereal.

- **Example of bran cereal**

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 B₆ (pyridoxine hydrochloride), vitamin B₂ (riboflavin), folic acid, vitamin B₁ (thiamin hydrochloride), vitamin A palmitate, vitamin B₁₂, vitamin D.

This cereal is fortified because it contains added nutrients (listed after "Vitamins and Minerals") but it is not WGR because wheat bran credits the same as enriched grains.



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Crediting Documentation for Breakfast Cereals

SFSP sponsors must be able to document that all breakfast cereals served in reimbursable meals and snacks meet the crediting requirements for the grains/breads component. 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. 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](#).

The USDA requires that SFSP sponsors must verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the breakfast cereal in reimbursable meals and snacks.

Guidance for PFS forms

For information on the requirements for PFS forms, 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 resources, [USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements](#). Additional information and resources are available on the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

For guidance on reviewing PFS forms, visit the USDA's [Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#) webpage. Guidance on how to review a grain PFS is available in the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program](#)

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 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*.

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Storing crediting documentation

SFSP sponsors must maintain all documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the SFSP (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Records Retention Requirements for the Summer Food Service Program](#)). This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the SFSP.

Serving Size for Breakfast Cereals

Cooked breakfast cereals (regular and instant) are in group H and cold RTE breakfast cereals are in group I of the USDA's chart, [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#). Cooked breakfast cereals (regular and instant) are in group H and cold RTE breakfast cereals are in group I. The required quantities are in servings. The minimum creditable amount 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 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 webpage, [Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Resources

[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

[Child Nutrition Programs: Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#)
(CSDE webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/tips-evaluating-pfs>

[Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (USDA webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp/breakfast-cereals-lower-sugar>

[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/creditingfsp/credit_enriched_grains_sfsp.pdf

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

[Exhibit A Grains Tool of the Food Buying Guide](#) (USDA):
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/ExhibitATool/Index>

[Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (USDA):
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>

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[Grains and Breads Component](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-summer-food-service-program/grains-and-breads) (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>

[Product Formulation Statements](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements) (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements>

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

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

[Summer Meals Annual Training Module: Crediting Documentation for Summer Meals](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training/#CreditingDocumentation) ("Annual Training" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage)
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training/#CreditingDocumentation>

[Summer Meals Annual Training Module: Crediting Foods in the SFSP Meal Patterns Part 4: Grains/Breads Component](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training/#CreditingFoods) ("Annual Training" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage)
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training/#CreditingFoods>

[USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans \(89 FR 31962\)](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for):
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for>

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

[Using Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/product_formulation_statements_sfsp.pdf) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/product_formulation_statements_sfsp.pdf

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[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

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For more information, visit 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/creditingfsp/credit_cereals_sfsp.pdf.



Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Summer Food Service Program

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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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