

The School Lunch Tray: January 17, 2024

Dear School Sponsors of Child Nutrition Programs:

The School Lunch Tray contains the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) weekly email notifications for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs. This week's topics are listed below.

Action Items

- Reminder for *Selected* NSLP School Food Authorities (SFAs): Complete USDA School Meals Operations (SMO) Study by January 19, 2024

Need to Know

- Next Table Talk: Thursday, January 25, 2024
- List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages: Updated January 17, 2024
- Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Reporting Requirements: Report of December 2023 Purchases due January 24, 2024
- Resource Roundup: Meal Counting and Claiming Process for Connecticut School Nutrition Programs

Good to Know

- Safe Meals, Healthy Kids: Food Safety Tips for Safe Summer Meals Webinar: January 31, 2024
- Food Solutions New England (FSNE) 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. For previous versions of the School Lunch Tray, visit the CSDE's [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage.



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Action Items

Reminder for *Selected* NSLP School Food Authorities (SFAs): Complete USDA School Meals Operations (SMO) Study by January 19, 2024

Mathematica is conducting the School Meals Operations (SMO) Study on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. The fourth SMO collection (SMO IV), which concluded earlier this month, also includes a survey of a nationally representative sample of school food authorities (SFAs). The deadline for the SFA survey was January 10, 2023, and many SFAs have not yet completed their survey. **Please complete the survey as soon as possible.**

Representatives from Mathematica emailed SFAs a link to the SMO IV web survey on January 11, 2024. Use the link in that email or contact Mathematica by calling 1-833-440-9475 or emailing SMOStudy@mathematica-mpr.com to retrieve their login information to complete the 30-minute survey.

Participation in this important study is required for all selected SFAs. Cooperation by states and districts is required under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) (PL 116-127) and Section 28 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

For questions, please call 1-833-440-9475 or email SMOStudy@mathematica-mpr.com.

Need to Know

Next Table Talk: Thursday, January 25, 2024

Join the CSDE's school nutrition programs staff on Thursday, January 25, 2024, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. for this week's Table Talk. To submit questions in advance, visit <https://forms.office.com/g/GWS7DCbbgo>.

Registration is not required. Please use the link below to join Table Talk on Microsoft Teams.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

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Meeting ID: 225 336 668 44

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List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages: Updated January 17, 2024

Updated lists of foods and beverages (dated January 17, 2024) are now available on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. New products on the lists are indicated by pink highlighting on the manufacturer and product name.

Items that have been **added or deleted** since the last update are listed on the CSDE's document, [Summary of Updates to Approved Food and Beverages](#). Please carefully review this summary document. **Note:** The January 17, 2024, update is the most extensive in many years because all listed foods and beverages were reviewed. Many products have been removed from the list due to the following reasons:

- the company is no longer in business;
- the manufacturer discontinued the product;
- the manufacturer reformulated the product and it no longer complies with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS); and
- the CSDE could not verify current the product's current nutrition information or if it is still available through Connecticut vendors because the company did not respond to requests for information.

In addition, note that some products are now listed under different manufacturers because the previous company sold their brand to another company.

The review of the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) is still ongoing and additional updates will be made. Schools will be notified when these updates are posted.

Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Reporting Requirements: Report of December 2023 Purchases due January 24, 2024

Districts that would like to receive reimbursement from their LFSIP funds allocation for purchases of locally grown or produced foods for the month of December 2023 must submit the [Monthly Local Foods for Schools Incentive Program \(LFSIP\) Reporting Form - Phase 1](#). Purchases made in December 2023 should be reported on the form by Wednesday, January 24, 2024.

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Resource Roundup: Meal Counting and Claiming Process for Connecticut School Nutrition Programs

To obtain USDA reimbursement for school meals, local educational agencies (LEAs) must accurately count, record, and claim the number of meals served to students by eligibility category (free, reduced price, and paid). Additionally, the number of free and reduced-price meals served and claimed for reimbursement must have adequate documentation on file to support the claim. The CSDE's [Overview of Meal Counting and Claiming Process for Connecticut School Nutrition Programs](#) summarizes the CSDE's requirements for the meal counting and claiming process and assists LEAs with meeting the USDA regulations for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Special Milk Program (SMP).

Good to Know

Safe Meals, Healthy Kids: Food Safety Tips for Safe Summer Meals Webinar: January 31, 2024

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Supplemental Nutrition and Safety Programs (SNAS) Food Safety and Nutrition Division, Food Safety Branch, will host a national webinar for summer meal providers titled **Safe Meals, Healthy Kids: Food Safety Tips for Safe Summer Meals** in partnership with the CN Community Meals Policy Division. The webinar will be held on **January 31, 2024, from 3:00pm – 4:30pm ET**, and will include a food safety presentation, as well as some refreshers on the SFSP meal pattern, share tables, and other policy topics that relate to food safety such as non-congregate meal service. There will also be a sharing session and a Q&A session. Food safety topics will include employee health and hygiene, alternative meal service and distribution, best practices for transporting and holding foods, and more. Information in this webinar is intended for summer meal providers, and others who may provide food safety training or technical assistance for summer meal operations.

- [Link to join webinar](#)

Food Solutions New England (FSNE) 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge

Food Solutions New England will host its 10th annual 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge from April 1, 2024, to April 21, 2024. Each year, thousands of individuals and hundreds of officially participating organizations join in a shared journey of learning and charting a course of action to dismantle racism in our food system and our world. The 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge is simple. Participants commit to deepening their understanding of, and willingness to confront, racism for 21 consecutive days in April of each year. To learn more and register, visit [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge - Food Solutions New England](#).



For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs 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/SLT/2024/SLT_01_17_2024.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
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

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