



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

1. What is the minimum amount of fruits or vegetables that can be credited toward the meal pattern requirements?

The minimum creditable amount for fruits and vegetables is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (2 tablespoons).

This means that fruits or vegetables in amounts smaller than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup do not credit toward the meal pattern requirements.

For example, if you make a casserole containing pasta, cheese, peas and carrots. The peas and carrots may credit toward the vegetable component if there is at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup peas and carrots in one serving of the casserole. You would use your standardized recipe to determine creditable amounts per serving. If there is less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup peas and carrots per serving, then you could not credit the casserole toward the vegetables component in that meal.

The minimum creditable amount may not meet the required serving amount for the meal pattern. Please note, minimum creditable amounts do not apply to the infant meal pattern.

2. How do food items that are mixtures of vegetables and fruit, such as a carrot-raisin salad or pineapple chicken stir fry, credit?

Food items that are mixtures of vegetables and fruits, such as a carrot-raisin salad, may credit toward both the vegetables component and the fruits component if they contain at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup fruit per serving. The vegetables and fruits should be visibly recognizable. For example, a carrot-raisin salad served

to 6-year-olds that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup carrots and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup raisins (which credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fruit) meets the full vegetables component and the full fruits component. Component contribution should be documented with a standardized recipe, Product Formulation Statement (PFS), or Child Nutrition (CN) label.

3. Can a program operator serve a vegetable mixture (such as peas and carrots) and credit this as 2 servings of vegetables at lunch and supper (if serving a second vegetable in place of fruits)?

Yes. Program operators may use a standardized recipe or manufacturer documentation (such as a PFS) that documents the ratio of vegetables in the mixture. For example, if a mixture contains 50 percent carrots and 50 percent peas, and a 1 cup serving of this blend provides a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of carrots and a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of peas, then this would credit as serving two, distinct vegetables at the meal. If the ratio or amount of each vegetable cannot be determined, then the vegetable mixture will credit as only one vegetable.

4. I would like to serve two different vegetables at lunch. Is this allowable?

Yes. To provide flexibility in menu planning, centers and day care homes may choose to serve two vegetables at lunch and supper, rather than a serving of vegetables and a serving of fruit. This means that the fruit component at lunch and supper may be substituted by an additional vegetable.

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The substituted vegetable must be at least the same serving size as the fruit component it replaced. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, they must be two different kinds of vegetables.

For example, a supper menu for children ages 6–12 years old may contain a ½ cup of roasted broccoli and a ¼ cup of roasted cauliflower. The broccoli meets the minimum serving size required for the vegetables components (½ cup) while the cauliflower is replacing the fruits component and meets the minimum serving size required for the fruits component (¼ cup) for children 6 through 12 years old.

5. **Are herbs and spices that I use in my recipes creditable in the CACFP?**

Dried herbs and spices are frequently used as seasonings to round out the meal, improve acceptability, and satisfy children's or adults' appetites. These dried herbs and spices are considered "other foods" and are not creditable in CACFP. Fresh herbs, such as parsley and cilantro, when provided in the minimum creditable amount, may be credited toward the vegetables component. Please note: Raw parsley and cilantro credit as half the volume served (¼ cup raw chopped herb credits as ½ cup vegetable).

6. **Could a provider serve mashed potatoes and French fries and count them as two different creditable vegetables in the same meal?**

No. Although these vegetables are in different forms, they are both made from white/russet potatoes and would not be considered different vegetables if served in the same meal.

7. **Can program operators who serve primarily American Indian or Alaska Native participants or who are located in American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands substitute vegetables for the grains component at snack meal service?**

Yes. These program operators may substitute vegetables for the grains component at any meal service, including snack. If program operators choose to substitute vegetables for grains at snack and want to offer vegetables as the second required component, then another (different) vegetable must be offered. The same serving of vegetables may not be used to meet the requirement to offer two components. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) encourages program operators to offer different vegetables for each component.

For example, a CACFP operator serving at-risk afterschool snacks to children ages 6–8 in Guam may substitute ½ cup of vegetables for 1 ounce equivalent of grains to meet the first of any two components required for snack. In this example, the CACFP operator may also serve ¾ cup of another vegetable to meet the vegetables component as the second component in a reimbursable snack.



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8. Can the fruit or fruit juice in pudding or gelatin be credited toward the fruits component?

This question must be answered in two parts:

- Fruit juice may be served in liquid, gelled, or frozen form, therefore 100% juice may credit even if it has been gelatinized or thickened with thickening agents. However, juice cannot be credited when used as an ingredient in another food or beverage except for smoothies. Therefore, fruit juice used in preparation of recipes other than smoothies does not credit.
- To credit fruit in other foods (for example, puddings or gelatin), each serving must contain at least an 1/8 cup (2 tablespoons) of fruit per serving, and the fruit must be visible in the product. Document the meal pattern contribution with a standardized recipe or a PFS.

9. How can I tell if juice is 100% full-strength juice?

Any juice product labeled “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “single-strength juice,” “100% juice,” or “reconstituted juice” is considered full-strength juice. To meet the fruits requirement, the product must be pasteurized, 100% full-strength juice and purchased fresh, canned, frozen, or reconstituted with water from concentrate. Juices that have the words cocktail, beverage, or drink are not considered 100% juice. The statements “natural” or “organic” do not indicate that the juice is 100% juice.

10. Can a pasteurized, 100% full-strength fruit and vegetable juice blend count toward both the vegetables component and the fruits component?

No, 100% fruit and vegetable juice blends may only credit toward one component, not both the vegetables and fruits components. The 100% fruit and vegetable juice blend credits toward the fruits component when fruit juice or puree is the first ingredient listed. Similarly, the 100% fruit and vegetable juice blend may credit toward the vegetables component when vegetable juice or puree is the first ingredient listed. Keep in mind, that fruit or vegetable juice may only be served as a reimbursable component of a meal once per day to children ages 1 through 18 and to adults. Please note, juice is not allowed under the infant meal pattern.

11. Can juice be served as an extra food item?

Yes. Juice (or other foods) may be served as an extra food item outside of the meal pattern requirements. For example, if juice is served at breakfast, juice may also be served as an extra item at snack (for example, crackers, cheese, and juice as the extra item). FNS encourages program operators to use their discretion when choosing to serve extra food items. While juice can be part of a healthful diet, it lacks the dietary fiber found in other forms of fruit and vegetables, and when consumed in excess, it can contribute extra calories. Meals containing extra foods, in addition to the minimum required meal components, receive the same reimbursement rate as regular CACFP meals.



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12. Can the list of approved juices from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) also be used in helping providers determine a creditable juice?

Yes. Like the CACFP, all WIC-approved juices must be 100% full strength. WIC's juice requirements include additional nutrition standards, such as a minimum amount of vitamin C. This means there may be some 100% juices that are creditable in the CACFP but may not be eligible in WIC.

13. When serving a smoothie with fruit as one of the ingredients/components, does that count as your juice for the day?

Yes. Pureed vegetables and fruits (fresh, frozen, or canned) served in a smoothie credit as juice and are subject to the daily juice limit.

14. Can we serve homemade juices such as apple cider from local farm stands?

Yes, if the juice is pasteurized. Due to the safety hazards, unpasteurized ciders and juices cannot be served. As a best practice, check your local and State requirements before serving.

15. How can juice concentrate credit?

Fruit juice concentrates are allowed to be credited when fully reconstituted. Per the FBG, reconstituted juice is one part juice concentrate to three parts water. One tablespoon (1 Tbsp) concentrate credits as $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fruit when fully

reconstituted: 1 Tbsp concentrate + 3 Tbsp water = 4 Tbsp full-strength reconstituted juice which equals $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.

16. May food ingredients that are unrecognizable (not visible) credit toward meal pattern requirements (for example, carrots pureed in a sauce for Macaroni and Cheese)?

Pureed vegetables or fruits may credit toward the CACFP meal pattern requirements if the menu item also provides an adequate amount ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup or more) of visible, creditable vegetables or fruits. For example, if the macaroni and cheese made with carrot puree also contains visible butternut squash cubes in the minimum creditable amount (e.g., $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of diced squash), then the volume of the pureed vegetables (e.g., $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of pureed carrots) may also credit. In this example, the menu item would provide a total of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetables. Meals served in CNP are a nutrition education opportunity to help children learn how to build a healthy plate. It is important for young children to be able to identify the meal components in a healthy meal.

17. How should vegetables, fruits, or other foods not listed in the FBG be credited?

Not all foods that you may want to serve at your site are listed in the FBG. If a food item is not listed in the FBG, the program operator may use the yield information of a similar food that is found in the FBG. For example, if you have a



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recipe that includes queso fresco (a soft, fresh Mexican cheese), you could use the FBG yield information for feta cheese, which is similar in texture and yield, to determine the crediting. Additionally, if your State agency approves, you may conduct an in-house yield study to determine the contribution toward meal pattern requirements. Instructions for developing in-house yields are available in the introduction section of the FBG.

18. How do I credit the vegetables and fruits on a homemade pizza?

Vegetable and fruit pizza toppings credit if there is at least an 1/8 cup vegetable or fruit per serving. If pizza toppings only meet a portion of the vegetable or fruit requirement, an additional serving of vegetable and/or fruit must be provided. Document the meal pattern contribution with a standardized recipe.

19. How much tomato paste, tomato puree, or tomato sauce would be needed to equal a 1/4 cup of vegetable for each child?

Tomato paste: 1 tablespoon = 1/4 cup vegetable

Tomato puree: 2 tablespoons = 1/4 cup vegetable

Tomato sauce: 4 tablespoons = 1/4 cup vegetable

20. Is tomato a fruit or vegetable? What about avocado?

Both tomatoes and avocados credit as vegetables in CNP. Refer to the FBG for a list of creditable fruits and vegetables. While the FBG provides a relatively

comprehensive list of foods commonly served in CNP, it does not include information on every possible vegetable or fruit that can be part of a reimbursable meal. CACFP centers and homes should work with their sponsor or State agency, as appropriate, when they have questions about the crediting of foods.

21. Are edible wild plants such as dandelion greens, burdock, lambs quarters (pig weed), and seaweed creditable?

Yes, these items credit as vegetables. Some items, such as seaweed, have been added to the FBG; others are listed as under a food item they are similar to (for example, dandelion greens are found under “chicory, fresh”). Caution should be used when serving wild plants that are not purchased commercially for food safety reasons.

22. Are dehydrated vegetables creditable?

Yes. Dehydrated vegetables are creditable. Crediting is based on the rehydrated volume, not the fresh volume that may be stated on the container. Keep in mind that rehydration data on the container often varies from brand to brand. This variation means that the following procedure must be used for each brand of dehydrated product. A minimum of an 1/8 cup of rehydrated vegetable must be served in order to credit toward the vegetables component.

Determine the rehydrated volume as follows:

- Rehydrate (add water or liquid to) a purchase unit of the dehydrated vegetable according to the manufacturer’s



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directions. If the directions are not on the container, request rehydration instructions from the manufacturer.

- Measure the rehydrated volume.
- Measure the number of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup servings of rehydrated product that one purchase unit provides.

Document and keep records obtained as required by the State agency, or sponsoring agency as verification. Records should include information on the size of the purchase unit, the number of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup servings of rehydrated product per purchase unit, the name of the manufacturer, and the manufacturer's directions for how to rehydrate the product.

23. Are the raisins in homemade rice or bread pudding creditable?

Yes. However, at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (2 tablespoons) must be present in each serving. In most recipes, not enough raisins are used to meet this requirement. Maintain a standardized recipe on file to document that there is at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (2 tablespoons) of raisins per serving (which credits as a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fruit).

As a reminder, sweet rice and bread puddings are considered grain-based desserts and are not creditable toward the grains component in CACFP.

