

Crediting Nuts and Seeds 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 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 Crediting Requirements

Nuts and seeds and their butters credit as meat alternates toward the meat/meat alternates (MMA) component in the SFSP meal patterns. Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, soy nuts, and sunflower seeds. Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts, which credit as meat alternates. However, fresh soybeans (edamame) credit as the vegetables/fruits component.

The SFSP meal patterns indicate the quantities for the MMA component in ounces. Two tablespoons of nut/seed butters and 1 ounce of nuts/seeds credit as 1 ounce of MMA.

Breakfast

The SFSP breakfast meal pattern does not require the MMA component. SFSP sponsors may choose to offer foods from the MMA component including nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters.

Lunch and supper

The SFSP meal patterns require 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates (MMA) component at lunch and supper. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of this requirement; they must be combined with another MMA to provide the full serving. For example, a lunch or supper cannot contain more than 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, and must also include 1 ounce of another MMA, e.g., $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt, 1 ounce of lean meat or cheese, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cottage cheese, or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked dried beans and peas legumes. This requirement does not apply to nut/seed butters.



Snack

The SFSP snack meal pattern requires two of the four snack components (meat/meat alternates, grains, vegetables/fruits, and milk). A 1-ounce serving of the MMA component may be served as one of the two required snack components. Menu planners may credit nuts and seeds and their butters as the full 1-ounce serving of MMA at snack.

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Crediting Nut and Seed Butters

Examples of creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter must meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for peanut butter ([21 CFR 164.150](#)), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Table 1 shows the MMA contribution of different serving sizes of nut and seed butters. The serving for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component. This crediting is the same for all types of nut and seed butters, e.g., smooth, crunchy, and natural.

The required volume measure (tablespoons) for nut and seed butters is not the same as weight (ounces). For example, a 1-ounce serving of peanut butter does not provide 1 ounce of the MMA component. Nut and seed butters that are portioned by weight instead of volume must use the appropriate weight conversion in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG). The FBG indicates that 1.1 ounces of a nut or seed butter credits as 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of the MMA component.

Table 1. Serving size for nut and seed butters

Meal pattern serving of meat/meat alternates	Tablespoons ¹	Scoop (disher) size ²	Weight equivalent ³
¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)	½	Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)	0.275 ounces
½ ounce	1	Closest is No. 60 (¾ teaspoons)	0.55 ounces
¾ ounce	1½	Closest is No. 40 (1⅓ tablespoons)	0.825 ounces
1 ounce	2	No. 30 (2 tablespoons)	1.1 ounces
1½ ounces	3	Closest is No. 20 (3⅓ tablespoons)	1.65 ounces
2 ounces	4	No. 16 (¼ cup)	1.2 ounces

¹ One tablespoon equals 3 teaspoons.

² Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster](#).

³ Weight equivalents are from the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

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Serving Size Considerations for Nut/Seed Butters

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the required serving. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich. For example, the SFSP lunch and supper meal pattern requires 4 tablespoons of peanut butter to credit as 2 ounces of the MMA component. This is a large amount for two slices of bread.



The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing with another MMA to provide the full serving. For example, a lunch or supper menu could provide 2 ounces of the MMA component from a sandwich containing 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce of meat alternate) served with 1 ounce of another meat or meat alternate, such as ½ cup of yogurt. Another option is providing the required 4 tablespoons of peanut butter in three half-sandwiches that each contain 4 teaspoons of peanut butter.

Crediting Nuts, Seeds, and Nut/Seed Butters in Commercial Products

Nuts and seeds and their butters that are ingredients in commercial products must be visible and easily recognizable as meat substitutes to credit toward the SFSP meal patterns. Commercial products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes cannot credit as the MMA component. Some examples include peanut butter blended into other foods (such as muffins or smoothies), peanut butter granola bars, and chopped nuts in muffins.

The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that SFSP sponsors offer foods from the MMA component in a form that is recognizable to children. The USDA emphasizes the importance of the nutrition education aspect of the school nutrition programs, which includes the goal of helping children easily recognize the key food groups that contribute to a healthy meal.

Noncreditable Nuts and Seeds

Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit as the MMA component.

Crediting Ingredients in Commercial Products

Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters that are ingredients in commercial products must be visible and easily recognizable as meat substitutes to credit toward the SFSP meal patterns. Commercial products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes cannot credit as the MMA component. Some examples include peanut butter blended into other foods (such as muffins or smoothies) and chopped nuts in muffins.

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Required Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products

Commercial processed products that contain nuts and seeds or their butters (such as pre-made peanut butter sandwiches, or a trail mix with nuts and dried fruit) require documentation stating the amount of the MMA component per serving. Acceptable documentation for commercial processed products includes:

- 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 (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#)); or
- a product formulation statement (PFS) signed by an official of the manufacturer stating the amount of the MMA component contained in one serving of the product.



For example, to credit a commercial pre-made peanut butter sandwich product as 1 ounce of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2 tablespoons of peanut butter.

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

SFSP sponsors must obtain a PFS for all commercial processed products that are not CN labeled. Crediting documentation must be maintained 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](#).

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Additional guidance on documentation for commercial products is available in the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)” section of the CSDE’s SFSP webpage.

Training on the requirements for PFS forms and how to evaluate a PFS 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](#)*.

Considerations For Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Nuts, seeds, chunky peanut butter, and chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters are choking hazards. Consider children’s age and developmental readiness when deciding how to offer nuts, seeds, and their butters in SFSP menus and modify foods and menus as appropriate. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include grinding or finely chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds before adding to prepared foods, and using only creamy nut or seed butters and spreading them 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/creditingfsp/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 Foods in the SFSP (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/documents>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Standard of Identity for Peanut Butter (21 CFR 164.150):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-164/subpart-B/section-164.150>

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>

Menu Planning for the SFSP (CSDE’s SFSP webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program#MenuPlanning>

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Summer Food Service Program

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

Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents#MMA>

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

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for
Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):
https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Standardized Recipe Form for the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/standardized_recipe_form_sfsp.docx

Standardized Recipes ("Documents/Forms" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/documents#StandardizedRecipes>

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/creditingfsfp/cn_labels_sfsp.pdf

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

What's in a Meal Module 8: Meat/Meat Alternates Component (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/creditingnutsseeds/sfsp/credit_nuts_seeds_sfsp.pdf.

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3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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