

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products 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 MMA component, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) resource, [Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the in the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#), and visit the “[Meal Patterns for the SFSP](#)” and “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP](#)” sections of the CSDE’s SFSP webpage.



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Overview of Meal Pattern Requirements

To credit as the meat/meat alternates (MMA) component in the SFSP meal patterns, commercial products that are processed or contain added ingredients (such as pizza, chicken nuggets, deli meats, hotdogs, and cheese ravioli) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. The acceptable types of documentation for commercial processed foods include:

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

For example, to credit a commercial breaded chicken patty as 2 ounces of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 ounces of cooked chicken.

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

A PFS is required for all commercial processed products that are not CN labeled. SFSP sponsors must maintain all crediting documentation on file. The CSDE will review this information during the Administrative Review of the SFSP.

For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Summer Food Service Program](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service Program](#). For guidance on how to review a PFS, refer to the USDA's [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#) and [Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates](#). For additional guidance, 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](#). For additional guidance on documentation for commercial products, visit the "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.



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MMA versus Protein

The SFSP 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 (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Summer Food Service Program](#)).

Serving Size

The serving sizes for 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 without added liquid, binders, and extenders (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Deli Meats in the Summer Food Service Program](#));
- 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended);
- 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food/spread, or cheese substitute (low-fat recommended);
- ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes), e.g., kidney beans, chick peas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Legumes in the Summer Food Service Program](#));
- ½ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, and sunflower seed butter (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Summer Food Service Program](#));
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Summer Food Service Program](#));

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- ¼ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein (refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Summer Food Service Program*);
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs ingredients (tempeh products with other ingredients require a CN label or PFS);
- 3 ounces of surimi (alternate crediting amounts must be documented with a PFS);
- ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Yogurt in the Summer Food Service Program*); and
- 1 ounce of alternate protein product (APP) that meets the USDA’s APP requirements (refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Summer Food Service Program*).

The USDA recommends limiting processed meats and poultry (such as hot dogs, bologna, luncheon meat, pepperoni, and sausages) to no more than once per week.

Minimum creditable amount

One-quarter (¼) ounce is the smallest amount that credits toward the MMA component. If a menu item provides less than the full meal pattern serving of the MMA component, the menu planner must include an additional meat or meat alternate to meet the full meal pattern serving.

Requirement for Recognizable MMA

The USDA requires that MMA must be recognizable (visible) to credit toward the MMA component. For example, SFSP sponsors cannot credit peanut butter in a muffin or smoothie, soft tofu blended in a soup, or pureed beans in a muffin. The intent for this requirement is to ensure that children can easily identify the foods in SFSP menus. The nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs includes the goal of helping children recognize the food groups that contribute to healthy meals and snacks.

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

- Yogurt blended in smoothies credits as a meat alternate. Other MMA such as peanut butter cannot credit when served in smoothies. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Smoothies in the Summer Food Service Program*.
- Pasta made with 100 percent legume flours may credit as a meat alternate if the menu also includes an additional meat or meat alternate such as tofu, cheese, or meat. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, *Crediting Legumes in the Summer Food Service Program*.

These are the only two unrecognizable foods that may credit toward the MMA component. All other MMA must be recognizable.

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Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Examples of MMA that may cause choking 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 age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of meat/meat alternate foods to offer in SFSP menus and modify foods and menus as appropriate. 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, 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

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 Deli Meats in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Deli_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 Legumes in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

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

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

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

Crediting Smoothies in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

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

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Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Tofu_SFSP.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 the SFSP (“How To” Section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/How-To#MealPatterns>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents#MMA>

Nutrition Guide: Summer Food Service Program (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/USDA_SFSP_NutritionGuide.pdf

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf

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 Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

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

Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the SFSP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

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

Reviewer’s Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/cnl_tipsheet-processedproduct.pdf

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

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

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

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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:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-tofu-and-soy-yogurt-products-school-meal-programs-and-cacfp>

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/school-meals/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:

<http://https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-tempeh-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/school-meals/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Webinar: Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/additional-meat-meat-alternate-tempeh-and-surimi>

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>

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 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/CreditingSFSP/Credit_MMA_SFSP.pdf

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