CREDITABLE FOODS ADDED TO MDNP LISTS FOR 2020

Coconut

Fresh, frozen, and dried coconut can be used to enhance the taste and presentation of salads, smoothies, and other dishes served with meals or as snacks. Recognizing its versatility, program operators now may credit fresh or frozen coconut as a fruit based on volume served. Dried coconut now credits as a fruit at twice the volume served. Like other fruits, at least 1/8 cup of fresh, frozen, or dried coconut must be served to credit toward the fruit component. Coconut water, labeled as containing 100-percent juice, can credit toward the fruit component as juice per volume served. Please note that coconut flour and coconut oil are not creditable in the CNP (*Child Nutrition Program*).

Menu planners must consider coconut's caloric and saturated fat content, which may limit its frequency of use in child care menus due to the dietary specifications for calories and saturated fat.

Hominy

Hominy is traditionally served in Mexican and Native American cultures as a vegetable or as a milled grain product (e.g., hominy grits). Based on its multiple uses and widespread appeal, hominy may now credit towards the vegetable or grain component in a reimbursable meal or snack. Program operators now may credit hominy as follows:

- ¼ cup of canned, drained hominy or cooked, whole hominy (from dried hominy)
- credits as ¼ cup vegetable (starchy vegetable for NSLP and SBP)
- ½ cup of cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) of dry hominy grits credits as 1 ounce equivalent whole grain.

Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal ***(See Q&A notes at end of this update.)***
Program operators now may calculate contributions from corn masa, masa harina, nixtamalized corn flour, and nixtamalized cornmeal in the same manner as all other creditable grain ingredients and food items. Crediting is determined by weight as listed in *Appendix of Food Buying Guide: Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*, or by grams of creditable grain per portion. However, if any non-whole corn ingredient is labeled as enriched, or includes nutrients sub-listed after the corn ingredient in the ingredient statement, such as: yellow corn flour (folic acid, riboflavin, niacin, and thiamine), then the corn ingredient can contribute only to the enriched grain requirements. Corn that is not "whole" or "enriched" or is not treated with lime (nixtamalized) does not credit as a grain in the CNPs. ***Please refer to the attached Questions and Answers for more detailed information about crediting these foods***.

Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs

Tempeh is used as a meat alternate in a variety of recipes, including stir-fries, sandwiches, and salads. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (Dietary Guidelines) identify soy products as protein foods, and a good source of copper, manganese, and iron. A key recommendation of the Dietary Guidelines is to consume a variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans and peas), and nuts, seeds, and soy products. As commenters noted, providing a straightforward crediting method for tempeh provides improved access to an additional vegetarian option, allowing program operators to diversify menus to meet the dietary needs of participants with vegetarian preferences or dietary restrictions for cultural or religious reasons.

Program operators now may credit 1 ounce of tempeh as 1 ounce equivalent of meat alternate. This method of crediting applies to tempeh with ingredients limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs.

Varieties of tempeh that include other creditable foods as ingredients, such as brown rice, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, flax seed, and/or vegetables, may also credit as meat alternates, grains, and/or vegetables. Since foods must be present in the minimum creditable quantities (⅛ cup or ¼ ounce equivalents) to credit in the CNPs, documentation must show how much tempeh and other creditable foods these products contain. Thus, to credit these varieties, program operators must obtain a Child Nutrition (CN) Label or a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) from the manufacturer. These varieties may credit based on the ingredient quantities identified in the CN Label or PFS. For more information, please see:

- CN Labeling: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/child-nutrition-cn-labeling-program.
- Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/food-manufacturersindustry

FNS remains committed to simplifying menu planning for CNP operators, promoting the efficient use of program funds, and ensuring operators and participants have a wide variety of nutritious and appealing food choices. We recognize that crediting decisions have an impact on schools, child care centers, adult day care centers, day care homes, the food industry, and most importantly, participating children and adults. The agency is committed to staying up-to-date with the evolving food and nutrition environment through continued engagement with a variety food providers.

Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs

Surimi seafood is available in many forms and shapes, including chunks, shredded, and flaked, and does not require additional preparation. Surimi seafood could be incorporated into a variety of menu items, such as seafood salads, sushi-style rolls, sandwiches, tacos, and ramen. Expanding food crediting in the CNPs to include surimi

seafood will allow Program operators to add new and diverse menu items. FNS will update the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs to reflect the meal contributions described below. To view the Food Buying Guide, please visit https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs.

Program operators now may credit surimi seafood as follows:

- A 4.4 ounce portion of surimi seafood credits as 1.5 ounce equivalent meat/meat alternate;
- A 3.0 ounce portion of surimi seafood credits as 1.0 ounce equivalent meat/meat alternate; and
- A 1.0 ounce portion of surimi seafood credits as 0.25 ounce equivalent meat/meat alternate.

The crediting information is displayed in the chart below:

Surimi Seafood (ounces)	**Meat/Meat Alternate** (ounce equivalents)
4.4	1.5
3.0	1.0
1.0	0.25

FNS used USDA's Food Patterns Equivalents Database and several industry experts as resources when developing the crediting method for surimi seafood.

Surimi seafood may contain as little as one-third seafood ingredient, and can include other creditable food ingredients. Program operators and manufacturers should note that the crediting ratio for surimi seafood differs based on portion size due to rounding rules that require crediting down to the nearest 0.25 ounces.

As with all products, manufacturers can document formulations of surimi seafood with higher percentages of meat/meat alternate ingredients using a Child Nutrition (CN) Label or a Product Formulation Statement (PFS). For example, a proprietary formulation may have a PFS that documents how 1.0 ounce of surimi seafood contributes 0.5 ounce equivalents meat/meat alternate. To credit surimi seafood differently than what is listed in the chart above, program operators should obtain a CN label or PFS from the manufacturer. These products may credit based on the creditable ingredient quantities identified in the CN Label or PFS. For more information, please see:

- CN Labeling at https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/child-nutrition-cn-labeling-program
- The Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement section of the CN Labeling Program website at https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/food-manufacturersindustry.

Pasta Products Made of 100% Vegetable Flour(s) Crediting as a Vegetable

Pasta products made of one or more vegetable flour(s) may credit toward the vegetable requirements. Consistent with vegetable crediting, ½ cup of pasta made of 100 percent vegetable flour(s) credits as ½ cup of vegetables.

Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour(s) from One Vegetable Subgroup

Pasta products made of flour(s) from one vegetable subgroup may credit toward the appropriate vegetable subgroup. For example, pasta made of 100 percent red lentil flour credits toward the weekly ½ cup legumes requirement.

Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flours from Multiple Vegetable Subgroups

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:(1)With a Product Formulation Statement from the food manufacturer detailing the actual volume of each vegetable 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 needed from any vegetable subgroup to meet the overall weekly vegetable requirements.

Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour(s) and Other Non-Vegetable Ingredients

Consistent with existing policy, pasta products made of vegetable flour and other non-vegetable ingredients may credit toward daily and weekly vegetable requirements (or, in the case of legumes, meat/meat alternate requirements) with a Product Formulation Statement detailing the actual volume of vegetable flour per serving.

This crediting does not apply to grain-based pasta products that contain small amounts of vegetable powder for color (e.g., spinach, sun-dried tomato).

Pasta Products Made of 100 Percent Legume Flour(s) Crediting as a Meat Alternate

The crediting change discussed above aims to increase options for local program operators to meet vegetable requirements; therefore, this crediting change does not remove the visual recognition requirement for legume pasta crediting toward the meat/meat alternate component.

Consistent with legumes crediting, ½ cup of cooked pasta made of 100 percent legume flour(s) may credit as 2 ounce equivalents of meat alternate. To credit as a meat alternate, pasta made of legume flour(s) must be offered with additional meat/meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat. At the discretion of local menu planners, legumes may credit as a vegetable or a meat alternate, but not as both in the same meal [7 CFR 210.10(c)(2)(i)(F)(iii)].

Popcorn

Popcorn is a whole grain food and a good source of fiber. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans identify dietary fiber as an “underconsumed nutrient” and a “nutrient of public health concern,” meaning most children and adults do not consume enough dietary fiber and that low intakes of dietary fiber are associated with health issues. Expanding food crediting in the CNPs to include popcorn, a budget-friendly, whole grain item that is particularly popular with children, could help address these concerns.

CACFP operators now may credit:

- ¾ cup (or 0.25 ounces (7 grams)) popped popcorn as ¼ ounce equivalent of whole grains in a reimbursable meal or snack.
- 1 ½ cups (or 0.5 ounces (14 grams)) popped popcorn as ½ ounce equivalent of whole grains in a reimbursable meal or snack.
- 3 cups (or 1.0 ounce (28 grams)) popped popcorn as 1 ounce equivalent of whole grains in a reimbursable meal or snack.

Afterschool Snack operators now may credit:

- ¾ cup popped (or 0.25 ounces (7 grams)) popcorn as ¼ serving of grains in a reimbursable meal or snack.
- 1 ½ cups (or 0.5 ounces (14 grams)) popped popcorn as ½ serving of grains in a reimbursable meal or snack.
- 3 cups (or 1.0 ounce (28 grams)) popped popcorn as 1 serving of grains in a reimbursable meal or snack.

In response to the RFI, some commenters acknowledged that the high volume of popcorn required for crediting may be too much for some children, especially young children. FNS encourages program operators to pair popcorn with another creditable grain in these situations, using the crediting guidance for ½ and ¼ ounce equivalents and servings outlined above. For example, program operators could serve popcorn in a trail mix with pretzels and cereal for a snack, or serve popcorn with a whole-grain wrap in the NSLP.

FNS will update the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs to include yields for popcorn in the grains section. To view the Food Buying Guide, please visit: https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs.

Crediting Popcorn in the Child Nutrition Programs

Popcorn also may be used as an ingredient in creditable foods prepared commercially or by program operators. Popcorn must be present in the minimum creditable quantities to credit in the CNPs *(for popcorn that is ¾ cup or ¼ ounce equivalent*). To credit commercially-prepared foods, program operators must obtain a Product Formulation Statement.

For more information, please see The Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement section of the Child Nutrition Labeling Program website at: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/food-manufacturersindustry. Program operators using popcorn as an ingredient in other food prepared in-house will follow the standards already in place for determining meal contributions for in-house recipes, including creating standardized recipes. Additionally, to determine how to credit popcorn that is ground into flour, and made into crackers for example, program operators will follow Exhibit A, found in the appendix of the Food Buying Guide.

Some commenters expressed concern about ingredients and toppings, such as salt, caramel, cheese, and butter, sometimes served with popcorn. CACFP does not have specific quantitative requirements for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Thus, when popcorn is served in CACFP, FNS encourages Program operators to limit the use of toppings such as salt, caramel, cheese, and butter that add sodium, sugar, or saturated fat. Although these toppings are not prohibited, FNS strongly encourages healthier alternatives, including seasoning the popcorn with herb blends or serving fresh, plain popcorn. Program operators are to use their discretion in determining if a certain popcorn product or recipe is perceived to be a grain-based dessert and to follow the guidance in place for grain-based desserts accordingly.

In addition, to prevent the risk of choking, program operators must consider the developmental readiness of children and the ability of disabled or older adults to swallow safely when deciding whether to offer popcorn. This consideration is especially important for program operators that serve young children.

Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Program

Shelf-stable, dried, and semi-dried meat, poultry, and seafood, such as beef jerky or summer sausage, are now creditable as meat in the child nutrition programs (CNPs).

Questions and Answers:
Crediting Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs

1. What is "nixtamalization"?

Nixtamalization is a process in which dried corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients. Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, corn masa (dough from masa harina), masa harina (corn flour), and certain types of cornmeal. Nixtamalized corn, such as hominy, corn masa, and masa harnia are considered whole grain when evaluating products for CNP meal requirements.

2. Is additional documentation required to count nixtamalized corn ingredients toward the WGR requirements?

Ingredients labeled as hominy, corn masa, or masa harina do not require additional documentation to count toward the whole grain-rich (WGR) requirements. However, some products made with cornmeal and/or corn flour ingredients may require additional information on a product formulation statement (PFS) to count toward the WGR requirement. If the PFS indicates that cornmeal or corn flour ingredients are nixtamalized, these ingredients can be considered whole grain.

3. What type of grits are creditable as whole grain in the CNPs?

Grits specifically labeled as hominy grits and products specifying that the corn is whole corn can be credited as whole grain. Products labeled as enriched grits may be credited as enriched grains. Grits labeled simply as grits, stone ground corn, or degermed corn are not creditable in the CNPs.

4. In addition to products labeled as corn masa, masa harina, and hominy, how can Program operators identify products made with nixtamalized corn?

There are two ways Program operators can identify products made with nixtamalized corn:

1) If a product made with corn includes one of the following Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved whole grain health claims on its packaging, the corn in the product is at least 50 percent whole grain:

   • *Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers.*

   • *Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease.*

For CACFP, the whole product is considered WGR (Whole Grain Rich) if the packaging includes the FDA whole grain health claim.

2) If the ingredient statement indicates the corn is treated with lime (for example, “ground corn with trace of lime” or “ground corn treated with lime”), then the corn is nixtamalized. Because it is nixtamalized, the corn ingredient credits as though it is whole grain.

5. Can Program operators use a State agency WIC list to identify WGR products?

Yes. If a product is included on any State agency’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)-approved whole grain food list, it can credit towards the WGR requirements regardless if the product has non-creditable grain ingredients anywhere in the ingredient statement. Program operators can document compliance by obtaining a copy of any State agency’s WIC-approved whole grain food list. For a list of WIC State agency contacts, please see: www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-contacts.