

Crediting Grain-based Desserts 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.



Contents

Crediting Grain-based Desserts	2
Examples of grain-based desserts	2
Recommended limit for creditable grain-based desserts	2
Table 1. Creditable grain-based desserts in the SFSP	3
Foods That Are Not Grain-based Desserts	4
Animal Crackers and Graham Crackers	4
Identifying Grain-based Desserts	4
Crediting Documentation for Commercial Grain-based Desserts	5
Storing crediting documentation	5
Resources	6



Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program

Crediting Grain-based Desserts

Certain types of creditable grain-based desserts are allowed at breakfast and snack in the SFSP. However, grain-based desserts do not credit at lunch or supper.

Grain-based desserts must contain creditable grains (whole grain, enriched grains, bran, and germ) to count toward the grains/breads component of the SFSP meal patterns. For guidance on crediting 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](#). Training on the crediting requirements for the grains/breads component is available in the CSDE's Summer Meals annual training module, [Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns: Part 4: Grains/Breads Component](#).

Examples of grain-based desserts

Some examples of grain-based desserts include brownies, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, coffee cakes, cinnamon streusel quick breads, piecrusts in sweet pies (e.g., apple, coconut, blueberry, and pecan), cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, breakfast bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, sweet scones (e.g., blueberry, orange cranberry, and chocolate chip), sweet croissants (e.g., chocolate or almond filled), sweet rice puddings (e.g., cinnamon and vanilla), sweet bread puddings (e.g., made with cinnamon, fruits, chocolate, or icing), and sweet pita chips (e.g., cinnamon sugar). [Table 1](#) summarizes the allowable types of grain-based desserts at breakfast and snack.

Recommended limit for creditable grain-based desserts

Grain-based desserts often contain more fat and added sugars than traditional grains. For more nutritious menus, the CSDE recommends limiting grain-based desserts (including sweet crackers like animal crackers and graham crackers) to no more than twice per week. For example, if the weekly SFSP menu includes cookies at Monday's snack and granola bars at Thursday's breakfast, other grain-based desserts should not be served that week.



Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program

Table 1. Creditable grain-based desserts in the SFSP

Food item	Breakfast	Snack
Animal crackers	Yes	Yes
Breakfast bars, plain or with nuts, dried fruit, chocolate pieces, fruit purees, filling, and frosting	Yes	Yes
Brownies, frosted	No	No
Brownies, plain	No	Yes
Cakes and cupcakes, plain or frosted	No	Yes
Cereal bars and grain-fruit bars	Yes	Yes
Cobbler/crisp topping in fruit cobblers and crisps	No	Yes
Coffee cakes, including cinnamon streusel quick breads	Yes	Yes
Cookies and bars, plain, frosted, or filled	No	Yes
Doughnuts, plain, frosted, or glazed	Yes	Yes
Graham crackers	Yes	Yes
Granola bars, all types	Yes	Yes
Marshmallow cereal treats	No	Yes
Pastries, plain or frosted, e.g., cinnamon rolls, sweet rolls, toaster pastries, fruit turnovers, sweet croissants (e.g., chocolate or almond filled), sweet scones (e.g., with fruit or chocolate)	Yes	Yes
Piecrust in dessert pies, e.g., fruit, chocolate, pecan	No	Yes
Sweet pita chips, e.g., cinnamon sugar	No	Yes

Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program

Foods That Are Not Grain-based Desserts

Grain-based desserts do not include quick breads such as banana bread and zucchini bread (except for cinnamon streusel), cornbread, pancakes, waffles, French toast, savory scones (e.g., cheese and herb), and piecrusts in entrees (e.g., quiche, meat pies, and chicken potpie). These foods may be served as the grains/breads component at any meal or snack.

Animal Crackers and Graham Crackers

Sweet crackers (like graham crackers and animal crackers) are not included in the restrictions for grain-based desserts. They 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. The CSDE recommends limiting all grain-based desserts (including sweet crackers) to no more than twice per week (refer to [“Recommended limit for creditable grain-based desserts”](#) in this document).

Identifying Grain-based Desserts

The CSDE’s resource, [Servings for Grains/Breads in the Summer Food Service Program](#), identifies creditable grain-based desserts in red (allowed only at snack) or blue (allowed at breakfast and snack). The USDA does not define a specific amount of sugar or fat that classifies a grain food as a dessert. If a product is not listed on the CSDE’s grains/breads serving chart, SFSP sponsors may decide if a food is a grain-based dessert by considering the common perceptions of the food and how it’s typically served. The questions below help SFSP sponsors determine if the product is a grain-based dessert.

- Is the food thought of or served as a dessert?
- Is it frosted, iced, or dessert-flavored, like chocolate, caramel, or butterscotch?
- Does it contain custard filling or candy?
- Is it in the shape of a cookie or packaged like a dessert?

SFSP sponsors should not rely on the product’s name to determine if a food is grain-based dessert because cookies and similar grain-based desserts do not have a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) standard of identity. This means that manufacturers may use terms in their product names or labels that might be misleading. Some examples include “breakfast rounds” for oatmeal raisin cookies, “breakfast bars” for cereal bars, and “super stars” for doughnut holes. Regardless of the name on the label, these types of foods are still grain-based desserts.

Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program

Crediting Documentation for Commercial Grain-based Desserts

SFSP sponsors must be able to document that commercial grain-based desserts meet the crediting requirements of the SFSP meal patterns. A PFS from the manufacturer is required if the product's ingredients statement and packaging do not provide sufficient information to determine if it meets the crediting criteria for the grains/breads component.

This documentation must be obtained and verified for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the grain product in reimbursable meals and snacks. Guidance on when a PFS is required for grain products, the information it must include, and the steps for evaluating its accuracy are provided in the CSDE's resource, [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

If the manufacturer will not supply a PFS or the PFS does not provide the appropriate documentation, the grain-based dessert cannot credit 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 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](#) and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). Training on the documentation requirements is available in the CSDE's Summer Meals annual training module, [Crediting Documentation for Summer Meals](#).

Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. 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*.

Storing crediting documentation

SFSP sponsors must maintain all crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the SFSP (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Records Retention](#)

Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program

[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.

Resources

[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>

[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

[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>

[Recipe Analysis Workbook \(RAW\) for Standardized Recipes](#) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-interactive-web-based-tool>

[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/creditingfsp/servings_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf

Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the Summer Food Service Program

[Standardized Recipes](#) (CSDE’s Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/standardized-recipes>

[Summer Meals Annual Training Module: Crediting Foods in the SFSP Meal Patterns Part 4: Grains/Breads Component](#) (“Annual Training” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage)

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training#CreditingFoods>

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

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/tips-evaluating-pfs>

[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>

[Using Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program](#) (CSDE):

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

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/creditingfsfp/credit_grain_based_desserts_sfsp.pdf.



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