

Crediting **Vegetables** in the **Child Nutrition Programs** Tip Sheet



Vegetables are a required component for reimbursable meals in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) including the Preschool lunch meal pattern, as well as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) lunch and supper meals. Vegetables may be served as part of a reimbursable meal for the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and to fulfill the combined fruits and vegetables requirement for Preschool and CACFP breakfasts, as well as in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). They may also be served as one of the two required meal components for a reimbursable snack in all Child Nutrition Programs.

Vegetable Requirements



- Vegetables must be fresh, frozen, canned, dried (including beans, peas, and lentils), or full-strength vegetable juice, referred to as 100% juice. Examples of creditable vegetables can be found in the “Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs” (FBG) at <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/>.



- Most vegetables credit as volume served; the minimum creditable serving size is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (exceptions are tomato paste, tomato puree, and raw leafy greens). **Note:** Minimum creditable amounts do not apply to the infant meal pattern.
 - **Raw leafy greens** credit at half the volume served in Schools Meals Programs and CACFP (Example: In NLSP, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup romaine lettuce contributes $\frac{1}{4}$ cup toward the dark green vegetable subgroup). In SFSP and NSLP afterschool snack service (until July 1, 2025), raw leafy greens credit as volume served.
 - **Cooked leafy greens**, such as sautéed spinach, credit based on volume served.
 - **Tomato paste** and **tomato puree** can credit using the whole food equivalency (volume of tomatoes prior to pureeing) rather than on the actual volume served. All other vegetable purees credit based on the finished volume served.



- Beans, peas, and lentils may count toward the meats/meat alternates or vegetables component, but not as both in the same meal. Schools have the option to count beans, peas, and lentils offered as a meat alternate at lunch toward the weekly beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroup requirement.



- In the school meal programs and CACFP, mixtures of fruits and vegetables (e.g., baked sweet potato with apples), must credit separately for the fruits and the vegetables components.



- Over the course of the week, schools must offer specific amounts for each grade group of the five vegetable subgroups.

More training, menu planning, and nutrition education materials can be found at TeamNutrition.USDA.gov.

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Vegetable Subgroup	Examples Include
Dark Green	bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mesclun, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, and watercress
Red/Orange	acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, tomatoes, tomato juice, and sweet potatoes
Beans, Peas, and Lentils	black beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, pinto beans, soy beans, split peas, and white beans
Starchy	corn, cassava, hominy, green bananas, green peas, plantains, taro, water chestnuts, and white potatoes
Other Vegetables	all other fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables, cooked or raw, such as artichokes, asparagus, avocado, bean sprouts, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, parsnips, turnips, wax beans, and zucchini

Vegetable Juice

- In school meal programs, no more than 1/2 of the total weekly vegetables offered may be 100% vegetable juice and is measured separately at breakfast, lunch, and snack (Limitations at snack are effective July 1, 2025).
- In CACFP or Preschool meal patterns, 100% vegetable juice may be used to meet the vegetables component no more than once per day, including snack. 100% vegetable juice may be used as one component of a snack when the other component is not a beverage.
- In SFSP, 100% vegetable or fruit juice may be counted to meet not more than 1/2 of the vegetable or fruits requirement at lunch or supper.

Note: Juice limit is measured by Program. For example, if a school serves lunch to preschoolers under NSLP and a snack through CACFP, the school can serve juice at both lunch and snack, though it is encouraged to serve juice no more than once per day.

Vegetable Smoothies

- Pureed vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned), when served in a smoothie, credit as juice, and as such are subject to the limitations regarding juice service.
- Pureed vegetable included in a smoothie may count as the entire vegetables component in NSLP afterschool snack service and at breakfast and snack in CACFP and SFSP. At snack, a smoothie containing juice and milk can credit as either juice or milk as long as there is a separate, second component served in addition to the smoothie.
- Beans, peas, and lentils may credit toward the vegetables component as vegetable juice when served in a smoothie.
- Juice does not credit when used as an ingredient in another food or beverage product with the exception of smoothies.



Hominy

- Hominy may credit toward the vegetables component in a reimbursable meal or snack.
 - ¼ cup of canned, drained hominy or cooked, whole hominy (from dried hominy) credits as ¼ cup vegetable (starchy vegetable for NSLP and SBP).

Pasta

- Pasta products made of one or more 100 percent vegetable flour(s) may credit toward the vegetables requirement in all Child Nutrition Programs. For example, ½ cup of pasta made of 100 percent vegetable flour(s) credits as ½ cup of vegetables.
- Pasta products made of flour(s) from one vegetable subgroup may credit toward the appropriate vegetable subgroup for school meals. Pasta made of legume flour (e.g., red lentil flour) may credit toward the beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroup or the meat alternates requirement.
- Pasta products made of a blend of 100 percent vegetable flours from multiple vegetable subgroups (e.g., lentils and cauliflower) may credit in two ways for school meals:

1 With a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) from the food manufacturer detailing the actual volume of each vegetable flour per serving, the pasta product may credit toward specific vegetable subgroups; or

2 If the actual volume of each vegetable flour is unknown, the pasta product may credit toward the additional vegetables to meet the overall weekly vegetables requirement.



Products That Do Not Contribute Toward Meal Pattern Requirements

- ✗ Snack-type foods made from vegetables, such as potato chips
- ✗ Freeze-dried vegetables (unless rehydrated)
- ✗ Condiments such as pickle relish, jam, jelly, tomato catsup, or chili sauce
- ✗ Dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning
- ✗ Home-canned products (for food safety reasons)



Test Your Skills!

Fill in the blank.

1. ___ cup is the minimum creditable amount for any single vegetable.
 A. ½ cup B. ¼ cup C. ⅛ cup
2. For school meals, sweet potatoes belong to the _____ subgroup.
 A. Starchy vegetable B. Red/Orange vegetable C. Other vegetable
3. Raw, leafy salad greens credit at _____ the volume served in school meals and CACFP.
 A. full B. half C. quarter
4. Cooked leafy greens like sautéed spinach, credit at _____ served.
 A. volume B. double the volume C. half the volume
5. Dehydrated vegetables used as seasoning _____ creditable.
 A. are B. are not
6. The combination of _____ makes a one-cup vegetable serving of fresh tomato, spinach, and bean salad in school meals and the CACFP.
 A. ¼ cup fresh tomatoes, 1 cup fresh spinach, and ¼ cup drained garbanzo beans
 B. ¼ cup fresh tomatoes, 2 cups fresh spinach, and ¼ cup drained garbanzo beans
 C. ¼ cup fresh tomatoes, 1¼ cups fresh spinach, and ⅛ cup drained garbanzo beans
 D. Both A and C



Does It Credit?

You are serving Kale and Sweet Potato Soup as one of the lunch menu items for high school. The manufacturer provided the following Product Formulation Statement (PFS). You need to review the documentation to make sure the vegetables credit as stated. Use the PFS and the FBG information below to answer the questions.

Product Name: Kale and Sweet Potato Soup			Product Code: 987		
Serving Size: 1 cup (8.20 oz)			Date: 7/21/2020		
Vegetables					
Description of Creditable Ingredients per FBG	Vegetable Subgroup	Ounce per Raw Portion of Creditable Ingredient (A)	FBG Yield (B)	Purchase Unit (C)	Creditable Amount (A x B / C)
Kale, fresh, <i>Untrimmed</i> , cooked, drained vegetable	Dark Green Vegetables	2.80 oz	11.80	16.00 oz	2.0650 1/4 cups
Sweet Potatoes, frozen, <i>Center cuts, approx. 7/8 to 1-3/8-inch thick by 1-1/4 to 1-3/4 inch diameter</i> , cooked vegetable	Red/Orange Vegetables	3.50 oz	9.70	16.00 oz	2.1218 1/4 cups
Total Cups Dark Green Vegetables:	0.5163 cups	Total Cups Red/Orange Vegetables:		0.5305 cups	
Meal Pattern Contribution Statement					
I certify that the above information is true and correct and that a 1 cup (8.20 oz) ounce serving of the above product (ready for serving) provides 1/2 cup(s) of Dark Green vegetables, 1/2 cup(s) of Red/Orange vegetables when prepared according to directions.					
_____			_____		
Signature			Title		
_____			_____		
Printed Name			Phone Number		

1. Food As Purchased, AP	2. Purchase Unit	3. Servings per Purchase Unit, EP	4. Serving Size per Meal Contribution	5. Purchase Units for 100 Servings	6. Additional Information
Kale, fresh <i>Untrimmed</i>	Pound	11.80	1/4 cup cooked, drained vegetable	8.50	1 lb AP = 0.67 lb ready-to-cook
Sweet Potatoes, frozen <i>Center cuts, approx. 7/8 to 1-3/8-inch thick by 1-1/4 to 1-3/4 inch diameter</i>	Pound	9.70	1/4 cup cooked vegetable	10.40	1 lb AP = 0.98 lb (about 2-3/8 cups) cooked sweet potatoes

True or False:

- The manufacturer correctly calculated the vegetable credit for this product.
 - True False
- The students do not need any additional vegetables for a reimbursable meal because this product meets the entire vegetables component.
 - True False





Answers

1. _____ cup is the minimum creditable amount for any single vegetable.

C: $\frac{1}{8}$ cup

2. For school meals, sweet potatoes belong to the _____ subgroup.

B: Red/Orange vegetable

3. Raw, leafy salad greens credit at _____ the volume served in school meals and CACFP.

B: half

4. Cooked leafy greens like sautéed spinach, credit by _____ as served.

A: volume

5. Dehydrated vegetables used as seasoning _____ creditable.

B: are not

6. The combination of _____ makes a one-cup vegetable serving of fresh tomato, spinach, and bean salad in school meals and the CACFP.

D: Both A and C

Both A and C are correct. Remember, raw leafy greens credit at half the volume served in school meals and the CACFP!

A is correct because $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh tomatoes plus 1 cup fresh spinach (which credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of drained garbanzo beans equals 1 cup serving of vegetables.
($\frac{1}{4}$ cup + $\frac{1}{2}$ cup + $\frac{1}{4}$ cup = 1 cup)

C is correct because $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh tomatoes plus $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups fresh spinach (which credits as $\frac{5}{8}$ cup) plus $\frac{1}{8}$ cup drained garbanzo beans equals 1 cup serving of vegetables.
($\frac{1}{4}$ cup + $\frac{5}{8}$ cup + $\frac{1}{8}$ cup = 1 cup)



Does it Credit?

1. The manufacturer correctly calculated the vegetable credit for this product.

Product Name: Kale and Sweet Potato Soup **Product Code:** 987
Serving Size: 1 cup (8.20 oz) **Date:** 7/21/2020

Vegetables

Description of Creditable Ingredients per FBG	Vegetable Subgroup	Ounce per Raw Portion of Creditable Ingredient (A)	FBG Yield (B)	Purchase Unit (C)	Creditable Amount (A x B / C)
Kale, fresh, <i>Untrimmed</i> , cooked, drained vegetable	Dark Green Vegetables	2.80 oz	11.80	16.00 oz	2.0650 1/4 cups
Sweet Potatoes, frozen, <i>Center cuts, approx. 7/8 to 1-3/8-inch thick by 1-1/4 to 1-3/4 inch diameter</i> , cooked vegetable	Red/Orange Vegetables	3.50 oz	9.70	16.00 oz	2.1218 1/4 cups
Total Cups Dark Green Vegetables:	0.5163 cups	Total Cups Red/Orange Vegetables:		0.5305 cups	

Meal Pattern Contribution Statement
 I certify that the above information is true and correct and that a **1 cup (8.20 oz)** ounce serving of the above product (ready for serving) provides **1/2 cup(s)** of Dark Green vegetables, **1/2 cup(s)** of Red/Orange vegetables when prepared according to directions.

1. Food As Purchased, AP	2. Purchase Unit	3. Servings per Purchase Unit, EP	4. Serving Size per Meal Contribution	5. Purchase Units for 100 Servings	6. Additional Information
Kale, fresh <i>Untrimmed</i>	Pound	11.80	1/4 cup cooked, drained vegetable	8.50	1 lb AP = 0.67 lb ready-to-cook
Sweet Potatoes, frozen <i>Center cuts, approx. 7/8 to 1-3/8-inch thick by 1-1/4 to 1-3/4 inch diameter</i>	Pound	9.70	1/4 cup cooked vegetable	10.40	1 lb AP = 0.98 lb (about 2-3/8 cups) cooked sweet potatoes

True: To calculate the contribution of the creditable ingredients for the soup, information from the FBG is entered into the PFS. Multiply the amount of Kale in column A (2.8 ounces per serving) by the FBG Yield in column B (11.80), which is the number of quarter-cup Servings per Purchase Unit. Since the FBG lists the purchase unit as pounds, the PFS must divide by 16.00 ounces (column C) as there are 16 ounces in one pound.

Let's check the calculations:

Kale



2.80 ounces of Kale x 11.8 for FBG Yield (Servings per Purchase Unit) ÷ 16 ounces per pound = 2.0650 quarter-cup servings.



To obtain the number of cups of Kale, divide the result by 4, as there are 4 quarter-cups in one cup: 2.0650 quarter cups ÷ 4 = 0.5163 cup, which rounds down to 0.5 or 1/2 cup vegetable.

Since Kale belongs to the dark green vegetable subgroup, it provides **1/2 cup of dark green vegetable**.

calculations continued on next page

Does it Credit? (continued)

Sweet Potato

✓ 3.50 ounces of Sweet Potato x 9.70 for FBG Yield (Servings per Purchase Unit) ÷ 16 ounces per pound = 2.1218 quarter-cup servings

✓ To obtain the number of cups of Sweet Potato, divide the result by 4 to obtain number of cups: 2.1218 quarter-cups ÷ 4 = 0.5305 cup, which rounds down to 0.5 cup of vegetable.

Since Sweet Potato belongs to the red/orange subgroup, it provides **½ cup of red/orange vegetable**.

This product provides
1 cup of total vegetables:

½ cup Kale + ½ cup Sweet
Potato = 1 cup vegetable



2. The students do not need any additional vegetables for a reimbursable meal because this product meets the entire vegetables component.

True: 1 cup vegetable is the minimum amount a school must offer to meet the daily vegetables requirement for grades 9–12, and a serving of the Kale and Sweet Potato Soup provides 1 cup of total vegetable. Under Offer versus Serve, students must select ½ cup of fruit or vegetable, plus two additional meal components for the meal to be reimbursable.

