

Menu Planning and Meal Pattern Requirements

Note: USDA finalized the [Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium](#), which take effect July 1, 2022. These standards are intended to be temporary and in effect for only two school years (SY 2022-23 & SY 2023-24) in order to provide immediate relief to schools during the return to traditional school meal service following extended use of COVID-19 meal pattern flexibilities. The meal pattern requirements outlined in this chapter for milk, whole grains, and sodium are updated to reflect changes for SY 2022-23 under the *Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium*. This chapter will be updated to reflect changes for SY 2023-24 accordingly.

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Additional Resources

- [USDA Memo SP 05-2022](#) Meal Requirements Under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Questions and Answers for Program Operators
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service’s [Menu Planner for School Meals](#)
- See also: *Index of Resources* at the end of this chapter

Introduction

School Food Authorities (SFA) must offer nutritious, well-balanced, and age-appropriate meals to all children they serve to improve their diets and safeguard their health. Federal regulations outlined in 7 CFR 210.10 and 7 CFR 220.8 set forth meal requirements for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), respectively. SFAs must follow a food-based menu planning approach in which meals are provided that meet the required meal components in the specified quantities for each age/grade group served. Meals must also meet dietary specifications for calories, sodium, and saturated fat. In addition, SFAs must keep production and menu records for the meals they produce. This section details menu planning, recordkeeping, and meal pattern requirements.

Menu Recordkeeping

SFAs must maintain records to demonstrate compliance with each program's nutrition requirements, including menu and production records for the meals produced. The following sections detail the various documentation requirements.

Menu

The menu is the core of the meal program and must list all food items offered to students as part of a reimbursable meal. When planning the menu, the menu planner should consider the foods available (including commodities), standardized recipes available, and the food service budget. The following checklist can assist SFAs with menu planning.

Menu Planning Checklist

- Schedule a time to plan and collect menu resources
- Consider previous menus and current meal pattern requirements
- Determine number of days to be planned
- Focus on grade group(s) to be served
- Decide on the number of choices to be offered
- Select the entrée for each day being planned
- Select the other required meal components, keeping in mind the NSLP requirement to plan a variety of vegetables throughout the week
- Ensure at least 2 milk choices are offered

- Make sure the daily and weekly minimum serving sizes are met for each component
- Evaluate success of current and past menus, and make notes for future menus
- Consider marketing ideas, menu themes, school events, and seasonal items
- Plan for *Cook's Choice* days to use up excess quantities of food prior to long school breaks or vacations

Cycle Menu

A cycle menu that follows meal pattern requirements is highly encouraged. Menu planners can decide on the length of the cycle to be used, which may be a set number of days or weeks. The benefits of using cycle menus includes:

- Reducing labor/time involved in planning menus
- Limiting plate waste through use of tried and tested meals
- Reducing food costs by allowing more foods to be ordered in bulk
- Reducing ordering/purchasing time due to repeated use of foods/meals
- Increasing participation through planning of the most popular meals

Sample Cycle Menu

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Hamburger on a Bun Fresh Apple Slices Tater Tots 2 Pkts Ketchup Vegetarian Baked Beans Milk*	Sweet Sesame Chicken Stir Fry with Asian Brown Rice Apricots California Casserole Fortune Cookie Milk	Cheese & Pepperoni Breadsticks with Marinara Sauce Pears Spinach Strawberry Salad Milk	Walking Taco Peaches in Gelatin Cowboy Corn Salad Tortilla Scoop, 1 oz Milk	Chicken Nuggets 1 oz BBQ Sauce Pineapple Sweet Potato Fries Green Beans & Carrots Whole-Grain Roll Milk
Week 2	Grilled Chicken Sandwich 1 Tbsp Low-Fat Mayo Pears Baked Beans Milk	Hatton Chicken Crunch with Brown Rice Peach Cup Milk	Rotini & Meat Sauce Parmesan Cheese, 1 Tbsp Apricot Cup Tossed Side Salad 2 Tbsp Reduced-Fat Ranch Dressing Milk	Beef & Refried Bean Burrito with Salsa Fresh Tangerine Corn Milk	Grilled Cheese Sandwich Fresh Grapes Waffle Fries 1 Pkt Ketchup Carrots Milk
Week 3	Mac & Cheese Fruit Salad Baby Carrots with Hummus Green Beans Milk	Chicken Broccoli Bowl Applesauce Cup California Blend Milk	Cheese & Pepperoni Pizza Pears in Cherry Jell-O Tossed Side Salad 2 Tbsp Reduced-Fat Ranch Dressing Milk	Quirky Quesadillas Fresh Orange Wedges Mexicali Corn Milk	Hamburger on a Bun Peaches Sweet Potato Puffs 2 Pkts Ketchup Milk
Week 4	BBQ Chicken Sandwich Pink Grapefruit Lemon Broccoli Potato Wedges 2 Pkts Ketchup Milk	Teriyaki Chicken with Brown Rice Fresh Apple Slices Veggies & Hummus Whole-Grain Cookie Milk	Mini Meatball Sub with Marinara Sauce Fresh Banana Bean & Corn Salad Milk	Taco Salad 2 Tbsp Reduced-Fat Ranch Dressing Mandarin Oranges Whole-Grain Tortilla Chips with Salsa Milk	Turkey & Gravy Strawberry Cup Mashed Potatoes Green Beans Whole-Grain Roll 1 Pat Butter Milk
Week 5	Sock-Rockin' Chili Applesauce Fresh Cucumber & Tomato Dip Whole-Grain Roll 1 Pat Butter Milk	Sweet & Sour Chicken Nuggets with Brown Rice Fresh Red Grapes Carrots Corn Milk	Chicken Alfredo with a Twist Pears in Cherry Jell-O Garlic Broccoli Milk	Mexican Pizza Peach Cup Tossed Side Salad 2 Tbsp Reduced-Fat Ranch Dressing Milk	Turkey & Ham Deli Sub 1 Tbsp Low-Fat Mayo Fresh Banana Baby Carrots with Hummus Milk

*Selections include a choice of 1-cup serving of Low-Fat (unflavored) or Fat-Free (unflavored or flavored) milk.

Menu Posting Requirement

Schools are required to post a menu(s) near the beginning of the meal service line(s) so students know what foods are offered or can be chosen as part of a reimbursable meal. Menus **do not** need to include foods served only as an à la carte option.

This menu requirement can be satisfied in the form of a written daily or weekly menu, through use of a sample/display tray, or by using menu posters. Visit ISBE's [Menu Board & Signage Resources webpage](#) for printable tools.

The image displays two menu posting templates. The first is a monthly calendar for May 2018, with a header for "[Enter school name]" and a sub-header for "[Breakfast or Lunch and Other Additional Menu Details Here]". The calendar is organized by days of the week (Monday through Friday) and includes a "FUN FACT" section for special announcements, fun facts, menu notes, and additional information or notices. The second template is titled "THIS WEEK FOR BREAKFAST" and also includes a header for "[Enter school name]". It features sections for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, each with a "[Enter]" prompt for menu details. A "SPECIAL NOTICE" section is provided for announcements, nutrition education, special events, and à la carte items.

Daily Production Records

A daily production record is required for **all meal services** and must contain the following:

- Food components (e.g. grains, meat/meat alternates, fruits, vegetables, and milk) and condiments
- Recipe (noting if a [USDA standardized recipe](#) is used) or food product used. USDA commodity items should be identified with a "C," and a USDA processed commodity, should be identified with a "PC"
- Planned/projected number of student portions and serving sizes for each grade group (e.g. K-5, 6-8, 9-12)
- Planned/projected number of portions and serving sizes for adults
- Total amount of food prepared (e.g. number of servings, pounds, cans, etc.)
- Number of reimbursable meals served (indicated for each grade group)
- Actual number of non-reimbursable meals served (such as to adults or à la carte sales)
- Leftovers and substitutions

Production records may vary in format, but they must accomplish the following:

- Providing staff information regarding foods, recipes, and portion sizes of servings
- Recording actual foods, recipes, and portion sizes served as well as leftovers

Production records must contain all of the required information outlined above. To ensure compliance with federal regulations, the following *Sample Format Production Record* may be used by SFAs by copying the following page or downloading the form from ISBE's [Nutrition & Professional Standards webpage](#).

Completing the Sample Production Record

1. Site: Name of the site (school) where the menu is served and/or prepared.
2. Meal Date: Record the date the menu is served and/or prepared.
3. Menu: List the food items that make the meal reimbursable.
4. Food Item and Form Used: The same food items listed on the menu in number three should be described in more detail. For example, peaches would be listed as *sliced in light syrup*; chicken nuggets would be listed as *breaded and baked*. Listing food item and form information is the first step in effectively communicating the menu to the staff. Listing all food items offered, including condiments, is important for future monitoring by the state agency.
5. Recipe or Product (name or number): This accurately identifies a specific recipe or food item to be used. It is critical to specify exact recipes and products. If the preparer or server uses a different recipe or product than indicated by the menu planner, the food provided to students may not necessarily meet the nutrient standard or meal requirements as planned.

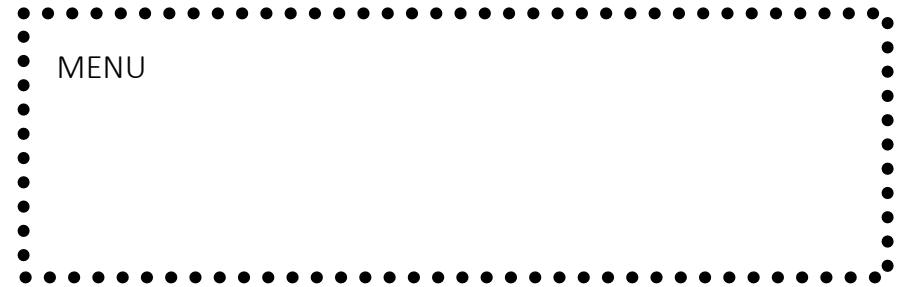
Recipe refers to USDA recipes or locally developed recipes. For example, cherry cobbler could be recorded as USDA C-6. Locally developed recipes can be referred to with a number code or by recipe name. The product name and number refer to processed foods. This number would be obtained from the manufacturer such as Prairie Product #1245. A product information sheet should be on file containing the nutrition information of the product. Generic items such as milk, peaches, and pickles do not require a product number because these types of items are available in the USDA-approved software database.
6. Grade Group: List the grade group(s) of the students for which the menu is planned. Grade groupings for lunch are K-5, 6-8, K-8, and 9-12.
7. Portion Size (number, weight, quantity): This information is important to ensure the correct portion size is served as well as planned and prepared. Without this guide on the production sheet, the server may have no way of knowing the correct portion size for the grade group.
8. Student Projected Servings: Projects the number of servings to prepare for student reimbursable meals.
9. Total Projected Servings: This figure includes projected reimbursable student meals, adult meals, and à la carte sales of the food item. The menu planner must also forecast the approximate number of servings needed of each menu item. Projecting the number of servings is the first step in determining how much food to order, how much time to allot for preparation, and which equipment to use.

In menus that offer several different selections with Offer Versus Serve (OVS), it will not be necessary to plan and prepare portions of each menu item for each person. Past production records (that must be kept on file) can help accurately forecast future production and menu planning figures for the required USDA menu planning approach.
10. Amount of Food Used (weight or quantity): Site staff must keep records to verify the planned menu was actually prepared and served. Staff should record this information in a way that is appropriate for the food item: Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates should be in ounces (weight measure); Fruits and Vegetables in cup (volume measure); and Milk in ounce or cup measure.
11. Student Servings: Record the actual number of students served.
12. À La Carte Servings: Record the actual amount of the food item that was sold à la carte.
13. Adult Servings: Record the number of adult meals actually served.
14. Leftovers: Once the meal is served, site staff should record leftovers on the production records. Estimate the quantity/portions or number of servings left over from the recipes. This will assist with any revisions when the menu is served in the future.

Sample Format Production Record

Site: Abraham Lincoln Elementary School
Meal Date: January 29, 2018

Total Projected Reimbursable Lunches 175



Food Item and Form Used	Recipe or Product (Name and Number)	Grade Group	Portion Size* (Number/Weight/Quantity)	Student Projected Servings	Total Projected Servings	Amount of Food Used** (Weight or Quantity)	Student Servings	A la Carte Servings	Adult Servings	Leftovers
							Actual			
<i>Meat/Meat Alternate</i> Chicken Nuggets	PC (List ICS Bulletin number if available)	K-5	4 Each (1.75 oz)	115	130	14 lbs	108		15	1 lb
<i>Vegetable</i> Broccoli & Cauliflower Mix	38	K-5	¾ c	75	115	40 c	69		10	5.5 c
<i>Fruit</i> Orange Slices		K-5	½ c	95	120	48 c	89		13	3.5 c
<i>Grains/Breads</i> Whole-Wheat Roll	Honey Breads	K-5	1 ea	150	175	175 rolls	138		20	17
<i>Other</i> BBQ Sauce	Big Z	K-5	Portion pack/ 1 ea	115	150	150	129		20	1
Low-Fat Ranch Dressing	H.V.		Portion pack/ 1 ea	100	120	120	93		16	11
<i>Milk</i> : Variety		K-5	1 c	145	170	170	110	23	5	7

NOTE: All foods, including condiments and milk, must be included daily.
*Portion size: Must be same as planned. Use separate line if adjusted for age.
**Amount of food used: Based on USDA Food Buying Guide or USDA recipe.

Processed Product Information and Nutrient Fact Information

Nutrition Facts Labels

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size ½ cup (114g) Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 30
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 13g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g	12%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 80%	Vitamin C 60%
Calcium 4%	Iron 4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
Calories: 2,000 2,500	
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram: Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

In order to analyze the nutrient content of a menu, specific nutrient information is required. This information may come in the form of a Nutrition Facts label or a manufacturer's nutrient information sheet. A Nutrition Facts label may be found on the box, can, or package of the food item. Nutrition information is recommended for items received as government-donated commodities. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently required changes to Nutrition Facts labels, including updates to the Daily Values, and declaring the amount of added sugar, vitamin D, and potassium. For more information on Nutrition Facts labels, visit FDA's [What's New with the Nutrition Facts Label](#).

Note: Nutrition Facts labels do not always include the name of the food item or product. If this is the case, the name of the product should be indicated somewhere on the nutrient information. Copy the entire product label including the Nutrition Facts section or write the name of the product on the Nutrition Facts section.

Child Nutrition (CN) Labels

The USDA Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program provides food manufacturers the option to include a standardized food crediting statement on their product label. Labels must be authorized by USDA Food & Nutrition Service (FNS) prior to use and manufacturers must have quality control procedures and inspection oversight that meet the FNS requirements. The Child Nutrition (CN) Label is the preferred method for verifying the crediting of menu items. In addition, it provides a warranty against audit claims when the product is used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Valid and acceptable documentation for the CN Label is:

- The original CN Label from the product carton; OR
- A photocopy of the CN Label shown attached to the original product carton; OR
- A photograph of the CN Label shown attached to the original product carton.
 - (CN Labels that are photocopied or photographed must be visible and legible.)
- When using the CN Label Verification Report the best practice is to print and maintain a copy of the page showing the CN product and information.

USDA has published a list of manufacturers that have met the Food and Nutrition Service's Quality Control Program requirements for the CN Labeling Program: [CN Label Verification Report](#) and [CN Manufacturers Report](#)

Note: CN Labels assist in crediting food items to the meal pattern, but do not include nutrient information. Please ensure all products contain nutrient information **and**, if available, a CN Label. Additional information regarding [CN Labels](#) is provided by USDA.

1 Chicken Stir-Fry Bowl

Ingredient Statement:

2 Chicken, brown rice, broccoli, red peppers, carrots, onions, water, olive oil, soy sauce, spices.

3 CN

Each 4.5 oz Chicken Stir-Fry Bowl provides 1.5 oz eq meat, 1.0 oz eq grains, XXXXXX
CN ¼ cup dark green vegetable, ¼ cup red/orange vegetable, and ⅙ cup other **CN**
 vegetable for Child Nutrition Meal Pattern Requirements. (Use of this logo
 and statement authorized by the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA XX/XX).
CN

Net Wt.: 18 pounds

4

Chicken Wok Company
 1234 Kluck Street • Poultry, PA 1235



1 Product Name

2 Ingredient Statement

3 CN Logo

4 Inspection Legend

CN Label Requirements

It is important to know, the CN Logo (the box with CN on each side that surrounds the meal pattern contribution statement) is one of the four integral parts of a label, which includes the product name, ingredient statement, and inspection legend. All four parts must be on the product carton in order for the CN label to be valid.

Components of a Child Nutrition (CN) Label

During an Administrative Review, if the original CN Label, or a valid photograph or photocopy of the original CN Label is **not** available, program operators may provide an invoice that includes the product name, AND:

- A hard copy of the CN Label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor; OR
- An electronic copy of the CN Label with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor; OR
- A hard copy of the CN Label from the CN Label Verification Report

Fact sheets and product labels provide a way for food manufacturers to communicate with program operators about how their products may contribute to the meal pattern requirements for meals served under USDA’s Child Nutrition Programs. Schools are not required to offer processed products with CN Labels; however, it is important to recognize that CN Labeled products ensure that the food provides the stated contribution toward CN meal pattern requirements.

Products purchased to be used in reimbursable meals that do not have a CN Label, should have a completed and signed Product Formulation Statement (PFS) on the manufacturers' letterhead that states how the processed product contributes to the meal pattern requirements (refer to the "Product Formulation Statement (PFS)" section below for additional guidance). If there is no Nutrition Facts panel on the processed product, nutrient information must be obtained from the manufacturer. Program operators are ultimately responsible if a menu does not fulfill meal pattern requirements, therefore, they must keep records of supporting documentation (an original CN Label from the product carton or a signed PFS) provided by the manufacturers. It is the program operator's responsibility to request and verify that the supporting documentation is accurate.

Product Formulation Statements (PFS)

An appropriate Product Formulation Statement (PFS) will provide specific information about the product and show how the credit is obtained citing [CN Program Resources and/or Regulations](#) . Consider the following guidance when reviewing a PFS:

- **Review a PFS prior to purchasing processed products.**
 - [Product Formulation Statement Evaluation Tips](#)
 - [Product Formulation Statement Samples](#)
- **Determine that creditable ingredients listed in the PFS match a description in the [Food Buying Guide \(FBG\) Calculator for Child Nutrition Programs](#).** If a PFS for a specific product claims to provide a higher credit than what is listed in the FBG, the statement must clarify all crediting ingredients, and demonstrate how the product provides that credit according to FNS regulations, guidance, or policy.
- **Verify that the amount of credit that a product contributes to the meal pattern is not greater than the serving size of the product.** For example, a 2.2 fluid ounce ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) frozen fruit pop or bar may not credit for more than 2.2 fluid ounces or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit or fruit juice.
- **Assure that the PFS proves how the claimed credit was obtained.** It is never acceptable for a manufacturer to simply state that the product provides a certain amount of credit for a Child Nutrition meal pattern.

Standardized Recipes

Standardized recipes are required for any menu item that contains 2 or more ingredients. Standardized recipes have been tried, adapted, and retried several times for use by a given food service operation. The benefits of standardized recipes include:

- Ensuring product quality
- Consistent menu planning
- Cost control
- Producing a consistent product

If a school is standardizing a recipe, or modifying an existing recipe, detailed records should be kept and the following information must be included:

- *Yield*: Include serving size and number of servings
- *All ingredients*: Provide as much information as possible for each ingredient. Include the form (e.g. fresh, frozen, or canned), packing medium (e.g. canned in juice or light syrup, frozen with added sugar, or plain), and fat content (e.g. 20 percent fat ground beef or ground pork, no more than 30 percent fat)
- *Correct measures, weights, and/or package size*
- *Preparation procedures*

Visit the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#) to access USDA standardized recipes for the School Nutrition Programs.

Meal Pattern Requirements

The nutrition standards in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) address today's nutrition concerns for students by aligning school meals with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The nutrition standards use a food-based menu planning system that helps increase the availability and intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk, as well as reduce the intake of saturated fat, sodium, and trans fat.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

The following are key points of the NSLP meal pattern. More detail is provided on each food component in the sections that follow.

- The NSLP has five food components: 1) grains, 2) meat/meat alternate, 3) fruits, 4) vegetables, and 5) milk
- Quantities of food components are determined based on age/grade groups
- The vegetable component is made up of five vegetable subgroups: 1) dark green, 2) red/orange; 3) legumes, 4) starchy, and 5) other
- 80% of grains offered throughout the week must be whole grain-rich (WGR)
- Milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) and may be unflavored or flavored
- Dietary specifications are set for calories, sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat
- Offer versus serve (OVS) is required for grades 9-12, and optional for grades K-8

Food Components

An NSLP meal has five required food components: 1) grains, 2) meat/meat alternate, 3) fruits, 4) vegetables, and 5) milk. The following sections provide more detail on each of these components.

Grade Groupings

The NSLP meal pattern establishes food quantities based on students' ages, which is commonly referred to as *grade group*. The NSLP meal pattern has 3 grade groups: Kindergarten through 5th grade (K-5), 6th through 8th grade (6-8), and 9th through 12th grade (9-12).

Additionally, school sites that overlap K-5 and 6-8 grade groups, including any or all grades in the K-8 range, have the option of implementing a meal pattern for a combined K-8 grade group. This option allows the same amount of food to be served for all K-8 students, rather than following different serving sizes for the K-5 and 6-8 grade groups.

The 9-12 grade group does not overlap the requirements with K-5 and 6-8 grade groups. Therefore, a K-12 school would not be allowed to serve the same amount of food to all students.



National School Lunch Program Meal Pattern

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food ^a per Week (minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^b	2 ½ (¼)	2 ½ (¼)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^b	3 ¾ (¾)	3 ¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark green ^c	½	½	½
Red/orange ^c	¾	¾	1 ¼
Beans and peas (legumes) ^c	½	½	½
Starchy ^c	½	½	½
Other ^{c, d}	½	½	½
Additional vegetables to reach total ^e	1	1	1 ½
Grains (oz eq) ^f	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/meat alternates (oz eq)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups) ^g	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^h	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Interim Target 1 (mg) ^h	≤ 1,230	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,420
Sodium Interim Target 1A (mg) ^{h, i}	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is ⅓ cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served.

^d This category consists of “Other vegetables” as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(E) of this section. For the purposes of the NSLP, the “Other vegetables” requirement may be met with any

additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroups as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

^e Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.

^f At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched.

^g All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be flavored or unflavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^h Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent are not allowed.

ⁱ Sodium Interim Target 1A must be met no later than July 1, 2023 (SY 2023-2024).

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Fruit Component

NSLP Fruit Component				
	K-5	6-8	Combined K-8	9-12
Daily Minimum (cups)	½	½	½	1
Weekly Total (cups)	2 ½	2 ½	2 ½	5

Types of Fruit & Crediting Information

Fruits that are fresh, frozen, dried, canned (packed in water, full-strength juice, or light syrup) and full-strength juice may contribute toward the fruit requirement. All fruits credit toward the fruit component based on their volume as served (e.g. ½ cup of grapes credits as a ½ cup toward the fruit component), except for dried fruits. Dried fruits, such as raisins, credit for twice the amount served. For example, a ¼ cup of dried apricots would credit as a ½ cup serving of fruit.

Juice credits as the amount served (e.g. ½ cup of juice contributes ½ cup toward the fruit component). However, no more than half of the required weekly cups of fruit may come from juice. For K-5, 6-8, and combined K-8 grade groups, no more than 1 ¼ cups of fruit offered weekly may be in the form of juice. For the 9-12 grade group, no more than 2 ½ cups per week may be juice. Schools may plan to serve whole fruits only, juice only, or a combination of both on the same day as long as the total juice planned for the week does not exceed half of the weekly total.

Products that Do Not Meet Requirements

The following products do not contribute to the fruit component and may not be credited toward meeting the fruit requirement in any meal served under the Child Nutrition Programs:

- Snack-type foods made from fruits such as fruit strips, fruit drops, or fried banana chips
- Jams and jellies
- Home canned products (for food safety reasons)

Vegetable Component

NSLP Vegetable Component				
	K-5	6-8	Combined K-8	9-12
Daily Minimum (cups)	¾	¾	¾	1
Weekly Total (cups)	3 ¾	3 ¾	3 ¾	5
Dark Green (cups)	½	½	½	½
Red/Orange (cups)	¾	¾	¾	1 ¼
Legumes (cups)	½	½	½	½
Starchy (cups)	½	½	½	½
Other (cups)	½	½	½	½
Additional vegetables to meet weekly total (cups)	1	1	1	1 ½

Vegetable Subgroups

The vegetable component has five subgroups that must be served each week, including: *Dark Green, Red/Orange, Legumes, Starchy, and Other*. See ISBE's [vegetable subgroups chart](#) for examples of vegetables that fall into each subgroup. Schools can choose to serve a given group on one day of the week, such as serving the weekly requirement for dark green vegetables all on Monday. Schools also have the option to serve a variety of vegetables each day, making sure to meet the minimum requirements for each subgroup through multiple smaller servings throughout the week. For example, the K-5 group must have a total of a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dark green vegetables for the week, so a school could choose to serve dark green vegetables twice a week, at a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each time to meet the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup weekly requirement. The minimum amount of any vegetable that can credit towards daily or weekly totals is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

Additional Vegetables to Meet Weekly Total

It is important to note the daily vegetable serving requirements are often greater than each of the vegetable subgroup weekly requirement. For example, the 6-8 grade group has a total weekly vegetable requirement of $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups, and a daily minimum requirement of $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. Each week the 6-8 grade group must be served at least a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the dark green subgroup, which counts toward the weekly total of $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups. If a school served a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dark green vegetables on Monday to meet the dark green vegetable subgroup minimum requirement, they would still need to serve a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of another vegetable to meet the minimum daily requirement of $\frac{3}{4}$ cup for the 6-8 grade group. This is when the *additional vegetables to meet weekly total* row on the chart above is used.

The *additional vegetables to meet weekly total* is not one of the five vegetable subgroups. When each of the five vegetable subgroup amounts are totaled, they fall short of the required weekly total. For the 6-8 grade group, the required weekly total for the vegetable component is $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups. However, when each of the vegetable subgroup amounts is totaled for this grade group it only equals $2\frac{3}{4}$ cups, which is 1 cup short of the required weekly total.

Returning to the example above of a school that serves the 6-8 grade group and chose Monday to serve the dark green vegetable subgroup, the original amount to be served was a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. If the school chose to instead serve a $\frac{3}{4}$ cup serving of dark green vegetables for the day, it would satisfy the minimum daily vegetable serving of $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. The minimum weekly requirement of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the dark green vegetables is being met along with a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of *additional vegetables to meet weekly total* being used.

Types of Vegetables and Crediting Information

Vegetables that are fresh, frozen, or canned may credit toward the vegetable component. All vegetables are credited based on their volume as served, with the exception of leafy vegetable and tomato paste and puree. Leafy vegetables only credit for half of the amount served. For example, 1 cup of Romaine lettuce would only credit as a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup serving of vegetables. Tomato paste and puree are credited based on calculated volume of the whole food equivalency.

Full-strength vegetable juice is allowed to be served and is held to the same requirements as fruit juice. Juice credits as the amount served, and no more than half of the weekly total vegetables may come from juice.

Pasta products made from 100% vegetable flours may also credit towards the vegetable component in the School Nutrition Programs. Review USDA memo [SP 26-2019](#) for requirements that must be met when crediting these types of products.

Mixed vegetable dishes, such as a vegetable medley, that contain multiple vegetables can count toward the daily minimum and weekly total vegetable requirements, and may or may not credit toward meeting any of the five vegetable subgroup requirements. The following examples provide clarification on how to credit mixed vegetable dishes.

Under the 6-8 grade group requirements, a $\frac{3}{4}$ cup serving of a vegetable medley meets the daily minimum vegetable requirement. However, if none of the vegetables in the medley are equal to or greater than a $\frac{1}{8}$ cup, the dish would not credit toward any of the vegetable subgroup requirements. The vegetable medley would then contribute to the *additional vegetables to meet weekly total*.

To allow mixed vegetable dishes to credit toward any of the vegetable subgroups, schools should 1) choose products with a CN label that shows the creditable amounts of vegetables, or 2) have a standardized recipe that would substantiate the specific vegetables in a mixed vegetable dish as being provided in an amount of $\frac{1}{8}$ cup or greater. Any vegetable present in an amount less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup cannot be credited toward a given vegetable subgroup.

Salad Bars

Salad bars can be an effective way to increase student access to and consumption of vegetables (and fruits). They can also help to reduce plate waste by allowing students to take only items they will eat. There are several considerations SFAs should consider when implementing a salad bar in their food service, such as portion sizes, ensuring a meal is reimbursable, production and menu records, and food safety. USDA memo [SP 41-2019](#) provides guidance on salad bars in the NLSF and SBP.

Products that Do Not Meet Requirements

The following products do not contribute to the vegetable component in any meal served under the Child Nutrition Programs:

- snack-type foods made from vegetables such as potato chips, or banana chips
- pickle relish, jam, or jelly
- tomato catsup and chili sauce; (tomato paste in chili is creditable)
- home canned products (for food safety reasons)
- dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning

Grains Component

NSLP Grains Component				
	K-5	6-8	Combined K-8	9-12
Daily Minimum (ounce equivalents)	1	1	1	2
Weekly Minimum (ounce equivalents)	8	8	8	10
Weekly Maximum* (ounce equivalents)	9	10	9	12

*The weekly maximum may be exceeded as long as weekly calories, sodium, and saturated fat limits are not exceeded.

In the NSLP, 80% of grains served throughout the week must be *whole grain-rich* (WGR), and any remaining grains must be *enriched*. These terms are defined in the sections that follow.

Whole Grain-Rich

Whole grain-rich (WGR) is a term that is specific to the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. WGR differs from the commonly used term *whole grain* (see *Whole Grains* section below for more information). A product is considered WGR if it contains 100% whole grains, or a blend of whole grains and enriched grains of which at least 50% is whole grain and any remaining grains in the product (if applicable) are enriched. USDA's [Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs: A Guide to Meeting Whole Grain-Rich Criteria](#) provides more detail on WGR requirements.

Whole Grains

Whole grain refers to a grain that contains all of its original parts (i.e. the bran, germ, and endosperm). Whole grains contain naturally occurring nutrients and are a good source of fiber.

Examples of whole grains include, but is not limited to:

- Amaranth
- Bromated whole wheat flour
- Brown rice
- Buckwheat
- Bulgar (cracked wheat)
- Crushed wheat
- Graham flour
- Millet
- Oatmeal or rolled oats
- Quinoa
- Triticale
- Wild rice
- Whole cornmeal
- Whole durum wheat
- Whole grain barley
- Whole grain corn
- Whole grain sorghum
- Whole grain triticale
- Whole rye
- Whole wheat

Enriched Grains

Enriched grains refer to grain products in which nutrients are added back to the product after removing the bran and germ. However, nutrients are not added back in the same proportions in which they were removed. Some examples of enriched grains that could be found on a product's ingredient list include, but are not limited to: enriched flour, enriched wheat flour, and enriched corn meal.

Crediting Information

All grain products served in the NSLP must be credited based on per-ounce equivalent (oz eq) standards. For example, 16 grams of creditable grain ingredients provide 1 oz eq credit for breads; 28 grams (approximately 1.0 ounce by weight) of dry product or ½ cup cooked product provides 1 oz eq credit for brown rice and pasta. When crediting grain products, grains round down to the nearest 0.25 oz eq. The minimum amount of grain creditable towards meal pattern requirements is 0.25 oz eq.

Program operators have the ability to credit ounce equivalencies for grain products based on the ounce weights listed in USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (see *Exhibit A—Criteria for Determining Minimum Serving Sizes* section), or by the grams of creditable grain in each product portion (documented by a standardized recipe, CN label, or PFS). The following example details how to calculate ounce equivalencies using Exhibit A using the Nutrition

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 bun (53g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 140	Calories from Fat 25
<hr/>	
	% Daily Values*
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 260mg	11%
Total Carbohydrate 25g	8%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 2g	
Protein 6g	
<hr/>	
Vitamin A -	● Vitamin C -
Calcium 4%	● Iron 15%
<small>* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</small>	

Facts label pictured for a 100% whole grain bun (note: products credit differently depending on the amount of whole grains present):

1. Determine the serving size per the package label. According to this Nutrition Facts label, one bun is 53 grams.
2. Review USDA's Exhibit A tool for information on how to credit the product. According to Exhibit A, buns fall under Group B in which 1 oz eq is equivalent to 28 grams.
3. Calculate the grain product's ounce equivalency:
 - 53 grams / 28 grams = 1.89 oz eq
 - 1.89 oz eq rounds down to 1.75 oz eq
 - **1 bun credits as 1.75 oz eq**

USDA's [Exhibit A Grains Tool](#) can assist SFA's with crediting grain products.

Exhibit A--Criteria for Determining Minimum Serving Sizes

USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) is divided into nine groups. The required weight for each group is based on the key nutrients in one slice of bread (25 grams or 0.9 ounce) or an equal amount (14.75 grams) of enriched or whole-grain meal and/or flour. Within each group, all grain items have approximately the same nutrient and grain content in each serving. Items with fillings, toppings, etc. require larger serving sizes to meet the minimum grain content.

Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs^{1, 2}

Color Key: Footnote 5 = Blue, Footnote 3 or 4 = Red

Group A	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group A	Minimum Serving Size for Group A
Bread type coating Bread sticks (hard) Chow Mein noodles Savory Crackers (saltines and snack crackers) Croutons Pretzels (hard) Stuffing (dry) <i>Note: weights apply to bread in stuffing</i>	1 oz eq = 22 gm or 0.8 oz 3/4 oz eq = 17 gm or 0.6 oz 1/2 oz eq = 11 gm or 0.4 oz 1/4 oz eq = 6 gm or 0.2 oz	1 serving = 20 gm or 0.7 oz 3/4 serving = 15 gm or 0.5 oz 1/2 serving = 10 gm or 0.4 oz 1/4 serving = 5 gm or 0.2 oz
Group B	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group B	Minimum Serving Size for Group B
Bagels Batter type coating Biscuits Breads - all (for example sliced, French, Italian) Buns (hamburger and hot dog) <i>Sweet Crackers⁵ (graham crackers - all shapes, animal crackers)</i> Egg roll skins English muffins Pita bread Pizza crust Pretzels (soft) Rolls Tortillas Tortilla chips Taco shells	1 oz eq = 28 gm or 1.0 oz 3/4 oz eq = 21 gm or 0.75 oz 1/2 oz eq = 14 gm or 0.5 oz 1/4 oz eq = 7 gm or 0.25	1 serving = 25 gm or 0.9 oz 3/4 serving = 19 gm or 0.7 oz 1/2 serving = 13 gm or 0.5 oz 1/4 serving = 6 gm or 0.2 oz
Group C	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group C	Minimum Serving Size for Group C
<i>Cookies³ (plain - includes vanilla wafers)</i> Cornbread Corn muffins Croissants Pancakes Pie crust (<i>dessert pies³, cobbler³, fruit turnovers⁴, and meats/meat alternate pies</i>) Waffles	1 oz eq = 34 gm or 1.2 oz 3/4 oz eq = 26 gm or 0.9 oz 1/2 oz eq = 17 gm or 0.6 oz 1/4 oz eq = 9 gm or 0.3 oz	1 serving = 31 gm or 1.1 oz 3/4 serving = 23 gm or 0.8 oz 1/2 serving = 16 gm or 0.6 oz 1/4 serving = 8 gm or 0.3 oz
Group D	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group D	Minimum Serving Size for Group D
<i>Doughnuts⁴ (cake and yeast raised, unfrosted)</i> <i>Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars⁴ (plain)</i> Muffins (all, except corn) <i>Sweet roll⁴ (unfrosted)</i> <i>Toaster pastry⁴ (unfrosted)</i>	1 oz eq = 55 gm or 2.0 oz 3/4 oz eq = 42 gm or 1.5 oz 1/2 oz eq = 28 gm or 1.0 oz 1/4 oz eq = 14 gm or 0.5 oz	1 serving = 50 gm or 1.8 oz 3/4 serving = 38 gm or 1.3 oz 1/2 serving = 25 gm or 0.9 oz 1/4 serving = 13 gm or 0.5 oz

¹ In the NSLP and SBP (grades K-12), at least half of the weekly grains offered must meet the whole grain-rich criteria and the remaining grain items offered must be made from whole-grain flour, whole-grain meal, corn masa, masa harina, hominy, enriched flour, enriched meal, bran, germ, or be an enriched product, such as enriched bread, or a fortified cereal. Please note: State agencies have the discretion to set stricter requirements than the minimum nutrition standards for school meals. For additional guidance, please contact your State agency. For all other Child Nutrition Programs, grains must be made from whole-grain flour, whole-grain meal, corn masa, masa harina, hominy, enriched flour, enriched meal, bran, germ, or be an enriched product, such as enriched bread, or a fortified cereal. Under the CACFP child and adult meal patterns, and in the NSLP/SBP preschool meals, at least one grains serving per day must meet whole grain-rich criteria.

- ² For the NSLP and SBP (grades K-12), grain quantities are determined using ounce equivalents (oz eq). All other Child Nutrition Programs determine grain quantities using grains/breads servings. Beginning Oct. 1, 2021, grain quantities in the CACFP and NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals will be determined using oz eq. Some of the following grains may contain more sugar, salt, and/or fat than others. This should be a consideration when deciding how often to serve them.
- ³ Allowed in NSLP (up to 2.0 oz eq grain-based dessert per week in grades K-12) as specified in §210.10 and at snack service in SFSP. Considered a grain-based dessert and cannot count towards the grains component in CACFP or NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals as specified in §§226.20(a)(4) and 210.10.
- ⁴ Allowable in NSLP (up to 2.0 oz eq grain-based dessert per week for grades K-12) as specified in §210.10. May count towards the grains component in SBP (grades K-12) and at snack and breakfast meals in SFSP. Considered a grain-based dessert and cannot count towards the grains component in the CACFP and NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals as specified in §§226.20(a)(4) and 210.10.
- ⁵ Allowed in NSLP (up to 2.0 oz eq grain-based dessert per week in grades K-12) as specified in §210.10. May count toward the grains component in the SBP (grades K-12), CACFP, NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals, and SFSP.

Group E	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group E	Minimum Serving Size for Group E
Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars ⁴ (with nuts, dried fruit, and/or chocolate pieces) Cookies ³ (with nuts, raisins, chocolate pieces and/or fruit purees) Doughnuts ⁴ (cake and yeast raised, frosted or glazed) French toast Sweet rolls ⁴ (frosted) Toaster pastry ⁴ (frosted)	1 oz eq = 69 gm or 2.4 oz 3/4 oz eq = 52 gm or 1.8 oz 1/2 oz eq = 35 gm or 1.2 oz 1/4 oz eq = 18 gm or 0.6 oz	1 serving = 63 gm or 2.2 oz 3/4 serving = 47 gm or 1.7 oz 1/2 serving = 31 gm or 1.1 oz 1/4 serving = 16 gm or 0.6 oz
Group F	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group F	Minimum Serving Size for Group F
Cake ³ (plain, unfrosted) Coffee cake ⁴	1 oz eq = 82 gm or 2.9 oz 3/4 oz eq = 62 gm or 2.2 oz 1/2 oz eq = 41 gm or 1.5 oz 1/4 oz eq = 21 gm or 0.7 oz	1 serving = 75 gm or 2.7 oz 3/4 serving = 56 gm or 2 oz 1/2 serving = 38 gm or 1.3 oz 1/4 serving = 19 gm or 0.7 oz
Group G	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group G	Minimum Serving Size for Group G
Brownies ³ (plain) Cake ³ (all varieties, frosted)	1 oz eq = 125 gm or 4.4 oz 3/4 oz eq = 94 gm or 3.3 oz 1/2 oz eq = 63 gm or 2.2 oz 1/4 oz eq = 32 gm or 1.1 oz	1 serving = 115 gm or 4 oz 3/4 serving = 86 gm or 3 oz 1/2 serving = 58 gm or 2 oz 1/4 serving = 29 gm or 1 oz
Group H	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group H	Minimum Serving Size for Group H
Cereal Grains (barley, quinoa, etc.) Breakfast cereals (cooked) ^{6,7} Bulgur or cracked wheat Macaroni (all shapes) Noodles (all varieties) Pasta (all shapes) Ravioli (noodle only) Rice	1 oz eq = 1/2 cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 gm) dry	1 serving = 1/2 cup cooked or 25 gm dry
Group I	Ounce Equivalent (oz eq) for Group I	Minimum Serving Size for Group I
Ready to eat breakfast cereal (cold, dry) ^{6,7}	1 oz eq = 1 cup or 1 ounce for flakes and rounds 1 oz eq = 1.25 cups or 1 ounce for puffed cereal 1 oz eq = 1/4 cup or 1 ounce for granola	1 serving = 3/4 cup or 1 oz, whichever is less

- ³ *Allowed in NSLP (up to 2.0 oz eq grain-based dessert per week in grades K-12) as specified in §210.10 and at snack service in SFSP. Considered a grain-based dessert and cannot count towards the grains component in CACFP or NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals as specified in §§226.20(a)(4) and 210.10.*
- ⁴ *Allowable in NSLP (up to 2.0 oz eq grain-based dessert per week for grades K-12) as specified in §210.10. May count towards the grains component in SBP (grades K-12) and at snack and breakfast meals in SFSP. Considered a grain-based dessert and cannot count towards the grains component in the CACFP and NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals as specified in §§226.20(a)(4) and 210.10.*
- ⁶ *Refer to program regulations for the appropriate serving size for supplements served to children aged 1 through 5 in the NSLP; breakfast served in the SBP, and meals served to children ages 1 through 5 and adult participants in the CACFP. Breakfast cereals are traditionally served as a breakfast menu item but may be served in meals other than breakfast.*
- ⁷ *In the NSLP and SBP, cereals that list a whole grain as the first ingredient must be fortified, or if the cereal is 100 percent whole grain, fortification is not required. For all Child Nutrition Programs, cereals must be whole grain, enriched, or fortified; cereals served in CACFP and NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce.*

Determining Equivalent Minimum Serving Sizes in Recipes

Exhibit A lists equivalent, minimum serving sizes for a wide variety of grain products. In lieu of using the minimum serving sizes listed in the chart, the contribution of a recipe may be calculated to determine the amount of grain servings the recipe provides. The crediting of a food item as a grain serving is determined by the total amount of enriched or whole-grain meal and/or flour in the recipe divided by the number of servings the recipe yields. The amount of enriched or whole-grain meal and/or flour contained in each serving is then divided by 14.75 grams.

Determining if a Product Meets WGR Criteria

The following list provides criteria for determining if a grain product is considered WGR in the NSLP. All products must meet the first criterion below, and at least one the criterion that follow.

1. The food item must meet the oz eq requirements for the grains component as defined in [SP 30-2012](#) and the Exhibit A tool.

AND

2. Whole grains per oz eq are at least 8.0 grams or more for Groups A – G of Exhibit A. For Groups H and I, the volumes or weights listed must be offered to credit as 1 oz eq, and whole grains must be the primary grains (with other grains being enriched). This information may be obtained from the product packaging or from the manufacturer, if available.

OR

3. The product includes one of the following FDA-approved whole grain health claims on its packaging:

- “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.”
- “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease.”

OR

4. The product ingredient declaration lists a whole grain first, specifically:

- Non-mixed dishes (e.g., breads, cereals): Whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight (a whole grain is first on the ingredient list with an exception for water). Products in which wholegrain content comes from multiple ingredients can meet the whole grain-rich criteria when all whole grains combined are the primary ingredient by weight. Proper documentation from the manufacturer or a standardized recipe is required.
- Mixed dishes (e.g., pizza, corn dogs): Whole grains are the primary grain ingredient by weight (a whole grain is the first grain ingredient in the list of grains). For recipes, the weights of grain ingredients are used to determine whether the total weight of whole grains is greater than or equal to the total weight of grains that are not whole grain. Proper documentation from the manufacturer or a standardized recipe is required.

USDA’s [Does My Product Meet the Whole Grain-Rich Criteria?](#) tool can assist SFAs in determining if a product is acceptable.

Popcorn

Popcorn is considered a whole grain and can therefore credit towards the grains component in the School Nutrition Programs. USDA memo [SP 23-2019](#) provides additional information.

Hominy, Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal

In accordance with USDA memo [SP 34-2019](#), hominy, corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal may be credited as grains in the School Nutrition Programs. Crediting is determined by weight as listed in *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*, or by grams of creditable grain per portion.

Grain-Based Desserts

Grain-based desserts are allowed to be served by SFAs and credit towards the grain component. However, the amount served must not exceed 2 oz eq per week. *Grain-based desserts* count toward the required weekly total for grains. [Exhibit A](#) notes grain-based desserts that are acceptable in the NSLP.

Grains that Do Not Meet Requirements

The following grain ingredients are not creditable towards the grain component in the NSLP and must be present at a level of less than 2% of the product formula:

- Bran
- Corn fiber
- Corn starch
- Germ
- Modified food starch (e.g. potato, legume, and other vegetable flours)
- Oat fiber
- Wheat starch

Record Keeping Requirement

Whole grain (WG) or whole grain-rich (WGR) must be written on menus next to the grain item. Proper documentation, such as a Child Nutrition (CN) label or a product formulation statement or an ingredient panel or a standardized recipe, must be on file to demonstrate that whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight for WGR items.

Meat/Meat Alternate Component

NSLP Meat/Meat Alternate Component				
	K-5	6-8	Combined K-8	9-12
Daily Minimum (ounce equivalents)	1	1	1	2
Weekly Minimum (ounce equivalents)	8	9	9	10
Weekly Maximum* (ounce equivalents)	10	10	10	12

*The weekly maximum may be exceeded as long as weekly calories, sodium, and saturated fat limits are not exceeded.

Types of Meat/Meat Alternate and Crediting Information

In the NSLP, the meat/meat alternate (M/MA) component must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and only one other food item. Like the grains component, M/MA items are credited

based on per-ounce equivalent (oz eq) standards. The minimum amount of M/MA creditable towards meal pattern requirements is 0.25 oz eq, and operators must round down to the nearest 0.25 oz eq when crediting M/MA products. SFAs should refer to the [Food Buying Guide](#) when determining how to credit certain M/MA products. Examples of foods that may credit toward the M/MA component include, but are not limited to:

- Beef
- Poultry
- Fish
- Tofu and soy products
- Beans and peas (legumes)
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Nuts and seeds
- Nut and seed butters
- Yogurt
- Dried and semi-dried meat

Examples of common one-ounce equivalents include:

- 1 oz cheese
- 2 TBSP nut butters
- 1 oz nuts and seeds
- ½ ea large egg
- ¼ cup beans/peas
- 2 oz cottage cheese
- 4 oz yogurt
- 1 oz cooked, boneless meat, poultry, and fish

Tofu and Soy Products

For purposes of the School Nutrition Programs, tofu is defined as a soybean-derived food, made by a process in which soybeans are soaked, ground, mixed with water, heated, filtered, coagulated, and formed into cakes. Basic ingredients are whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water. Commercial tofu and soy products may be used to meet all or part of the M/MA component, but must conform to FNS guidance. Review USDA memo [SP 53-2016](#) for information on crediting tofu and soy yogurt products in the School Nutrition Programs and [SP 25-2019](#) for how to credit tempeh. Noncommercial and/or non-standardized tofu and soy products are not creditable in the NSLP.

Beans and Peas

Cooked dry beans and peas (legumes) may be used to meet all or part of the M/MA component. They may be counted as either a meat alternate or a vegetable, but not as both in the same meal. Black-eyed peas (not dry), green peas, and green lima beans do not fall under the legumes vegetable subgroup; they are considered a starchy vegetable in the NSLP and therefore cannot contribute as a meat alternate.

Pasta made from 100% legume flours may also credit as a meat alternate (or vegetable) in the School Nutrition Programs. These products cannot contribute to both the M/MA and vegetable components in the same meal. To credit as a meat alternate, pastas made from 100% legume flour must be offered with an additional M/MA food item that serves as visual recognition of the M/MA component in the meal. Review USDA memo [SP 26-2019](#) for information on crediting pasta made from legume flour.

Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds and their butters are allowed as meat alternates in the School Nutrition Programs. Nuts or seeds may be used to meet no more than half of the M/MA component, therefore, another M/MA food item must be provided in the same meal to meet the full requirement. However, nut or seed butters can be used to meet the entire M/MA requirement

at any meal. Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts may not be used because of their low protein and iron content.

Yogurt

Yogurt may be used to meet all or part of the M/MA component. Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened. Noncommercial and/or non-standardized yogurt products, such as frozen yogurt, drinkable yogurt products, homemade yogurt, yogurt flavored products, yogurt bars, yogurt covered fruits and/or nuts or similar products are not creditable.

Dried and Semi-Dried Meat

Shelf-stable, dried, and semi-dried meat, poultry, and seafood, such as beef jerky, is creditable as a meat in the School Nutrition Products. However, these products are not included in the USDA's Food Buying Guide because industry standards vary widely. Acceptable documentation for meal pattern crediting include CN labels and PFS. Review [SP 21-2019](#) for additional information on how to credit dried and semi-dried meat.

Surimi

Surimi seafood may credit as a meat in the School Nutrition Programs. It is available in many forms, such as shredded and chunked, and does not require additional preparation. Review [SP 24-2019](#) for crediting information.

Milk Component

NSLP Milk Component				
	K-5	6-8	Combined K-8	9-12
Daily Minimum (cups)	1	1	1	1
Weekly Total (cups)	5	5	5	5

Types of Milk and Requirements

All milk provided in the NSLP must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%), and may be unflavored or flavored. SFAs must offer at least two varieties of fluid milk during the meal service, and one of those options must be unflavored.

Fluid milk substitutions are among the most common dietary accommodation requests in the School Nutrition Programs. When accommodating such requests, SFAs must ensure milk substitutions meet USDA nutrient requirements. Refer to *Chapter K—Dietary Accommodations* for additional information.

Dietary Specifications

NSLP Dietary Specifications				
	K-5	6-8	Combined K-8	9-12
Calories (kcal)	550-650	600-700	600-650	750-850
Sodium (mg)	≤ 1,230	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,230	≤ 1,420
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10	<10
Trans Fat	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.			

The standards for calories, sodium, and saturated fat are based on averages for the school week. Throughout the week, one or more days may fall outside of the required calorie range, or above the sodium and saturated fat limits. However, other days during that week must balance out those averages so that meals fall within the above requirements.

Food products and ingredients used to prepare school meals must contain zero grams of trans fat (less than 0.5 grams) per serving. Meats that contain a minimal amount of naturally-occurring trans fats are allowed in the school meal programs.

Offer Versus Serve

In the NSLP, students must be offered all five meal pattern components (i.e. grains, M/MA, fruits, vegetables, and milk). Under *offer versus serve* (OVS), students are allowed to decline up to two meal components. However, at least three components must be selected, and at least a ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable must be selected for the meal to be reimbursable.

The 9-12 grade group must participate in OVS during lunch. OVS participation for grades K-8 is optional. Grades K-8 that do not participate in OVS are considered *serve only*, in which students are provided all five meal pattern components and no components are able to be declined.

Once a student has selected at least three components in the required serving sizes (one of which is a ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable), schools can allow or encourage tasting/partial servings of the remaining components. This may be especially effective when introducing new foods or when working with younger students who may not be as comfortable when trying new foods.

Regardless of whether a student chooses 3, 4 or all 5 components under OVS, meals are priced as a unit. This means students who pay full price or reduced price for meals continue to pay the same price that they normally would for a meal.

Additional OVS guidance can be reviewed in USDA's [Offer Versus Serve: Guidance for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program](#).

School Breakfast Program (SBP)

The following are key points of the SBP meal pattern. More detail is provided on each food component in the sections that follow.

- The SBP has three food components: 1) grains, 2) fruits, and 3) milk
- Quantities of food components are determined based on age/grade groups
- 80% of grains offered throughout the week must be whole grain-rich (WGR)
- Milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) and may be unflavored or flavored
- Including items from the meat/meat alternate and vegetable components are optional and provide menu planners with additional flexibility at breakfast
- Dietary specifications are set for calories, sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat
- Offer versus serve (OVS) is optional for all grade groups

Food Components

An SBP meal has three required food components: 1) grains, 2) fruits, and 3) milk. Additional menu planning flexibilities at breakfast may include vegetables and meat/meat alternates. The following sections provide more detail on each of these components.

Grade Groupings

Like the NSLP, the SBP meal pattern has 3 grade groups: Kindergarten through 5th grade (K-5), 6th through 8th grade (6-8), and 9th through 12th grade (9-12).

Additionally, school sites that include grades K-5 and 6-8 have the option of following a combined meal pattern for the K-8 grade group. Schools that include grades K-12 can choose to implement one meal pattern for the K-12 grade group, rather than following separate meal patterns for all 3 grade groups.

School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food ^a per Week (minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^{b c}	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{b c}	0	0	0
Dark green	0	0	0
Red/orange	0	0	0
Beans and peas (legumes)	0	0	0
Starchy	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Grains (oz eq) ^d	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Meats/meat alternates (oz eq) ^e	0	0	0
Fluid milk ^f (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^{g h}	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Target 1 (mg)	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily and 5 cups of fruit weekly. Vegetables may be substituted for fruits, but the first two cups per week of any such substitution must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans/peas (legumes), or “Other vegetables” subgroups, as defined in §210.10(c)(2)(iii) of this chapter.

^d At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched. Schools may substitute

1 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternate for 1 oz. eq. of grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met.

^eThere is no meat/meat alternate requirement.

^fAll fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be unflavored or flavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^gThe average daily calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).

^hDiscretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.

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Fruit Component

SBP Fruit Component					
	K-5	6-8	9-12	K-8	K-12
Daily Minimum (cups)	1	1	1	1	1
Weekly Total (cups)	5	5	5	5	5

Types of Fruit & Crediting Information

Like in the NSLP, fruits that are fresh, frozen, dried, canned (packed in water, full-strength juice, or light syrup) and full-strength juice may contribute toward the fruit requirement in the SBP. . No more than half of the required weekly cups of fruit may come from juice. All fruits credit toward the fruit component based on their volume as served, except for dried fruits, which credit as twice the amount served. The minimum quantity of fruits and/or vegetables that may be credited towards this component is 1/8 cup.

Vegetable Substitutes

Vegetables are not a required meal pattern component in the SBP, however, vegetables may be offered in place of all or part of the required fruits at breakfast to increase menu variety. 7 CFR Part 220.8(c) requires that the first two cups per week of any such substitution must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes), and/or other subgroup; the starchy subgroup may only be served after at least two cups have been served from the aforementioned subgroups. However, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 provides flexibility through the 2022-2023 school year allowing any vegetable subgroup to be offered in place of fruit without including the vegetable subgroups in any particular order (i.e. starchy vegetables may be offered without offering dark green, red/orange, beans and peas, and other vegetables first).

Smoothies

Smoothies may be offered as part of a reimbursable meal in the NSLP and SBP. Milk, yogurt, fruits, and vegetables used in smoothies may credit toward meal pattern requirements if they meet all USDA regulations. Smoothies can be made from scratch, commercially prepared mixes, or commercial ready-to-eat smoothies. Review USDA's guide [Offering Smoothies as Part of Reimbursable School Meals](#) for information on how smoothies can be credited in the NSLP and SBP.

Grains Component

SBP Grains Component					
	K-5	6-8	9-12	K-8	K-12
Daily Minimum (oz eq)	1	1	1	1	1
Weekly Minimum (oz eq)	7	8	9	8	9
Weekly Maximum* (oz eq)	10	10	10	10	10

*The weekly maximum may be exceeded as long as weekly calories, sodium, and saturated fat limits are not exceeded.

Types of Grains & Crediting Information

Like the NSLP, 80% of grains served throughout the week must be *whole grain-rich* (WGR), and any remaining grains must be *enriched* in the SBP. All grain products served in the SBP must be credited based on per-ounce equivalent (oz eq) standards. When crediting grain products, grains round down to the nearest 0.25 oz eq. The minimum amount of grain creditable towards meal pattern requirements is 0.25 oz eq. Refer to the *Grains Component* section of the NSLP meal pattern in this chapter for additional information on the WGR requirement and crediting information.

Cereal

In the NSLP and SBP, ready-to-eat cereals that list a whole grain as the first ingredient must be fortified. However, if the cereal is 100% whole grain, fortification is not required.

Meat/Meat Alternate Substitutes

Schools may substitute meats/meat alternate (M/MA) products to meet the weekly grains serving requirement at breakfast in order to increase menu variety. However, the daily minimum serving requirement of one ounce equivalent (oz eq) for grains (for all grade groups) must be met before a M/MA can credit toward the weekly grains serving requirement. Refer to the Meat/Meat Alternates Component section of the NSLP meal pattern in this chapter for additional information on M/MA crediting information.

Milk Component

SBP Milk Component					
	K-5	6-8	9-12	K-8	K-12
Daily Minimum (cups)	1	1	1	1	1
Weekly Total (cups)	5	5	5	5	5

Types of Milk and Requirements

Like the NSLP, all milk provided in the SBP must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%), and may be unflavored or flavored. SFAs must offer at least two varieties of fluid milk during the meal service, and one of those options must be unflavored.

Dietary Specifications

SBP Dietary Specifications					
	K-5	6-8	9-12	K-8	K-12
Calories (kcal)	350-500	400-550	450-600	400-500	450-500
Sodium (mg)	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640	≤ 540	≤ 540
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10	<10	<10
Trans Fat	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.				

Similar to the NSLP, the standards for calories, sodium, and saturated fat are based on averages for the school week. Throughout the week, one or more days may fall outside of the required calorie range, or above the sodium and saturated fat limits. However, other days during that week must balance out those averages so that meals fall within the above requirements.

Offer Versus Serve

In the SBP, students must be offered all three meal pattern components (i.e. grains, fruits, and milk). Under *offer versus serve* (OVS), these three components must be offered as at least four *items*. The term *item* is specific to the SBP and refers to a specific food offered within one of the three food components. USDA sets serving size standards for what is considered an *item* for each component (review the chart below).

What Counts as an <i>Item</i> in the SBP?	
Component	1 <i>Item</i> Equals
Fruits	1/2 cup
Grains	1 oz eq
Milk	1 cup

Under OVS, students are allowed to decline one *item* at breakfast. Three *items* must be selected, and at least a ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitution) must be selected for the meal to be reimbursable. OVS is optional for all grade groups at breakfast.

Fruit Item

One *item* of fruit is equal to a ½ cup. At a minimum, SFAs are required to offer one cup of fruit daily in the SBP. Therefore, SFAs may choose to offer multiple fruits in ½ cup amounts. This satisfies the requirement of offering at least one cup of fruit daily, and would provide multiple *items* toward the OVS requirement to offer at least 4 *items*.

Grain Item

One *item* of grain is equal one oz eq. Products with more than one oz eq of grain (or M/MA substitution) may count as multiple *items* depending on the amount of grains present. For

example, a 2 oz eq bagel may credit as two *items* for OVS purposes. Therefore, a student who selects that bagel would have two out of three *items* needed for a reimbursable meal in the SBP. SFAs may also choose to count a 2 oz eq bagel as 1 *item* at their own discretion.

Milk Item

One *item* of milk is equal to one cup. Milk may be used as a beverage, on cereal, or used in part for each purpose. Milk does not need to be selected in order for a meal to be reimbursable.

Additional OVS guidance can be reviewed in USDA's [Offer Versus Serve: Guidance for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program](#).

Preschool Meals in the School Nutrition Programs

Preschool meals served through the NSLP and SBP are designed to meet the nutritional needs of young children. Schools serving meals to children in preschool (ages 1 through 5) under the NSLP and SBP must serve the food components and quantities required in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) lunch or breakfast meal pattern. The preschool meal pattern is provided in the chart on the following page. It should be noted that there are several differences between the preschool meal pattern and the standard school meal pattern for grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. An overview of these differences are described in USDA's guide to [Serving School Meals to Preschoolers](#).

Age Groups & Food Components

There are two age groups under the preschool meal pattern: children 1-2 years old, and children 3-5 years old.

The preschool meal pattern for breakfast includes three meal pattern components: 1) milk, 2) fruits/vegetable/combination of fruits and vegetables, and 3) grains. All three components must be served for a reimbursable breakfast.

The preschool meal pattern for lunch includes five meal pattern components: 1) milk, 2) fruits, 3) vegetables, 4) grains, and 5) meat/meat alternates. All five components must be served for a reimbursable meal.

Additional information and details on the CACFP meal pattern, including creditable and non-creditable food items, can be found in USDA's [Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

School Meal Pattern for Preschoolers

	Breakfast		Lunch	
	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5
Milk ^{a,b,c}	½ cup (4 oz)	¾ cup (6 oz)	½ cup (4 oz)	¾ cup (6 oz)
Fruits ^{d,e}	¼ cup	½ cup	1/8 cup	¼ cup
Vegetables ^{d,e,f}			1/8 cup	¼ cup
Grains ^{g,h}	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	½ oz eq
Meat/Meat Alternates ⁱ	0	0	1 oz eq	1 ½ oz eq

^a 1 year old children must be offered unflavored whole milk only. Children ages 2-5 must be offered unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk only

^b A one month transition period is allowed for children 12 to 13 months of age to allow time to adjust to cow's milk when switching from breastmilk or formula. Please note, breastmilk is considered an allowable fluid milk substitute for children of any age, if a mother chooses to breastfeed her child past 1 year of age

^c Unflavored whole milk and unflavored reduced-fat (2%) milk may be served to children between the ages of 24 and 25 months to help with the transition from whole milk to fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk

^d May serve fruits, vegetables, or combination of both to meet the combined vegetables/fruit component for breakfast for ages 1-2 and 3-5

^e May serve 100% juice once per day. If juice is served at breakfast, it cannot be served at lunch.

^f A second, different vegetable may be served in place of fruit at lunch for ages 1-2 and 3-5

^g One of the grain components must be whole grain-rich every day. Enriched grains may be served at lunch if whole grain-rich items are served at breakfast.

^h Grain-based desserts may not credit towards the grain component. Refer to *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs* for additional information.

ⁱ Meats/meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component up to 3 times per week at breakfast. The minimum serving size for both age groups is ½ oz eq.

Milk

The CACFP regulations require that each participant's breakfast and lunch include fluid milk to be eligible for reimbursement. The breakfast meal pattern requires that a serving of fluid milk be served as a beverage, used on cereal, or used in part for each purpose. Lunch must contain a serving of fluid milk as a beverage.

Milk must be unflavored whole milk for children who are one year old. Milk must be unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free (skim) for children two to five years old. However, USDA allows transition periods for children 12-13 months old and 24-25 months old. Iron-fortified formula may be served to children between the ages of 12 months and 13 months to help with the transition to whole milk. Children 24 months to 25 months old may be served whole milk or reduced-fat milk (2%) to ease the transition to low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk. Breastmilk is allowed at any age in the CACFP.

Fruits and Vegetables

For breakfast, the CACFP regulations require a serving of fruits, vegetables, or a combination of both. For lunch, the CACFP meal pattern includes a separate fruit component and vegetable component. However, menu planners have the flexibility to serve a second, different vegetable in place of the fruit requirement at lunch. It should be noted that two servings of the same vegetable (even in different forms, such as raw carrots and cooked carrots) provided at the same meal do not count as two different vegetables and cannot be served in place of the fruit requirement.

A reimbursable meal at breakfast must contain:

- The minimum required serving of fruit OR
- The minimum required serving of vegetable OR
- Adequate portions of both a fruit and vegetable to provide the minimum required serving

A reimbursable lunch must contain:

- The minimum required serving of fruit and the minimum required serving of vegetable OR
- Two different minimum servings of vegetables

Fresh, frozen, dried, and canned fruit, as well as full-strength fruit juice may contribute to the fruit component. Fresh, frozen, dried, and canned vegetables, as well as full-strength vegetable juice may contribute to the vegetable component. Full-strength 100% fruit and vegetable juice may count toward the entire fruits or vegetables component at one meal per day. Commercial fried fruit chips, such as banana chips, are not creditable toward the fruit component. Snack chips, such as potato chips, are not creditable toward the vegetable component. Additionally, home-canned fruit and/or vegetable products are not allowed in the CACFP due to health and safety reasons.

In most cases, fruits and vegetables are credited based on their volume as served. The minimum creditable portion size of fruit and vegetable is an ⅓ cup or 2 tablespoons. Dried fruit credits as twice the volume served. Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served.

Grains

Grains are a required component for a reimbursable breakfast and lunch. However, meat/meat alternates may be used to meet the entire grains requirement a maximum of three times per week at breakfast (refer to the *Meat/Meat Alternate* section below).

All grain products served in the CACFP must be made with whole grains or enriched meal and/or enriched flour, or bran or germ, in order to be creditable. At least one serving per day across all eating occasions must be whole grain-rich, which refers to products that contain at least 50% whole grains, and any other grains in the product are enriched.

The minimum amount of grains that can credit toward the grains component is 0.25 ounce equivalents. Grain-based desserts do not count towards meeting the grains requirement. Refer to the [Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) for information on crediting grains in the CACFP. USDA's [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#) provides the minimum portion sizes of grain products that are required to meet meal pattern requirements for each age group.

Meat/Meat Alternates

The CACFP regulations require that lunch meals contain a serving of meat/meat alternate as specified in the meal pattern. In order to meet the minimum serving, the meat/meat alternate for lunch may be served in the main dish, or in the main dish together with another menu item. A menu item must provide at least a ¼ ounce equivalent of meat or meat alternate to count towards the meat or meat alternate requirement.

A meat/meat alternate is not required to be served at breakfast. However, meats and meat alternates may be used to meet the entire grains requirement a maximum of 3 times per week at breakfast. One ounce of meat/meat alternate is equal to 1 ounce equivalent of grains.

Nutrient Limits

Cereals and yogurt have set sugar limits under the preschool meal pattern. Cereal is limited to 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce. Yogurt is limited to 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces.

Additionally, deep-fat frying (cooked by submerging in hot oil or other fat) is not allowed onsite, including at central kitchens.

Offer Versus Serve

Offer versus serve (OVS) is not allowed under the preschool meal pattern. OVS is only allowed when preschool students are *co-mingled* with older children and following the meal pattern for older students. When following OVS during *co-mingling*, students must select at least three food items, and one of those items must be at least a ½ cup of fruits and/or vegetables.

Co-Mingling

Sometimes, schools must serve meals to a variety of grades at the same time. This is usually due to operational constraints, such as time and space. USDA refers to this practice as *co-mingling*.

When each of the following conditions are met, the meal service is considered to be *co-mingled* and schools may offer the meal pattern of the older grades, such as K-5, to preschool students:

- Preschool students and students from older grade groups (such as K-5, K-8, or K-12) are served meals in the same place at the same time,
- It is difficult to differentiate preschool students from older students, **AND**
- It would be operationally difficult to serve different foods or different amounts of foods during the combined meal service

If each of these conditions are not met, schools must follow the preschool meal pattern. USDA strongly encourages schools to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals to preschoolers.

NSLP Afterschool Care Snack Service

The afterschool snack component of the NSLP is a federally assisted snack service that fills the afternoon hunger gap for school children. This afterschool care program which must provide children with regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a supervised environment.

Food Components and Serving Sizes

Afterschool snacks must contain at least two different components of the following four: milk, M/MA, grains, and fruits/vegetables. It should be noted that two items from the same component cannot be served. Each component is described in more detail in the sections that follow.

Serving sizes in the afterschool snack service are as follows: ages 1-2, ages 3-5, and ages 6-12. The chart below provides information on required serving sizes for each age group. Portions for children 13-18 years of age must not be less than the portions for the 6-12 age group. USDA recommends that SFAs offer larger portions for children aged 13-18 based on their greater energy requirements.

NSLP Afterschool Care Snack Service Meal Pattern

	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18*
Milk	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup	1 cup
Fruits/Vegetables Vegetables and/or fruits <i>or</i> Full-strength fruit and vegetable juice <i>or</i> An equivalent combination	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup
Grains Bread <i>or</i> Cornbread, biscuits, rolls, muffins, etc. <i>or</i> Flakes or rounds Puffed cereal <i>or</i> Hot, cooked cereal <i>or</i> Cooked pasta or noodle products <i>or</i> Granola <i>or</i> An equivalent combination	½ slice ½ serving ½ cup ¾ cup ¼ cup ¼ cup ⅛ cup	½ slice ½ serving ½ cup ¾ cup ¼ cup ¼ cup ⅛ cup	1 slice 1 serving 1 cup 1 ¼ cup ½ cup ½ cup ¼ cup	1 slice 1 serving 1 cup 1 ¼ cup ½ cup ½ cup ¼ cup
Meat/Meat Alternate Lean meat, poultry, or fish <i>or</i> Cheese <i>or</i> Eggs <i>or</i> Cooked, dry beans and peas <i>or</i> Nut and seed butter <i>or</i> Nuts and seeds** <i>or</i> Yogurt, plain or flavored, sweetened or unsweetened <i>or</i> An equivalent combination	½ oz ½ oz ½ large egg ⅛ cup 1 TBSP <i>Not Recommended</i> 2 oz or ¼ cup	½ oz ½ oz ½ large egg ⅛ cup 1 TBSP <i>Not Recommended</i> 2 oz or ¼ cup	1 oz 1 oz ½ large egg ¼ cup 2 TBSP 1 oz 4 oz or ½ cup	1 oz 1 oz ½ large egg ¼ cup 2 TBSP 1 oz 4 oz or ½ cup

*Servings for children ages may be larger than the serving sizes listed.

**Nuts and seeds are not recommended for children 1-3 years old. Children under the age of 4 are at a high risk of choking while eating.

Milk

For purposes of the afterschool snack service, a serving of fluid milk may be provided as a beverage, on cereal, or used in part for each purpose. Milk provided to children ages 1-2 must be whole, unflavored milk. Children ages 3-5 must be provided low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim, unflavored milk. Children ages 6+ may be provided low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim), flavored or unflavored milk. Unlike the NSLP, there is no requirement in the afterschool snack service to offer at least two varieties of milk.

Meat/Meat Alternate

A serving of meat/meat alternate may be provided in the afterschool snack service. Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugar per a 6-ounce serving.

Grains

The grains component of the afterschool snack service may be whole grain or enriched bread, or an equivalent serving of a bread product. Ready-to-eat cereal may be whole grain-rich, enriched, or fortified. Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce.

Fruits/Vegetables

A serving of vegetable or fruit, or full-strength vegetable or fruit juice, or an equivalent quantity of any combination of these foods may be served in the afterschool snack service. Juice must not be served when fluid milk is served as the only other component.

Index of Resources

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