

School Lunch
FOR THE WIN



Menu Planning PACKET

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS (NSLP/SBP)

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Breakfast Overview_(SBP)

FOR THE MOST COMMON AGE/GRADE GROUPINGS

At breakfast, sponsors may plan menus for grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 or combine breakfast menus for grades K-8, K-12, or 6-12.

Combined K-8 Breakfast Meal Pattern:

- Minimum daily fruit/100% fruit juice requirement: 1 cup
 - May substitute vegetable/100% vegetable juice
- Minimum daily milk requirement: 8 fl. oz. (1 cup)
- Minimum daily grain and/or meat/meat alternate requirement: 1 oz. equivalent (minimum of 8 oz. eq./week)
- Other dietary specifications based on weekly average: 400-500 calories; ≤540 mg sodium; <10% total calories from saturated fat

Combined K-12 Breakfast Meal Pattern:

- Minimum daily fruit/100% fruit juice requirement: 1 cup
 - May substitute vegetable/100% vegetable juice
- Minimum daily milk requirement: 8 fl. oz. (1 cup)
- Minimum daily grain and/or meat/meat alternate requirement: 1 oz. equivalent (minimum of 9 oz. eq./week)
- Other dietary specifications based on **weekly** average: 450-500 calories; ≤540 sodium; <10% total calories from saturated fat

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM	SODIUM TIMELINE & LIMITS	
Age/Grade Group	In place through June 30, 2027 (mg)	Must be implemented by July 1, 2027 (mg)
K-5	≤540	≤485
6-8	≤600	≤535
9-12	≤640	≤570

Lunch Overview^(NSLP)

FOR THE MOST COMMON AGE/GRADE GROUPINGS

At lunch, sponsors may combine menus for grades K-8, but must submit a separate menu for grades 9-12.

Combined K-8 Lunch Meal Pattern:

- Minimum daily fruit requirement: ½ cup
- Minimum daily vegetable requirement: ¾ cup
(*must also meet all weekly vegetable subgroups requirements)
- Minimum daily milk requirement: 8 fl. oz. (1 cup)
- Minimum daily grain requirement: 1 oz. equivalent
(minimum of 8 oz. eq./week)
- Minimum daily Meats/Meat Alternates (M/MA) requirement: 1 oz. equivalent (minimum of 9 oz. eq./week)
- Other dietary specifications based on **weekly** average: 600-650 calories; ≤1,110 mg sodium; <10% total calories from saturated fat

Grades 9-12 Lunch Meal Pattern:

- Minimum daily fruit requirement: 1 cup
- Minimum daily vegetable requirement: 1 cup
(*must also meet all weekly vegetable subgroups requirements)
- Minimum daily milk requirement: 8 fl. oz. (1 cup)
- Minimum daily grain requirement: 2 oz. equivalent
(minimum of 10 oz. eq./week)
- Minimum daily M/MA requirement: 2 oz. equivalent
(minimum of 10 oz. eq./week)
- Other dietary specifications based on **weekly** average: 750-850 calories; ≤1,280 mg sodium; <10% total calories from saturated fat

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM	SODIUM TIMELINE & LIMITS	
Age/Grade Group	In place through June 30, 2027 (mg)	Must be implemented by July 1, 2027 (mg)
K-5	≤1,110	≤935
6-8	≤1,225	≤1,035
9-12	≤1,280	≤1,080

LINKS TO ASSIST WITH PLANNING NUTRITIOUS SCHOOL MENUS:

- [Food Buying Guide for School Meal Programs](#)
- [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [Whole Grain Resource](#)
- [CN Labels and Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statements](#)
- [Offer vs. Serve Guidance](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) for NSLP](#)



	BREAKFAST MEAL PATTERN		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Meal Pattern	Amount of Food ^a Per Week (Minimum Per Day)		
Fruits and/or Vegetables (cups) ^{b,c}	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Grains and/or Meat/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.)	7 (1) ^{g,h}	8 (1) ^{g,h}	9 (1) ^{g,h}
Fluid Milk (cups) ^j	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^{i,j}	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^j	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (mg) ^j (Target 1 effective through SY 2026-27)	< 540	< 600	< 640
Sodium (mg) ^j (Limit effective July 1, 2027)	< 485	< 485	< 570
	LUNCH MEAL PATTERN		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Meal Pattern	Amount of Food ^a Per Week (Minimum Per Day)		
Fruits (cups) ^{b,c}	2 ½ (1)	2 ½ (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{b,c}	3 ¾ (¾)	3 ¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark Green ^d	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^d	¾	¾	1 ¼
Beans, Peas, and Lentils ^d	½	½	½
Starchy ^d	½	½	½
Other ^{d,e}	½	½	¾
Additional Veg to Reach Total ^f	1	1	1 ½
Grains (oz. eq.)	8 (1) ^g	8 (1) ^g	10 (2) ^g
Meat/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.)	8 (1)	9 (1)	10 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups) ^j	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^{i,j}	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^j	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (mg) ^j (Target 1A effective through SY 2026-27)	< 1,110	< 1,225	< 1,280
Sodium (mg) ^j (Limit effective July 1, 2027)	< 935	< 1,035	< 1,080

- * Effective July 1, 2025, product-based limits on added sugars must be in place, including:**
- Flavored milk must contain no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces.
 - Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.
 - Yogurt must contain no more than 8 grams of added sugars per 4 ounces (1/2 cup).

- a Food items included in each food group and subgroup and amount equivalents.
- b Minimum creditable serving is 1/8 cup. One quarter-cup of dried fruit counts as 1/2 cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as 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 may substitute vegetables for fruit at breakfast as described in §220.8(c).
- d Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served.
- e This category consists of "Other vegetables" as defined in §210.10(c)(2)(iii)(E). For the purposes of the NSLP, "Other vegetables" requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroups as defined in §210.10(c)(2)(iii).
- f Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.
- g At least 80% of the grains offered in the SBP & NSLP must be whole grain rich as defined in §210.2. All remaining grains items offered must be enriched. Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.
- h Schools may offer grains, meat/meat alternates, or a combination of both at breakfast to meet the daily and weekly ounce equivalents for this combined component.
- i The average daily amount of calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).
- j Discretionary sources of calories* (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories.
- k. At breakfast and lunch, fluid milk may be flavored or unflavored whole, reduced fat/2%, low-fat/1%, and fat-free/skim, or nondairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk.

AfterSchool Snack

MEAL PATTERN

SELECT TWO OF THE FIVE COMPONENTS FOR A REIMBURSABLE SNACK

FOOD COMPONENTS AND FOOD ITEMS ¹	CHILDREN AGES 1 and 2	CHILDREN AGES 3-5	CHILDREN AGES 6-18
	Minimum Quantities	Minimum Quantities	Minimum Quantities²
FLUID MILK³	4 fl. oz (1/2 cup)	4 fl. oz (1/2 cup)	8 fl. oz (1 cup)
MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE^{4, 5, 6, 7}			
Lean meat or poultry or fish ⁴ or	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Alternate protein products ⁵ or	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Cheese or	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Egg (large) or	1/2 large egg	1/2 large egg	1/2 large egg
Cooked dry beans or peas or	1/8 cup	1/8 cup	1/4 cup
Peanut or other nut or seed butters or	1 Tbsp.	1 Tbsp.	2 Tbsp.
Nuts and/or seeds ⁶ or	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz
Yogurt ⁷	2 oz or 1/4 cup	2 oz or 1/4 cup	4 oz or 1/2 cup
VEGETABLES			
And/or pasteurized, full-strength juice ^{1, 8}	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
FRUITS			
And/or pasteurized, full-strength juice ^{1, 8}	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
GRAINS/BREADS^{9, 10, 11, 12, 13}			
Bread or	1/2 oz eq ¹¹	1/2 oz eq ¹¹	1 oz eq ¹¹
Cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or	1/2 oz eq ¹¹	1/2 oz eq ¹¹	1 oz eq ¹¹
Cold dry cereal ¹² or	1/4 cup or 1/3 oz ¹³	1/3 cup or 1/2 oz ¹³	3/4 cup or 1 oz ¹³
Cooked cereal grains or	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Cooked pasta or noodles	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup

- 1 Must serve two of the five components. Only one of the two components may be a beverage.
- 2 Children aged 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs. They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column.
- 3 Must be unflavored whole milk for children aged one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1% or less) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. For K-12, must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1% or less). Milk may be unflavored or flavored.
- 4 A serving consists of the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.
- 5 Alternate protein products must meet requirements in Appendix A of 7 CFR Part 210.
- 6 Nuts and seeds are generally not recommended to be served to children ages 1-3 since they present a choking hazard. If served, nuts and seeds should be finely minced.

- 7 Yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).
- 8 Juice must be pasteurized, full-strength juice. No more than half of the weekly fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice.
- 9 At least 80% of grains offered weekly (by ounce equivalents) must be whole grain-rich, as defined in 7 CFR 210.2, and the remaining grains items offered must be enriched.
- 10 Grain-based desserts may not be used to meet the grains requirement.
- 11 Refer to [Exhibit A: Grain Requirements For Child Nutrition Programs](#) for information on ounce equivalents.
- 12 Breakfast cereal must have no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. Information on crediting grain items may be found in FNS guidance.
- 13 Either volume (cup) or weight (oz), whichever is less.

Background AND PLANNING INFORMATION

DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS

The Dietary Guidelines are released every five years by the USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services. Recommendations are designed to promote health and prevent chronic disease. Sponsors are encouraged to purchase and serve foods that align with these recommendations as often as possible.

- Visit [this website](#) to view or download the **2020-2025** DGA website.
- Visit [this website](#) to view or download the **2025-2030** DGA website.

CALORIES, SATURATED FAT, AND SODIUM

The breakfast and lunch meal pattern dietary specifications set limits for calories, saturated fat and sodium to ensure age-appropriate meals for grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 are met.

REDUCING SODIUM IN THE SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

Shaking It Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors is a national sodium reduction initiative to foster creative ways to boost flavor and maximize taste to support efforts to lower the sodium content of school meals. This website is dedicated to helping the school community find the resources they need to increase awareness of the need for dietary sodium reduction, as well as ensure school meals meet current sodium standards. For more information, visit: [Shaking It Up | ICN](#).

When planning, ordering and preparing program meals, be salt savvy by:

- Offering regular/high sodium foods less often by limiting the use of:
 - Salty, smoked or cured meat such as bologna, hot dogs, ham, luncheon meats, and sausage;
 - Salty snacks such as chips and pretzels;
 - Ready-to-eat canned foods such as soups, chili, and ravioli; food prepared in brine such as pickles, olives, and sauerkraut; food items made with cheese — try to limit cheese as the main meal item to one or two days per week; and
 - Condiments — when possible, limit the portion size of condiments such as ketchup, mustard, barbecue sauce, and salad dressing.
- Reading Nutrition Facts information comparing sodium content and selecting the lower amount for similar food items and portion size when quality and price are similar.
- Foods that are “Low in Sodium” are defined as containing less than 140 mg per serving or 5% Daily Value (DV). Choose the product with the lowest amount of salt when price and quality are similar.
- **Modify recipes that use high-sodium ingredients by:**
 - Reduce or eliminating salt from recipes when possible.
 - Emphasize that salt should not be added to recipes unless it is listed as an ingredient.
 - Limit the use of ingredients such as regular bouillon cubes, beef base, and chicken base.
 - Use different herbs and spices as seasonings in place of salt. Enhance your recipes with low-sodium seasoning blends/salt substitutes or flavorful veggies instead of salt.
 - Provide low sodium flavor shakers to students to flavor their foods.



Menu Planning

POINTS TO REMEMBER

When planning menus, keep in mind the following points to meet meal pattern requirements and the Dietary Guideline recommendations.

Fruits | 100% Fruit Juice



- Fruits must be offered daily at breakfast and lunch.
- Fruit is measured and credited in cups and not by weight.
- Minimum daily portion at Breakfast is a 1 cup portion for all grade levels; for Lunch grades K-8, the requirement is ½ cup and for 9-12, it is 1 cup.
- Vegetables may be offered in place of fruits at breakfast. If offered one day per school week, sponsors may offer any vegetables, including starchy vegetables. If offered two or more days per school week, sponsors must offer at least two different vegetable subgroups.
- No more than one half of the fruit offerings during the week may be in the form of juice. This requirement applies to breakfast, lunch, and (effective July 1, 2025) afterschool snacks independently.
- Fruit may be fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.
 - Fresh, whole fruits are credited by the cup based on the yield of the whole fruit. Can be offered as sliced, quartered or cut pieces (e.g., 1 apple = 1 cup; 1 orange = ½ cup; 1 banana = ½ cup).
 - Canned - May be packed in juice, water or light syrup (no heavy syrup).
 - 1/8 cup (2 tablespoons) fruit is the smallest creditable portion.
 - Dried fruits credit as double the portion (i.e., ¼ cup = ½ cup) of a fruit component.
 - Snack-type fruit chips such as banana chips are not creditable.
- May serve and combine portions from two or more forms of the same fruit in the same meal (i.e., fresh orange and orange juice, fresh apple and applesauce). However, plan and serve a variety of fruits to ensure nutritionally well-balanced meals.
- Fruit Juices
 - Only 100% (full-strength) juice is allowed (breakfast, lunch, and snacks).
 - May be served chilled, frozen, or as a slushy with 1/2 cup portion = 1/2 cup fruit.
- Juice or syrup poured from canned fruit cannot be used as fruit juice.
- Juice cannot be counted as part of a snack when milk is the only other component.
- Under Offer vs. Serve, students must select at least 1/2 cup of the fruits or the vegetables component as part of the reimbursable breakfast or lunch meal. The requirement may be met with 1/4 cup fruits and 1/4 cup vegetables.

Vegetables | 100% Vegetable Juices | Vegetable Subgroups



- Vegetables must be offered daily at lunch and meet daily and weekly requirements.
- Vegetables are measured and credited in cups and not by weight.
- Weekly Subgroup requirements must be met. For examples of vegetables in each Subgroup, please refer to the USDA Vegetable Subgroups Chart on page 12 of this packet.
- Raw, leafy greens credit at half the volume served (i.e., 1 cup of Romaine lettuce contributes ½ cup of the dark green vegetable subgroup).
- Cooked leafy greens are credited according to the volume served (i.e., ½ cup cooked spinach credits as ½ cup dark green vegetable).
- Green peas, corn, and white potato items (including fries) are credited as starchy vegetables.
- 2/3 cup baked beans in sauce = 1/2 cup bean/pea/lentil credit.
- 100% (full-strength) vegetable juices are creditable but no more than half of the vegetable offerings over the week at each meal service may be in the form of juice.
- Small amounts (less than 1/8 cup) of onions, relish, catsup, jams or jellies, or other condiments may be added for flavor or garnish as other foods, but cannot be counted toward the vegetable requirement.
- Snack-type vegetable products such as potato chips, potato sticks, and baked vegetable sticks, are not creditable towards meeting the vegetable requirements. If planned, these items should be listed in the "other" foods section on the menu and production record.
- Under Offer vs. Serve, students must select at least ½ cup of a fruit or vegetable for a reimbursable breakfast or lunch meal.
- Smaller portions of fruits and vegetables may be combined to meet the minimum daily requirement.

Meat and Meat Alternates (M/MA)



- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish credits as 1 M/MA
- Hot dogs and/or bologna must not contain meat or poultry by-products, cereals, binders, or extenders. One ounce of these items credits as 1 oz. eq. M/MA.
- 1 large, whole egg credits as 2 oz. eq. M/MA.
- Cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils may be counted as either a vegetable or as a meat alternate but not as both in the same dish. $\frac{1}{4}$ cup = 1 oz. eq. and $\frac{3}{8}$ cup = 1.5 oz. eq. toward the meat alternate requirement for vegetarian-based menu items such as black beans and rice, bean burritos, etc.
- Effective July 1, 2024: When offered toward the meat alternate component, beans, peas, and lentils may count toward the weekly beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroup requirement, but may not count toward the daily or weekly vegetable component requirement.
- Protein Fortified Pasta - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked pasta made of 100% legume flour(s) may credit as 1 oz. eq. of M/MA. To credit as a M/MA, pasta made of legume flour(s) must be offered with additional M/MA, such as tofu, cheese, or meat.
- For peanut and nut butters, 2 tablespoons = 1 oz. eq. It is not recommended to use only the peanut or nut butter to meet the full planned M/MA requirement for lunch meals. If this is done, please consider:
 - Using 4 Tbsp. of peanut butter only when a third slice of bread is added to the sandwich to achieve 2 oz. equivalent M/MA; or
 - Serving 2 Tbsp. of peanut butter with an additional M/MA item such as a 1 oz. cheese stick or 4 oz. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) yogurt to achieve the 2 oz. eq. M/MA requirement.
- For nuts and seeds, 1 oz = 1 oz. eq.
- Yogurt (dairy and soy-based) may be served as a Meat/Meat Alternate component:
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 oz.) of plain, sweetened, or flavored yogurt = 1 oz. eq. M/MA.
 - 1 cup (8 oz.) = 2 oz. eq. M/MA.
 - Effective July 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 8 grams of added sugars per 4 oz. ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup), 12 grams per 6 oz. ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup), or 2 grams per oz.
 - Frozen yogurt, drinkable yogurt, and other yogurt-flavored snack products (yogurt covered fruit, etc. are not considered yogurt and do not meet program requirements for the M/MA component.
- Cheese must be natural or processed to be creditable as M/MA. Most cheeses credit ounce for ounce (1 oz. = 1 oz. eq.).
- Cheese products labeled "cheese food," "cheese spread," or "cheese substitutes" are creditable, but 2 ounces of product must be used to achieve 1 oz. eq. M/MA.
 - Products labeled "imitation cheese" or "cheese product" are not creditable and should not be served.
- Shredded cheese may be weighed - 1 oz. = 1 oz. eq., or measured - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup = 1 oz. eq.
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of shredded American, cheddar, or mozzarella cheese = 1 oz. eq. M/MA.
- Soft cheeses like cottage and ricotta - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup serving = 1 oz. eq. M/MA and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup serving = 2 oz. eq. M/MA.
- Tofu - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or 2.2 oz. portion of commercially-prepared tofu that contains 5 grams of protein is creditable as 1 oz. eq. M/MA. (It is recommended to look for CN Labeled products.)
- Tempeh - 1 oz. of commercially-prepared tempeh (fermented soybean cake made with whole soybeans) = 1 oz. eq. M/MA.
- Bacon is not creditable as a M/MA. If planned, this item should be listed in the "other" foods section on your menu and production record.
- Ham, turkey ham, and turkey deli meats are water-added products and do not yield ounce for ounce as a M/MA.
 - The [USDA Food Buying Guide](#) states that 1.4-1.7 oz. of turkey ham provides 1 oz. equivalent of Meat/Meat Alternate.
 - Ham has a wide variety of crediting depending on added ingredients and cooking method. Please see the [USDA Food Buying Guide](#) for specific information.
 - **Please note** that luncheon meats that are not CN Labeled or listed in the **FBG** are not creditable toward meal pattern requirements.
 - You should confirm each individual item's crediting by using the CN Label or the product formulation statement.



At least 80% of the grains offered in the SBP, NSLP, and (effective July 1, 2025) ASP must be whole grain or whole grain rich (WGR). All remaining grains served must be enriched.

How to determine WGR requirements:

- A. Whole grains per oz. eq. are at least 8.0 grams of 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 determined from information provided on the product packaging or by the manufacturer, if available.
- B. The product includes the following U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved whole grain health claim 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.”
- C. The product ingredient declaration lists a whole grain first, specifically.
 - In non-mixed dishes (e.g., breads, cereals) whole grains are the primary ingredient by weight (a whole grain is first on the ingredients list with an exception for water). Products in which whole grain content comes from multiple ingredients can meet the whole grain-rich criteria when all whole grains combined are the primary ingredient by weight.
 - Mixed-dishes (e.g., cheese pizza, corn dogs): Whole grains are the primary grain ingredients by weight. For recipes, the weight 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.

All grain products are credited based on an oz. eq. standard and have the following requirements:

- Baked goods, such as breads, biscuits, bagels, buns, and rolls require 16 grams of creditable grain ingredients to provide 1 oz. eq. grain component credit.
- For ready-to-eat breakfast cereal, 28 grams or 1 ounce of product is considered a 1 oz. eq. (1 cup for flakes or rounds, 1 ½ cups for puffed cereal, or ¾ cup granola all provide 1 oz. eq. grains).
- For cooked cereals and grains such as oatmeal, pasta and rice, a 1 oz. (28 gram) portion of dry product (or ½ cup cooked volume) provides 1 oz. eq.
- Grain-based desserts/sweet grain items may be used in meeting the daily/weekly grain requirements at lunch but are limited to **no more** than 2 oz. eq. per week. These foods include cookies, dessert pies, cakes, and brownies.
- Effective July 1, 2025, grain-based desserts may not be used to meet the grains requirement in the afterschool snack program. (i.e. cookies, donuts, breakfast bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pop tarts, cake, brownies.)
- Non-sweet snack products such as hard pretzels and chips and sweet crackers such as graham crackers and animal crackers can be used to meet the grain requirement in the afterschool snack program.
- Potato chips **do not** count as a grain item; however, may be offered as an “extra” item if calorie and other nutrient standards allow. If planned, these items should be listed in the “other” foods section on the menu and production record.

Fluid Milk



- 1 cup of fluid milk must be offered daily during both the breakfast and lunch meal service.
- A minimum of two choices must be offered at breakfast and lunch daily.
 - At breakfast and lunch, fluid milk may be flavored or unflavored whole, reduced fat/2%, low-fat/1%, and fat-free/skim, or nondairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk.
 - Unflavored milk must be offered at each meal service.
 - Flavored milk must contain no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces.
 - Milk may be served as one of the two snack component items, except when juice is the only other component item offered.
- If milk is poured from gallon/bulk containers and not served in 8 oz. cartons, the cups used must be a minimum size of 10 fluid ounces so that the full 8 oz. portion of milk can be served at one time.
- Yogurt, ice cream, and pudding are not creditable as a milk component. Yogurt may be credited as a Meat/Meat Alternate and may be offered at breakfast, lunch, and snack (yogurt must contain no more than 8 grams of added sugar per 4 oz. serving, 12 grams per 6 oz, or 2 grams per oz.). If planned, ice cream and pudding may be offered as an “extra” item if calorie and other nutrient standards allow. If planned, these items should be listed in the “other” foods section on the menu and production record.
- Evaporated or nonfat dry milk is not creditable as a milk component but may be used in cooking to enhance the flavor and nutritional content of the meal.

USDA Vegetable SUBGROUPS*

DARK GREEN VEGETABLES	RED AND ORANGE VEGETABLES	OTHER VEGETABLES
Bok Choy Broccoli Broccoli Rabe Collard Greens Dark Green or Red Leafy Lettuce Escarole Lettuce Kale Mesclun Mustard Greens Romaine Lettuce Spinach Turnip Greens Watercress	Acorn Squash Butternut Squash Carrots Hubbard Squash Orange Peppers Pumpkin Red Peppers Sweet Potatoes Tomatoes Tomato Juice Yellow Yams	Artichokes Asparagus Avocado Bean Sprouts Beets Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Cauliflower Celery Cucumbers Eggplant Green Beans Green Peppers Iceberg (Head) Lettuce Mushrooms Okra Onions Parsnips Purple (Bell) Peppers Radish Snap Beans Summer Squash Turnips Wax Beans Yellow Peppers Zucchini
BEANS, PEAS, AND LENTILS	STARCHY VEGETABLES	
Black Beans Black-Eyed Peas (Mature, Dry) Edamame Garbanzo Beans (Chickpeas) Kidney Beans Lentils Navy Beans Pinto Beans Soy Beans Split Peas White Beans	Cassava Corn Corn Hominy Green Bananas Green Peas Jicama Lima Beans Plantains Potatoes Taro Water Chestnuts White Yams Fresh Cowpeas, Field Peas, or Black-Eyed Peas (Not Dry)	

*Popular Florida grown items are **bolded**.



Grain CLASSIFICATIONS

WHOLE GRAINS | WHOLE GRAIN-RICH | REFINED/ENRICHED

DEFINITIONS & TERMS

At least 80% of grains served in the NSLP, SBP, and (effective July 1, 2025) ASP must be whole grain or whole grain rich and the remaining 20% of grains must be at least enriched.

- Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain, seed, or kernel and include whole wheat, graham, bromated, cracked and crushed wheat flours. Other whole grains include whole corn, oats and oatmeal, brown and wild rice, and others. The whole grain kernel has three parts—the bran, the germ, and the endosperm. Usually the kernel is cracked, crushed, or flaked during the milling process but the finished product retains the same relative proportions of bran, germ, and endosperm as the original grain. Whole grains are higher in fiber and coarser in texture than whole grain-rich or refined grains.
- Refined grains are not considered whole grain as the relative proportions of the original grain kernel are not the same and the refined grains must be enriched by replacing nutrients lost in the milling process. Refined grains are lower in fiber and softer in texture. To increase the healthfulness of refined grains, some vitamins and minerals are added back into these items at which point they are considered “enriched.” Any refined grains offered in Child Nutrition Program meals and supplements must be made from enriched flours or the grain cannot credit as a component in the meal pattern and is seen as an extra item.
- Whole grain-rich foods are a blend of whole grain and refined grains where at least one-half of the grain content is whole grain and the remaining portion of grains in a product is enriched, refined flour. This combination of whole and refined grains makes a whole grain-rich item.

Grain products (ingredients) that are not whole grains:

“Flour” has been designated by the FDA as the term for refined wheat flour. The following ingredients are **not** whole grains:

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Flour | • Enriched bromated flour | • Cake flour |
| • Enriched flour | • Instantized flour | • Durum flour |
| • White flour | • Phosphated flour | • Couscous |
| • Wheat flour | • Self-rising flour | • Hominy |
| • All-purpose flour | • Self-rising wheat flour | • Farina |
| • Unbleached flour | • Enriched self-rising flour | • Semolina |
| • Bromated flour | • Bread flour | • Degerminated corn meal |

For additional information on grain offerings in the NSLP and SBP, refer to USDA's [Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#).

EXHIBIT A: SCHOOL LUNCH AND BREAKFAST

WHOLE GRAIN-RICH OUNCE EQUIVALENCY (OZ. EQ.) REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS^{1, 2}

GROUP A	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP A
- Bread type coating - Bread sticks (hard) - Chow Mein noodles - Savory crackers (saltines and snack crackers) - Croutons - Pretzels (hard) - Stuffing (dry) Note: weights apply to bread in stuffing.	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.
GROUP B	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP B
- Bagels - Batter type coating - Biscuits - Breads (sliced whole wheat, French, Italian) - Buns (hamburger and hot dog) - Sweet crackers⁵ (graham crackers - all shapes, animal crackers) - Egg roll skins - English muffins - Pita bread (whole wheat or whole grain-rich) - Pizza crust - Pretzels (soft) - Rolls (whole wheat or whole grain-rich) - Tortillas (whole wheat or whole corn) - Tortilla chips (whole wheat or whole corn) - Taco shells (whole wheat or whole corn)	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 oz.
GROUP C	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP C
- Cookies³ (plain - includes vanilla wafers) - Cornbread - Corn muffins - Croissants - Pancakes - Pie crust (dessert pies³, cobbler³, fruit turnovers⁴, and meat/meat alternate pies) - 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.
GROUP D	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP D
- Doughnuts⁴ (cake and yeast-raised, unfrosted) - Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars⁴ (plain) - Muffins (all, except corn) - Sweet roll⁴ (unfrosted) - Toaster pastry⁴ (unfrosted)	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.
GROUP E	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP E
- Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars⁴ (with nuts, dried fruit and/or chocolate pieces) - Cookies³ (with nuts, raisins, chocolate pieces and/or fruit purees) - Doughnuts⁴ (cake and yeast-raised, frosted or glazed) - French toast - Sweet rolls⁴ (frosted) - Toaster pastry⁴ (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.

GROUP F	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP F
• Cake³ (plain, unfrosted) • Coffee cake⁴	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.
GROUP G	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP G
• Brownies³ (plain) • Cake³ (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.
GROUP H	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP H
• Cereal grains (barley, quinoa, etc.) • Breakfast cereals (cooked)^{6,7,8,9} • Bulgur or cracked wheat • Macaroni (all shapes) • Noodles (all varieties) • Pasta (all shapes) • Ravioli (noodle only) • Rice (enriched white or brown)	1 oz. eq. = 1/2 cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 gm) dry
GROUP I	OZ. EQ. FOR GROUP I
• Ready to eat breakfast cereal (cold, dry)^{6,7,8,9}	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. In the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) (grades K–12), and NSLP afterschool snacks (by July 1, 2025), at least 80% 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 Child and Adult Care Program (CACFP) child and adult meal patterns and in the NSLP/SBP preschool meals, at least one grain serving per day must meet the whole grain-rich criteria.
2. For the NSLP, SBP (grades K–12), NSLP afterschool snacks, and CACFP, and NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals grain quantities are determined using ounce equivalents (oz eq). Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) may determine grain quantities using grains/breads servings. Some of the following grain items 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 toward the grains component in CACFP or NSLP afterschool snacks (effective July 1, 2025), or NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals as specified in §§226.20(a)(4) and 210.10.
4. Allowed in NSLP (up to 2.0 oz eq grain-based dessert per week for grades K–12) as specified in §210.10. May count toward the grains component in SBP (grades K–12) and at snack and breakfast meals in SFSP. Considered a grain-based dessert and cannot count toward the grains component in the CACFP, NSLP afterschool snacks (effective July 1, 2025), or 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), NSLP afterschool snacks, CACFP, NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals, and SFSP.
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. If the cereal is 100% whole grain, fortification is not required. For all Child Nutrition Programs, cereals must be whole-grain, enriched, or fortified.
8. Effective July 1, 2025, cereals served in NSLP, SBP, and NSLP afterschool snacks must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.
9. Effective October 1, 2025, cereals served in CACFP and NSLP/SBP infant and preschool meals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. Prior to October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals served in the CACFP must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce.

Menu Evaluation

PROCESS OVERVIEW

MENU EVALUATION FOR MEAL PATTERN COMPLIANCE & MENU CERTIFICATION

MENUS SUBMITTED FOR EVALUATION BY FDACS FNW STAFF:

1. Menus reviewed for meal pattern compliance must be submitted on the most current [FDACS Menu Templates](#) in an editable Word Document format (no scans).
2. Menus compliant with the current Meal Patterns are ready to be reviewed for compliance with the NSLP and SBP dietary specifications during the menu certification process.

PROCESS FOR MENU PLANNERS:

Please read this packet and related documents as they describe in detail the requirements for reimbursable meals under the NSLP/SBP. Then submit your one week of menus (5 or 7 days) for each of your grade groups on the applicable menu templates for the SBP, NSLP, and ASSP. Contact FNW for assistance if your program regularly operates 3, 4, or 6 days per week, if you need additional menu pages, or for any other questions with completing the menu templates.

For **SAMPLE MENUS**, please visit the FNW website at:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/Nutrition-Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program/Menu-Planning-and-Meal-Service/Menu-Planning-Ideas-and-Samples>

For **MENU TEMPLATES**, please visit the FNW website at:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Food-Nutrition/Nutrition-Programs/National-School-Lunch-Program/Menu-Planning-and-Meal-Service/Menu-Planning-Templates>

For **MENU CERTIFICATION WORKSHEETS**, please visit the USDA website at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/certification-compliance-worksheets-5-day-schedule>

Please include the following information on the Menu Template and Meal Service/Production Records for each food component/item you plan to serve:

- **Milk:** The milk chart is found at the bottom right corner of the last page of the Menu Template. Include the flavor (white, chocolate, strawberry), serving size in fluid ounces (8 fl. oz.), and milk fat content (fat-free or 1%). Milk served as a part of the reimbursable breakfast and lunch may be flavored or unflavored options planned with at least two choices offered, with one being white at each meal. A choice of milks for student selection in the Afterschool Snack Program is recommended but not required.
- **Meat/Meat Alternates (M/MA):** Include the item description or name and the USDA recipe number (if applicable), as well as the planned portion size or cooked ounce weight (cooked) and the M/MA contribution in ounce equivalents (i.e. 2 oz. cooked grilled chicken is equal to 2 oz. eq. M/MA; 5 Chicken Nuggets is equal to 2 oz. eq. M/MA and 1 oz. eq. of Grain/Bread (per Child Nutrition [CN] Label); 1/3 cup of the USDA Chicken Salad is equal to 2 oz. eq. M/MA).
- **Grains:** Include the item description or name, as well as the portion details (i.e., one whole, two slices) and weight (in grams or ounces) of each portion. List portions for cooked pasta, rice, and cereals in cups. Ready-to-eat cereals can be recorded by either weight or volume (1 cup or 1 ounce). Remember to also record the ounce equivalents of the grain from any combination items such as pizza or chicken nuggets. A CN Label or product formulation statement will need to be provided for any combination items.
- **Fruits and Vegetables:** Include the description or name, service information (fresh or cooked), and portion size **in cups**. Juices must be 100% and listed in **fluid ounces or cups**.
- **Other Items:** Include the description or name of any non-creditable items such as bacon or chips served with the meal and any condiments in cups or ounces (grams, teaspoons, or tablespoons are okay).



KEY TERMS

OUNCE EQUIVALENT (OZ. EQ.) - The creditable portion of a meat/meat alternate or grain that must be served to equal 1 ounce towards the meal component.

CREDITING - The contribution a specific portion size of a food makes toward a reimbursable meal (how many ounce equivalents).

FOOD COMPONENT - One of the five food groups that make up a reimbursable meal: Grains, Meat/Meat Alternate, Fruits, Vegetables and Fluid Milk.

FOOD ITEM - A specific food offered within the five food components. For example, a hamburger patty on a bun is one food item with one of the two food components (Meat/Meat Alternates and Grains).





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