

Sample Snack Menus for Centers and Family Day Care Homes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This document provides sample snack menus for ages 3-5 with menu planning considerations for child care centers, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and family day care homes that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The specified servings meet or exceed the requirements of the [CACFP meal patterns for children](#) and are indicated in parentheses after each menu item. Servings may be adjusted for other ages.

The CACFP snack meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires the minimum serving of any two of the five meal components, including $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk; $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalent (oz eq) of meats/meat alternates; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits; and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq of grains. Only one of the two snack components may be a creditable beverage such as milk or juice.

Each meal component must provide at least the minimum meal pattern serving. CACFP menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. Serve nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to children's nutrition needs.

For guidance on the CACFP meal patterns for children, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Guide to Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children and Crediting Requirements](#). For additional resources, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns](#) and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Menu Planning Considerations

Consider the meal pattern requirements and recommendations below when planning CACFP menus. For guidance on crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Meats/meat alternates (MMA) component

- The serving size of MMA refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, fillers, or other ingredients. Commercial processed products that contain added ingredients (such as combination entrees, deli meats, hot dogs, and sausages) require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS) to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

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- Nut and seed butters credit by volume (tablespoons) not weight. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- Yogurt and soy yogurt 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 limit for yogurt to no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving only lean meats, nuts, and beans, peas, and lentils; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese.

For more information, visit the "[Meats and Meat Alternates](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage

Fruits component and vegetables component

- Before planning juice at snack, make sure that the other daily meals and snacks do not contain juice. Pasteurized full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. The juice limit includes fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, and pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice.
- Dried fruit credits as twice the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component.
- Raw leafy greens such as lettuce or spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of raw leafy greens credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vegetables component.

For more information, visit the "[Fruits](#)" section and the "[Vegetables](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage

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Grains component

- At least one serving of grains per day must be whole grain-rich (WGR). The USDA's [CACFP best practices](#) recommend at least two servings of WGR grains per day. To meet the CACFP WGR criteria, foods must contain at least 50 percent whole grains and the remaining grain ingredients must be enriched, bran, or germ. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and refer to "Whole Grain-rich Requirement" in the "Grains" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- To credit as the required oz eq, the serving of grain products and recipes must provide either: 1) the required serving weight (groups A-E) or volume (groups H-I) in the USDA's Exhibit A chart (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)); or 2) the minimum creditable grains per serving (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Calculation Methods for Grains Ounce Equivalents for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). For more information, refer to "Serving Requirements" in the "Grains" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- Grain-based desserts do not credit. Examples include cookies, piecrusts in sweet pies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, pastries, toaster pastries, cake, and brownies. Sweet crackers such as graham crackers and animal crackers are not grain-based desserts and may credit as the grains component. However, the CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's [Grain-based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage
- Breakfast cereals must be WGR, enriched, or fortified and cannot contain more than 6 grams of sugars per dry 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 limit for breakfast cereals to no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

For more information, visit the "Grains" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

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Milk component

- The CACFP meal patterns for ages 3-5 require unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk.

For more information, visit the “Milk” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage

Noncreditable foods

Noncreditable foods cannot be served in place of the required meal components. Examples of noncreditable foods include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods for Child Care Programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

Crediting Documentation

CACFP facilities must be able to document that CSCFP menus provide the minimum portion of each required meal component. Use the USDA’s [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the meal pattern requirements.

- Commercial processed products require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information unless they are listed in the FBG. CACFP sponsors must verify PFS forms for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and snacks. For more information, 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 [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- Foods made from scratch must have a recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. Standardized recipes are encouraged to ensure accurate crediting information. For more information, refer to the “[Standardized Recipes](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Additional guidance on meal pattern documentation is available on the CSDE’s [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program](#) webpage.

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Abbreviations for Sample Menus

The abbreviations used in the CACFP sample menus are indicated below.

Meal components

M = Milk component

MMA = Meats/meat alternates component

V = Vegetables component

F = Fruits component

G = Grains component

WGR = Whole grain-rich

Menu items not credited

A = Additional creditable food (credits but does not provide full serving)

O = Other food (noncreditable)

Measurements

c = cup

Tbsp = tablespoon

tsp = teaspoon

oz = ounce

oz eq = ounce equivalent

Note: The CSDE's sample menus are intended for informational purposes and do not guarantee compliance with the CACFP meal patterns for children. Crediting information for local menus will vary depending on the types of foods purchased by the CACFP facility and the recipes and preparation techniques used. CACFP facilities are responsible for ensuring that their menus meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and maintaining appropriate crediting documentation on file (refer to "[Crediting Documentation](#)" above).

Sample Snack Menus for Centers and Family Day Care Homes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Week 1

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup					
MMA ½ oz		Yogurt and fruit parfait: Low-fat vanilla yogurt (¼ c)			Ham (¼ oz) and cheese (¼ oz) roll-up
V ½ cup			Cucumber slices (½ c)	Vegetable soup (½ cup vegetables)	
F ½ cup	Orange slices (½ c)	Sliced strawberries (¼ c) Blueberries (¼ c)		Cantaloupe chunks (½ c)	
G ½ oz eq	Enriched corn muffin (1 oz)		Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR		Whole-corn tortilla (½ oz) WGR
A		Whole-grain granola (2 Tbsp) WGR			Shredded lettuce (⅛ c)
O	Water	Water	Low-fat dip (1 Tbsp) Water	Water	Mustard (1 tsp) or low-fat mayonnaise (1 tsp) Water

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Week 2

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup					
MMA ½ oz	Diced turkey (½ oz)		Sunflower butter (1 Tbsp)	Hummus (⅛ c chickpeas) pita with shredded carrots	
V ½ cup	Tossed salad: Lettuce (½ c) with tomatoes and cucumbers (¼ c)	Sliced avocado (½ c)			Cucumber slices (¼ c) Carrot slices (¼ c)
F ½ cup			Apple slices (½ c)		
G ½ oz eq		Whole-wheat toast (½ oz) WGR		Whole-wheat pita half (½ oz) WGR	Enriched pretzels (½ oz)
A	Enriched croutons (¼ oz)			Shredded carrots (⅛ c)	
O	Low-fat dressing (1 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Water	Low-fat dip (1 Tbsp) Water

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Week 3

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup				Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)	
MMA ½ oz		Low-fat cottage cheese (⅛ c)	Tortilla wrap: Refried beans (⅛ c) and shredded cheese (⅛ oz)		
V ½ cup				Carrot-pineapple-raisin salad: Shredded carrots (½ c)	Roasted cauliflower bites (½ c)
F ½ cup	Mixed berries (½ c)	Canned apricots in juice (½ c)			Honeydew melon (½ c)
G ½ oz eq	Soft whole-grain pretzel (½ oz) WGR		Whole-grain tortilla (½ oz) WGR		
A	Shredded cheese (¼ oz)		Diced tomato (⅛ c)	Crushed pineapple (⅛ cup) Raisins (1 tsp)	
O	Water	Water	Water		Low-fat dip (1 oz) Water

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Week 4

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup			Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)		
MMA ½ oz	Part-skim Mozzarella cheese stick (½ oz)	Ants on a log: Peanut butter (1 Tbsp)		Pasta veggie salad: Ham (½ oz)	
V ½ cup		Carrot sticks (¼ c) Celery sticks (¼ c)			
F ½ cup	Red grapes (½ c)				Sliced kiwi (½ c)
G ½ oz eq			Whole-grain flaked cereal (½ c) WGR	Enriched rotini pasta (¼ c)	Whole-grain cornbread (1 oz) WGR
A		Raisins (1 Tbsp)		Diced vegetables: Carrots, broccoli, and tomatoes (¼ c)	
O	Low-fat dressing (1 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Water	Water

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Week 5

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup				Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)	
MMA ½ oz		Low-fat cottage cheese (⅛ c)	Tortilla wrap: Refried beans (⅛ c) and shredded cheese (⅛ oz)		
V ½ cup				Carrot-pineapple-raisin salad: Shredded carrots (½ c)	Roasted cauliflower bites (½ c)
F ½ cup	Mixed berries (½ c)	Canned apricots in juice (½ c)			Honeydew melon (½ c)
G ½ oz eq	Soft whole-grain pretzel (½ oz) WGR		Whole-grain tortilla (½ oz) WGR		
A	Shredded cheese (¼ oz)		Diced tomato (⅛ c)	Crushed pineapple (⅛ cup) Raisins (1 tsp)	
O	Water	Water	Water		Low-fat dip (1 oz) Water

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Week 6

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup				Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)	
MMA ½ oz			Low-fat Greek yogurt (¼ c)	Almond butter (1 Tbsp)	Tuna salad (½ oz tuna)
V ½ cup	Sliced jicama (½ c)	Marinated broccoli florets (½ c)			
F ½ cup		Plums (½ c)	Fruit salad: Oranges, bananas, sliced grapes, pineapple (½ c)		
G ½ oz eq	Enriched bread sticks (½ oz)			Whole-wheat bagel (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR
A					Chopped tomatoes (¼ c)
O	Low-fat dip (2 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water		Water

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Week 7

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup			Unflavored low-fat milk (½ c)		
MMA ½ oz	Pumpkin seeds (½ oz)	Hummus (⅛ c chickpeas)		Shredded low-fat cheese (½ oz)	Berry-peach yogurt parfait: Low-fat yogurt (¼ c)
V ½ cup		Zucchini sticks (¼ c) Pepper strips (¼ c)		Garden salad: Lettuce (½ c), tomatoes, cucumbers, and carrots (¼ c)	
F ½ cup	Watermelon chunks (½ c)				Seasonal berries (¼ c) Diced peaches (¼ c)
G ½ oz eq			Enriched pumpkin cranberry muffin (1 oz) WGR		
A					
O	Water	Water		Low-fat Italian dressing (1 Tbsp) Water	Crumbled graham crackers (1 Tbsp) Water

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Week 8

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup					
MMA ½ oz	Pita bread triangles: Low-fat cheese (½ oz)				Chicken salad (½ oz cooked chicken)
V ½ cup		Roasted chickpeas (½ c)	Marinated diced cucumber-tomato salad (½ c)		
F ½ cup		Pineapple chunks (½ c)		Strawberry shortcake: Sliced strawberries (½ c)	
G ½ oz eq	Whole-wheat pita bread (½ oz) WGR		Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR	Enriched biscuit (½ oz)	Whole-wheat pita pocket (½ oz) WGR
A	Veggie salsa (⅛ c)				Shredded lettuce (⅛ c) Diced tomato (⅛ c)
O	Low-fat dip (2 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Whipped cream (2 Tbsp) Water	Water

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Week 9

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup					
MMA ½ oz				Almond butter (1 Tbsp)	Herbed cottage cheese (⅛ c)
V ½ cup		Marinated three-bean salad (½ c)			Celery sticks and cucumber slices (½ c)
F ½ cup	Pineapple slices (½ c)		Sliced kiwi (½ c)	Frozen banana (½ c)	
G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain bagel (½ oz) WGR	Enriched pretzels (½ oz)	Whole-grain puffed cereal (¾ c) WGR		
A					Whole-grain crackers (¼ oz) WGR
O	Light cream cheese (½ Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Water	Water

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Week 10

Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
M ½ cup					
MMA ½ oz	Hard-boiled egg (½ large)				Peanut butter (1 Tbsp)
V ½ cup		Sliced cherry tomatoes (½ c)		Roasted green beans (½ c)	
F ½ cup		Diced pears (½ c)	Refried beans and salsa (½ cup)	Apple slices (½ c)	
G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR		Whole-corn tortilla chips (½ oz) WGR		Whole-wheat bagel (½ oz) WGR
A					
O	Low-fat dip (2 Tbsp) Water	Water	Water	Water	Water

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Resources

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-cacfp-child-care-programs/grains>

Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):

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

Guide to Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children and Crediting Requirements (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/guide_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs>

Menu Planning Basics: A Guide for CACFP Operators in Child Care (Institute of Child Nutrition):

<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/menu-planning-basics-cacfp>

Menu Planning for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/menu-planning>

Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage)

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning/recipes-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf

Snacks ("Menu Planning" section of CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/menu-planning#Snacks>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) 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/mealpattern/menu_cacfp_snack.pdf.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
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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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