

Crediting Juice for Grades K-12

in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies only to grades K-12 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. For additional guidance on crediting juice for grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP, see the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).

For information on crediting juice for grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, see the CSDE's [Afterschool Snack Program Handbook](#). For information on crediting juice for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO, see the CSDE's handout, [Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#).



Juice served in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and ASP must be pasteurized full-strength 100 percent fruit juice, vegetable juice, or a combination of fruit and vegetable juices. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “100 percent juice,” “reconstituted juice,” or “juice from concentrate.” The statements “natural” and “organic” do not indicate that a juice is full strength.

Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables. School food authorities (SFAs) should serve whole fruits and vegetables most often, as recommended by the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).

Crediting Juice Concentrates

Juice concentrates credit only when reconstituted with water to 100 percent full-strength juice and served in the form of juice. Foods made with juice concentrate, such as gelatin or sherbet, do not credit as juice because they are no longer in the form of juice.



Juice made from concentrate is reconstituted with a volume of water that is several times the amount of the juice concentrate. A typical reconstitution ratio might be three parts water to one part concentrate, but this ratio may vary for different juice products. Commercial juice products made from concentrate will list “water” as the first ingredient followed by the type of juice concentrate, for example, “water, orange juice concentrate” and “filtered water, grape juice concentrate.” Juice made from concentrate that is labeled “100 percent juice” credits when the SFA follows the manufacturer’s specific instructions for reconstituting.

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Crediting Juice Blends

Juice blends credit if they are a combination of full-strength fruit juices, full-strength vegetable juices, or full-strength fruit and vegetable juices. At lunch, 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product credits as the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the “other” or the “additional” vegetables requirement, depending on the needs of the menu planner.

The ingredients statement below shows an example of a vegetable and fruit juice blend. Since the first ingredient is reconstituted vegetable juice blend, this product credits as either the “other” or “additional” vegetables subgroup.

- Ingredients: *Reconstituted vegetable juice blend (water and concentrated juices of sweet potatoes, purple carrots, carrots)*, reconstituted fruit juices (water and concentrated juices of apples, white grapes, cranberries, blackberries), contains less than 2% of: natural flavoring, citric acid, lemon juice.

For information on the vegetable subgroups, see the CSDE’s handout, [Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP](#).

Weekly Juice Limits at Lunch

Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount (cups) of fruits offered at lunch, and vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount (cups) of vegetables offered at lunch. For example, if a five-day lunch menu for grades K-5 offers 2½ cups of the fruits component during the week, the lunch menu may offer up to 1¼ cups of juice during the week. The weekly juice limit includes all sources of 100 percent juice available to students during the week, as listed below.



- **100 percent juice (fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate):** For information on crediting juice from concentrate, see “Crediting Juice Concentrates” on page 1.
- **Frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice:** The meal pattern contribution of frozen juice pops is based on the fluid volume prior to freezing. SFAs must request this information from the manufacturer and maintain on file for documentation.
- **Pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies:** Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice in the meal patterns for the NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SSO. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, [Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).

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- **Juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice:** The meal patterns allow a serving of canned fruit to include the juice in which it is packed. For example, canned peaches ($\frac{3}{8}$ cup) in juice ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup) credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. The juice from canned fruit counts toward the weekly juice limit if the SFA credits the juice toward the fruits component. However, juice from canned fruit does not count toward the weekly juice limit if the SFA plans the juice as an extra food that does not credit toward the meal patterns. For example, if food service personnel portion $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned fruit in a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce container, then add the juice **after** measuring the full $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruit, the juice does not count toward the weekly juice limit. Drained canned fruit and canned fruit in light syrup or water do not count toward the juice limit.

Table 1 shows the weekly juice limits at lunch, based on the minimum servings of the fruits component and vegetables component in the NSLP meal pattern. If SFAs serve larger amounts of fruits and vegetables, the weekly juice limit also increases.

Juice limits for grades K-5 and 6-8

For five-day lunch menus, SFAs may offer a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup portion of fruit juice twice per week and a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup portion of vegetable juice three times per week. For seven-day lunch menus, SFAs may offer a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup portion of fruit juice three times per week and a $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup portion of vegetable juice five times per week. Alternatively, SFAs may serve larger quantities of juice on one or two days if the weekly total complies with the juice limit. For example, a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 could offer 1 cup of fruit juice once per week instead of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice twice per week.

Juice limits for grades 9-12

For five-day and seven-day lunch menus for grades 9-12, SFAs may offer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice each day and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetable juice each day. However, SFAs must be careful not to exceed the weekly calorie limit of the dietary specifications when offering juice daily because juice contains more calories than whole fruits and vegetables. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of grape juice contains 76 calories while $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fresh grapes contains 34 calories; and 1 cup of fresh sliced peaches contains 60 calories while 1 cup of canned sliced peaches in juice contains 109 calories.

Note: For information on the dietary specifications, see the meal patterns for grades K-12 (available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage) and section 6 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).

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Table 1. Weekly limits for fruit and vegetable juice at lunch

Grade group	Five-day week			Seven-day week		
	Required weekly servings of food component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup juice servings	Required weekly servings of food component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup juice servings
Fruits component						
K-5	2½ cups	1¼ cups	2	3½ cups	1¾ cups	3
6-8	2½ cups	1¼ cups	2	3½ cups	1¾ cups	3
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
Vegetables component						
K-5	3¾ cups	1 ⁷ / ₈ cups	3	5¼ cups	2 ⁵ / ₈ cups	5
6-8	3¾ cups	1 ⁷ / ₈ cups	3	5¼ cups	2 ⁵ / ₈ cups	5
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7

Juice limit calculation for lunch

The weekly juice limit is based on the amount of fruits or vegetables that students are allowed to select at a given meal, regardless of the number of options or variety of fruits or vegetables available. SFAs must calculate the lunch menu’s compliance with the weekly juice limit separately for fruits and vegetables.

- **Fruits component:** Divide the total amount (cups) of 100 percent fruit juice that students may select at all lunches during the week by the total amount (cups) of fruits that students may select at all lunches during the week.
- **Vegetables component:** Divide the total amount (cups) of 100 percent vegetable juice that students may select at all lunches during the week by the total amount (cups) of vegetables that students may select at all lunches during the week.

Table 2 shows a sample calculation for determining if a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8 meets the weekly fruit juice limit.

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Table 2. Calculating weekly fruit juice limit for a five-day lunch menu for grades 6-8				
<p>A lunch menu for grades 6-8 offers 1 cup of fruit daily, which is ½ cup more than the minimum daily requirement for the fruits component. Students can select up to two servings from a variety of ½-cup fruit choices, including fresh fruit, drained canned fruit¹, and 100 percent fruit juice. Cafeteria menus and signage instruct students to select two servings of fruit or one serving of fruit and one serving of juice.² This lunch menu meets the weekly juice limit because the amount of juice (2½ cups) offered to students during the week is half of the amount of fruits (5 cups) offered to students during the week.</p>				
<p>1. Calculate total weekly juice offerings: Multiply the total daily amount (cups) of juice that students are allowed to select by the number of days in the week.</p> <p>Students may select one ½-cup serving of fruit daily: ½ cup multiplied by 5 days equals 2½ cups.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #006633; color: white; padding: 5px;">A</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2.5</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">cups</td> </tr> </table>	A	2.5	cups
A	2.5	cups		
<p>2. Calculate total weekly fruit offerings: Multiply the total daily amount (cups) of fruit that students are allowed to select by the number of days in the week.</p> <p>Students may select two ½-cup servings of fruit daily (1 cup total): 1 cup multiplied by 5 days equals 5 cups.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #006633; color: white; padding: 5px;">B</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">5</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">cups</td> </tr> </table>	B	5	cups
B	5	cups		
<p>3. Calculate weekly percentage of juice offerings: Divide A by B and multiply by 100.</p> <p>2½ cups divided by 5 cups equals 0.5 multiplied by 100 equals 50 percent.</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #006633; color: white; padding: 5px;">C</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">50</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">percent</td> </tr> </table>	C	50	percent
C	50	percent		
<p>4. Are the juice offerings 50 percent or less? If “yes,” the menu meets the weekly juice limit.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
<p>¹ In this example, the canned fruit is drained and does not count toward the juice limit. If the menu planner credits the juice from canned fruit toward the fruits component, the juice must also count toward the weekly juice limit.</p> <p>² Students cannot be allowed to choose more than one serving (½ cup) of juice because this would exceed the weekly juice limit.</p>				

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Required Signage for Lunch and Breakfast

Cafeteria menus and signage must clearly indicate the specific amount of fruits, vegetables, and juice that students may select with each meal, for example, “choose one fruit and one juice” or “choose up to two servings of fruit (no more than one juice).” For guidance on signage, see “Meal Identification Signage” in the CSDE’s guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*, and review the CSDE’s guide, *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*.

Weekly Juice Limit at Breakfast

Fruit juice together with vegetable juice (including fruit/vegetable juice blends) cannot exceed half of the total amount (cups) of fruits and vegetables offered at breakfast during the week. Table 3 shows the maximum weekly contribution of juice at breakfast, based on the minimum serving of the fruits component in the SBP meal pattern. SFAs may serve ½ cup of juice daily because the SBP meal pattern requires 1 cup of fruits daily for all grade groups. If SFAs serve larger amounts of fruits and vegetables, the weekly juice limit also increases.

Table 3. Weekly limits for juice at breakfast ¹

Grade group	Five-day week			Seven-day week		
	Required weekly servings of fruits component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup servings	Required weekly servings of fruits component	Maximum weekly juice contribution (50 percent)	Maximum weekly ½-cup servings
K-5	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
6-8	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7
9-12	5 cups	2½ cups	5	7 cups	3½ cups	7

¹ The SBP meal pattern does not require the vegetables component. SFAs may substitute vegetables (including juice) from the dark green, red/orange, legumes, and “other” subgroups for the fruits component at any time.

Juice limit calculation for breakfast

SFAs must calculate the breakfast menu’s compliance with the weekly juice limit by dividing the total amount (cups) of fruit juice and vegetable juice that students may select at all breakfasts during the week by the total amount (cups) of fruits (and vegetables, if offered) that students may select at all breakfasts during the week. When calculating the total amount of juice available at breakfast during the week, menu planners must include 100 percent juice (fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate), frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice, juice in canned fruit, and pureed fruits/vegetables in smoothies. For a sample calculation, see table 2 on page 4.

Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Resources

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

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

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Product Formulation Statement for Vegetables and Fruits (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Documenting_Vegetables_Subgroups_Fruits.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

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

Sample Completed Product Formulation Statement for Fruits (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFSsamplefruits.pdf>

Sample Completed Product Formulation Statement for Vegetables (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFSsamplevegetables.pdf>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP (CSDE):

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

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For more information, review the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12* and visit the CSDE's *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* and *Crediting Foods 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 document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuice.pdf>.

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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
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- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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