

How Do They Compare? Meal Pattern Requirements

The pandemic has created new opportunities for sponsors to serve meals to kids. This chart provides a summary of meal pattern requirements between the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs (NSLP, SBP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Meal Pattern Requirement	School Meal Programs (NSLP and SBP)	Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Age/Grade Groups	Grade K-5, Grade 6-8, Grade 9-12	No requirement for different portion sizes	Birth-5 months, 6 months – 11 months, Ages 1-2, Ages 3-5, Ages 6-12, Ages 13-18 (for at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters)
Fruit/Vegetable			
Components	<p>Breakfast: Fruit is required, but not a vegetable. Vegetables can be offered in place of fruit – flexibility in place through June 30, 2021.</p> <p>Lunch: ½ cup fruit required daily for K-8, 1 cup fruit required daily for 9-12, and ¾ cup vegetable required daily for K-8 and 1 cup daily for 9-12</p>	<p>Breakfast, Lunch and Snack: Vegetables and fruit are one component</p>	<p>Breakfast: Vegetables and fruit are one component</p> <p>Lunch, Supper, Snack: Vegetables and fruit are two separate components</p>
Vegetable Subgroups	<p>Lunch: Must offer specific serving amount of each vegetable subgroup (dark green, red-orange, beans and peas, starchy and other vegetables) over the course of a week</p>	No requirements	No requirements
Full-strength juice (100% Juice)	<p>Breakfast and Lunch: May count towards no more than half of the vegetables or fruits offered over the week.</p>	<p>Lunch, Supper: May count towards no more than half of the fruit/vegetable requirement</p> <p>Snack: Juice may not be served when milk is served as the only other component.</p>	<p>May count towards the entire vegetable or fruit component no more than <i>once per day</i>.</p> <p>Snack: Juice may not be served when milk is served as the only other component.</p>

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Crediting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dried fruit credit as twice the amount offered (1/4 cup dried fruit = ½ cup fruit) ● Raw leafy greens credit for half the amount offered (1 cup of raw leafy greens = ½ cup vegetable) 	All fruits and vegetables are credited based on volume served except for tomato paste and tomato puree which credit based on yields found in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dried fruit credit as twice the amount offered (1/4 cup dried fruit = ½ cup fruit) ● Raw leafy greens credit for half the amount offered (1 cup of raw leafy greens = ½ cup vegetable)
Grains			
Whole grain-rich	All grains offered must be whole grain-rich (complete the Meal Pattern Flexibility waiver to allow for half of grains to be whole grain-rich)	No whole grain-rich requirement	Must serve at least one whole grain-rich food per day
Grain-based desserts	<p>Breakfast: no restrictions</p> <p>Lunch: Up to 2 oz equivalents of grain-based desserts per week may be offered as part of the grains component.</p>	No restrictions	Grain-based desserts cannot count towards the grain requirement for meals or snack
Breakfast cereals	No sugar limit – the cap is generated by the dietary specifications for the weekly menu	No sugar limit	Must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce
Crediting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on ounce equivalents ● Non-crediting grains (e.g. bran, germ, etc) are limited to no more than 2% or less than 0.25 oz eq per portion 	Based on serving sizes	Based on serving sizes until October 1, 2021. May use ounce equivalents now.
Meat/Meat Alternate			
Yogurt (including soy yogurt)	No sugar limit per product – the cap is generated by the dietary specifications for the weekly menu	No sugar limit	Must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces

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Meat/meat alternates in place of grains	Breakfast: May substitute 1 oz eq meat/meat alternate for 1 oz eq grains after meeting the minimum daily grain requirement, or it may be served as an extra within the dietary specifications for the week	Breakfast: May be served as an extra food item	Breakfast: May substitute meat/meat alternate for the entire grain component up to 3 times per week
Tofu	Allowed as a meat alternate. Must contain 5 grams of protein per 1.0 ounce equivalent (1/4 cup of 2.2 oz by weight)	Not creditable	Commercial tofu is allowed as a meat alternate. Must contain 5 grams of protein per 1.0 ounce equivalent (1/4 cup of 2.2 oz by weight)
Milk			
Fat content	Low-fat (1%) or fat-free	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1-year-olds: whole milk ● 2-year-olds and older: low-fat or fat-free milk
Flavored milk	Must be fat-free, unless approved for Meal Pattern Flexibility Waiver	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not allowed for children 1 through 5 years old ● Must be fat-free when served to children 6 years old and older
Non-dairy beverages (Fluid Milk Substitutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent (defined by regulation) to cow's milk may be served to non-disabled students with medial or special dietary needs; must be requested in writing by a parent/guardian. ● Other beverages, including water, may not be offered in place of milk as part of the reimbursable meal. ● Potable water is required to be available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not allowed for SFSP sponsors ● School sponsors claiming meals under SFSP may serve non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent (defined by regulation) to cow's milk may be served to non-disabled children with medial or special dietary needs; must be requested in writing by a parent/guardian or licensed health care professional. ● Other beverages, including water, may not be offered in place of milk as part of the reimbursable meal or snack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent (defined by regulation) to cow's milk may be served to non-disabled students with medial or special dietary needs; must be requested in writing by a parent/guardian, adult participant, or a person on behalf of the adult participant. ● Breastmilk may be served in lieu of fluid milk; a written request is not required. ● Water must be offered throughout the day. ● Other beverages, including water, may not be offered in place of milk as part of the reimbursable meal.

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Dietary Specifications			
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Meal Service Options			
Offer Versus Serve (OVS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Required in high schools. SY 20-21 national waiver makes OVS optional at high schools. At lunch, students must select at least 3 food components out of the 5 components offered; at breakfast, menu planner must offer 4 food items and students must select 3 food items ● Breakfast and Lunch: Students must select at least ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable ● Optional for middle and elementary schools ● Not allowed at non-congregate (take home meal) sites ● Snack: Not allowed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allowed at all SFSP sites, regardless of location type or sponsorship. At lunch, children must select 3 food components out of the 4 offered; at breakfast, at least 4 food items must be offered, and children must select 3 items. ● Not allowed at non-congregate (take home meal) sites ● No ½ cup fruit or vegetable requirement ● Snack: Not allowed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only allowed in adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs. At lunch or supper, participants must select at least 3 food components out of the 5 components offered; at breakfast, at least 4 food items must be offered, and participants must select 3 items ● No ½ cup vegetable or fruit requirement ● Not allowed in pre-K ● Snack: Not allowed
Family Style Meals (not recommended in pandemic)	Allowed in all schools and RCCIs	Allowed only at camps and closed enrolled sites	Allowed in all CACFP settings