

# Menu Planning Guidance for Preschoolers in the Afterschool Snack Program

This guidance applies to preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). For more information, see the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) handouts, *ASP Meal Pattern for Preschoolers* and *Menu Planning Guidance for Preschoolers in the ASP*. For detailed guidance on the ASP meal pattern requirements for preschoolers, see the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.



The USDA's final rule, *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (81 FR 24348), and the [final rule corrections](#) (81 FR 75671), updated the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for preschoolers, effective October 1, 2017. The NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for preschoolers are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children.

## Healthy Food Certification Requirements

In addition to meeting the meal pattern requirements, ASP snacks served to preschoolers in public schools that choose the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification (HFC) under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS). For more information, visit the CSDE's [HFC](#), [CNS](#), and [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpages.

## Meal Pattern Requirements

School food authorities (SFAs) must ensure that snack menus provide the required food components and serving sizes in the ASP meal pattern for preschoolers. The five snack components include milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains. Snack menus must include any two of the five components. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving a vegetable or fruit for at least one snack component. Offer versus serve (OVS) does not apply to the ASP.



SFAs should use the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) to determine food yields and crediting information. For processed commercial foods, SFAs must obtain the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label (if available) or product formulation statement (PFS) to determine crediting information. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program*, *Product Formulation Statements*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*.

# Menu Planning Guidance for Preschoolers in the ASP

The guidance below assists SFAs with planning snack menus to meet the ASP meal pattern for preschoolers. Menu planning forms for ages 1-2 and 3-4 are available under “Menu Forms” in the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s ASP webpage. For additional guidance, see the CSDE’s [ASP](#) and [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages.

## Milk Component

The milk component includes only fluid milk. Milk must be pasteurized, meet all state and local requirements, and contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The ASP meal pattern for preschoolers requires unflavored whole milk for age 1 and unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk for ages 2-4. Flavored milk cannot be served to preschoolers. For more information, see the USDA’s handout, [Serving Milk in the CACFP](#).

- **Milk variety:** A variety of milk is not required. SFAs may serve one type of unflavored milk to all children.
- **Serving size:** The minimum serving size is 4 fluid ounces (½ cup) of milk.
- **Nondairy milk substitutes:** Nondairy milk substitutes, such as soy milk, must meet the USDA’s nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs](#).
- **Crediting restrictions:** SFAs cannot serve milk when juice is the only other snack component. Milk does not credit when cooked in cereals, puddings, cream sauces, or other foods, e.g., quiche and macaroni and cheese.

## Meat/Meat Alternates

The meat/meat alternates component includes cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish; cheese; cottage cheese; beans and peas (legumes); eggs; nut and seed butters; nuts and seeds; commercial tofu that contains at least 5 grams of protein in 2.2 ounces; tempeh; surimi; alternate protein products (APPs); and yogurt (including soy yogurt) that contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces. The USDA’s [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese.

- **Serving size:** The ASP preschool meal pattern lists the meat/meat alternates component in ounces instead of ounce equivalents. The amount of a food that provides 1 ounce equivalent or 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component is the same. The minimum serving size is ½ ounce of the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients.

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- Meats without added liquids, binders, and extenders credit on an ounce-per-ounce basis (actual serving weight), e.g., 1 ounce of meat provides 1 ounce of meat/meat alternates.
- Meat products with added liquids, binders, and extenders (such as water, broth, modified food starch, carrageenan, and soy flour) credit based on the percentage of meat in the product formula, as documented by the manufacturer's product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Product Formulation Statements](#).
- **Legumes:** Legumes (cooked dry beans and peas) credit based on volume. Two tablespoons ( $\frac{1}{8}$  cup) of legumes credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. The serving size refers to the amount of cooked legumes without any added liquid, such as the sauce in baked beans. For example, a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -cup serving of baked beans that contains sauce and pork fat does not provide the full-required  $\frac{1}{8}$ -cup serving of the meat/meat alternates component. Legumes credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or vegetables component, but not both in the same snack. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- **Pasta products made of 100 percent legume flours:** Pasta products made of 100 percent legume flours (such as chick pea flour or lentil flour) credit as the meat/meat alternates component based on volume. A  $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of cooked pasta made of 100 percent legume flours credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Legume pasta credits as either the meat/meat alternates component or vegetables component, but not both in the same snack. The requirements for crediting these pasta products are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019 and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Cheese:** A  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce serving of natural cheese (e.g., Colby, Monterey Jack, and Swiss) or process cheese (e.g., American) credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. A 1-ounce ( $\frac{1}{8}$  cup) serving of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food or cheese spread, and cheese substitutes credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, and cheese spread substitute must meet the FDA's standard of identity for substitute foods and must be labeled as "cheese substitute," "cheese food substitute," or "cheese spread substitute." Imitation cheese and cheese products do not credit.
- **Nuts and seeds:** Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. A  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce serving of nuts and seeds credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Acorn, chestnut, and coconut do not credit. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#).

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- **Nut and seed butters:** Creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter must meet the FDA's standards of identity for peanut butter (21 CFR 164.150), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts. The serving size for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons), not weight (ounces). One tablespoon of nut or seed butter credits as ½ ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP*.
- **Alternate protein products (APPs):** APPs must meet the requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). SFAs must obtain documentation from the manufacturer that the product meets the APP criteria. Acceptable documentation includes a CN label, PFS, or signed letter from a company official attesting that the APP meets the USDA's requirements. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Requirements for Alternate Protein Products*, and the USDA's handout, *Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products*.
- **Dried meat, poultry, and seafood products:** Jerky, dried meat sticks, and similar products require a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to document the meat/meat alternates contribution. SFAs must evaluate the product's PFS to ensure that it complies with the USDA's three crediting principles: 1) The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must match or have a similar description as the ingredient listed in the product's ingredients statement; 2) the creditable meat ingredient listed on the product's PFS must have a similar description to a food item in the FBG; and 3) the creditable amount cannot exceed the finished weight of the product (i.e., the cooked weight ready for serving). **Note:** Fat content must be 30 percent or less for ground beef or ground pork to credit in Child Nutrition Programs. Products that do not indicate the fat percentage do not credit. The requirements for crediting dried meat are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting dried meat products, review the USDA's webinar, *Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products*.
- **Tofu:** Commercial tofu and tofu products must be easily recognizable as meat substitutes, such as a tofu burger or tofu sausage. A product that contains at least 5 grams of protein in a 2.2-ounce serving by weight (¼ cup volume equivalent) credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP*.
- **Surimi seafood:** Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood usually made from pollock (fish). A 2-ounce serving of surimi seafood credits as ½ ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must obtain a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to credit surimi seafood differently. The requirements for crediting surimi are summarized in

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USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: *Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs*. For additional guidance on crediting surimi, review the USDA's webinar, *Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi*.

- **Tempeh:** Tempeh is a fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. A ½-ounce serving of tempeh credits as ½ ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If a tempeh product contains other ingredients, SFAs must obtain a CN label or PFS to document crediting information. The requirements for crediting tempeh are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: \*Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs\*](#). For additional guidance on crediting tempeh, review the USDA's webinar, *Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi*.
- **Yogurt:** Yogurt includes plain yogurt, flavored yogurt, yogurt with added fruit (either blended or on the bottom), and soy yogurt. Yogurt cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce). The required serving size for yogurt is based on volume (cups) or weight (ounces) and is the same for all types, flavors, and fat contents. A ¼-cup serving (volume) or 2 ounces (weight) credits as ½ ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. To increase nutrient variety, SFAs should not serve yogurt when milk is the only other snack component. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.
- **Commercial products:** SFAs must ensure that commercial products (such as dried meat sticks, pizza, chicken nuggets, and cheese ravioli) provide the required amount of the components being credited. For example, to credit a commercial pizza as ½ ounce of the meat/meat alternates component, the product's CN label or manufacturer's PFS must indicate that the pizza contains at least 1 ounce of cheese per serving. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program*, *Product Formulation Statements*, *Accepting Processed Product Documentation*, and *Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP*.
- **Noncreditable meat/meat alternates:** Examples of foods that do not credit include, but are not limited to: bacon; commercial canned soups, e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice; cream cheese; drinkable yogurt; egg whites; frozen yogurt; imitation cheese; products made with tofu that are not easily recognized as meat substitutes; sour cream; tofu that contains less than 5 grams of protein in 2.2-ounce serving by weight; yogurt that contains more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces; and yogurt in commercial smoothies. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.

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## Vegetables Component

Vegetables include fresh, frozen, canned, and rehydrated dried vegetables; and pasteurized full-strength vegetable juice. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. For example, a serving of canned corn cannot include the water in which it is packed, and a serving of baked beans cannot include the sauce in which it is packed. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes) credit when rehydrated if the product's PFS provides specific documentation on the amount of vegetables per serving. Dried vegetables used for seasonings, such as dried onion and dried parsley, do not credit.

The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends at least one serving per week of dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas (legumes), starchy vegetables, and other vegetables. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP*.

- **Serving size:** The minimum serving size is ½ cup. Vegetables credit based on the volume served, except for raw leafy greens such as spinach and lettuce, which credit as half the volume served. For example, ½ cup of raw leafy greens credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component. Consult the FBG for yields of specific vegetables. SFAs must obtain a PFS (or CN label, if available) to document the crediting of processed commercial combination foods that contain vegetables, such as vegetable egg rolls and hummus.
- **Legumes:** Legumes credit based on the volume served. The serving size refers to the amount of cooked legumes without any added liquid, such as the sauce in baked beans. For example, a ½-cup serving of baked beans that contains sauce and pork fat does not provide the full-required ½-cup serving for preschoolers. Legumes credit as either the vegetables component or meat/meat alternates component, but not both in the same snack. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP*.
- **Pasta made of vegetable flours:** Pasta made of one or more vegetable flours credits as the vegetables component. A ½-cup serving of pasta made of 100 percent vegetable flour credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component. If the pasta product contains other non-vegetable ingredients, SFAs must obtain a PFS to document the crediting information for the actual volume of vegetable flours per serving. Grain-based pasta products that contain small amounts of vegetable powder for color, such as spinach pasta or sun-dried tomato pasta, do not credit. The requirements for crediting pasta products made of vegetable flours are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 26-2019](#), [CACFP 13-2019](#) and [SFSP 12-2019](#): *Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*.
- **Vegetables with added ingredients:** If a menu item or recipe contains added ingredients (such as mayonnaise, salad dressing, sugar, butter, and sauce), only the vegetable portion credits toward the ASP meal pattern. Examples include baked beans with sauce and pork fat, carrot-raisin salad, coleslaw, potato salad, macaroni salad, and mashed potatoes. For example, a ½-cup serving of potato salad must contain ½ cup of potatoes, excluding added ingredients such as mayonnaise and seasonings.

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- **Vegetable juice:** Vegetable juice must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice or a combination of vegetable and fruit juices. Vegetable juice counts with all other juices toward the daily juice limit of no more than one serving per day. For more information, see “Juice” under the “Fruits Component” below.
- **Noncreditable vegetables:** Examples of foods that do not credit include, but are not limited to: chili sauce; dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning; cream vegetable soups (e.g., cream of broccoli and cream of mushroom); home-canned products (for food safety reasons); ketchup; pickle relish; and snack-type foods made from vegetables such as potato chips.

### Fruits Component

Fruits include fresh, frozen, canned (in light syrup, water, or fruit juice), and dried fruits; and pasteurized full-strength fruit juice. The USDA’s *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice. Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables, which provide fiber, fewer calories, and more nutrients.



- **Serving size:** The minimum serving size is  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. Fruits credit based on the volume served, except for dried fruit such as raisins and mixed dried fruit, which credits as twice the volume served. For example,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of raisins credits as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the fruits component. Consult the FBG for the yields and crediting of specific fruits. SFAs must obtain a PFS (or CN label, if available) to document the crediting of processed commercial combination foods that contain fruits.
- **Juice:** Juice must be pasteurized full-strength (100 percent) fruit juice, vegetable juice, or combination. It can be fresh, frozen, or made from concentrate.
  - Pasteurized full-strength juice (fruit, vegetable, or combination) can meet the vegetables or fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day. The juice limit includes all fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For more information, see the CSDE’s handouts, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP* and *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.
  - The meal pattern contribution of frozen fruit juice (such as full-strength frozen juice pops) is based on the fluid volume prior to freezing. Menu planners must request this information from the manufacturer. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, *Product Formulation Statements*.

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- Juice blends (combination of full-strength fruit juices or full-strength fruit and vegetable juices) credit based on the first ingredient. If the first ingredient is a fruit juice, the juice blend credits as the fruits component. If the first ingredient is a vegetable juice, the juice blend credits as the vegetables component.
- **Canned fruit:** A serving of canned fruit may include the 100 percent juice in which the fruit is packed, but cannot include water or syrup. The juice from canned fruit counts toward the preschool juice limit if the SFA credits the juice toward the fruits component. Juice from canned fruit does not count toward the preschool juice limit if the SFA plans the juice as an extra food that does not credit toward the preschool meal patterns. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.
- **Whole fruits:** The meal pattern contribution of whole fresh fruit varies depending on the type and size (count pack) of the fruit. To credit an individual piece of fresh fruit (whole or cut-up) as the full fruits component, one piece must provide  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit. Since some types of fresh fruit provide less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit, SFAs must ensure that one piece provides the full-required serving. For example, a clementine credits as  $\frac{3}{8}$  cup of the fruits component, which is less than the full-required  $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving. A snack menu with one clementine would require an additional  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of fruit to credit as the fruits component. In this example, students must take both fruit items to count as the full serving of the fruits component. OVS is not allowed in the ASP. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Serving Sizes for Vegetables and Fruits for Preschoolers in the ASP*.
- **Coconut:** Fresh and frozen coconut credit as the fruits component based on the volume served. Dried coconut credits the same as other dried fruit, i.e., as twice the volume served. Coconut flour, coconut oil, and coconut milk do not credit. Coconut water labeled as 100 percent juice credits based on the volume served, but must be included when determining if the menu meets the preschool juice limit. Coconut is high in calories and saturated fat, and should be limited in ASP menus. The requirements for crediting coconut are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 34-2019](#), [CACFP 15-2019](#) and [SFSP 15-2019](#): *Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Corn Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*.
- **Noncreditable fruits:** Examples of foods that do not credit include, but are not limited to: fruit snacks (e.g., fruit roll-ups, fruit leathers, fruit wrinkles, fruit twists, yogurt-covered fruit snacks); banana chips; home-canned products (for food safety reasons); jams, jellies, and preserves; and juice drinks that are not 100 percent juice such as grape juice drink, orange juice drink, pineapple-grapefruit drink, cranberry juice cocktail, and lemonade.

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## Grains Component

The grains component includes a wide variety of products, such as breads, biscuits, bagels, rolls, tortillas, and muffins; snack products, such as crackers (including animal crackers and graham crackers), hard pretzels, hard bread sticks, and tortilla chips; cereal grains, such as buckwheat, brown rice, bulgur, and quinoa; ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals; cooked breakfast cereals (instant and regular), such as oatmeal, farina, and cream of wheat; bread products used as an ingredient in another menu item, such as combination foods, e.g., breading on fish or poultry and pizza crust in pizza; and pasta products, such as macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, orzo, and couscous.

- **Creditable grains:** Creditable grains are whole grains, enriched grains, bran and germ. **Note:** Bran and germ credit in the preschool meal patterns for the NSLP, SBP and ASP; and in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. However, they do not credit in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. Products that are 100 percent whole grain, such as whole-wheat bread and brown rice, provide the best nutrition and should be served most often. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#).
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- **WGR requirement:** At least one serving of grains per day must be WGR, between all meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers. The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. For the preschool meal patterns, WGR foods contain 100 percent whole grains or contain a blend of whole grains (at least 50 percent) and enriched grains. A commercial food meets the preschool WGR criteria if a whole grain is listed as the first ingredient (or second after water), and the next two grain ingredients (if any) are whole grains, enriched grains, bran, or germ. A food made on site meets the preschool WGR criteria if the combined weight of all whole grains is equal to or greater than the combined weight of all enriched grains in the SFA's standardized recipe. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, [Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#) and [Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: [Grain Requirements in the CACFP: Questions and Answers](#). For best nutrition, serve whole grains most often.
  - **Serving the same grains to preschoolers and grades K-12:** The crediting and WGR criteria for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns are different for preschoolers and grades K-12. Except for grain-based desserts, grain foods that meet the crediting and WGR criteria for grades K-12 will also meet the preschool crediting and WGR criteria. However, grain foods that meet the preschool crediting and WGR criteria may or may not meet the crediting and WGR criteria for grades K-12. If SFAs serve the same grain foods to grades K-12 and

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preschoolers, these foods must comply with the crediting and WGR criteria for grades K-12. If SFAs serve the same cooked and RTE breakfast cereals to grades K-12 and preschoolers, these cereals must meet the crediting and WGR criteria for grades K-12 and the preschool sugar limit. SFAs cannot serve the same grain-based desserts to grades K-12 and preschoolers because grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns. The only exceptions to these requirements are when SFAs choose to follow: the K-5 meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-5 who eat in the same service area at the same time; or the ASP K-12 meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-12 who eat in the same service area at the same time. For more information on the meal pattern requirements for preschoolers and grade K-12 eating together, see section 1 of CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*, and *USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers*. For information on the differences between the grains component for preschoolers and grades K-12, see the CSDE's handout, *Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs*.

- **Serving size:** Through September 30, 2021, the required preschool amount for the grains component is  $\frac{1}{2}$  serving. All grain menu items must meet the minimum weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for the appropriate grain group in the USDA's grain servings chart, or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. To credit as  $\frac{1}{2}$  serving, foods in groups A-G must contain 7.38 grams of creditable grains and foods in groups H-I must contain 13 grams of creditable grains. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Grain Serving Sizes for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP* and *Calculation Methods for Grain Servings for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.

The USDA's grain servings chart applies to all creditable commercial grain products. SFAs may also use this chart for creditable grain foods made on site, if the standardized recipe indicates the weight of the prepared (cooked) serving. If the standardized recipe does not provide this information, the SFA must calculate the average weight per serving by weighing at least four samples of the cooked product. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Yield Study Data Form*.

**Note:** Effective October 1, 2021, the required preschool amount for the grains component is  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce equivalent. All grain menu items must meet the minimum weight (groups A-G) or volume (groups H-I) for the appropriate grain group in the USDA's ounce equivalents chart, or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. To credit as  $\frac{1}{2}$  serving, foods in groups A-G must contain 8 grams of creditable grains and foods in groups H-I must contain 14 grams of creditable grains. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Whole Grain-rich Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.

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- **Breakfast cereals (cooked and RTE):** To credit as the grain component, breakfast cereals must list a creditable grain as the first ingredient or be fortified; and must meet the preschool sugar limit (no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce). To be WGR, breakfast cereals must list a whole grain as the first ingredient; be fortified; and meet the preschool sugar limit. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Preschool Meals in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#).
  - **Serving size for cooked breakfast cereals (group H):** Through September 30, 2021, the required preschool serving is  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cooked or 13 grams dry. Effective October 1, 2021, the required preschool amount is  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce equivalent ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cooked or 14 grams dry).
  - **Serving size for RTE breakfast cereals (group I):** Through September 30, 2021, the required preschool serving is  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup or  $\frac{1}{3}$  ounce for ages 1-2; and  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup or  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce for ages 3-4. Effective October 1, 2021, the required preschool amount is  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce equivalent, which equals  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of flaked or round cereal,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of puffed cereal, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of granola.
- **Grain-based desserts:** Except for sweet crackers (such as graham crackers and animal crackers), grain-based desserts do not credit in the ASP preschool meal pattern. Examples include cookies, sweet pie crusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. The CSDE recommends not serving sweet crackers more than twice per week between all preschool meals and ASP snacks. For more information, see the USDA's handout, [Grain-Based Desserts in the CACFP](#), and [USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

### Noncreditable Foods

Noncreditable foods do not credit in the ASP meal pattern for preschoolers. Examples include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, fruit roll-ups, and condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter). Some noncreditable foods may be offered as extra foods, e.g., maple syrup on pancakes, salad dressing on tossed greens, and condiments such as ketchup or mustard on sandwiches. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#).

- Water does not credit as a snack component. SFAs may offer water in addition to, but not in place of, the two required snack components. If milk or juice is one of the two snack components, SFAs cannot offer a choice between water and milk or juice. **Note:** The [Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act](#) requires that SFAs must make drinking water available to children at no charge where meals are served during the meal service, including the ASP. However, SFAs cannot promote or offer water or any other beverage as an alternative selection to fluid milk throughout the food service area. For more information, see [USDA](#)

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[Memo SP 49-2016 and CACFP 18-2016: Resources for Making Potable Water Available in Schools and Child Care Facilities](#), [USDA Memo SP 28-2011: Water Availability During National School Lunch Program Meal Service](#), and [USDA Memo SP 19-2018: Clarification on the Milk and Water Requirements in the School Meal Programs](#).

- Snack menus that include a noncreditable food must also include the full serving of at least two creditable food components. For example, a snack menu of strawberry gelatin (noncreditable food), whole-grain crackers (grains/breads component), and low-fat unflavored milk (milk component) contains three items but only two components. This snack is only reimbursable if the milk and crackers provide the minimum required serving.
- To ensure that ASP snacks meet children’s nutritional needs, the CSDE encourages SFAs to use discretion when serving noncreditable foods. Noncreditable foods are typically higher in added sugar, saturated fats, and sodium; and contain few nutrients. Menu planners should read labels, be aware of the ingredients in foods, and limit the frequency and amount of less nutritious choices.

### Resources

Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program>

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPHandbook.pdf>

Afterschool Snack Program Meal Pattern for Preschoolers (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPmealpatternpreschool.pdf>

Afterschool Snack Program Menu Form for Ages 1-2 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/Forms/ASPmenuform12.doc>

Afterschool Snack Program Menu Form for Ages 3-4 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/Forms/ASPmenuform34.doc>

Afterschool Snack Program Sample Menu for Ages 3-4 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/Forms/ASPmenuform34.pdf>

Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Milksub.pdf>

CACFP Best Practices (USDA):

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP\\_factBP.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP_factBP.pdf)

CACFP Training Tools (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-training-tools>

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Calculation Methods for Grain Servings for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/GrainCalcPreschool.pdf>

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CNlabel.pdf>

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPComparisonPreschoolK12.pdf>

Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Connecticut-Nutrition-Standards>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditMMA.pdf>

Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditDeli.pdf>

Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditEnrichedGrains.pdf>

Crediting Foods in Preschool Meals (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditTofu.pdf>

Crediting Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know! Webinar Series (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-updates-child-nutrition-programs-be-know-webinar-series>

Crediting Whole Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditWholeGrains.pdf>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Grain Ounce Equivalents for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP

(effective October 1, 2021) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Preschoolozeq.pdf>

Grain Servings for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP

(through September 30, 2021) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/PreschoolGrains.pdf>

Healthy Food Certification (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Healthy-Food-Certification>

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How to Identify Creditable Grains for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/IdentifyCreditableGrainsPreschool.pdf>

List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/List-of-Acceptable-Foods-and-Beverages>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/mpgpreschool.pdf>

Noncreditable Foods for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Noncredpreschool.pdf>

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/APPREq.pdf>

Serving Sizes for Vegetables and Fruits for Preschoolers in the ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/aspVFservingpreschool.pdf>

USDA Final Rule (81 FR 24348): Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fr-042516>

USDA Final Rule (84 FR 50287): Delayed Implementation of Grains Ounce Equivalents in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/09/25/2019-20808/delayed-implementation-of-grains-ounce-equivalents-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Final Rule Corrections (81 FR 75671): Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

USDA Memo CACFP 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo CACFP 09-2017: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-cacfp-qas>

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USDA Memo CACFP 09-2018: Grain Requirements in the CACFP: Questions and Answers

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-requirements-cacfp-questions-and-answers>

USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp>

USDA Memo CACFP 16-2017: Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/grain-based-desserts-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>

USDA Memo SP 23-2019, CACFP 10-2019 and SFSP 9-2019: Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-popcorn-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<http://https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019 and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019 and SFSP 15-2019: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-coconut-hominy-corn-masa-and-corn-flour-child-nutrition-programs>

# Menu Planning Guidance for Preschoolers in the ASP



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For more information, review the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for Preschool Meals in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#) and visit the CSDE's [ASP](#) and [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, 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 handout is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPmenuguidancepreschool.pdf>.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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