

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

School Year 2025-26 (July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026)

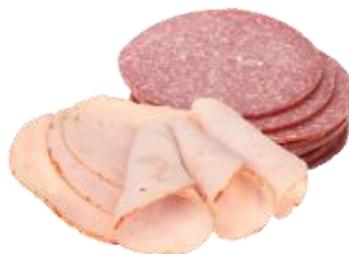
This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), and [Afterschool Snack Program \(ASP\)](#) of the NSLP. The [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP follows the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns.

For information on the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, and the “[Meal Patterns and Crediting](#)” section of the ASP webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Contents

Overview of Crediting Requirements	2
Liquids, Binders, and Extenders	3
Table 1. Examples of binders and extenders	3
Examples of commercial products with added liquid, binders, and extenders	3
Developing Recipes for Menu Items with Deli Meats	4
Comparing Cost	5
Table 2. Cost comparison of sample deli meats	5
Required Crediting Documentation for Deli Meats	6
Storing crediting documentation	7
Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children	7
Resources	8



Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

Overview of Crediting Requirements

Deli meats (such as turkey, chicken, ham, roast beef, salami, and bologna) credit as the MMA component. The serving of deli meat that provides 1 oz eq of the MMA component depends on the product's ingredients. These servings vary greatly between different brands and types of deli meats depending on the ingredients they contain.

- **100 percent meat:** Products that are 100 percent meat without added liquids (e.g., water or broth), binders, and extenders credit on an ounce-per-ounce basis (actual serving weight). For example, 1 ounce of deli meat that is 100 percent meat credits as 1 oz eq of the MMA component.
- **Added liquids, binders, and extenders:** Products that contain added liquids, binders, and extenders credit based on the percentage of meat in the product formula. A 1-ounce serving of these products does not credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The crediting depends on the amount of meat per serving, excluding added ingredients. For example, to credit as 1 oz eq of the MMA component might require 1.6 ounces of one brand of deli meat and 2.3 ounces of another brand of deli meat.

School food authorities (SFAs) must ensure that the serving of deli meat provides the amount of the MMA component being credited toward the reimbursable meal or afterschool snack.



Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

Liquids, Binders, and Extenders

Products with added liquids, binders, and extenders cannot credit as the MMA component without a CN label or PFS that states the amount of the MMA component per serving. Menu planners must review product labels and ingredients to determine if commercial products contain added liquids, binders, and extenders. Binders and extenders are defined by the USDA's regulations for the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) ([9 CFR 318.7](#)).

Table 1. Examples of binders and extenders ¹

Agar-agar	Isolated soy protein (APP) ¹
Algin (a mixture of sodium alginate, calcium carbonate and calcium gluconate/lactic acid)	Locust bean gum
Bread	Methyl cellulose
Calcium-reduced dried skim milk	Modified food starch
Carrageenan	Reduced lactose whey
Carboxymethyl cellulose (cellulose gum)	Reduced minerals
Cereal	Sodium caseinate
Dried milk	Soy flour (APP) ²
Dry or dried whey	Soy protein concentrate (APP) ¹
Enzyme (rennet) treated calcium-reduced dried skim milk and calcium lactate	Starchy vegetable flour
Gums, vegetable	Tapioca dextrin
	Vegetable starch
	Wheat gluten
	Whey
	Whey protein concentrate (APP) ¹
	Xanthan gum

¹ Products may contain these ingredients if they meet the USDA's requirements for alternate protein products (APPs). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Examples of commercial products with added liquid, binders, and extenders

The ingredients statements below show some examples of turkey breast products that contain added liquid, binders, and extenders (indicated in *italics*).

- Ingredients: Turkey breast, *water*, *modified cornstarch*, contains less than 2% of sodium lactate, salt, sugar, sodium phosphates, *carrageenan*, natural flavor, sodium diacetate, potassium chloride, sodium ascorbate, sodium nitrite, caramel color.

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

- Ingredients: Turkey breast meat, *turkey broth*, contains 2% or less salt, sugar, *carrageenan*, sodium phosphate, sodium acetate, sodium diacetate, flavoring.

To credit these products in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks, SFAs must obtain a CN label or PFS indicating the oz eq of MMA per serving.

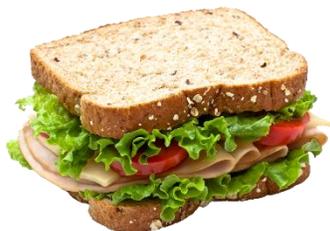
Developing Recipes for Menu Items with Deli Meats

Different brands and types of deli meat credit differently. To ensure proper crediting, SFAs should develop standardized recipes for menu items that contain deli meats, such as sandwiches and other entrees.

These standardized recipes should indicate the deli meat's contribution to the MMA component based on the specific weight of a specific brand. To make portioning simple for food service staff and ensure that the serving provides the proper crediting amount, round up the weight of the deli meat in the standardized recipe to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce. For example, the standardized recipe should list 1.2 ounces of deli meat as 1.25 ounces and 1.6 ounces of deli meat as 1.75 ounces.

If the SFA makes the same food item using different brands of deli meats that credit differently, the standardized recipe should include the specific weight of each brand. For example, if a school makes a turkey sandwich using either ABC brand turkey breast or XYZ brand turkey breast, the standardized recipe should include the required weight of ABC brand for 1 oz eq and the required weight of XYZ brand for 1 oz eq. Alternatively, the SFA could also choose to develop a separate standardized turkey sandwich recipe for each brand of deli meat.

For information on standardized recipes, visit the "[Standardized Recipes](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on standardized recipes is available in Module 7: Meal Pattern Documentation for School Menus, of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).



Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

Comparing Cost

Determining the cost per oz eq of MMA helps SFAs decide if the required meal pattern serving for a specific brand of deli meat is reasonable and cost effective. The deli product with the lowest cost per pound might not be the least expensive. Considering the cost per oz eq of the MMA component instead of the cost per ounce of meat provides a more accurate reflection of the product's cost in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks. Table 2 shows a sample cost comparison of two deli meat products.

Table 2. Cost comparison of sample deli meats

Food Item	Price per pound	Price per ounce	1 oz eq of MMA ¹	Cost of 1 oz eq of MMA
Sample product A: Deli meat with liquids, binders, or extenders	\$4.99	\$.31	1.7 ounces ²	\$.53
Sample product B: Deli meat without liquids, binders, or extenders	\$6.99	\$.44	1 ounce	\$.44

¹ Products with added liquids, binders, extenders require a CN label or PFS to document the MMA oz eq per serving (refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation for Deli Meats](#)" in this document).

² SFAs must obtain the oz eq contribution of the deli meat from its PFS.

Sample product A (deli meat with liquids, binders, or extenders) costs \$2 less per pound than sample product B (deli meat without liquids, binders, or extenders). However, when the SFA compares the cost based on 1 oz eq of the MMA component, a serving of sample product A costs 53 cents and a serving of sample product B costs 44 cents. Sample product A requires almost twice the weight of sample product B to provide 1 oz eq of the MMA component because of the added liquids, binders, and extenders.

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

Required Crediting Documentation for Deli Meats

SFAs must obtain appropriate crediting documentation that states the oz eq of the MMA component per serving for all deli meats that contain added liquids, binders, and extenders. Acceptable documentation includes any of the documents below.

- **Child Nutrition (CN) label:** A CN label is a USDA-approved statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements. CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute at least ½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) of the MMA component. Allowable CN label documentation includes 1) the original CN label from the product carton; 2) a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or 3) a CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor and the bill of lading (invoice). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- **Product formulation statement (PFS):** A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. The PFS must be signed by an official of the manufacturer and state the amount of each meal pattern component contained in one serving of the product. For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Deli meats without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks unless they are listed in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG).

A PFS is required for all deli meats without a CN label that are not listed in the FBG. The USDA requires that SFAs must obtain and verify the PFS for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks.

For more information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs, 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](#).

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

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*.

Storing crediting documentation

SFAs must maintain all crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs (refer to the CSDE's [Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs](#)). This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the [Administrative Review](#) of the school nutrition programs.

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Large chunks or cubes of deli meats are choking hazards. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding how to offer deli meats in preschool menus and modify foods and menus as appropriate. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/accepting_processed_product_documentation_snp.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>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_commercial_mma_snp.pdf

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

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

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Meats and Meat Alternates (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/meats-and-meat-alternates>

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>

Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/app_requirements_snp.pdf

Standardized Recipes (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs 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>

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/cn_labels_snp.pdf

Using Product Formulation Statements in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/product_formulation_statements.pdf

What's in a Meal Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

What's in a Meal Module 10: Meats/Meat Alternates Component (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs 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/nslp/crediting/credit_deli_snp.pdf.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email louis.todisco@ct.gov.

