



CACFP Meal Pattern Q&As

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Q: Can a 1 year old child have formula? Does the transition period apply to this?

A: There is a transition period from when the child is 12 months old until they turn 13 months of age. During this time the infant can have formula as they transition to drinking milk.

Q: For field trips can cheese be substituted for milk?

A: No. Milk is a required component at breakfast, lunch and supper and MUST be served in order to claim meals for reimbursement. Cheese is a meat alternate and is NOT a substitute for milk in the CACFP. Accommodations must be provided to keep the milk and other food items at the proper temperature (e.g. ice or ice packs in a cooler).

Q: To serve lactose free milk, what documentation/requirements do we need to have on file?

A: The [CACFP Special Dietary Needs Tracking Form](#) must be completed by the program, along with appropriate support documentation as specified on the tracking form. This form is posted on the [Guidance Memorandum](#) website, under GM 12: Special Dietary Needs section.

Q: Does lactose free milk need to meet the fat content for the correct age?

A: Yes. Lactose free and lactose reduced milk must meet the fat content for the age of the participants. For example, a one-year old must be served whole lactose free or whole lactose reduced milk.

Q: If there is a doctor's note for the child to have 2% milk, is that creditable?

A: Yes, if the doctor's note specifies that the child must be served 2% milk for a disability.

Q: Must all milks (cow’s milk, soy milk, etc.) be unflavored and not vanilla?

A: Yes, all milks for 1–5-year-olds must be unflavored. Vanilla is considered “flavored” and is not allowed. Fat-free flavored and low-fat flavored milk are only creditable for children age 6 years old and older.

Q: Are soy, coconut and almond milks creditable?

A: Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to regular cow’s milk are creditable and may be served as part of a reimbursable meal when the family has submitted a written request. For a list of current creditable non-dairy beverages see the [Creditable Non-Dairy Beverages](#) handout. Non-dairy beverages such as coconut milk, almond milk, rice milk, oat milk, hemp milk and some soymilks are not creditable because they are not nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk. These cannot be served in the CACFP.

The only time a non-creditable non-dairy beverage (those not nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk) may be served as part of a meal and claimed is when it is served to a child with a disability and there is a valid medical statement on file.

Q: How do you know if a non-dairy beverage is equivalent to cow’s milk?

A: To determine if a non-dairy beverage is nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk (if it is not one of the creditable beverages listed in the [Creditable Non-Dairy Beverages](#) handout) follow the steps below:

1. Obtain documentation of the product’s nutrient levels for all nutrients listed in the [Creditable Non-Dairy Beverages](#) handout. Some nutrients are listed on the product package. Nutrients that are not listed on the product package may be located on the manufacturer’s website or by contacting the product manufacturer and requesting documentation.
2. Compare nutrient levels to those listed in the table.
3. If a product’s levels of required nutrients equal or exceed requirements, it is nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk.
4. Retain product information on file.

Q: If a child has a medical statement on file for vanilla soy milk, can we serve it as creditable, or does it have to be unflavored?

A: Medical statements must be specific as to what should be served and must be for a disability. If serving soy milk without a medical statement, i.e. for lifestyle choice, the soymilk must be unflavored.

Q: If a child is low weight and the doctor prescribes Pediasure, would vanilla Pediasure served at mealtimes be creditable?

A: If this item is being served for a disability in place of regular milk at meals and snacks, and there is a medical statement on file to support the Pediasure, flavored Pediasure can be served and claimed.

Q: If you have a doctor’s note/medical statement, where/how do we document this when recording food?

A: The [CACFP Special Dietary Needs Tracking Form](#) must be completed by the program, along with appropriate support documentation as specified on the tracking form. This form is posted on the [Guidance Memorandum](#) website, under GM 12: Special Dietary Needs section.

Q: Is Toddler milk creditable?

A: Toddler milk (aka toddler formula) is not creditable in the CACFP. It consists mainly of powdered milk, corn syrup and vegetable oil. It contains less protein per serving than cow's milk, along with added sugar that cow's milk lacks. The American Academy of Pediatrics says there is no evidence of advantage of toddler or "next step" milk-based formulas over whole milk in terms of growth or development.

Q: Is there a new chart/list for lactose free milks? Soy? Almond?

A: Lactose free and lactose reduced milks are creditable in the CACFP provided the correct fat content is served to a participant depending on their age. The [Creditable Non-Dairy Beverages](#) handout, found under the GM 12: Special Dietary Needs section, has a list of creditable non-dairy beverages. Other non-dairy beverages, i.e. coconut milk, almond milk, rice milk, oat milk, hemp milk and some soymilks are not creditable because they are not nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. These cannot be served in the CACFP.

Q: Is organic milk allowed? If a parent brings in organic milk can we claim that meal?

A: Organic milk is creditable and allowed. The program may claim the meal/snack (when milk is one of the components) if the program purchases and provides the organic milk. In addition, a family can provide **one creditable component** of meal. This means that a family may provide organic milk and, when the program provides all other required creditable components, the meal may be claimed. Organic milk must meet the fat content for the age of the participants. For example, a one-year-old must be served whole organic milk.

Water

Q: Can programs offer water at meals if A) a child refuses milk but it is offered, or B) the child had the serving of milk and is still thirsty?

A: **For A:** When serving meals family style, children may choose to pass on serving themselves milk and then could serve themselves water instead. However, if the meal is pre-plated or staff dish up food and pour beverages, the minimum required amount of milk must be poured into each participant's cup; participants cannot refuse milk. However, the participant does not have to drink milk, and water may also be served alongside the milk. **For B:** A participant that has had the minimum serving of milk and is still thirsty may be served water.

Q: Can bottled water and infant water be purchased with CACFP funds?

A: Yes, infant water for infant formula may be purchased with CACFP funds. Bottled water can only be purchased with CACFP funds if safe water is not readily available in your facility.

Q: Does the water offered throughout the day need to be noted on menu or just communicated to teachers?

A: Communicate with teachers. Water is not required to be noted on the menus.

Q: Does having water available in the classroom (faucet, drinking fountain) count or does it have to be in a pitcher at meal times?

A: Water must be offered to children regularly throughout the day. Therefore, having a faucet in the classroom, with available cups that children can fill to drink, or having a drinking fountain counts as offering water.

Fruit and Vegetable

Q: Can we serve fruits that are in light syrup?

A: Yes, however it is suggested that the fruit be drained and rinsed to reduce the amount of sugar. Best practice when serving canned fruits is to use fruit that is canned in water or 100% fruit juice.

Q: Can we serve veggie straws?

A: Veggie straws are a processed product containing potato starches and flours, and are not creditable as a vegetable. Veggie straws may credit as a grain if the first ingredient is a whole grain or enriched grain. However, not many brands of veggie straws/sticks are creditable as a grain.

Q: When serving canned fruits does the juice count toward the serving size? Will sugar need to be considered?

A: Juice in canned fruit may credit as part of the serving of the fruit. Use the Food Buying Guide to determine number of servings yielded when using fruit and juice. Sugar does not need to be considered.

Q: For snack could I serve ¼ cup vegetable and ½ cup fruit with another component?

A: When serving a fruit and a vegetable as the two components at snack, each component must be served in the full minimum amount. For example, a 6-18 year old must be served ¾ cup fruit and ¾ cup vegetable. You cannot combine smaller amounts of each since they are now two separate components.

Q: Can I serve a vegetable and a fruit at snack and claim it?

A: Yes

Q: For snack, can you claim carrots and celery and milk?

A: Yes. Carrots and celery is the vegetable component and milk is the milk component, this snack would consist of two components. The amount of carrots and celery combined must meet the minimum serving size for the vegetable component.

Q: Pre-fried vegetables are okay as long as they are baked on site?

A: Yes.

Q: Can we use frozen fruit and count it as a fruit?

A: Yes.

Q: I serve two separate classes. One class gets breakfast and snack, the other class gets lunch and snack. Can juice be served at both snacks?

A: No. Juice may only be served at one meal/snack per day regardless of which children are present at meals and snacks.

Q: Do potatoes (mashed, French fries, baked, hash browns) count as a grain or vegetable?

A: Vegetable.

Meat/Meat Alternates

Q: If bacon is in a recipe can we count the dish as a component in the meal?

A: Yes, however the bacon cannot count towards the meat/meat alternate component. Bacon is not creditable to the CACFP. Only turkey bacon that has a CN label or product formulation statement may be credited toward the meat/meat alternate component.

Q: For yogurt, is there a minimum protein requirement?

A: No.

Q: Can you count yogurt with fruit as meat/meat alternate (i.e. strawberry yogurt)?

A: Yes, yogurt is a meat alternate. However, the fruit in the yogurt cannot count as the fruit component.

Q: Can yogurt be served as a Meat/Meat Alternate component at breakfast or lunch?

A: Yes, yogurt is a creditable meat alternate at breakfast, lunch, supper and snack.

Q: Can a meat/meat alternate be served in place of grain at breakfast?

A: Yes. A meat/meat alternate can replace the entire grain a maximum of three times per week at breakfast; however, a meat/meat alternate can also be served as an extra.

Q: Are beans a vegetable or meat alternate?

A: Cooked, dry beans or peas (legumes) may credit as a vegetable or as a meat alternate, but not as both components in the same meal. Refer to the [Crediting Handbook](#), Meat/Meat Alternate and Vegetable sections, for a list of creditable dry beans or peas. Green beans and green peas are not dry beans or peas; these are vegetables.

Q: What is a peanut-free meat alternate we can use that is creditable?

A: There are many meat alternates that can be substituted for peanuts, such as tofu, seeds, eggs, yogurt, cheese, soy butter, almond butter, sunflower butter or cooked, dry beans or peas (legumes).

Q: Do I need a CN label for bologna, kielbasa or lunch meat?

A: Not if the product is 100% meat, without binders/fillers.

Q: How do eggs count at breakfast?

A: Eggs credit as a meat alternate. A meat/meat alternate may replace the entire grain a maximum of three times per week at breakfast. Amounts required are listed on the CACFP meal pattern.

Q: How would you prepare homemade creditable meatballs and keep documentation in the CACFP binder?

A: You must have a recipe and maintain this on file. The recipe must show how much meat was used when making meatballs so you know how it contributes to the meat/meat alternate component of the meal pattern. In addition, the recipe must have yield sizes so you know how many meatballs to make and how each meatball contributes to the meal pattern. Keep in mind, the fat content of the meat used will determine the yield of the cooked meatballs. Refer to the [Food Buying Guide Calculator](#) to determine how much meat to use in the recipe.

Q: Is cheddar cheese sauce creditable?

A: To credit cheese sauce as the meat/meat alternate component, a CN label or product formulation statement (PFS) must be on file to indicate the creditable portion and the serving size amounts. Cheese sauce that does not have a CN label or PFS can be served as an extra; keep in mind this is an added item so it increases your food costs.

Q: Can we serve pastas made from beans as a meat alternate?

A: Yes. Pasta made of 100% legume flour(s) may credit as meat alternate or vegetable, but not as both in the same meal. A ½ cup serving of cooked legume pasta may credit as 2 ounce equivalent of meat alternate. To credit as a meat alternate, pasta made of legume flour(s) must be offered with an additional 0.25 ounces of visible meat/meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese or meat. Refer to the [Creditable and Non-creditable Foods Guide](#) for additional information.

Q: Can you explain creditable cheese food? Does this include Velveeta?

A: The words “Cheese Food” will be on the front of the package. Velveeta is not a cheese food, it is a cheese product which is not creditable. Refer to [Creditable and Non-Creditable Cheeses](#) for examples.

Q: At what age can you start serving nuts?

A: There are no CACFP requirements on ages for this, but it is recommended starting at age 3-4 years old. Nuts are a choking risk for young children.

CN Labels and Product Formulation Statements

Q: If providing items like chicken nuggets and fish sticks, do you have to have a CN label?

A: Yes, any food item purchased from a store that is processed and contains two or more components, or containing binders/fillers must have a CN label or product formulation statement (PFS) on file so you know how much of each item to serve to each child. Below are examples of items that require a CN label or PFS:

- Items that contain meat, grain and/or vegetables (e.g. chicken nuggets, fish sticks, pizza, corn dogs, meatballs, ravioli, etc.)
- Items that contain fillers and other non-meat items (e.g. Salisbury steak, frozen beef patties, sausage, cheese sauce, meatballs, etc.)

Q: Do you need CN labels and product formulation statements kept on file?

A: You are required to have one or the other on file when serving store-bought combination foods. You are not required to have both. Refer to the [Crediting Store-bought Combination Foods](#) handout for additional information on CN labels and PFS.

Q: Where do we find the correct numbers for chicken nuggets?

A: All store-bought combination foods (i.e., chicken nuggets, fish sticks, etc.) must have a Child Nutrition (CN) label or Product Formulation Statement (PFS) from the manufacturer for the specific product purchased. The CN label or PFS provides information on how the food contributes to the meal pattern. You must use the information to determine how much to prepare for a specific meal and how much to serve to each child. A Nutrition Facts label is not sufficient for these combination food items.

Q: Do you need a CN label for bread, waffles?

A: No. Only main dish products which contribute to the Meat/Meat Alternate component of the meal pattern requirements require a CN label to be on file. Examples include beef patties, pizza, burritos, breaded fish or chicken items.

Q: When serving fish sticks or chicken nuggets with no CN label, can we serve the right amount of cheese to count as a meat alternate?

A: Yes. In this scenario the cheese is credited as the meat alternate and the fish sticks or chicken nuggets, without the CN label, can be served as an extra. This will increase your food costs as the fish sticks or chicken nuggets served as extras are an added cost to the meal (i.e. food cost for that meal has increased beyond what it would cost if you were serving just the required creditable components). Further, fish sticks or chicken nuggets without a CN label cannot be counted as a CACFP expense because it is a non-creditable food.

Q: If a CN label read 3 chicken nuggets equals 2 ounces M/MA, how many nuggets would you need to serve to each age group?

A: Each 1-2 year old must be served 1 ½ nuggets to equal 1 ounce of meat/meat alternate, however, you may round up to 2 chicken nuggets for each child.
 Each 3-5 year old must be served 2 nuggets to equal 1.5 oz meat/meat alternate.
 Each 6-18 year old must be served 3 nuggets to equal 2 oz meat/meat alternate.

Q: On the production record, how do you write the grains and meats when you serve an item that has a CN label?

A: Write the name of the item next to the component it credits as. For example, for cheese pizza, on the Meat/Meat Alternate line, write “cheese pizza (CN)” and on the Grains line, write “pizza crust (CN)”. Then in the *Comments* column, check the CN Label box, and provide the crediting information for each component that will credit toward the meal pattern. See example below.

Projected Participants		Component	Foods to be Served	Amounts Required	Amounts to be Prepared	Comments ³
Week of: July 3-7, 20XX Preparer: Melissa Storm						
Monday		M/MA	Cheese Pizza (CN)	60.5 oz	36 slices	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CN Label 1 Slice of Pizza = 2 oz m/ma 1 oz equiv. grain
1 & 2	9	Vegetable	Cantaloupe, fresh	9 cups	5.5 pounds	
3 to 5	15	Fruit or Veg	Cauliflower, frozen	12 cups	5.25 pounds	
6 to 12	10	Grains	Pizza Crust (CN)	25 servings	36 slices	
13 to 18		Whole ¹	#of 1-year-olds: 5	2.5 cups	1 gallon	
Adult	6	1%/Skim ²	1%	27.75 cups	2 gallons	

Q: How do we obtain a CN label from a Manufacturer Company?

A: Commercially prepared foods may have a CN label on the product package. If there is not one on the package, call the manufacturer for the Product Formulation Statement. The contact information for the manufacturer will be on the product packaging.

Q: How do I obtain a PFS? In the past I've asked and they sent me a nutrition label.

A: Try to obtain a product formulation statement (PFS) by contacting the company (manufacturer) that makes the item and specifically ask for a product formulation statement that explains how the item credits to USDA Child Nutrition Programs. Keep in mind that not all products purchased at a store will have this information available. If you cannot obtain a CN label or PFS for an item, do not serve the item. Find another creditable item to serve.

Grains

Q: Is air popped popcorn with no butter creditable?

A: Yes. Popcorn is creditable as a WGR food. Refer to the [CACFP Grains Chart](#) handout for serving size information. One thing to note is that the amount required may be too much for young children, and programs may want to serve popcorn with another creditable grain.

Toppings such as cheese, salt and butter may be used, but programs are encouraged to limit use of toppings. Encourage healthier toppings such as herb blends or serve fresh, plain popcorn. Caramel and kettle corn are considered grain-based desserts and are not creditable.

Q: How can a 1 year old and a 5 year old have the same serving size?

A: One year olds and 5 year olds only have the same serving size requirements for the Grains component. The other components of the meal pattern are different for a one and five year old. The serving sizes for the CACFP meal pattern are minimum amounts; therefore you may serve more if the child is still hungry.

Q: Can we use bagels and strawberry cream cheese?

A: Yes, the bagel counts towards the grains component. Cream cheese is not a creditable food in the CACFP, however, it is a condiment that is served to enhance a meal; therefore it is an allowable CACFP expense.

Q: Are bread sticks, rice cakes (all types, plain and sweet), and store-bought French toast sticks okay to serve?

A: Yes, bread sticks, all types of rice cakes, and store-bought French toast sticks credit as a grain for all meals and snacks.

Grain-Based Desserts

Q: Are vanilla wafers, Nutri-Grain® bars, Rice Krispy® treats and puppy chow creditable?

A: These items are considered grain-based desserts and are not creditable:

- Vanilla wafers are a cookie
- Nutri-Grain® bars are a breakfast bar
- Rice Krispy® treats are a cereal bar
- Puppy chow is perceived as a dessert

Q: Are you aware of any muffins that meet the sugar requirement?

A: There is no sugar requirement for muffins. All muffins are creditable. Best practice is to purchase or make muffins with less sugar. For example, they can contain blueberries, oats, cranberries, nuts, seeds or other healthy ingredients.

Q: How do banana muffins differ from banana cupcakes?

A: Muffins typically have nuts or dried fruit and usually have liquid form of fat, such as vegetable oil, while cupcakes often use butter. Cupcakes often have more butter and sugar than muffins.

Q: If grain-based desserts (i.e. granola bars) are homemade, are they creditable?

A: No. If you make homemade grain-based desserts with healthy ingredients and less sugar, they are still a grain-based dessert and are not creditable.

Adding Sugar

Q: Can cinnamon-sugar be added to a flour tortilla, sugar be added to oatmeal, syrup be added to waffles or pancakes, and chocolate chips be added to a cereal mix and be creditable?

A: Yes, however this is not recommended as the intent the meal pattern is to reduce the amount of added sugar being served to participants due to the negative health effects from eating too much sugar. A best practice is to limit added sugar.

- Instead of adding cinnamon-sugar to tortillas, add toppings such as hummus, yogurt or other bean dips, peanut butter, or low-fat luncheon meats and cheese
- Instead of adding sugar to oatmeal, add peanut butter, cinnamon or other spices, or pureed or chopped fruit
- Instead of adding syrup to waffles and pancakes, top with pureed or chopped fruit or yogurt
- Instead of adding chocolate chips to cereal mix, make a savory cereal mix with nuts, pretzels, and small savory crackers

Whole Grain Rich (WGR)

Q: When will the grain ounce equivalents for creditable grains start?

A: October 2021. Training is provided on the [Ounce Equivalents for Grains](#) Training webpage.

Q: Can we still serve white bread, white noodles, and flour tortillas as long as we serve one whole grain-rich (WGR) item for the day?

A: Yes. The requirement is that one meal/snack per day must contain a whole grain-rich item. Grains served at other meals/snacks must be creditable, meaning the first ingredient must be a whole grain, enriched grain, bran or germ.

Q: Does rice have to be brown? Does pasta have to be whole wheat/whole grain?

A: No. If rice or pasta is not whole grain, they must be enriched.

Q: Can we prepare 50% whole grain pasta and 50% enriched pasta and have it count as the whole grain rich item for the day?

A: Yes. This same process may also be used with other grains such as brown rice and enriched rice.

Q: If lasagna is homemade with whole grain noodles, can that count as the WGR item?

A: Yes, as long as the serving size meets the amount required for the grain component.

Q: Would it be possible to change a recipe that calls for all-purpose flour to whole wheat flour and be creditable as a whole grain-rich item?

A: Yes.

Cereals

Q: Will DPI accept WIC-approved cereals from another state?

A: Yes, any state's WIC list is acceptable.

Q: Can cereal with honey (*Honey Bunches of Oats*) be served to children under 5 years old? I heard honey wasn't allowed (same with peanut butter).

A: Honey and peanut butter are not creditable and cannot be served to infants under 1 year of age. For 1-3 year olds, peanut butter is cautioned due to choking reasons; however, honey may be served.

Q: Do you add both total sugars and added sugars to the sugar calculation?

A: No, only use the *Total Sugars* when completing sugar calculations for yogurt and cereal. The manufacturer already included the added sugars in the *Total Sugars* amount.

Documentation

Homemade Items

Q: If we make items from scratch, (ex. bran muffin), how do we document the nutrition label?

A: Homemade items require that you maintain a recipe on file to show how it credits to the CACFP. If making a store-bought item (such as a box mix) keep the product package (including name and ingredients) on file.

Q: Will they allow recipes to be submitted for approval for snack items?

A: Programs do not need to submit recipes for approval for creditable items. Even if there is a recipe on file for a homemade grain-based dessert, it is still not creditable.

Maintaining Documentation on File

Q: When keeping pictures of labels on file – do they need to be printed or can we keep the pictures on the computer?

A: Having pictures saved on the computer is okay, but there must be a backup in case the computer crashes. Further, all documentation must be readily available during business hours in case of announced or unannounced DPI and/or USDA audits.

Q: For keeping nutrition facts/CN labels, can we tape them to our storage boxes/containers?

A: Any organizational system that works for you is acceptable, as long as the labels are kept on file and can be accessed during a review. If you make a copy of the label, make sure all parts are readable (not blurry, cut off or too dark to read). It is recommended to keep all currently used labels in a binder or file folder. You can file old labels in another file.

Q: Multi-site centers – do you have to keep records at each center or the main center?

A: Sponsoring Organizations with multiple sites do not need to keep a copy of product information for cereal, whole grains, yogurt and/or tofu at each site if food purchases are made from one location and distributed to each site. In these cases, only one copy of the product information must be maintained; this could be at the administrative office or at the main kitchen location. However, if each site is responsible for making purchases for their own site, or makes occasional purchases for substitutions, then each site must maintain a copy of product information at the site.

However, CN labels must be on file at each site. This is required so staff preparing meals have information to know how much to prepare, and staff serving the meal know how much to serve to each participant to meet CACFP requirements.

Cereal

Q: If the cereal is a store brand off the WIC list, do you need a picture of the label?

A: If the cereal is on the WIC Approved Cereal list, you do not have to keep the label on file. If the cereal is not on the WIC Approved Cereal List, you must keep the product package (including name and ingredients) on file. Write the specific name of cereal on the menu, (i.e. “Roundy’s Toasted Oats”).

Non-Creditable Foods

Q: Are condiments non-creditable? (i.e., BBQ sauce, syrup, ketchup)

A: Yes, condiments are not creditable towards the meal pattern, however, they may be included as a CACFP food cost because they are used as part of a reimbursable meal.

Q: Can we use all natural jellies sweetened with real fruit juice?

A: Yes, but they are not creditable as the fruit component and are considered a condiment.

Q: For snack if we serve apples and carrots, can we serve juice as a bonus item?

A: Yes, however, by serving extra items, you are increasing your food costs. It is recommended to serve water instead of juice.

Q: Can programs serve non-creditable foods as extras at meals if they are not counted as one of the required components of the meal/snack?

A: All non-creditable foods are additional items. Programs must serve a complete meal or snack with creditable foods, and non-creditable items may be served as an extra. Non-creditable foods may not be included as a CACFP food cost and therefore would be an extra cost to your program.

Menus

Q: How do you recommend promoting the CACFP meal pattern?

A: The CACFP meal pattern promotes meals and snacks that provide more vegetables and whole grains, and less high-sugar and high-fat items such as cookies, donuts, cakes, etc. (grain-based desserts). By not serving these sweet items during meals and snacks, participants may hopefully see them as a special treat and not something they should be eating every day. With doing this, we are teaching about healthy choices.

Q: For breakfast can we serve fruit juice, milk and cereal?

A: Yes, the milk may be poured on the cereal and the juice served as the beverage. If juice is served at breakfast, it cannot be served as part of another CACFP meal or snack. This also applies if different groups of children are being served throughout the day.

Q: Does the rule that no food item repeat in a two week period still apply?

A: There is no rule in the CACFP about this, however, it is recommended to serve a variety of foods to each child according to the child's developmental level and parent's feeding instructions.

Q: Are there sample recipes available?

A: The following resources provide standardized recipes:

- [Team Nutrition Recipes](#)
- [Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Child Care Centers](#)
- [The Institute of Child Nutrition](#)

Menu Changes and Substitutions

Q: Do you have to do a 24-hour notice for a change in menu items?

A: No, however, you must record any meal substitutions on menus and production records, including correct food amounts prepared.

Q: How do we document a menu change on a posted, rotating menu?

A: The CACFP requires that a copy of each month's menu be kept on file to support the monthly claim. It is acceptable to use a rotating menu, however, you must keep a dated menu on file to support the claim, and this copy must include written menu changes and/or substitutions.

Q: If we change the fruit that is being served, do we need to change it on the posted menu for the parents or only on the kitchen copy?

A: For the CACFP, the copy kept on file must show the substitution. Licensing may require substitutions be posted on all menus so check with your licensor for their requirements.

Q: Can a menu say "chef's choice" and write the food on the morning of?

A: Yes, list all components (*specific food items served*) on the menu and production record that will be kept on file.

Milk

Q: If production records have the specific milk recorded, does the menu have to list the specific milks offered?

A: Yes. USDA requires that the type of milk offered be documented on menus.

Fruits and Vegetables

Q: When I serve mixed frozen vegetables such as Normandy vegetables or mixed fruit, do I need to state on the menu what vegetables or fruits are included?

A: The specific vegetables or fruits in the blend do not need to be identified. It is ok to write 'Mixed Vegetables' or 'Mixed Fruit' on the menu. However, it shows variety if you write the specific types of vegetables and fruits you are offering, (i.e. Normandy Vegetables, California Blend, or Fruit Cocktail).

Q: If I am serving mixed fresh vegetables, how should it be written on the menu? This usually includes carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumbers, three types of peppers, and mushrooms.

A: It is recommended to write out the different types of vegetables served. Mentioning the variety of fresh vegetables offered is more appealing to families than just writing "Mixed Vegetables."

Q: For menu documentation of produce from a CSA, can I write "CSA vegetables" on the menu?

A: Yes, however, on the day the meal is served, you must write the specific vegetables served on the menu and production record.

Grains

Q: If a menu says "Cheerios" but we serve "Tastee-O's," do you have to show a name change on the menu?

A: Yes, menus must list the exact cereal that is being served because each cereal must meet the CACFP sugar limits.

Q: Can we write "WIC Approved Cereal" instead of the name of the cereal?

A: No, the name of the cereal must be on the menu.

Q: Can you have more than one cereal listed on the menu so children have different options?

A: Yes, you may list all possible cereals that are offered on the menu (at the top or bottom). Only brands listed on the menu may be served. If cereal is to be counted as the whole grain-rich (WGR) item for day, then all cereals must be WGR.

Q: How many times a week can cereal be served?

A: There is no CACFP requirement or rule on how many times cereal can be served. However, it is suggested to serve a variety of items and not the same item frequently.

Meal Preparation

Q: Any suggestions on how to buy fresh fruit or vegetables for 100-150 children so you know you are buying the correct amount?

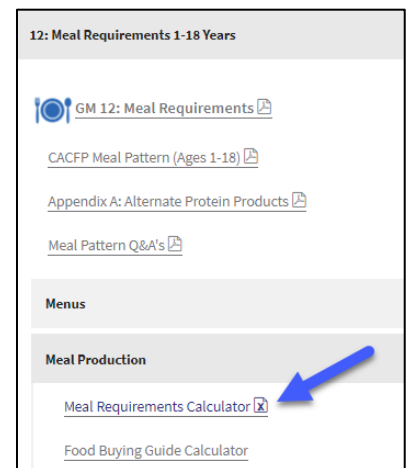
A: Refer to the [Food Buying Guide Calculator](#). If you are not sure how to use this tool, select 'Self-Tutorial' and watch the video provided.

Q: What is the guidance about offering more than the minimum requirement?

A: The CACFP does not have requirements for offering more than the minimum amounts of foods. Licensing rules require programs to have seconds of fruit, vegetable, grain and milk available.

Q: Please provide step by step instructions on how to access the Meal Requirements Calculator.

1. Go to the [Guidance Memorandum](#) website:
2. Choose the applicable program
3. Scroll down and open up the tab for #12: Meal Requirements
4. Open the **Meal Production** tab
5. Click on the *Meal Requirements Calculator* link shown here with the blue arrow



Q: How can I get a Food Buying Guide Book/Binder?

A: The Food Buying Guide is no longer available in print and has moved to an online-only format. You can access the online [FBG Calculator](#) and [FBG Calculator instructions](#) on the [Guidance Memorandum](#) webpage under GM 12 (Meal Production tab). Keep in mind, the FBG is applicable to all USDA Child Nutrition Programs (National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Service Program) and therefore includes some foods not creditable to the CACFP but still creditable to other Child Nutrition Programs.

Meal Service

Q: Can milk be brought to the classroom in the gallon or does it need to be measured and poured into pitchers?

A: Milk can be brought to the classroom in the gallon. Milk brought to the classroom in a gallon (*original container*) can be used again (i.e. taken back to kitchen or placed in refrigerator in classroom). However, leftover milk poured/measured into pitchers must be discarded.

Q: Is it okay for kids to sit on the floor/ground and eat meals?

A: The CACFP does not have rules or regulations on this, check with your Licensor or local health inspector.

Q: How do you regulate serving sizes when food is served family style to women and their children in a shelter environment?

A: Staff at Emergency Shelters are required to be present to monitor the meal service and ensure children are provided the required components in the minimum amounts. If meals are served family style, all meal components must be on the table and amounts must be available so that child(ren) can take the minimum amount required for their age per the meal pattern. With family style, the child **must serve themselves** and can take the portion size they want.

Q: What happens if a child brings a treat from home for birthdays/parties to share?

A: That treat provided by the family may be served in addition to the full meal or snack provided by the program.

Q: If doing family style dining, do the children have to adhere to serving sizes?

A: You must have the minimum serving sizes available on the table for all children seated at the table so each child could take at least the minimum amount required per the CACFP meal pattern. The children choose how much they want to take.

Infants

Q: If we are part of CACFP meal program do we have to provide formula for infants?

A: Yes. All programs participating on the CACFP, that are licensed for or care for infants, are required to offer a minimum of one type of iron-fortified infant formula and all foods to infants. This includes programs that choose not to claim infant meals for CACFP reimbursement.

Q: Do we need a doctor's note to provide table foods for a child under 12 months old?

A: No. Table foods may be served to an infant while still meeting the infant meal pattern requirements. For example, cut-up fruit (i.e. strawberries or bananas) meet the fruit requirement for infants. Eggs, yogurt and shredded cheese are acceptable meat alternates for infants. If an infant is developmentally ready for and families request table foods, they may be served to an infant under 1 year of age. When serving table foods, the infant meal pattern must still be met; therefore, it is not acceptable to serve grains (i.e. pancakes, toast, waffles) in place of iron fortified infant cereal at breakfast.

Q: For infants, can we serve a baby food that has 2 fruits/vegetables?

A: Yes, as long as it contains only fruits and/or vegetables, (e.g. peas/corn, pears/pineapple).

Q: Can infants be introduced to high allergen foods or should programs wait for parent permission to introduce the high allergen foods?

A: The CACFP does not have restrictions for introducing high allergen foods to infants. However, it is suggested to discuss with families before introducing any new foods to infants. Follow what families are serving at home for these high allergen foods.

Q: I find more parents want their child to eat solid foods sooner to get off of formula. How do we cover ourselves to get reimbursed?

A: Formula is a required component for infants until the infant's first birthday. If a parent wants their infant to get off of formula before their first birthday because of cost, the parent has the option to accept the infant formula offered by your program. Solid foods should only be served to an infant when the infant is developmentally ready to consume them. Further, when an infant is developmentally ready to consume infant foods, before, at, or after 6 months of age, CACFP programs must provide them.

Q: Do infants need to have water offered to them?

A: No, only children ages 1 year and over must have water offered to them throughout the day.

CACFP Administration

Q: Do we still need to keep a Guidance Memorandum (GM) book on site?

A: No, as long as you have the GM website bookmarked and can show how you access it.

Q: How many years do you need to keep CACFP records?

A: You must keep CACFP records for three fiscal years plus the current year.

Q: Can aluminum foil, pans and eating utensils be included in purchasing costs?

A: Yes, these items are non-food CACFP costs and may be purchased with CACFP funds.

Q: Why can't child care centers join Team Nutrition?

A: All agencies participating on the CACFP can join [Team Nutrition](#).

Q: Can we serve all CACFP components and also offer other components out of our own budget.

A: A CACFP creditable meal must be served to each participant in order for each meal to be claimed. These meals must include all required components and creditable foods. These foods can be purchased using the CACFP reimbursement your agency receives. Any additional foods served (non-creditable foods) must be allocated as a non-CACFP cost (ex. other food expense) and paid for with other program income. Keep in mind, buying and serving additional foods increases your food costs and overall operating expenses.

Donated Foods and Farmers Markets

Q: What do you do when a farmer at the farmers market doesn't provide a receipt?

A: Use the [Local Foods Purchase Log](#) to track purchases from a farmer's market, local farm, or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Maintain this on file with CACFP records.

Q: What is required for donated foods?

A: Any donated foods received and served in a CACFP meal or snack must be documented (specific item and quantity received). You can use the [DPI Donated Foods Log](#) found under GM 11 to document this information. Donated foods used in the CACFP must be creditable.

Families receiving WIC, i.e. formula and baby foods, CANNOT donate unused items to your program. Any unused WIC foods must be returned to the WIC office.

Claiming Meals

Q: Can we count extra lunches that are served to other students in the same building?

A: No. All meals claimed in the CACFP must be for eligible participants enrolled in the CACFP.

Q: Can we count preschool children for lunch if they bring their own lunch?

A: No, to claim a meal for a child, your program must provide all of the components for the meal.

Q: Are meals eaten at fast food restaurants disallowed?

A: These meals would need to meet all meal pattern requirements. To claim meals from a restaurant, you must obtain a product formulation statement or recipe from the restaurant for combination items (i.e. pizza, fried chicken, burgers). There are many factors to consider if you plan to claim a meal at or from a restaurant. Contact your [assigned consultant](#) for specific questions.

Q: If you are not claiming a snack, does it have to be in compliance with the CACFP meal pattern? Example: cookies.

A: No, meals that are not claimed on the CACFP may include non-creditable food items such as cookies. However, you cannot use CACFP funds to pay for non-creditable foods.

Q: For lifestyle choices, if a parent provides the child's meals/snacks, can you count that child?

A: A family can choose to provide **one creditable component** of their child's meal for a non-disability special dietary need. These meals can be claimed when the program provides all other required components with creditable food items. The [Special Dietary Needs Tracking Form](#) must be completed by the program, along with appropriate support documentation as specified on the form. This form is posted on the [Guidance Memorandum](#) website, under GM 12: Special Dietary Needs section.

Q: If we claim a non-creditable meal and this is discovered during a review, how does this get corrected?

A: The meal would be disallowed and may result in fiscal action as part of the review.

Q: Do classroom food experiences have to follow CACFP guidelines?

A: If the food experience is part of a meal/snack that will be claimed, then the meal/snack must follow the CACFP meal pattern.