

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies only to grades K-12 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP). For guidance on school meals, see the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).

For information on crediting smoothies for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and ASP, see the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) handout, [Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP](#). For a comparison of the meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 and preschoolers, see the CSDE's handout, [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).



Smoothies credit differently depending on whether the school food authority (SFA) prepares them on site or purchases commercially prepared products. The USDA recommends not offering smoothies at more than one meal or ASP snack per day.



Smoothies Made on Site

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies made on site by the SFA credit only as juice toward the daily and weekly requirements for the fruits component and vegetables component. Crediting is based on the actual volume of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving, which must be documented by the SFA's standardized recipe. SFAs must count pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies with all other juices toward the weekly juice limit.

At lunch, fruit juice (including smoothies) cannot exceed *half* of the total fruits offered during the week and vegetable juice cannot exceed *half* of the total vegetables offered during the week. At breakfast, fruit juice together with vegetable juice and vegetable/fruit juice blends (including smoothies) cannot exceed half of the total fruits offered during the week. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 for the NSLP and SBP](#).

The USDA's crediting requirements for smoothies are summarized below.

- Smoothies that contain a mix of pureed fruits and vegetables, or that contain 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends, credits toward the fruits component if fruit juice or fruit puree is the predominant ingredient. If vegetable juice or vegetable puree is the predominant ingredient, the smoothie credits toward the vegetables component.

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

- Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars and do not unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.
- Milk in smoothies made on site by the SFA credits as the milk component if it is low-fat (1%) milk or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored). The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. If a smoothie contains less than 1 cup of milk per serving, the menu must include additional milk to meet the full 1-cup requirement for each grade group. To meet the USDA's requirement to offer a variety of milk options, schools must also offer fluid milk on the serving line in the required quantity.
- Yogurt and soy yogurt in smoothies made on site by the SFA credit as the meat/meat alternates component. **Note:** The meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and ASP require that yogurt and soy yogurt cannot contain more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (no more than 3.83 grams per ounce). Any yogurt and soy yogurt in smoothies that the SFA serves to preschoolers and grades K-12 must comply with the preschool sugar limit for yogurt and soy yogurt. The exception is when SFAs choose to follow the K-5 meal pattern for preschoolers and grades K-5 who eat in the same service area at the same time. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, *Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*, *Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*, and the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP*.
- Smoothies may include additional noncreditable ingredients to improve flavor and consistency, such as oatmeal and peanut butter. These ingredients cannot credit toward the meal patterns but count toward the weekly dietary specifications. They must contain zero trans fat and their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the weekly limits for calories, saturated fats, and sodium. For information on the dietary specifications, see the meal patterns for grades K-12 (available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage) and section 6 of the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*.

Table 1 shows how a smoothie made with blueberry puree, yogurt, milk, and oatmeal credits toward the meal patterns.



Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Table 1. Blueberry smoothie crediting example	
Ingredient	Meal pattern crediting ¹
Frozen blueberry puree, ½ cup	½ cup of fruit juice (fruits component) ²
Low-fat yogurt, ½ cup	1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates
Unflavored fat-free milk, 4 fluid ounces	4 fluid ounces of fat-free milk ³
Oatmeal, 2 tablespoons	None

¹ The minimum creditable amount of milk in a smoothie is ¼ cup. If a smoothie contains less than 1 cup of milk per serving, the menu must include additional milk to meet the full 1-cup requirement for each grade group. SFAs must also offer a variety of fluid milk separately to meet the milk component requirement, i.e., at least two different choices of low-fat milk (unflavored or flavored) or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored).

² The menu planner must count pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies with all other juices toward the weekly juice limit. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 for the NSLP and SBP](#).

³ SFAs must offer a variety of fluid milk separately to meet the milk component requirement, i.e., at least two different choices of low-fat milk or fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored).

Crediting smoothies made with vegetables at lunch

Pureed vegetables in smoothies made on site credit only as **juice** toward the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements. At lunch, vegetable smoothies containing one vegetable subgroup or one vegetable juice credit toward that subgroup. For example, a smoothie made with pureed carrots or 100 percent carrot juice credits toward the red/orange subgroup. The crediting of smoothies containing two or more different pureed vegetables or vegetable juices depends on whether the vegetables are from the same or different subgroups.

- **Same Subgroup:** Smoothies that contain pureed vegetables and vegetable juice from the same subgroup credit toward that vegetable subgroup. For example, a smoothie containing pureed carrots and tomatoes, or a 100 percent carrot/tomato juice blend, credits toward the red/orange vegetable subgroup because both vegetables are from the red/orange vegetable subgroup.
- **Different Subgroup:** Smoothies that contain vegetables and vegetable juice from more than one subgroup credit only toward the “other” vegetable subgroup. For example, a smoothie containing pureed carrots (red/orange), spinach (dark green), tomato (red/orange), and watercress (dark green) or a 100 percent vegetable juice blend containing carrots, spinach, tomato, and watercress credits toward the “additional” vegetable subgroup.

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Fruit and vegetable smoothies

Smoothies made with pureed fruits and pureed vegetables credit only as **juice**, and must be included in the calculation of whether the menu meets the weekly juice limit. Smoothies that contain a mix of fruits and vegetables (or that contain 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice blends) contribute to the fruits component if fruit juice or fruit puree is the predominant ingredient. If vegetable juice or vegetable puree is more predominant than fruit juice or fruit puree, the smoothie contributes toward “additional” vegetables.

Signage requirement

The USDA’s regulations require SFAs to identify the food components offered to students. Schools serving smoothies should inform students about the components included by listing the type of smoothie on the menu and serving line signage. For example, “peach and milk smoothie” or “strawberry, yogurt, and milk smoothie.” For more information, see “Meal Identification Signage” in the CSDE’s *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*. For sample signage templates, visit the New England Dairy & Food Council’s [Smoothies](#) webpage.



Commercial Smoothies

Commercial smoothies do not meet the USDA’s requirements for fluid milk or yogurt because they do not comply with the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) standard of identity for milk or yogurt. Smoothies with dietary supplements (such as whey protein powder) or herbal supplements (such as ginkgo biloba, ginseng, and echinacea) cannot credit in Child Nutrition Programs.

Commercial smoothies made with pureed fruits/vegetables credit only as **juice** toward the fruits component. The product label should include a statement regarding the “percent juice content,” which is required by the FDA for beverages made with fruit/vegetable juice or fruit/vegetable puree. For example, an 8-fluid ounce smoothie made from fruit puree with the juice content labeled as “contains 50% juice” credits as 4 fluid ounces or ½ cup of juice. SFAs may need to obtain a PFS from the manufacturer to document the amount of pureed fruit in the product. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, *Product Formulation Statements*.

Resources

Create a Reimbursable Meal Smoothie (New England Dairy & Food Council):

<http://www.newenglanddairycouncil.org/media/SmoothieRecipeBooklet2015.pdf>

Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 for the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditJuice.pdf>

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP

Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothiePreschool.pdf>

Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP (CSDE): [https://portal.ct.gov/-](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditYogurtPreschool.pdf)

[/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditYogurtPreschool.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditYogurtPreschool.pdf)

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Product Formulation Statement for Vegetables and Fruits (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Documenting_Vegetables_Subgroups_Fruits.pdf

Sample Completed Product Formulation Statement for Fruits (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFSsamplefruits.pdf>

Sample Completed Product Formulation Statement for Vegetables (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFSsamplevegetables.pdf>

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Resources and Recipes for Smoothies (New England Dairy & Food Council):

<https://www.newenglanddairyCouncil.org/schools/dairy-in-schools/smoothies/>

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Smoothie Recipe Guide (New England Dairy & Food Council):

<https://www.newenglanddairyCouncil.org/media/Recipe-Guide-Marketing-Tips-1.pdf>

Smoothies (New England Dairy & Food Council):

<https://www.newenglanddairyCouncil.org/schools/dairy-in-schools/smoothies/>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/VegSubgroup.pdf>

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP



For more information, review the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12* and visit the CSDE's *Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs* and *Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs* webpages, or contact the [school 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/NSLP/Crediting/CreditSmoothie.pdf>.

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- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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