



An Explanation of the Separation of the Vegetable and Fruit Components

The updated CACFP meal patterns include a separate vegetables component and fruits component at lunch, supper, and snack. Serving separate vegetable and fruit components will help increase the variety of vegetables and fruits served and consumed by children and adults.

To allow program operators flexibility to offer a variety of vegetables, the meal pattern(s) allow a second vegetable to be served in place of the fruits component.

A reimbursable meal at breakfast must contain:

- minimum required serving of fruit(s)

OR

- minimum required serving of vegetable(s)

OR

- adequate portions of both a fruit and a vegetable to provide the minimum required serving.

A reimbursable lunch/supper, must contain:

- the minimum required serving of fruit(s) and the minimum required serving of vegetable(s)

OR

- two different minimum servings of vegetable(s); in this option, the second different vegetable is served in place of the fruit requirement.

A **reimbursable snack** may include a fruit and a vegetable as 2 of the 5 required components. This means the program operator may offer:

- the minimum serving of fruits and vegetables

OR

- two different vegetables to credit towards the vegetables and fruits component.

Fruits and vegetables are credited based on their volume as served. The smallest creditable portion size of fruit and vegetable is an 1/8 cup or 2 tablespoons. There are a few exceptions:

- Dried fruit credits as twice the volume served (for example, a 1/4 cup of raisins credits as a 1/2 cup of fruit).
- Raw leafy greens credit half of the volume served. For example, a 1/2 cup raw leafy greens credits as a 1/4 cup vegetable.
- Tomato paste and puree credit based on their whole food equivalency. One tablespoon of tomato paste provides a 1/4 cup vegetable, while 2 tablespoons of tomato puree equals a 1/4 cup vegetable.

Servings of fruits and vegetables that are less than an 1/8 cup are not creditable towards the fruit and vegetable components. Condiments and seasonings may be served as extras to enhance the acceptability of the meal.



Fruit and Vegetable Juices

Full-strength 100% fruit and vegetable juice may count toward the entire fruits or vegetables component at 1 meal per day, including snack. However, when fluid milk is served as 1 of the components at snack, juice cannot credit toward the vegetables or fruits component. Full-strength 100% juice may be fresh, canned, frozen, or reconstituted with water from concentrate and served in either a liquid or frozen state. The name of the full-strength juice as it appears on the label must include the word(s) “juice” or “full-strength juice” or “single-strength juice” or “100% juice” or “reconstituted juice” or “juice from concentrate.”

If juice blends are served, they must be 100% juice or a full-strength juice blend. A juice blend that contains 100% tomatoes, carrots and spinach juice counts as vegetable juice and credits towards the vegetables component. As a best practice, you are encouraged to specify the type of juice served on your menu.

Juice blends or purees that are mixtures of vegetables and fruits contribute to the vegetables or fruits component based on the highest quantity ingredient. For example, if the first ingredient listed on the product label is a fruit juice/puree (e.g., strawberry), then the juice blend credits towards the fruit requirement. If the first ingredient is a vegetable juice/puree (e.g., carrot), then the juice blend credits towards the vegetable requirement.

All juice must be pasteurized. Unpasteurized juice may contain harmful bacteria. Children and some older adults are at risk of becoming ill from consuming these types of bacteria.

Food Mixtures With Fruits and Vegetables

Foods that contain a mixture of vegetables and fruits with known quantities must be credited separately for the vegetables and fruits component in reimbursable lunches/suppers and snacks. The mixture must contain at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetable to count toward the vegetables component and at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fruit to count toward the fruits component. For example, a carrot-pineapple mixture served to 6-year-olds contains a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup carrots and a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pineapples (credits as a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable and a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fruit). This carrot-pineapple mixture meets the full vegetables component and full fruits component requirements for a reimbursable lunch/supper for children 6 through 12 years old.





QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

- 1. What is the minimum amount of fruit or vegetable that can be credited toward the meal pattern requirements?**

To meet the fruit and the vegetable components, the minimum creditable serving size is an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (2 tablespoons). For raw, leafy greens the minimum serving is a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup and for dried fruit the minimum serving is an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (2 tablespoons). This amount may not meet the required serving for the meal pattern.

- 2. How do fruits and vegetables credit toward meal pattern requirements when found in combination dishes such as beef stew or pineapple chicken stir fry?**

Combination food items may credit toward both the vegetables component and/or the fruits component if they contain at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of visible vegetable and/or fruit per serving.

- 3. Can combination mixed vegetables (such as peas and carrots) be used to meet the requirement of serving 2 vegetables at lunch and supper?**

Yes. Program operators may use a recipe or information provided by the manufacturer 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 the requirement of serving 2 vegetables is met. If the ratio or serving size for each vegetable cannot be determined, then the mixture will credit as 1 vegetable component.



4. How are combination salads such as carrot-raisin salad or Waldorf salad credited?

Mixtures of vegetables and fruits must be credited separately for the vegetable and fruit components. The mixture must contain at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of vegetable to count toward the vegetables component and an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup fruit to count toward the fruits component. For example, a portion of carrot-raisin salad served to 6-year-olds contains a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of carrots and an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of raisins (credits as a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit because dried fruits credit for twice the volume served). This carrot-raisin salad meets the full vegetables component and full fruits component for children 6 through 12 years old. Document meal pattern contribution with a standardized recipe or a Product Formulation Statement.

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

Yes. You may serve the second vegetable as either an extra food or count it toward the fruits component for lunch. This is because a second vegetable may count toward the fruits component at lunch and supper meals if at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of two different kinds of vegetables are served. For example, a center serves 6-year-old children a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of roasted broccoli and a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of roasted cauliflower. The cauliflower is replacing the fruits component and meets the minimum serving size required for the fruits component for children 6 through 12 years old.

6. Can the vegetable, fruit, or juice in pudding or gelatin be credited toward the fruits component?

This question must be answered in two parts:

- Fruit juice **ONLY** credits when served as a beverage. Therefore, fruit juice used in preparation of puddings or gelatins does not credit.
- To credit fruit in puddings or gelatin, each serving must contain at least an $\frac{1}{8}$ 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 Product Formulation Statement.

7. Could a provider serve a sweet potato and a white potato and count them as two different creditable vegetables in the same meal?

No. Although the nutrient content of sweet potatoes and white potatoes is not identical, from an operational standpoint they are both potatoes and would not be considered different vegetables if served in the same meal.

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

Full-strength juice will be labeled with "Contains 100% Juice." 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.



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

No. 100% fruit and vegetable juice blends cannot count toward both the vegetable and fruit components. A 100% fruit and vegetable juice blend may contribute to the fruits component or vegetables component. The 100% fruit and vegetable juice blend counts toward the fruits component when fruit juice or puree is the most prominent ingredient. Conversely, the 100% fruit and vegetable juice blend may contribute to the vegetables component when vegetable juice or puree is the most prominent ingredient. 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.

10. 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 [extra]). FNS encourages centers and day care homes 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. Additionally, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans align with the Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation that young children consume no more than 4 to 6 fluid ounces of 100% fruit juice per day. Meals containing extra foods, in addition to the minimum required meal components, receive the same reimbursement rate as regular CACFP meals.

As a reminder, juice may not be served more than once a day as a reimbursable component of a meal. Additionally, juice is not allowed under the infant meal pattern.

11. Can the list of approved juices from WIC also be used in helping providers determine a creditable juice?

Yes. Similar to 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.

12. When serving a smoothie with fruit as 1 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 juice limit.



13. Can we purchase homemade juices such as apple cider from local farm stands?

Yes. However, due to the safety hazards of unpasteurized ciders and juices, only pasteurized juice and juice products may be served.

14. How can juice concentrate credit?

There are four ways juice can credit toward the fruit requirements:

- 100% liquid juice not from concentrate;
- 100% frozen juice not from concentrate;
- 100% liquid juice reconstituted from concentrate; or
- 100% frozen juice reconstituted from concentrate.

Juice concentrates can be used only when reconstituted with water to full-strength 100% juice and can be credited in the forms of liquid (including 100% carbonated juice) or frozen juice only. Therefore, juice cannot be credited when used as an ingredient in another food or beverage with the exception of smoothies. See the *Food Buying Guide* for additional crediting information. For example, a ¼ cup of gelatin made with 1 tablespoon of juice concentrate and water does not credit as a ¼ cup of juice since the fruit juice is no longer in the form of liquid or frozen juice. Please note that the amount of juice concentrate used cannot credit for more than one serving of vegetable or fruit per day.

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

Pureed vegetables or fruits may contribute to the CACFP meal pattern requirements if the dish also provides an adequate amount (an ⅛ cup or more) of visible, creditable fruits or vegetables. Therefore, in the carrots and macaroni and cheese scenario, the pureed or mashed carrots can count toward the vegetables component if there is at least an ⅛ cup of another visible vegetable per portion. Meals served in the Child Nutrition Programs 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 components in a healthy meal.

16. How should vegetables, fruits, or other foods not listed in the *Food Buying Guide* be credited?

There are some foods not listed in the *Food Buying Guide* that may be served in CACFP. If a food can contribute to a reimbursable meal, but is not listed in the *Food Buying Guide*, the yield information of a similar food or in-house yield may be used to determine the contribution toward meal pattern requirements, with State agency approval. Instructions for developing yields are available in the introduction section of the *Food Buying Guide*.



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17. 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 portion. 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.

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

Tomato paste: 1 tablespoon = 1/4 cup vegetable

Tomato puree: 2 tablespoons = 1/4 cup vegetable

Tomato sauce: 4 tablespoons = 1/4 cup vegetable

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

Both tomatoes and avocados are considered vegetables. Refer to the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* for a list of creditable fruits and vegetables. While the *Food Buying Guide* provides a relatively comprehensive list of foods commonly served in Child Nutrition Programs, 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.

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

These items are considered to be vegetables; however, caution should be used. Wild plants that are not purchased commercially may have been sprayed with toxic pesticides. Safeguards in the use of wild plants should be developed. It is suggested that operators restrict their use of these food items to those that are commercially available.

21. 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 vary 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 contribute to the vegetables component.

Determine the rehydrated volume as follows:

- Rehydrate (add water or liquid to) a purchase unit of the dehydrated vegetable according to manufacturers' directions. If the directions are not on the container, request rehydration instructions from the manufacturer.
- Measure the rehydrated volume.



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- Measure the number of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup servings of rehydrated product that 1 purchase unit provides.
- Document and keep records obtained as required by the State agency, regional office, 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 manufacturers' directions for how to rehydrate the product.

22. 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 (1) not creditable grains and (2) generally discouraged in the CACFP.

