

Avoiding Common Menu Problems in the

AFTERSCHOOL SNACK PROGRAM



All snacks served in the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) must meet the required components and serving sizes specified in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) ASP Meal Pattern. The four snack components include meat/meat alternates, grains/breads, vegetables/fruits and milk. Snack menus can include any **two** of the four components, but they must be two **different** components. For example, a snack of carrot sticks and apple juice does not comply with the ASP meal pattern because both items are from the vegetables/fruits component.

In addition to meeting the ASP meal pattern, snacks served in public schools that choose the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification (HFC) under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes must comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS). The CNS focuses on moderating calories, limiting fat, saturated fat, sodium and sugars, eliminating trans fat, and increasing consumption of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean meats and legumes. For more information, see the CSDE's [HFC](#) and [CNS](#) Web pages, and the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#).

School menus must document that each snack complies with the ASP meal pattern. The guidance below assists schools with planning snack menus to meet the ASP meal pattern requirements. For additional guidance on crediting foods, see the CSDE's [ASP Handbook](#) and [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals](#).

GRAINS/BREADS

- All grain products must be **whole grain or enriched**. Breakfast cereals must be whole grain, enriched or fortified. Bran and germ credit the same as enriched or whole-grain meal or flour.
- All grain products must meet the **minimum serving sizes** in [Serving Sizes for Grains/Breads in the Afterschool Snack Program](#). The serving size for grains/breads made from scratch is based on the creditable grains content of the recipe. For more information on calculating the grain content of foods, see the CSDE's handout, [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains in School Nutrition Programs](#).
- Schools may choose to use the minimum **ounce equivalents** specified in [Whole Grain-rich Ounce Equivalents for School Nutrition Programs](#) instead of the serving sizes for grains/breads. The whole grain-rich (WGR) ounce equivalents provide more nutrient-dense choices for children and consistency with school meals.
- Creditable grain-based desserts such as cookies, granola bars, toaster pastries, sweet rolls and cake cannot be served more than **twice** a week. For example, if cookies are served on Monday and granola bars are served on Thursday, no other grain-based desserts can be served in the ASP that week. Most grain-based desserts are high in fat, added sugars and sodium. They should be served infrequently, if at all.
- For best nutrition, offer **whole grains** most often and substitute WGR products for enriched products. For more information, see [Criteria for Whole Grain-rich Foods](#) and [Identifying Whole Grains](#).



VEGETABLES/FRUITS

- The **minimum serving size** for the vegetables/fruits component is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup for ages 3-5 and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup for ages 6-18. Menu planners should consult the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for School Meals* to determine the crediting information for specific fruits and vegetables.
- **Vegetables** include fresh, frozen and canned. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Legumes (cooked dry beans and peas) credit as either a vegetable or a meat/meat alternate, but not both in the same snack.
- **Fruits** include fresh, frozen (with or without added sugar), dried, and canned in light syrup, water or fruit juice. A serving of canned fruit may include the 100 percent juice in which the fruit is packed.
- An individual piece of **whole fresh fruit** for ages 6-18 must provide at least a $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup serving. Most whole fresh fruits do not provide $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of fruit. For example, the *Food Buying Guide* indicates that one 150-count banana, one 150-count pear, one 80-count peach, one 138-count orange and one 2-inch diameter plum each credit as only $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit. A snack that consists of one of these fruits and one other component is not reimbursable because it does not provide the minimum required serving size of the fruits component. If an individual piece of fruit does not provide $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, the menu planner must provide additional vegetables/fruits to meet the minimum $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup serving, or provide two additional snack components and count the fruit as an "extra" snack item. Only a few whole fruits listed in the *Food Buying Guide* provide the minimum $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup serving for ages 6-18 in one piece of fruit. These include size 56-64 nectarines, size 56 peaches and 120-count pears. One 125 to 138-count apple provides 1 cup of fruit.
- Reimbursable snacks must contain two **different** components. Snacks do not meet the ASP meal pattern if they only include two servings of vegetables or two servings of fruits or one serving of vegetables and one serving of fruits. For example, a snack of $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of orange juice and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of carrot sticks contains two food items but only one food component (vegetables/fruits). This snack would only be reimbursable if the menu also includes the minimum serving of another meal pattern component.
- Juice must be **pasteurized 100 percent full-strength** fruit juice, vegetable juice or combination. It can be fresh, frozen or made from concentrate. Juice may be served frozen, e.g., full-strength frozen juice pops.



- For ages 6-18, the minimum serving size is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. If the snack menu includes 4-fluid ounce juice cartons ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup), the menu planner must include an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruit or vegetable to provide the minimum serving size for the vegetables/fruits component. To be reimbursable, this snack must also include the minimum serving size of either grains/breads or meat/meat alternates.
- Serve whole fruits and vegetables most often, as recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables, which provide fiber, fewer calories and more nutrients.
- Juice cannot be served when milk is the only other snack component.

AVOIDING COMMON MENU PROBLEMS IN THE ASP, continued

MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES

- **Meat/meat alternates** include cooked lean meat, poultry or fish, cheese, cottage cheese, beans and peas (legumes), eggs, nut and seed butters, nuts and seeds, commercial tofu, yogurt or soy yogurt and APPs. Legumes can credit as either a meat/meat alternate or vegetable, but not both in the same snack. Menu planners should consult the USDA's *Food Buying Guide for School Meals* to determine the crediting information for specific meat/meat alternates.
- **Bacon and cream cheese** do not credit as meat/meat alternates.
- Meat products without **binders and extenders** credit based on the actual serving weight, e.g., 1 ounce of meat provides 1 ounce of meat/meat alternate. However, meat products with binders and extenders (such as modified food starch, carrageenan and soy flour) cannot credit based on the amount served. For example, 1 ounce of deli turkey that contains modified food starch cannot credit as 1 ounce of meat/meat alternate. This product would credit based on the actual percentage of turkey in the product formula, as documented by the manufacturer's product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Product Formulation Statements*.
- When snack menus include **commercially prepared foods** such as pizza and chicken nuggets, menu planners must ensure that these products provide the actual amount of the snack component being credited. For example, to credit a commercially prepared burrito as 1 ounce of meat/meat alternate, the product must have a Child Nutrition (CN) label or the product's PFS must indicate the specific amount of meat, beans and cheese in one serving. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *CN Labeling* and *Product Formulation Statements*.
- To increase nutrient variety, the CSDE recommends that yogurt not be served when milk is the only other snack component.



MILK

- Milk must be **low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free flavored or unflavored**, including lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk. Whole milk, reduced-fat (2%) milk and low-fat flavored milk cannot be served. Milk must be pasteurized, meet all state and local requirements and contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Any **nondairy milk substitutes**, such as soy milk, must meet the USDA nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Allowable Milk Substitutions for Nondisabled Children*.
- Milk cannot be served when juice is the only other snack component.



AVOIDING COMMON MENU PROBLEMS IN THE ASP, continued

NONCREDITABLE FOODS

- Noncreditable foods, such as popcorn, potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, ketchup and fruit roll-ups, cannot credit toward the ASP meal pattern. They can be offered as **extra foods** but cannot count as one of the two required snack components. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, *Noncreditable Foods in the Afterschool Snack Program*.
- **Water** does not credit as a snack component. It can be offered in addition to, but not in place of, the two required snack components. If milk or juice is one of the two snack components, menus cannot offer a choice between water and milk or juice.
- Snacks that include a noncreditable food must also include **at least two creditable food components** in the minimum serving size. For example, a snack of strawberry gelatin (noncreditable food), whole grain-rich graham crackers (grains/breads component) and low-fat milk (milk component) is only reimbursable if the milk and graham crackers provide the minimum required serving. When snacks include more than two food items, at least two items must contribute to the ASP meal pattern.

RESOURCES

ASP Handbook: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/nutrition/snack/asphandbook.pdf

ASP Meal Pattern: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/nutrition/snack/aspmp.pdf

ASP Web Site (CSDE): www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320648

Connecticut Nutrition Standards: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322422

Healthy Food Certification: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322420

List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322432

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals: www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=334320



For more information, visit the CSDE's [ASP](#) and [Crediting Foods](#) Web pages or contact the [school nutrition programs](#) staff in the CSDE Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457.

This handout is available at www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/nutrition/snack/aspavoid.pdf.

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