

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This guidance applies to meals and snacks in child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and adult day care centers that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) CN Labeling Program is a voluntary federal labeling program for the Child Nutrition Programs. It provides food manufacturers the option to include a standardized food crediting statement on their product labels, which the USDA approves prior to use. Manufacturers participating in the CN Labeling Program must have quality control procedures and inspection oversight that meet USDA's requirements.

The USDA does not require that manufacturers make CN-labeled products or that schools and institutions participating in the Child Nutrition Programs purchase foods with CN labels. Purchasing decisions are at the discretion of the local school or institution. If a CN labeled product is required, the school or institution must clearly state this information in their purchasing specifications.

CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component of the USDA's meal patterns. Examples include beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded fish portions.

CN labels will usually indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products. For example, CN-labeled pizza may list contributions to the meat/meat alternates, grains, and vegetables components; and CN-labeled breaded chicken nuggets may list contributions to the meat/meat alternates and grains components.

Contents of CN Labels

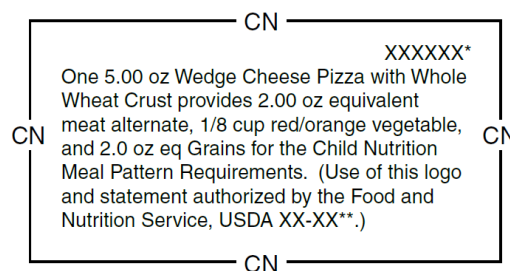
A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. Manufacturers state this contribution on their labels. CN labeling provides a warranty that the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements as printed on the label.



Using CN Labels in the CACFP

The CN label is found on the actual product packaging and will always contain the following:

- the CN logo, which is a distinct border;
- the meal pattern contribution statement;
- a six-digit product identification number;
- the USDA's authorization; and
- the month and year of approval.



This sample CN label for cheese pizza with whole-grain crust indicates that the product provides 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component, 1/8 cup of the vegetables component (red/orange subgroup), and 2 ounce equivalents of the grains component

Note: CN-labeled products list the grains component in ounce equivalents, which are not required in the CACFP meal patterns until October 1, 2021. However, CACFP facilities may use the ounce equivalents information on a CN-labeled product to document compliance with the CACFP whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement, because an ounce equivalent of the grains component is slightly more than the current CACFP serving sizes. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP](#).

The USDA does not allow manufacturers to place the CN label on a fact sheet or any other product information. Acceptable and valid documentation for the CN label includes the original CN label from the product carton, or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton. CN labels that are photocopied or photographed must be visible and legible.

For more information, see the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) handout, [Accepting Processed Product Documentation, USDA Memo SP 11-2015 \(v2\), CACFP 10-2015 and SFSP 13-2015: CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation](#), and [USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015 and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition \(CN\) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). The USDA's [Authorized Labels and Manufacturers](#) webpage lists approved CN-labeled products and manufacturers.

Using CN Labels in the CACFP

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/AcceptDocCACFP.pdf>

Afterschool Snack Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program>

Authorized Manufacturers and Labels (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/usdausdc-authorized-labels-and-manufacturers>

Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Child-Nutrition-Programs>

CN Labeling (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/child-nutrition-cn-labeling-program>

Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Adult-Day-Care-Centers>

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers (CSDE webpage):

<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Adult-Centers>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

USDA Memo SP 11-2015 (v2), CACFP 10-2015 and SFSP 13-2015: CN Labels Copied with a Watermark Acceptable Documentation:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn-labels-copied-watermark-acceptable-documentation>

USDA Memo SP 27-2015, CACFP 09-2015 and SFSP 12-2015: Administrative Review Process Regarding the Child Nutrition (CN) Label, Watermarked CN Label and Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/administrative-review-process-regarding-child-nutrition-cn-label-watermarked-cn-label-and>

Whole Grain-rich Criteria for the CACFP:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/WGRCriteriaCACFP.pdf>

Using CN Labels in the CACFP



For more information, visit the CSDE's [Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage or contact the [Child Nutrition Programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/CNlabelCACFP.pdf>.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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