

The School Lunch Tray: November 3, 2021

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.

- USDA Foods Shelf Life Reminder on Mozzarella String Cheese
- Making Last-Minute Substitutions to your School Meal Menu
- CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program
- Updating Grains Ounce Equivalents Crediting in USDA's Child Nutrition Program Meal Pattern Tables
- Professional Standards Training Reward Badges
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Issues Final Guidance for Voluntary Sodium Reduction Targets
- Resource Roundup: Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. Thank you.



USDA Foods Shelf Life Reminder on Mozzarella String Cheese

USDA Foods Material Code 110396, Mozzarella String Cheese, is a perishable refrigerated item. As a reminder, this product has a 90-day shelf life from the pack date. If you have string cheese at HPC, please note that the current pack dates are 9/25 and 9/27, so the best use by date is December 25 and 27, 2021. Please plan on taking delivery of all inventory before then to either use or freeze for future use.

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Making Last-Minute Substitutions to your School Meal Menu

The USDA understands that many schools are experiencing supply chain issues during school year 2021-22. Some schools have received little notice that ordered food products will not be provided as planned. As a result, these schools have had to find other products to serve on the school meal menu. The USDA's [Making Last-Minute Substitutions to your School Meal Menu](#) provides information on the variety of ways that schools can document how these substituted foods can meet the meal pattern requirements. This information is part of Team Nutrition's electronic bulletin, *School Meals Grab 'n Go: Tips to improve your meal service*.

CT Grown for CT Kids Grant Program

On October 26, 2021, the Resources and Funding Workgroup of the Farm to School Collaborative [announced the launch](#) of the Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Grant Program. This competitive grant process is administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) for Connecticut Schools and their partners to implement and advance Farm to School Activities. This grant is open through **December 20, 2021**, at 4:00 p.m.

Please visit DoAg's [CT Grown for CT Kids](#) webpage for details. This page can also be found by visiting <https://ctgrown.org/> or the DoAg's homepage at <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG>. You can visit [CT Grown for CT Kids](#) to register to attend an informational webinar on November 9, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. The recorded webinar will be posted when available.

Updating Grains Ounce Equivalents Crediting in USDA's Child Nutrition Program Meal Pattern Tables

The USDA published a technical correction in the Federal Register to amend Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) regulations: [Federal Register: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010; Technical Amendments](#). This correction amends meal pattern tables and associated text to reflect that grains served in CACFP meals are credited in ounce equivalents effective October 1, 2021. The technical corrections were also made to 7 CFR 210.10, 7 CFR 220.8, and 7 CFR 226.20. **Note:** Preschool meals served in the NSLP and SBP follow the CACFP meal pattern requirements.

The USDA has published a variety of online resources to help program operators credit grains as ounce equivalents. These resources are available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grains-ounce-equivalents-resources-cacfp>. For additional guidance on implementing grain ounce equivalents in preschool menus, refer to the "[Ounce Equivalents](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Professional Standards Training Reward Badges

The USDA's [Professional Standards Training Reward Badges](#) are a fun way to promote training and recognize staff who have completed training. School nutrition professionals can earn badges by completing training in any of the key areas: Nutrition, Operations, Administration, or Communications/Marketing. Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum badges can also be earned by completing training in more than one key area. Sticker pages of the training reward badges will also be included with the printed version of the [Guide to Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs](#) which will be available later this fall.

Team Nutrition's webinar, "[Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool \(PSTTT\)](#)," provides information about the PSTTT. For additional information and access to other resources, visit Team Nutrition's [Professional Standards: Resources](#) webpage.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Issues Final Guidance for Voluntary Sodium Reduction Targets

On October 13, 2021, the FDA issued final guidance to set voluntary sodium reduction targets for the producers of foods Americans eat every day. This is a significant step in creating a healthier food supply to help reverse the trend of diet-related chronic diseases and the disproportionate burden experienced by racial and ethnic minority groups.

The FDA's guidance, "[Voluntary Sodium Reduction Goals: Target Mean and Upper Bound Concentrations for Sodium in Commercially Processed, Packaged, and Prepared Foods](#)," provides voluntary, short-term sodium reduction targets for food manufacturers, restaurants, and food service operators for approximately 160 categories of processed, packaged and prepared foods. The targets seek to decrease average sodium intake from approximately 3,400 milligrams (mg) to 3,000 mg per day—about a 12% reduction—over the next 2.5 years.

The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) recently released a [Dietary Guidelines for Americans fact sheet on sodium](#) to advise consumers on strategies to lower their sodium intake. However, because about 70% of the sodium we eat comes from packaged, processed, and restaurant foods not prepared by consumers, sodium reduction still presents a significant challenge. The FDA's plan recognizes that successful sodium reduction needs to take place broadly across the overall food supply, making default choices healthier and helping consumers make changes with much less effort. While the new FDA guidance for producers will still be above the [Dietary Guidelines](#) recommended limit of 2,300 mg per day for those 14 and older, these modest reductions—made slowly over the next few years—will substantially decrease risk for hypertension, heart disease, and stroke and make for a healthier, more resilient population overall. In the future, the FDA plans to issue revised, subsequent targets to lower the sodium content incrementally to further help reduce sodium intake.

Resource Roundup: Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

The CSDE's resources below provide guidance to help menu planners meet the NSLP and SBP meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 (including the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP) and encourage student selections of reimbursable meals with offer versus serve (OVS).

- [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the NSLP](#)
- [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the SBP](#)

These documents are available in the "[Menu Planning for School Meals](#)" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [School Lunch Tray Table Talk](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Training/TableTalk/SLT_11_03_2021.pdf.

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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