

## **MDE CACFP and Preschool Meal Patterns: Grain-Based Desserts**

The updated Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and School Nutrition Program (SNP) Preschool Meal Patterns took effect October 1, 2017. The regulations for serving grain-based desserts in the updated Meal Patterns differ from the K-12 Meal Patterns and Smart Snacks Guidelines. Under the updated meal patterns for the CACFP and SNP Preschool meal patterns, grain-based dessert food items do not count towards the grain component in a reimbursable meal or snack.

### **First Things First: Which Meal Pattern to Follow?**

CACFP Meal Pattern: Child and adult care programs, family day care homes, emergency shelters, and at-risk afterschool programs follow the CACFP meal pattern.

Preschool Meal Pattern: Schools with preschool programs successfully operating in the National School Lunch Program and/or the School Breakfast Program follow the Preschool Meal Pattern.

### **Why does the Preschool Meal Pattern Differ from the K-12 Meal Pattern?**

Preschoolers are experiencing new foods and learning what they like and dislike. The updated Preschool meal pattern's goals include supporting the development of healthy food preferences and healthy habits, so children can learn and grow. Replacing sweet treats with healthier options like more vegetables, fruits, protein and/or whole grains, promotes healthy food preferences and builds healthy habits for life.

### **Is it a Grain-Based Dessert? Perception Counts!**

While there is no specific amount of sugar, fat, or other nutrient limit set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to qualify a grain-based food item as a dessert, how a food item is perceived plays a role in determining if an item is a grain-based dessert. Before adding an item to your menu, consider whether the food is commonly thought of as a dessert or sweet treat, especially by a toddler or preschooler. If the item is seen as a dessert or sweet treat, choose a healthier grain option instead.

**Things to ask yourself when selecting grain food items for your menu. If the answer is yes, the item does not count.**

**1. Does the food item contain:**

- Chocolate or other flavored chips? (white, caramel, strawberry, etc.)
- Candy pieces?
- Jam, fruit puree, or custard fillings?
- Marshmallows?

**2. Is the food item:**

- Dessert flavored? (chocolate, caramel, butterscotch, etc.)
- Coated with dessert flavored coatings or toppings? (cocoa, caramel, toffee, cinnamon-sugar, powdered sugar, glazes, etc.)
- Iced or frosted?
- Covered with sprinkles, jimmies, or other sweet garnishes?

**3. Is the item:**

- Shaped like a cookie? Look like a cookie?
- An unfrosted piece of cake or a cupcake?
- A breakfast, cereal, or granola bar (store-bought or homemade) ?
- A sweet pie, pastry, or turnover?

**4. Is the item packaged as a sweet treat?**

- Sweetened and/or dessert-flavored cereal snack food?
- Trail mix with sweetened cereal and/or candy pieces?
- Found in the snack aisle of the grocery store?
- Does it look like it came from a vending machine?

## Not sure? Ask! Technical Assistance Available

Menu planners with any questions about a grain-based food item can contact their assigned program analyst and/or the CACFP office at 517-241-5353. Schools serving infants and preschoolers are encouraged to call the CACFP office and/or their School Nutrition Program (SNP) program analyst. The SNP office may be reached at 517-241-5374.

### USDA Guidance Operational Memoranda:

These operational memoranda may be found on the CACFP website, [www.michigan.gov/cacfp](http://www.michigan.gov/cacfp) under Operational Memoranda and on the SNP website [www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition](http://www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition).

SP 01-2018 Updated Infant and Preschool Meal Patterns in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Questions and Answers

CACFP 01-2018 Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program: Questions and Answers (superseded by CACFP 09-2018)

CACFP 02-2018 Claiming Preschool Children under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs versus the Child and Adult Care Food Program for School Food Authorities (SFA)

CACFP 09-2018 Grain Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program: Questions and Answers.

CACFP 16–2017 Grain-Based Desserts in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

SP 30-2017, CACFP 13-2017 Transition Period for the Updated Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns and the Updated National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Infant and Preschool Meal Patterns

SP 37-2017 Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers

The USDA Food and Nutrition Services CACFP Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks webpage: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>.

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