

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the Summer Food Service Program

This guidance applies to meals and snacks served in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). For information on the SFSP meal patterns and the meats/meats alternates (MMA) component, visit the “Meal Patterns” section of the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) SFSP webpage and refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Requirements for the Meats/Meat Alternates Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns](#). For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Overview of Crediting Requirements

Nuts and seeds and their butters credit as the MMA component in the SFSP meal patterns. Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, soy nuts, and sunflower seeds.

Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts. However, fresh soybeans (edamame) credit as the vegetables component (beans, peas, and lentils subgroup). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program](#).

Examples of creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter must meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for peanut butter ([21 CFR 164.150](#)), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

Training on the crediting requirements for the MMA component is available in the CSDE's Summer Meals annual training module, [Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns: Part 3: Meats/Meat Alternates Component](#).

One ounce of MMA equals 2 tablespoons of nut/seed butter or 1 ounce of nuts/seeds.

Change to Limit for Nuts and Seeds at Lunch and Supper

Effective July 1, 2024, the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), removes the previous 50 percent crediting limit for nuts and seeds at lunch and supper. Nuts and seeds may credit for the full MMA component at any meal or snack.



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Serving Size for Nut and Seed Butters

Table 1 shows the MMA contribution of different serving sizes of nut and seed butters. The serving for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons credit as 1 ounce of the MMA component. This crediting is the same for all types of nut and seed butters, e.g., smooth, crunchy, and natural.

The required volume measure (tablespoons) for nut and seed butters is not the same as weight (ounces). For example, a 1-ounce serving of peanut butter does not provide 1 ounce of the MMA component. Nut and seed butters that are portioned by weight instead of volume must use the appropriate weight conversion in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG). The FBG indicates that a 1.1-ounce serving of a nut or seed butter credits as 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of the MMA component.

Table 1. Serving sizes and meal pattern contribution for nut and seed butters

Serving size	Scoop (disher) size ¹	Meal pattern contribution	Weight equivalent ³
½ tablespoon (1½ teaspoons)	Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)	¼ ounce (minimum creditable amount)	0.275 ounces
1 tablespoon (3 teaspoons)	Closest is No. 60 (3¼ teaspoons)	½ ounce	0.55 ounces
1½ tablespoons	Closest is No. 40 (1⅔ tablespoons)	¾ ounce	0.825 ounces
2 tablespoons (⅓ cup)	No. 30 (2 tablespoons)	1 ounce	1.1 ounces
3 tablespoons	Closest is No. 20 (3⅓ tablespoons)	1½ ounce	1.65 ounces
4 tablespoons (¼ cup)	No. 16 (¼ cup)	2 ounce	1.2 ounces

¹ Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster](#).

² Weight equivalents are from the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#).

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Serving size considerations for nut/seed butters

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the required serving for each grade group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich. For example, the lunch and supper meal patterns require 4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) of peanut butter to credit as 2 ounces of the MMA component. This is a large amount for two slices of bread.



The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing it with another MMA to provide the full serving. For example, a lunch menu could provide 2 ounces of the MMA component from a sandwich containing 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce of MMA) served with 1 ounce of another MMA, such as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt. Another option is providing the required 4 tablespoons of peanut butter in three half-sandwiches that each contain 4 teaspoons of peanut butter.

Nuts, Seeds, and Nut/Seed Butters in Commercial Products Must Be Recognizable

Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters used as ingredients in commercial products must be visible and easily recognizable as meat substitutes to credit toward the SFSP meal patterns. Commercial products that are not easily recognizable as meat substitutes do not credit. Some examples include peanut butter blended into other foods (such as muffins or smoothies), peanut butter granola bars, and chopped nuts in muffins.

The USDA's intent for this requirement is to ensure that SFSP sponsors offer foods from the MMA component in a form that is recognizable to children. The USDA emphasizes the importance of the nutrition education aspect of the SFSP, which includes the goal of helping children easily recognize the key food groups that contribute to a healthy meal.

Noncreditable Nuts and Seeds

Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit as the MMA component.

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Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Nuts, seeds, chunky peanut butter, and chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters are choking hazards.

Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding how to offer nuts, seeds, and their butters in SFSP menus and modify foods and menus as appropriate. Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include grinding or finely chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds before adding to prepared foods, and using only creamy nut or seed butters and spreading them thinly on other foods such as toast and crackers. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Required Crediting Documentation for Commercial Products

SFSP sponsors must obtain appropriate crediting documentation that states the amount of the MMA component per serving for all commercial processed products that contain nuts, seeds, or nut/seed butters. Some examples include commercially packaged peanut butter sandwiches and trail mixes with nuts/seeds and dried fruits. 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 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 Summer Food Service Program](#).
- **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 Summer Food Service Program](#).

For example, to credit a commercially packaged peanut butter sandwich product as 1 ounce of the MMA component, the product's CN label or PFS must state that one serving contains 2

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tablespoons of peanut butter. Commercial processed products that contain nuts, seeds, or nut/seed butters cannot credit in reimbursable meals and snacks without a C CN label or PFS.

A PFS is required for all commercial processed products without a CN label. This documentation must be obtained and verified for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the product in reimbursable meals and snacks.

For more information on crediting documentation, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service 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 the CSDE's Summer Meals annual training module, [Crediting Documentation for Summer Meals](#); Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation, Part B – Crediting Commercial Processed Products of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#); and the Institute of Child Nutrition's online training, [FBG Module 3: Product Formulation Statements](#).

Storing crediting documentation

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

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Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/accepting_processed_product_documentation_sfsp.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 Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/credit_commercial_mma_sfsp.pdf

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>

FBG Module 3: Product Formulation Statements (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.docebosaaS.com/learn/courses/139/fbg-module-3-product-formulation-statements-pfs>

Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Standard of Identity for Peanut Butter (21 CFR 164.150):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-164/subpart-B/section-164.150>

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 Component (CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-summer-food-service-program/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>

Records Retention Requirements for the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/records_retention_sfsp.pdf

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Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Summer Meals Annual Training Module: Crediting Documentation for Summer Meals ("Annual Training" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training#CreditingDocumentation>

Summer Meals Annual Training Module: Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns: Part 3: Meats/Meat Alternates Component ("Annual Training" section of CSDE's SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/annual-training#CreditingFoods>

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

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

USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (89 FR 31962):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for>

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, 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>

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/cn_labels_sfsp.pdf

Using Product Formulation Statements in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsp/product_formulation_statements_sfsp.pdf

What's in a Meal Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation Part B – Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

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

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#) webpage or contact the [Summer Meals 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/sfsp/creditingfsp/credit_nuts_seeds_sfsp.pdf.

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2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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