

Summary of Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Food in Schools • Effective July 1, 2009

This document summarizes the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) *Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Food in Schools*. The complete version, including the rationale for development and additional implementation guidance, is available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Standards>. The Connecticut Nutrition Standards address all food items sold to students separately from a reimbursable school breakfast or lunch. They focus on limiting fats, sugars and sodium, moderating portion sizes, and promoting increased consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. CSDE encourages all schools to use these standards to determine what food items are available at school, including a la carte sales in the cafeteria, vending machines, school stores, fundraisers, classroom parties and other school events. A list of food items that meet the standards is available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Healthy>. **Note: Districts that choose to participate in healthy food certification under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) must follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all food items sold to students separately from reimbursable school meals at all times and from all sources.**

The Connecticut Nutrition Standards group food items into the following five categories: (1) Entree Items; (2) Cooked Grains; (3) Soups; (4) Fruits and Vegetables; and (5) Snacks and Desserts.

Entree Items

The Connecticut Nutrition Standards differentiate between 1) entree items that are *planned as part of a reimbursable meal and are also sold a la carte*; and 2) entree items that are *only sold a la carte*. If an entree item that is planned and served as part of a reimbursable school meal for the day is also sold a la carte, it must be the same portion size but does not need to meet any additional nutrition standards.* If an entree item is *only sold a la carte* (i.e., not part of a reimbursable meal) it must meet the following standards:

- **Fat:** No more than 18 grams per entree. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Saturated Fats:** No more than 5 grams per entree.
- **Trans Fats:** Zero trans fats (<0.5 gram).¹
- **Added Sugars:** No more than 15 grams per entree. No artificial sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Sodium:** No more than 500 milligrams per entree.
- **Caffeine:** No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Fiber:** Increase choices of entrees with whole grains and foods containing fiber.
- **Condiments:** Limit use and provide low-fat, low-sugar and low-sodium varieties.²
- **Portion Size:** No larger than the serving size that would normally be planned and served as part of the reimbursable meal for the appropriate age/grade group under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal pattern.

Definition of Entree Items

For the purposes of the Connecticut Nutrition Standards, entree items include three categories of main dish food items: 1) a combination food of meat/meat alternate and grain/bread (e.g., turkey sandwich, pizza, hamburger on a bun and cheese burrito); 2) a combination food of vegetable/fruit and meat/meat alternate (e.g., chef's salad, fruit and cheese platter, baked potato with chili, chicken vegetable stir-fry); and 3) a meat/meat alternate alone (e.g., sausage patty, egg, cheese wedge, chicken nuggets), excluding yogurt, nuts and seeds. Yogurt, nuts and seeds are addressed by the nutrition standards for the *Snacks and Desserts* category.

* This provision only applies to **entree items that are planned and sold as part of a reimbursable meal and are also sold a la carte the same day**. It does not apply to any other meal items such as breads, fruits, vegetables and soups. All other food items that are *part of a reimbursable meal and are also sold separately from the meal* must meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for the specific food category. For example, french fries that are part of a reimbursable meal can only be sold a la carte if they meet the nutrition standards for the *Fruits and Vegetables* category. Muffins that are part of a reimbursable meal can only be sold a la carte if they meet the nutrition standards for the *Snacks and Desserts* category.

Cooked Grains

- **Fat:** No more than 7 grams per serving. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Saturated Fats:** No more than 2 grams per serving.
- **Trans Fats:** Zero trans fats (<0.5 gram).¹
- **Added Sugars:** No more than 15 grams per serving. No artificial sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Sodium:** No more than 500 milligrams per serving.
- **Caffeine:** No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Fiber:** Increase choices of whole grains and naturally occurring grains (those with minimal/trace amounts of added fats and no added sugars).
- **Condiments:** Limit use and provide low-fat, low-sugar and low-sodium varieties.²
- **Portion Size:** No larger than the serving size that would normally be planned and served as part of the reimbursable meal for the appropriate age/grade group under the USDA meal pattern.

Soups

- **Fat:** No more than 7 grams per serving. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Saturated Fats:** No more than 2 grams per serving.
- **Trans Fats:** Zero trans fats (<0.5 gram).¹
- **Added Sugars:** No more than 15 grams per serving. No artificial sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Sodium:** No more than 1,000 milligrams per serving.
- **Caffeine:** No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Fiber:** Increase choices of soup containing vegetables, legumes and whole grains.
- **Condiments:** Limit use and provide low-fat, low-sugar and low-sodium varieties.²
- **Portion Size:** No more than 1 cup

¹Trans fats include naturally occurring and artificial sources. Most trans fats (80 percent) come from processed foods and oils. Food labeling regulations allow food labels to state "0 grams" trans fats if a serving contains less than 0.5 gram. To avoid artificial trans fats, read ingredients and select products without hydrogenated oils or shortening.

²Any condiments packaged with a food (e.g., bagel with cream cheese, carrots with dip), must be included when determining whether the food meets the Connecticut Nutrition Standards.

Fruits and Vegetables

This category addresses fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables. *Note: Fruit roll-ups or fruit snacks that are not 100 percent fruit do not meet the nutrition standards for the Fruits and Vegetables category.*

- Make **quality fruits and vegetables** available at any place snack items are sold. For example, dried fruit in vending machines; fresh fruit and vegetables, such as pineapple slices, melon cubes or baby carrots in a la carte lines and school stores. (“Quality” means fruits and vegetables prepared and packaged without added fats, sugars or sodium.)
- **Fat:** No more than 35 percent of total calories **and** 7 grams per serving. No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Saturated Fats:** No more than 10 percent of total calories **and** 2 grams per serving.
- **Trans Fats:** Zero trans fats (<0.5 gram).¹
- **Added Sugars:** No more than 35 percent by weight **and** 15 grams per serving. No artificial sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Sodium:** No more than 500 milligrams per serving.
- **Caffeine:** No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Condiments:** Limit use and provide low-fat, low-sugar and low-sodium varieties.²
- **Portion Sizes:** ½ cup *minimum* for quality fruits and vegetables; ½ cup *maximum* for vegetables or fruits with added fats; and 1.5 ounces *maximum* for dried fruit.

Snacks and Desserts

This category addresses all snack and dessert items, such as chips, crackers, popcorn, cereal, trail mix, nuts, seeds, peanut butter and other nut butters, jerky, cookies, animal/graham crackers, cereal bars, granola bars, bakery items (e.g., pastries, toaster pastries, muffins, soft pretzels, rolls), frozen desserts, ice cream, cheese, yogurt, pudding and smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt or other low-fat dairy alternatives and/or fruit/juice).

- **Fat:** No more than 35 percent of total calories **and** 7 grams per package (with the exception of naturally occurring fats in nuts, seeds, peanut and other nut butters and cheeses). No chemically altered fat substitutes.
- **Saturated Fats:** No more than 10 percent of total calories **and** 2 grams per package.
- **Trans Fats:** Zero trans fats (<0.5 gram).¹
- **Added Sugars:** No more than 35 percent by weight **and** 15 grams per package. The standard excludes naturally occurring sugars in fruits, vegetables and dairy products. For smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt or other low-fat dairy alternatives and/or fruit/juice), yogurt and pudding, no more than 5 grams total sugars (added and naturally occurring) per ounce. No artificial sweeteners or sugar alcohols.
- **Sodium:** No more than 500 milligrams per package.
- **Caffeine:** No caffeine, with the exception of trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine-related substances.
- **Whole-Grain Foods:** Encourage the availability of whole grains and foods containing fiber. Provide choices of whole grains and naturally occurring grains (those with minimal/trace amounts of added fats and no added sugars). Limit grain-based snacks made from enriched flour.
- **Condiments:** Limit use and provide low-fat, low-sugar and low-sodium varieties.²
- **Portion Sizes:** If products meet the preceding standards for *Snacks and Desserts*, they may be served in a package that does not exceed the serving size limits specified below.

Baked chips, popcorn, rice cakes, puffed snacks	1.25 oz.
Crackers, hard pretzels, pita chips, snack mix.....	1.75 oz.
Peanut butter-filled crackers and cheese-filled crackers.....	1.5 oz.
Trail mix, nuts, seeds, soy nuts	1.75 oz.
Jerky	1.25 oz.
Cereals.....	2 oz.
Cookies, animal crackers, graham crackers, cereal bars, granola bars.....	2 oz.
Bakery items, e.g., pastries, toaster pastries, muffins, bagels, waffles, pancakes, french toast, soft pretzels, rolls	3 oz.
Frozen desserts e.g., ice cream (including novelties), frozen yogurt, Italian ice, sorbets, juice/fruit bars, frozen fruit-based desserts	4 fl. oz. (½ cup)
Pudding, parfaits and cottage cheese	4 fl. oz. (½ cup)
Yogurt and cultured soy	8 oz.
Smoothies (made with low-fat yogurt or other low-fat dairy alternatives and/or fruit/juice).....	10 fl. oz.
Cheese (low-fat recommended)	2 oz.
Nut butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, soy butter.....	4 Tbsp.

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² Any condiments packaged with a food (e.g., bagel with cream cheese, carrots with dip), *must* be included when determining whether the food meets the Connecticut Nutrition Standards.

Beverages

The requirements for beverages allowed for sale to students in public schools are defined by CGS Section 10-221q, and are separate from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. The state statute only allows five categories of beverages (milk; nondairy milks such as soy or rice milk; 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices; beverages containing only water and juice; and water), with specific nutrition requirements for each category. For additional information on the requirements for beverages, see *Allowable Beverages in Connecticut Schools* and *Questions and Answers on Connecticut Statutes for School Food and Beverages*, available at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Standards>.

CSDE evaluates and revises the Connecticut Nutrition Standards annually to reflect changes in nutrition science and national dietary guidelines. For additional information, contact: Susan S. Fiore, M.S., R.D., Nutrition Education Coordinator, Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457 Phone: (860) 807-2075 • E-mail: susan.fiore@ct.gov

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