

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 dried legumes), or 100% full-strength vegetable 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, 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 and peas (legumes) may count toward the meats/meat alternates or vegetables component, but not as both in the same meal.



- 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 vegetables from specific 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 (legumes)	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 ½ of the total weekly vegetables offered may be full-strength, 100% vegetable juice and is measured separately at lunch and breakfast.
- In CACFP or Preschool Meal Patterns, full-strength, 100% vegetable juice may be used to meet the vegetables component no more than once per day, including snack. Full-strength, 100% vegetable juice may be used as one component of a snack when the other component is not a beverage.
- In SFSP, full strength 100% vegetable or fruit juice may be counted to meet not more than ½ 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.

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 fruits/vegetables component in the 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.
- Dry beans and peas 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.



Newly Creditable Vegetables in Child Nutrition Programs

Hominy

- Hominy may credit towards 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 legume 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
- ✗ Home-canned products (for food safety reasons)
- ✗ Condiments such as pickle relish, jam, jelly, tomato catsup, or chili sauce (tomato paste is creditable)
- ✗ Freeze-dried vegetables
- ✗ Dehydrated vegetables used for seasoning