

# Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Afterschool Snack Program

This guidance applies to preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) School Breakfast Program (SBP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. For information on crediting juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO, see the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) handout, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#). For information on crediting juice for grades K-12 in the ASP, see the CSDE’s [Afterschool Snack Program Handbook](#). For additional guidance on preschool meals and ASP snacks, see the CSDE’s guide, [Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#).



Juice served to preschoolers 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 Fruit and Vegetable 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. Juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product contributes to the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product contributes to the vegetables requirement. For example, the product below credits toward the vegetables component because the first ingredient is a vegetable juice blend.

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.

## Juice Limit

Full-strength juice can meet the vegetables component or fruits component at only one preschool meal or snack per day, between all meals and ASP snacks served to preschoolers in the school. Lunch cannot contain a serving of juice as the fruits component and a serving of juice as the vegetables component. The daily juice limit includes all sources of 100 percent juice 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, which must be indicated in the manufacturer’s documentation. SFAs must maintain this documentation on file.
- **Pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies:** Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice in the preschool meal patterns. **Note:** Lunch cannot contain a serving of juice as the fruits component and a serving of juice as the vegetables component. For example, if the preschool lunch menu includes a smoothie made with pureed strawberries, vegetable juice cannot credit as the vegetables component. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, [Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#).
- **Juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice:** The juice from canned fruit counts toward the daily juice limit if the SFA credits the juice toward the fruits component. The juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if the SFA plans the juice as an extra food that does not credit toward the preschool meal patterns. For example, the juice from canned fruit does not count toward the daily juice limit if food service personnel

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portion  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of canned fruit in a 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce container and add the juice after measuring the full  $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruit. Drained canned fruit and canned fruit in light syrup or water do not count toward the juice limit.

If a preschool meal or ASP snack includes any type of juice as the fruits component or vegetables component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at any other preschool meal or ASP snack that day. For example, if the breakfast menu includes juice as the fruits component, canned fruit in juice cannot credit as the fruits component at lunch or ASP snack. If the ASP snack menu includes a smoothie as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast or lunch.

If the daily preschool menu already meets the juice limit, the SFA could choose to offer juice as an extra noncreditable food that does not count toward the preschool meal patterns. However, the USDA encourages SFAs to limit juice in preschool menus to ensure that meals meet preschoolers' nutrition needs. Preschoolers might not consume the actual meal components if the menu includes noncreditable foods. In addition, SFAs must consider the cost issues of providing noncreditable foods. The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving a variety of fruits and choosing whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.



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## Resources

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

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

Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/ComparisonPreschoolK12.pdf>

Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP (CSDE):

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

Product Formulation Statement for Vegetables and Fruits (USDA):

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS\\_Documenting\\_Vegetables\\_Subgroups\\_Fruits.pdf](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 CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/VegGroupCACFP.pdf>

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For more information, review the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuicePreschool.pdf>.

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- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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