

Updated Nutrition Standards for School Meals:

*What's changing and what does it
mean for menus*

August 15, 2024

Housekeeping

- 45-minute presentation with content & culinary demo
- 15-minutes for Q&A at the end
- Post-webinar email will be sent with:
 - Survey
 - Instructions for receiving your CEU certificate
 - Must complete the survey before you will receive your CEU certificate
- References for content are included on the last slide

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Speakers



Lesley Shiery, MS, RD

Associate Nutrition Manager

General Mills Bell Institute of Health & Nutrition



Chef Heather Swan

K-12 Corporate Chef

General Mills North America Foodservice

Disclosure: This webinar is being sponsored by the General Mills Bell Institute of Health & Nutrition and General Mills Foodservice. Both speakers are paid employees of General Mills.

Objectives

- ❑ Understand why changes to the school meal nutrition standards are being implemented
- ❑ Describe the updated nutrition and meal pattern standards
- ❑ Learn how to adjust menus to keep student favorites while still meeting the nutrition standards
- ❑ Gain inspiration for new menu solutions to meet the updated standards

School Meal Programs Have a Long History of Promoting Good Nutrition

USDA School Meal Programs

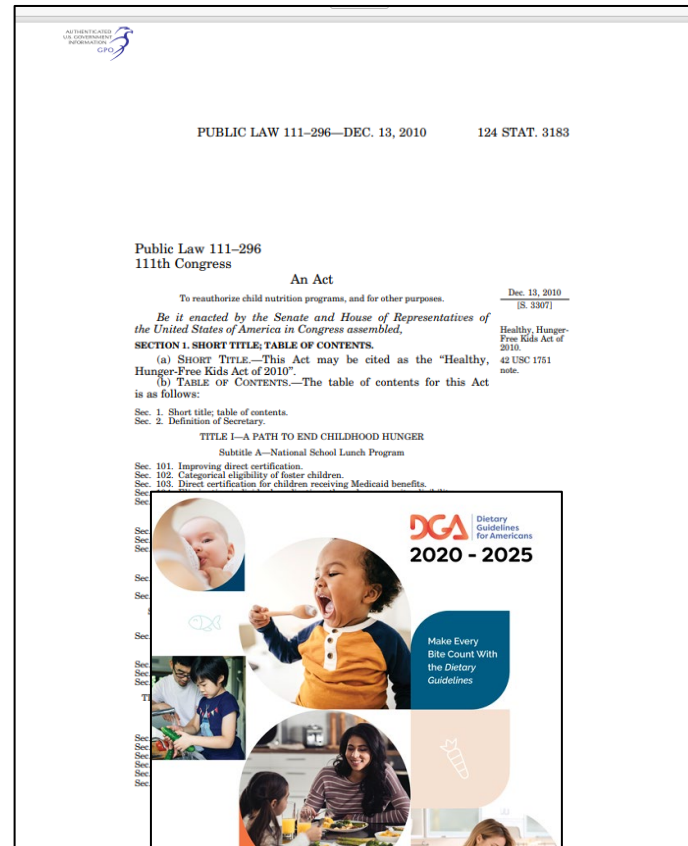
- 1946 and 1966 - National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs
- Established to address hunger and malnutrition, particularly in military recruits
- Goal of Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act 2010: improve nutrition & reduce childhood obesity

"In the long view, no nation is healthier than its children, or more prosperous than its farmers."

President Harry Truman, on signing the 1946 National School Lunch Act



Child Nutrition Reauthorization: The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act



“Not less frequently than once every 10 years, the Secretary shall review and, as appropriate, update requirements for meals served under the program under this section to ensure that the meals—

“(I) are consistent with the goals of the most recent Dietary Guidelines;

and **“(II) promote the health of the population served by the program....”**

Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020 – 2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Final Rule

31962 Federal Register / Vol. 89, No. 81 / Thursday, April 25, 2024 / Rules and Regulations

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Food and Nutrition Service

7 CFR Parts 210, 215, 220, 225, and 226
[FNS–2022–0043]
RIN 0584–AE88

Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

AGENCY: Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Department of Agriculture (USDA).

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This rulemaking finalizes long-term school nutrition requirements based on the goals of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025*, robust stakeholder input, and lessons learned from prior rulemakings. Notably, this rulemaking gradually phases in added sugars limits for the school lunch and breakfast programs and in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, updates total sugars limits for breakfast cereals and yogurt to added sugars limits. As a reflection of feedback from stakeholders, this final rule implements a single sodium reduction in the school lunch and breakfast programs and commits to studying the potential associations between sodium reduction and student participation in the school lunch and breakfast programs. This rulemaking addresses a variety of other school meal requirements, including establishing long-term milk and whole grain requirements. Finally, this rule includes provisions that strengthen Buy American requirements. While this rulemaking takes effect school year 2024–2025, the Department is gradually phasing in required changes over time. Program operators are not required to make any changes to their menus as a result of this rulemaking until school year 2025–2026 at the earliest.

DATES: This final rule is effective July 1, 2024. Phased-in implementation dates for required changes are addressed in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this rule.

ADDRESSES: *Docket:* Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov> for access to the rulemaking docket, including any background documents.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrea Farmer, Director, School Meals Policy Division—4th Floor, Food and Nutrition Service, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314; telephone: 703–305–2054.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

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Table of Abbreviations

AFHK—Action for Healthy Kids
 ADA—Americans with Disabilities Act
 CACFP—Child and Adult Care Food Program
 CNA—Child Nutrition Act
 CN-OPS—Child Nutrition Operations Study
 FAR—Federal Acquisitions Regulations
 FDA—U.S. Food and Drug Administration
 FNS—Food and Nutrition Service
 HEI—Healthy Eating Index
 HMI—Healthy Meals Incentives
 ICN—Institute of Child Nutrition
 NASEM—National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine
 NSLA—National School Lunch Act
 NSLP—National School Lunch Program
 SBP—School Breakfast Program
 SFSP—Summer Food Service Program
 SNAP—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
 SMA—Special Milk Program
 SY—School Year
 USDA—U.S. Department of Agriculture

Section 1: Background

On February 7, 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published *Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*¹ (“2023 proposed rule”) to update the school meal pattern requirements based on a comprehensive review of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025* (Dietary Guidelines), robust stakeholder input on the school meal patterns, and lessons learned from prior rulemakings.² USDA is finalizing that proposed rule, with some modifications based on public input. This final rule is the next step in an ongoing effort toward healthier school meals that USDA and the broader school meals community have been partnering on for well over a decade. Separately, on January 23, 2020, USDA published a proposed rule, *Simplifying Meal Service and Monitoring Requirements in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs* (“the 2020 proposed rule”).³ As noted in the 2023 proposed meal pattern rule, based on public comment, USDA is finalizing certain meal pattern provisions from the 2020 proposed rule in this final rule.⁴ The following sections address rule provisions that were included in the 2020 proposed rule:

- Section 6: Meats/Meat Alternates at Breakfast
- Section 12: Beans, Peas, and Lentils at Lunch
- Section 14: Meal Modifications
- Section 15: Clarification on Potable Water Requirements
- Section 16: Synthetic Trans Fats

Through this rulemaking, USDA is exercising broad discretion authorized by Congress to administer the school

USDA Food and Nutrition Service
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FINAL RULE FOR SCHOOL MEAL STANDARDS



Updated School Meal Standards: working towards a common goal of healthy children and helping them reach their full potential.

School meals are the main source of nutrition for millions of children every school day. USDA is ensuring these meals are even more nourishing, while keeping them appealing to kids.

Key Provisions



Whole Grains

Schools may continue to offer a variety of nutrient-rich whole grains with options for some enriched grains (no changes in standard)

Milk



Continue to allow flavored and unflavored milk (no changes in standard) with new limits on added sugars

Added Sugars



Limit using a phased approach:

- Phase 1:** Limits on specific high-sugar products (cereals, yogurt, flavored milk)
- Phase 2:** Overall weekly limits

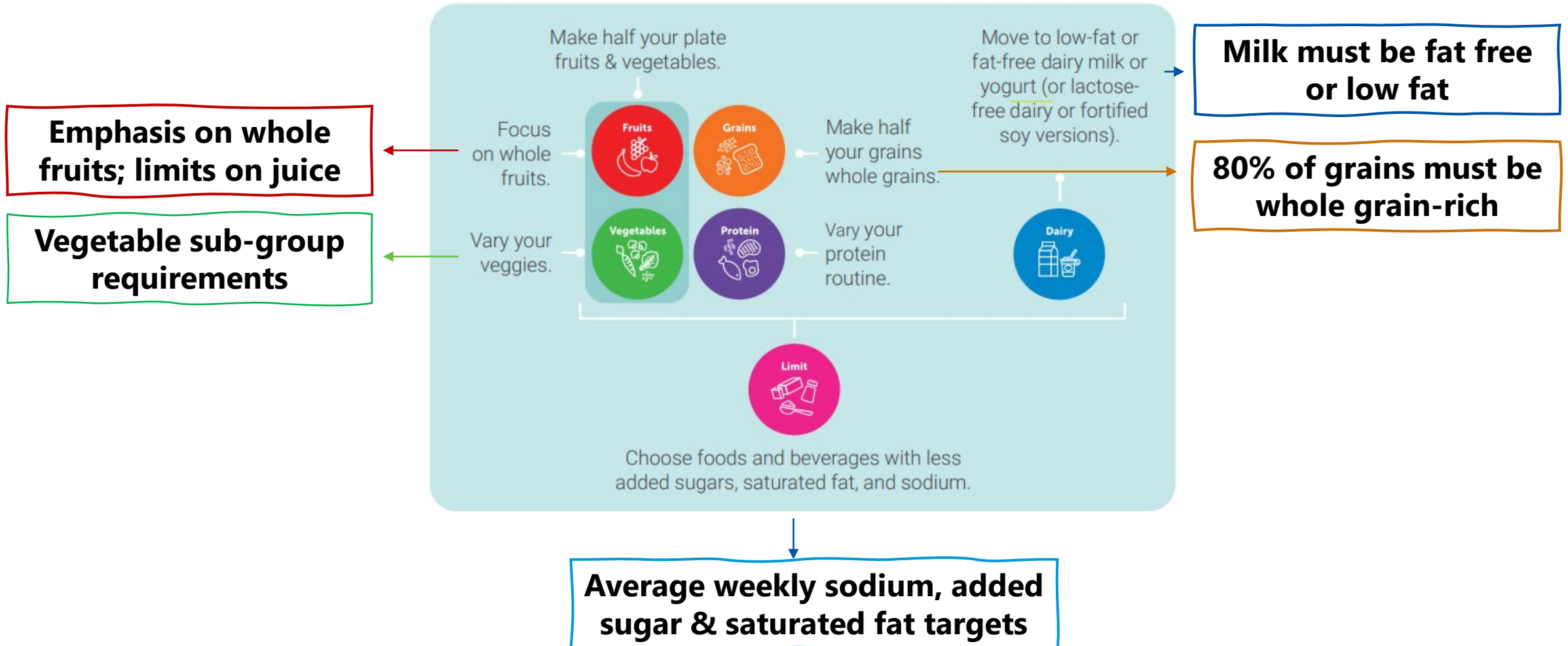



Sodium

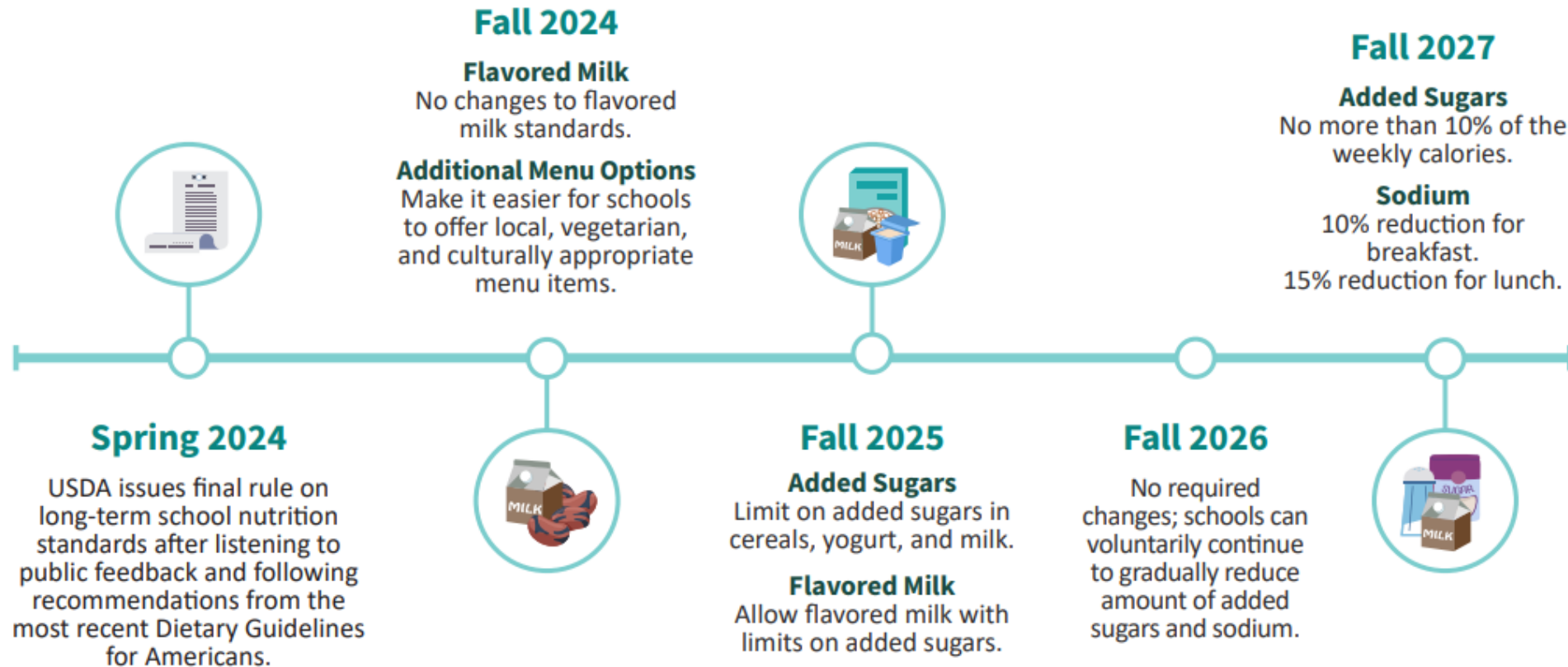
Gradually phase in one reduction of weekly limit

Nutrition Standards Aligned to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans



Implementation Timing



Updated Nutrition Standards: A Closer Look

What's Changing: Added Sugar Product-Based Standards

Final Rule:

Breakfast Cereal: No more than 6 grams added sugars per dry oz

Yogurt: No more than 12 grams added sugars per 6 oz

*Cereal & yogurt limits **also apply to CACFP***

Flavored Milk: ≤10g added sugars per 8 fl oz., or for flavored milk sold as a competitive food for middle and high schools ≤15g added sugars per 12 fl oz.

Implementation: SY 25 – 26
CACFP: October 1, 2025



No more than 6 grams
per dry oz



No more than 12 grams
per 6 oz (2 grams/oz)



No more than 10g per 8
fl oz

Remember! No other product categories have product-based added sugar standards.

What's Changing: Added Sugar Weekly Standard

Final Rule:

Limits added sugars to **less than 10% of calories across the week**, on average, at lunch and breakfast

Limit is in addition to the product-based standards.

**Weekly Standard Implementation:
SY 27 - 28**

Breakfast Weekly Added Sugar Standard

Grade	K – 5	6 – 8	9 – 12
Calorie Range	350 - 500	400 – 550	450 - 600
10% of Calories from Added Sugar (g)*	9 – 12.5	10 – 13.75	11 - 15

Lunch Weekly Added Sugar Standard

Grade	K – 5	6 – 8	9 – 12
Calorie Range	550 – 650	600 – 700	750 - 850
10% of Calories from Added Sugar (g)*	~14 – 16	15 – 17.5	~19 - 21

*on average over the week

Label Reading: Added Sugar

Nutrition Facts			
About 5 servings per carton			
Serving size		3 tubes (170g)	
	Per Serving		Per Tube
Calories	140		45
	% DV*		% DV*
Total Fat	2g 2%	0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat	1g 6%	0g	0%
Trans Fat	0g	0g	
Cholesterol	5mg 2%	< 5mg	1%
Sodium	90mg 4%	30mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate	23g 8%	8g	3%
Dietary Fiber	0g 0%	0g	0%
Total Sugars	16g	5g	
Incl. Added Sugars	10g 20%	3g	7%
Protein	7g	2g	
Vitamin D	3.9mcg 15%	1.3mcg	6%
Calcium	350mg 25%	120mg	8%
Iron	0mg 0%	0mg	0%
Potassium	290mg 6%	100mg	2%
Vitamin A	190mcg 20%	60mcg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

1

Total Sugar =

naturally occurring + added sugar in a product



2

Added Sugar: Represents **only** the sugar that has been added to the product

1

2

% Daily Value (DV): % of the DV for added sugar in a serving of the food.

Using the Label to Plan Menus: Added Sugar



Do - look only at the added sugar amount (exception: single ingredient sources of sugar like honey or maple syrup)



Do - check the serving size! Larger servings will have higher added sugar but still may meet requirements. Example: 2 oz cereal cup with 12g added sugar = 6g added sugar per 1 oz.



Don't - add the total and added sugar together. Added sugar is already included in the total sugar number!



Don't - use only the %Daily Value to determine if a product will fit in the weekly standard. A product may have >10% Daily Value for added sugar and still fit in the weekly standard.

Menu Considerations: Added Sugar

- ☑ Balance days higher in added sugar with those that are lower
- ☑ Use spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves or extracts to impart sweetness
- ☑ Use fruit purees in baked goods to replace part of the sugar
- ☑ Experiment with savory applications of traditionally sweet
- ☑ Consider condiment swaps (fruit or yogurt to top pancakes) or modify recipes to eliminate the need for condiments

Added Sugar Swaps

Lower Added Sugar



IW Cinnamon Pull-Apart
2 oz eq Grain = 13g



Reduced Sugar Cereal
2 oz eq Grain = 11g



Mustard 1 Tb = 0g



Minestrone
1/2 cup (3/4 cup Veg): 0g

Higher Added Sugar



Pancakes with Syrup
2 oz eq Grain + 2 Tb syrup = 23g



Toaster Pastry
2 oz eq Grain = 28g



Ketchup 1 Tb = 3g



Tomato Soup
1/2 cup (1 cup Veg): 8g

How can we lower the added sugar in this menu to be compliant?

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Grain/ Meat/Meat Alternate	Whole Grain Filled Bagel - Strawberry Cream Cheese (2 Grain) 12g added sugar	Cereal Bowlpak (1 Grain) 6g added sugar String Cheese (1 M/MA) 0g added sugar	Whole Grain Waffles (2 Grain) 4g added sugar Syrup 1.4 oz cup 19g added sugar	Whole Grain Cinnamon Roll (2 Grain) 13g added sugar	Whole Grain Blueberry Muffin (2 Grain) 16g added sugar
Fruit	Raisins (1/4 cup) Apple, small	Banana slices, 1/2 cup Blueberries, 1/2 cup	Pineapple Juice, 4 oz Pears, 1/2 cup	Orange slices, 1/2 cup Strawberries, 1/2 cup	Diced Peaches, 1/2 cup Fruit juice, 4 oz
Milk	8 oz 1% Choc Milk 10g added sugar	8 oz 1% White Milk	8 oz 1 % Choc Milk 10g added sugar	8 oz 1% White Milk	8 oz 1% Choc Milk 10g added sugar
<i>Calories</i>	500	420	520	405	480
<i>Added Sugar (g)</i>	22	6	33	13	26

Average Calories: 465

% of calories from added sugar, on average: **17.2%**

How can we lower the added sugar in this menu to be compliant?

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Grain/ Meat/Meat Alternate	Whole Grain Biscuit with Egg (2 Grain, 1 MA) 2g added sugar	Cereal Bowlpak (1 Grain) 6g added sugar String Cheese (1 M/MA) 0g added sugar	Maple Flavored Waffles (2 Grain) 12g added sugar	Whole Grain Cinnamon Roll (2 Grain) 13g added sugar	Whole Grain Cereal Bar (1 Grain) 8g added sugar 4 oz Yogurt (1 MA) 5g added sugar
Fruit	Raisins (1/4 cup) Apple, small	Banana slices, 1/2 cup Blueberries, 1/2 cup	Pineapple Juice, 4 oz Pears, 1/2 cup	Orange slices, 1/2 cup Strawberries, 1/2 cup	Diced Peaches, 1/2 cup Fruit juice, 4 oz
Milk	8 oz 1 % White Milk	8 oz 1% White Milk	8 oz 1 % White Milk	8 oz 1% White Milk	8 oz 1% Choc Milk 10g added sugar
Calories	550	420	420	385	470
Added Sugar (g)	2	6	12	13	23

Average Calories: 450

**% of calories from added
sugar, on average:** 9.98%

What's Changing: Grains in the School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern

Final Rule:

Creates a **combined grain and meat/meat alternate meal component at breakfast** and removes the requirement for schools to offer 1 oz eq grains each day

May serve a grain, meat/meat alternate OR a combination to meet the oz eq requirements at breakfast

Implementation: SY 24 -25

School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Meal Components	Amount of Food¹ per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ²	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ²	0	0	0
Dark Green Subgroup	0	0	0
Red/Orange Subgroup	0	0	0
Beans, Peas, and Lentils Subgroup	0	0	0
Starchy Subgroup	0	0	0
Other Vegetables Subgroup	0	0	0
Grains or Meats/Meat Alternates (oz. eq) ³	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Fluid Milk (cups) ⁴	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Dietary Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week⁵			
Minimum-Maximum Calories (kcal)	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10
Added Sugars (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Limit: In place through June 30, 2027	≤540 mg	≤600 mg	≤640 mg
Sodium Limit: Must be implemented by July 1, 2027	≤485 mg	≤535 mg	≤570 mg

What's Changing: Vegetables in the School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern

Final Rule:

- Allows schools who choose to offer vegetables at breakfast **one day** per school week to **offer any vegetable**, including starchy.
- Schools choosing to substitute vegetables for fruits at breakfast on **two or more days** per school week are required to offer vegetables from **at least two different vegetable subgroups**

Implementation: SY 25 -26

1 Day Per Week: Offer any vegetable



2 + Days: At least 2 Vegetable Subgroups



Spinach Cooler



Sweet Potato Parfait

Menu Considerations: School Breakfast Program

Meal Pattern

- ☑ Remember! Grains are an important source of nutrients, whole grain and carbohydrates for energy.
- ☑ Serving grains can help control costs and manage sat fat and sodium in menus.
- ☑ Monitor sodium & sat fat if increasing M/MA. Yogurt, beans, nuts & seeds can be a low sat fat and sodium M/MA.
- ☑ Vegetables-forward breakfasts can help increase veggie intake in kids (who don't get enough in their diet!).

Incorporate into familiar favorites!

Carrot Strawberry Smoothie



What's Changing: NSLP Afterschool Snack

Final Rule:

- Must include 2 of the 5 components: milk, M/MA, vegetable, fruits, grains
- 'Grain-Based Desserts' are not eligible for the grain component
- 80% of grains as whole grain-rich
- Cereal & yogurt must meet added sugar product standards
- Milk must be low or non-fat; flavored or unflavored
- No more than 1/2 the weekly fruit can be fruit juice
- Deep fat fried foods are not reimbursable

Implementation: SY 25 - 26

Meal Component	Minimum Quantities
Fluid Milk	8 fluid ounces
Meats/meat alternates	1 ounce equivalent
Vegetables	3/4 cup
Fruits	3/4 cup
Grains	1 ounce equivalent



80% of grains

Menu Considerations: NSLP Afterschool Snack

- ☑ Identify 'grain-based desserts' in your current menu and suitable replacements.
- ☑ Dry cereal can be an easy whole grain-rich snack. Pair with individual yogurt cups or tubes.



What about “Grain-Based Desserts” at Breakfast?

Final Rule:

Did NOT adopt a serving limit on products classified as a ‘grain-based dessert’ **at breakfast.**

Products will need to fit in the weekly added sugar standard.

USDA to provide additional guidance on ‘grain-based desserts’ in the School Breakfast Program



“Grain-Based Desserts”

What is a “Grain-Based Dessert”?

- USDA provides guidance on what products are classified as a grain-based dessert
- Term can be interpreted differently
- Grain Based Desserts are noted in [Exhibit A of the Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs](#)

Regulations on “Grain-Based Desserts”

NEW in Final Rule:

- No longer creditable in NSLP Afterschool Snack

STAYING THE SAME – NO CHANGE:

- Can be menued at breakfast
- Continue to *not* be creditable in CACFP
- Up to 2 oz eq or less can be served at lunch
- Can be sold as Smart Snacks (if meets for Smart Snacks)

“Grain-Based Desserts”	Not “Grain-Based Desserts”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brownies and Cakes• Bars (cereal, granola, breakfast)• Cookies, including vanilla wafers• Doughnuts• Fruit filled rolls/bars/cookies• Marshmallow cereal treats• Dessert pies, cobbler, fruit turnovers• Sweet biscotti, croissants (e.g. chocolate), scones, rolls (e.g. cinnamon rolls)• Toaster Pastries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quick breads (banana, zucchini)• Cereals• Cornbread• Crackers• Waffles, French Toast & Pancakes• Muffins• Pie crusts of savory pies• Plain croissants• Plain or savory pita chips• Savory biscotti or scones

What's Changing: Sodium (in 3 years)

Final Rule:

For the next three school years, through SY 2026-2027, schools will maintain current sodium limits, then new limits go into effect:

- **Breakfast:** 10% reduction in SY 27-28
- **Lunch:** 15% reduction in SY 27-28

Implementation: SY 27 -28

Breakfast Sodium Limits

(on average over the week)

Age/Grade Group	Current	Effective July 1, 2027
Grades K-5	≤ 540 mg	≤ 485 mg
Grades 6-8	≤ 600 mg	≤ 535 mg
Grades 9-12	≤ 640 mg	≤ 570 mg

Lunch Sodium Limits

(on average over the week)

Age/Grade Group	Current	Effective July 1, 2027
Grades K-5	≤ 1110 mg	≤ 935 mg
Grades 6-8	≤ 1225mg	≤ 1035 mg
Grades 9-12	≤ 1280 mg	≤ 1080 mg

Menu Considerations: Sodium

- ☑ Balance days higher in sodium with those that are lower
- ☑ Pair higher sodium foods with those that are lower in sodium in individual meals (higher sodium entrée paired with lower sodium sides)
- ☑ Create a spice station for students to season to their tastes
- ☑ Use citrus or vinegar to enhance salty flavor; create your own seasoning blends; add aromatics (garlic, onion, shallots)
- ☑ Find small swaps you can make in menus – products or ingredients (e.g. whole grain corn tortilla, 10mg sodium, in place of whole wheat flour tortilla, 200mg sodium)

Sodium Swaps

Lower Sodium



White Milk
8 oz = 130 mg



Brown Rice
1.5 oz eq Grain = 5mg



Yogurt
1 MA = 80mg



Chicken Breast
2 M/MA = 220mg



Mozzarella Cheese
1 MA = 180 mg

Higher Sodium



Chocolate Milk
8 oz = 210 mg



Tortilla 1.5 oz eq Grain =
220mg



Cottage Cheese
1 MA = 400mg



Breaded Chicken
2 M/MA = 340 mg



American Cheese
1 MA = 400 mg

What's Staying the Same: Whole Grain

Final Rule:

- **Maintains the current whole grains requirement:** at least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered in the school lunch and breakfast programs are whole grain-rich, based on ounce equivalents
- Codifies the definition of whole grain-rich

Stay the Course!

Whole grain-rich:

the grain content of a product is between 50 and 100 percent whole grain with any remaining grains being enriched



Menu Considerations: Whole Grain

Promote Intake Through...

- Combination entrées
- Offering a variety of whole grain foods if able
- Getting students involved (sampling, menu ideas)
- Serving whole grain versions of kid favorites

Menu Inspiration

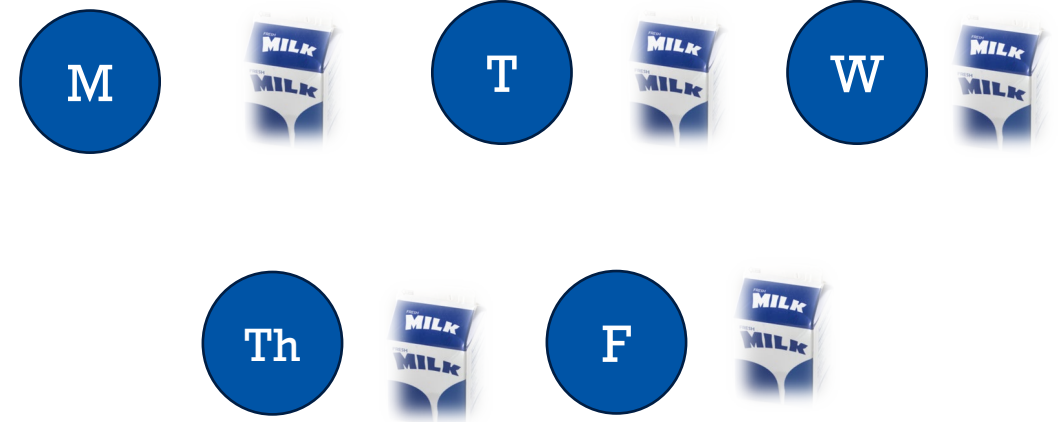


What's Staying the Same: Milk

Final Rule:

- All schools continue to have the option to offer fat-free and low-fat milk, flavored* and unflavored, to K-12 students, and to sell fat-free and low-fat milk, flavored* and unflavored, à la carte
- Unflavored milk must continue to be offered at each school breakfast and lunch meal service

Stay the Course!



Must continue to offer a variety of milk each day: flavored fat free + unflavored low fat milk

**Flavored milk offered to K-12 students in the NSLP and SBP and sold to students à la carte during the school day must comply with the product-based added sugars limit. (SY 25 – 26)*

Menu Considerations: Fluid Milk

Promote Intake Through...

- Smoothies
- Cereal + milk
- Milk dispensers
- Ice cold milk or hot chocolate milk

Fun Fact! Over 50% of milk consumed by kids is from the combination of cereal + milk

Inspiration



YoLatte Tea Smoothie



Cooler Smoothie



Other Miscellaneous Changes



Updates **entrée definition in competitive foods** to include **whole grain-rich and enriched**



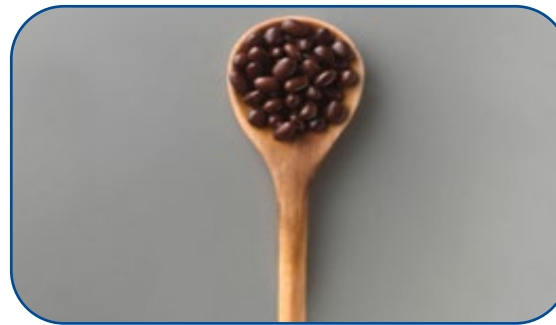
Allows **vegetables in place of grains** in **tribally operated**, operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, and that serve primarily American Indian or Alaska Native children



Allows **nuts and seeds** to credit for the **full M/MA** in all child nutrition programs



Exempts bean dip (e.g. hummus) from **total fat** standard in **Smart Snacks**



Allows **beans, peas, & lentils** offered **toward M/MA** to also **count toward the ½ cup of beans, peas, and lentils subgroup** each week



Explicitly states that **traditional Indigenous foods may be served** in reimbursable school meals

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You Got This!



Menu Inspiration with Chef Heather



Thank you!

Questions?

