

Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

July 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025

This guidance applies to reimbursable meals and snacks served in child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and adult day care centers that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

For information on the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Creditable Ingredients

Smoothie ingredients that credit toward the CACFP meal patterns include full-strength vegetable juice and pureed vegetables (vegetables component); full-strength fruit juice and pureed fruits (fruits component); low-fat or fat-free milk (milk component); and yogurt or soy yogurt (meats/meat alternates (MMA) component).

Creditable ingredients in smoothies must provide at least the minimum creditable amount to credit toward the meal patterns. The minimum creditable amounts are $\frac{1}{8}$ cup for the vegetables component and fruits component, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup for the milk component (applies only to milk in smoothies), and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce) for yogurt.

Required Crediting Documentation for Smoothies

CACFP facilities must maintain appropriate documentation to indicate the crediting information for each meal component in the smoothie. For example, to credit a strawberry-yogurt smoothie as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component and 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) of the MMA component, the CACFP facility's documentation must indicate that the serving contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt. Documentation must be based on the food yields and crediting information in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG).

Documentation for commercial smoothies

Commercial smoothies require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) that indicates the amount of each meal component per serving. A CN label might be available for some commercial smoothies that contain yogurt. For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#); and the USDA's PFS forms and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#).

For more information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: [Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements](#), and the USDA's resource, [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#).

Additional guidance is available on the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

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Documentation for smoothies made from scratch

Smoothies made from scratch require a recipe that indicates the contribution of each meal component in the serving. This includes foods made on site by the CACFP facility and foods prepared by vendors. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine food yields and crediting information for CACFP recipes.

The CSDE encourages CACFP facilities to use standardized recipes to ensure accurate crediting information. For information on standardized recipes, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Recipe Standardization Guide for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "[Standardized Recipes](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

Storing crediting documentation

CACFP facilities must maintain all crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the CACFP (refer to the CSDE's [Records Retention Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the CACFP.

Recommended Daily Limit for Smoothies

The USDA recommends limiting smoothies to one CACFP meal or snack per day. For example, if a smoothie is served at breakfast, the CACFP menus for lunch and snack should not include a smoothie.



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Crediting Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice toward the vegetables component or fruits component. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice. CACFP facilities must document the amount of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation for Smoothies](#)” in this document). Menu planners must follow the guidance below when crediting fruits and vegetables in smoothies.

Juice limit

Juice credits as the vegetables component or fruits component at only one CACFP meal or snack per day. The juice limit includes all types of 100 percent juice (e.g., fruit juice, vegetable juice, and juice blends; pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies; frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice; and juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice). For example, if the menu planner credits pureed blueberries in a smoothie as the fruits component at breakfast, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at lunch or snack. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Juices in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Mixed fruits and vegetables

Smoothies that contain a mix of pureed fruits and vegetables, or 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends, credit based on the greatest fruit or vegetable ingredient. Commercial smoothies credit as the fruits component if the first juice ingredient is fruit juice or fruit puree, and credit as the vegetables component if the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice or vegetable puree. Smoothies made from scratch credit as the fruits component if the greatest juice ingredient in the standardized recipe is fruit juice or fruit puree, and credit as the vegetables component if vegetable juice or vegetable puree is the greatest juice ingredient.

Smoothies at Breakfast

The CACFP breakfast meal pattern requires a serving of vegetables, fruits, or both. Smoothies that contain the required amount of juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables) for each age group may credit as the entire vegetables and fruits component at breakfast. For example, a serving of smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries credits as the full fruits component for ages 3-5.

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Smoothies at lunch and supper

The CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern requires a serving of the fruits component and a serving of vegetables component. Lunch and supper menus cannot offer a smoothie and juice as the only two servings of fruits and vegetables because both credit as juice. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and tomato juice as the vegetables component. At least one of the required servings of the vegetables component or fruits component must be a whole fruit or vegetable, i.e., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.

Smoothies at snack

The CACFP snack meal pattern requires two of the five meal components (milk, MMA, vegetables, fruits, and grains). Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies may credit as either the entire fruits component or the entire vegetables component but cannot credit as both components in the same snack. Smoothies containing juice and milk may credit as either juice or milk but cannot credit as both components in the same snack. The snack menu cannot include juice (including pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies) when milk is the only other meal component at snack.

The examples below show how these requirements apply to the CACFP meal patterns for ages 3-5. These smoothies cannot credit as the milk component for age 1 because the CACFP meal patterns for children require whole milk for age 1.

- **Example 1:** A smoothie recipe's serving contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of unflavored low-fat milk. The menu planner may choose to credit the smoothie as either the fruits component or the milk component but cannot credit the smoothie as both components in the same snack. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component, i.e., MMA, grains, or vegetables.
- **Example 2:** A smoothie recipe's serving contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed fruit (credits as fruit juice) and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of unflavored low-fat milk. The pureed fruit credits as the fruits component. However, the milk does not credit as the milk component because the serving is less than $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. To be reimbursable, the snack must include the full serving of a second component, i.e., MMA, grains, or vegetables.

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Crediting Milk in Smoothies

Milk in smoothies credits as the milk component based on the amount per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the milk component. CACFP facilities must document the amount of milk per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation for Smoothies](#)” in this document).

Allowable types of milk

The CACFP meal patterns require unflavored whole milk for age 1, and unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk for ages 2 and older. Flavored low-fat or fat-free milk may be served to ages 6 and older but the USDA’s [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving only unflavored milk.

Minimum creditable amount

The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. CACFP facilities must have a standardized recipe or PFS to document the type and amount of milk per serving (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document).

Crediting Yogurt in Smoothies

Yogurt and soy yogurt that meets the CACFP sugars limit credits as the MMA component when it is used as an ingredient in smoothies. The meal pattern contribution is based on the amount per serving. Yogurt and soy yogurt used in smoothies cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce).

Effective October 1, 2025, the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), changes the product-based limit for yogurt from total sugars to added sugars. Yogurt cannot exceed 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).

A $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of yogurt credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. CACFP facilities must document the amount of yogurt or soy yogurt per serving with a recipe for smoothies made from scratch and a PFS for commercial products (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document). For information on the crediting requirements for yogurt, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

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Yogurt substitution for milk in CACFP adult meal patterns

For the CACFP adult meal patterns only, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (6 ounces weight) that meets the CACFP sugars limit may substitute for 8 fluid ounces of milk at one meal per day. This includes yogurt in a smoothie.

Additional Ingredients

Smoothies may include additional noncreditable ingredients to improve flavor and consistency, such as oatmeal and peanut butter. However, these ingredients do not credit toward the CACFP meal patterns.

Smoothie Crediting Example

The example below shows how to credit a smoothie made with blueberry puree, low-fat yogurt, fat-free milk, and oatmeal. This smoothie recipe credits toward the fruits, MMA, and milk components for ages 2 and older and adult participants; and toward the fruits and MMA components for ages 1.

This smoothie cannot credit as the milk component for age 1 because the CACFP meal patterns for children require unflavored whole milk for age 1.

Ingredient	Meal pattern contribution
Frozen blueberry puree, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice (fruits component) ¹
Low-fat blueberry yogurt, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	1 oz eq of MMA
Low-fat milk, 4 fluid ounces	4 fluid ounces of milk ²
Oatmeal, 2 tablespoons	None (does not credit in smoothies)

¹ Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the juice limit.

² The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.

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Commercial Products

Commercial smoothies credit the same as smoothies made from scratch. However, product formulation and labeling can vary greatly because commercial smoothies do not have a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) standard of identity. To credit commercial smoothies in CACFP meals and snacks, CACFP facilities must obtain a PFS (or CN label, if available) stating the amount of all creditable ingredients per serving, such as pureed fruits and vegetables, juice, yogurt, and milk (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document) and follow the guidance below.

Crediting pureed vegetables/fruits

Commercial smoothies made with juices or pureed fruits/vegetables credit only as juice toward the fruits component or vegetables component. Crediting is based on the volume of fruits/vegetables after pureeing and before freezing. The product label must include a statement regarding the “percent juice content,” which is required by the FDA for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or puree.

For example, an 8-fluid ounce smoothie made from fruit puree that is labeled with “contains 50% juice” credits as 4 fluid ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of juice. CACFP facilities may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruit in the product.

Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars and do not credit in smoothies unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

Crediting milk

The type of milk used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies must be consistent with the CACFP meal pattern requirements (refer to “[Allowable types of milk](#)” in this document). The manufacturer’s product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with milk are made using ingredients that meet federal, state, and local definitions for fluid milk.

Crediting yogurt

Yogurt and soy yogurt that meets the CACFP sugars limit credits as the MMA component when used as an ingredient in commercial smoothies (refer to “[Crediting Yogurt in Smoothies](#)” in this document). The product documentation must attest that commercial mixes with yogurt are made in compliance with the federal definition for yogurt.

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Limit for crediting amount

The total creditable amount in a smoothie cannot exceed the volume served. For example, ½ cup of a commercial smoothie cannot credit as 1 cup of juice.

Noncreditable commercial smoothies

Probiotic dairy drinks, drinkable yogurt, and yogurt drinks are not smoothies, and do not credit in the CACFP meal patterns. Commercial smoothies that contain dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) do not credit in the CACFP meal patterns.

Review accuracy of PFS

Prior to including commercial smoothies in reimbursable meals and snacks, CACFP facilities must check the manufacturer's PFS for accuracy (refer to "[Documentation for commercial smoothies](#)" in this document). Check that the listed volumes of pureed fruits and vegetables are prior to freezing. Check that milk and yogurt (if included) meet the meal pattern requirements and yogurt meets the federal definition for yogurt.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/accepting_processed_product_documentation_cacfp.pdf

Accepting Product Documentation (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/accepting-product-documentation>

Calculating the Added Sugars Limit for Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp/calculating-sugar-limits-yogurt>

Choose Yogurt That Is Lower in Added Sugars in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp/choose-yogurts-lower-sugar>

Crediting Juices in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_juices_cacfp.pdf

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Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_yogurt_cacfp.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements>

Recipe Standardization Guide for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (Institute of Child Nutrition):

<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/step-by-step-recipe-standardization-guide-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/>

Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/standardized-recipes>

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

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

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation>

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

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

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using_cn_labels_cacfp.pdf

Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using_product_formulation_statements_cacfp.pdf

Vegetable Subgroups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/vegetable_subgroups_cacfp.pdf

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/cacfp_credit_smoothies.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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