

Accommodating a Vegetarian Child on the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Vegetarian meals and snacks for children can meet the CACFP Meal Pattern requirements with some planning. The CACFP does not require child care facilities to accommodate vegetarian diets as they are rarely prescribed for medical reasons related to disabilities. However, vegetarian children can be easily accommodated within the CACFP Meal Pattern requirements by making a few substitutions to the regular menu.

Types of Vegetarian Diets

Vegetarians get their source of protein mostly through plant based foods, such as legumes (dry beans, peas, and lentils), soy products, nuts, and seeds instead of meat, poultry, and fish. Most vegetarian diets will fall into one of the following categories:

- The semi-vegetarian diet (sometimes called “flexitarian”) is the least restrictive. Semi-vegetarians eat mostly a plant-based diet, along with milk, milk products, eggs, and occasionally small amounts of chicken and/or fish.
- Lacto-ovo-vegetarians eat a plant-based diet along with milk, milk products, and eggs.
- Lacto-vegetarians eat a plant-based diet along with milk and milk products.
- Ovo-vegetarians eat a plant-based diet along with eggs.
- The vegan diet is the most restrictive. Vegans only eat plant-based foods.

General Guidelines for Meeting CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements

All types of vegetarians will eat foods from the Vegetable/Fruit component and the Grain/Bread component. Only the Fluid Milk component and Meat/Meat Alternate component may need adjustments for vegetarian meals.

Milk: For children who do not drink milk, the CACFP allows non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk to be served, with a note from the child’s parent or guardian or medical provider. See the *Fluid Milk Substitutions in the Child Nutrition Programs* on DPI’s Guidance Memorandum websites.

Meat/Meat Alternates: Legumes (cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils), certain soy products, nuts and their butters, and seeds may be substituted for meat, poultry, and fish to meet the meat/meat alternate requirement. Many vegetarian children will also eat cheese, eggs, and yogurt.

- **Nuts and seeds:** They may fulfill no more than one-half of the meat/meat alternate requirement for lunch/supper.

Some children may potentially have allergies to various nuts and seeds which may require meal accommodations based on USDA’s requirements for special dietary needs. Also, they can pose a choking hazard for children under four years of age.

- **Alternate protein products (APP):** They are processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources. APP may be used alone or in combination with other food ingredients to fulfill the meat/meat alternate component. All APP require CN labels or the manufacturer’s product formulation statement to document that they have the proper protein levels by weight and digestibility. Tofu, seitan, tempeh, and soy-based cheeses are not creditable.

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Menu Planning for Vegetarian Meals

Breakfasts are the easiest to plan for vegetarian diets since only three components are required: Fluid Milk, Vegetable/Fruit, and Grain/Bread.

No substitutions are necessary except for those children who do not drink milk. Refer to the *Fluid Milk Substitutions in the Child Nutrition Programs* on the on DPI's Guidance Memorandum websites for non-dairy milk substitutes that are nutritionally equivalent to milk.

Snacks are also fairly easy to plan for vegetarian diets since only two of the four components (Fluid Milk, Vegetable/Fruit, Grain/Bread, and Meat/Meat Alternate) are required to be served. For those snacks that include the Meat/Meat Alternate component, there are plenty of options that don't include meat. Refer to the next page, *Snack Ideas for Vegetarians*, for suggestions.

Lunch/Suppers require the most planning for vegetarian diets since all four components are required: Fluid Milk, Vegetable/Fruit (2 different items), Grain/Bread, and Meat/Meat Alternate. However, the *USDA Recipes for Child Care* (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/usda-recipes-child-care>) offer over 25 vegetarian recipes that can be used for main dish items for lunch/supper to meet the CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements. Refer to the section below on *Vegetarian Lunch/Supper Cycle Menus* for 6 weeks of menu ideas using the *USDA Recipes for Child Care*.

Good menu planning is essential to include the necessary calories, fat, protein, iron, calcium, vitamin B₁₂ and vitamin D.

Good Sources of Fat and Calories

Nuts; Nut Butters; Seeds; Seed Butters;
Avocados; Dried Fruits

Good Sources of Calcium

Dark Green Vegetables (Kale, Okra, Turnip,
Collard, and Mustard Greens); Broccoli;
Fortified Foods (Rice, Orange Juice, Soy Milk)

Good Sources of Protein

Dried Beans; Legumes; Nuts; Seeds; Grains;
Peanut Butter; Soy Nut Butter; Sunflower Seed
Butter; Soy Milk

Good Sources of Vitamin B₁₂

Fortified Cereals; Soy Milk; Vitamin B₁₂
Supplement

Good Sources of Iron

Green Leafy Vegetables; Iron Fortified
Cereal or Formula; Enriched Bread; Peanut,
Soy, Nut, or Seed Butters; Broccoli; Dried
Beans; Butternut Squash
*Eat foods high in vitamin C (i.e. citrus fruits) with
iron rich foods to increase the absorption of iron.*

Vitamin D

Adequate exposure to sunlight, *20-30 minutes
of sun on hands and face 2-3 times per week*,
is recommended to promote Vitamin D
synthesis. If sunlight exposure is limited,
dietary or supplemental Vitamin D should be
used.

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Snack Ideas for Vegetarians

There are many ways to incorporate meat alternatives into snacks for vegetarian children. To get started, a few snack ideas with child appeal are provided below. The serving sizes indicated below are for children ages 3-5. Adjust serving sizes according to the CACFP Meal Pattern requirements for children who are younger or older.

2 oz lowfat yogurt served with:

- Any type of grain/bread, such as ½ oz graham crackers (2 crackers) or sprinkled with ½ cup oat cereal
- Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup diced apricots; or make a fruit kebob with ¼ cup sliced strawberries and ¼ cup grapes cut in half; or make a parfait by layering with ½ cup mixed fruit and 1 Tablespoon of granola

¾ cup Yogurt Fruit Dip (USDA Recipes for Child Care G-04) served with:

- Any type of cut fresh fruit, such as ½ cup fresh apple slices or ½ cup fresh banana slices

½ oz cheddar cheese served with:

- Any type of grain/bread, such as ½ toasted mini bagel; or ½ oz whole wheat crackers (4 crackers); or melted on ½ whole wheat pita pocket
- Any type of vegetable, such as ½ cup lightly steamed carrots and broccoli or ½ cup carrot and celery sticks
- Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup apple slices or ½ cup pear slices

½ oz mozzarella cheese served with:

- Any type or grain bread, such as melted onto ½ toasted English muffin with 2 Tablespoons of tomato sauce for a mini-pizza

1 oz lowfat cottage cheese served with:

- Any type of grain/bread, such as ½ oz graham crackers (2 crackers) or ½ oz whole wheat crackers (4 crackers)
- Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup pineapple tidbits or ½ cup of diced peaches

1 Tbsp peanut butter served with:

- Any type of grain/bread, such as ½ slice whole wheat bread or ½ oz pretzels for dipping
- Any type of fruit/vegetable, such as ½ cup apple slices; or ½ cup celery sticks; or spread on a banana and sprinkled with 1 Tablespoon of granola

½ hard boiled egg served with:

- Any type of grain/bread, such as ½ slice toasted whole wheat bread or ½ toasted bagel
- Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup fresh orange sections or ½ cup Carrot-Raisin Salad (USDA Recipe E-05)

¼ cup pureed black or pinto beans served with:

- Any type of grain/bread, such as ½ oz toasted whole wheat pita bread or spread on ½ oz toasted tortilla triangles with 2 Tablespoons salsa

¼ cup of hummus served with:

- Any type of grain/bread, such as ½ oz toasted whole wheat pita bread
- Any type of vegetable, such as ½ cup of celery sticks, baby carrots, cucumber slices, or cherry tomatoes

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Vegetarian Lunch/Supper Cycle Menus

Refer to *CACFP Meal Pattern Chart for 1-12 Year Olds* found within DPI's Guidance Memorandums when planning serving sizes for different age groups (serving sizes for main dishes below are for 3-5 year olds). Recipe name and numbers in bold refer to recipes in the *USDA Recipes for Child Care*, available on the web at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/usda-recipes-child-care>.

Week One	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	2 pieces Cheese Ribbon Sandwich F-05 (1 oz meat alternate, 1 bread) Peas and carrots Fresh apples slices with lowfat yogurt Milk	1 slice Spanish Quiche D-08A (1½ oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable, 2 bread) Steamed broccoli Tropical fruit salad Milk	1 Black Bean Mini Pizza on ½ wholegrain English muffin (made with ¼ cup black beans and 1 oz cheese) Shredded lettuce and chopped tomatoes Orange sections Milk	1 piece Macaroni and Cheese D-20 (1½ oz meat alternate, 1½ bread) Steamed spinach Pear slices Milk	½ cup Pasta Toss with Vegetables D-14 (¾ oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable, ½ bread) Whole wheat roll Apricot halves with lowfat yogurt Milk
Week Two	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	½ cup Bean Soup H-08 topped with ½ oz shredded cheddar cheese (1½ oz meat alternate, ½ cup vegetable) Whole grain crackers Diced peaches Milk	½ Banana-Peanut Butter Sandwich F-03A (1 oz meat alternate, ½ cup fruit, 1 bread) Steamed carrots Strawberries with lowfat yogurt Milk	¼ cup Refried Beans I-13 (1 oz meat alternate) Baked tortilla wedges Mexicali Corn I-15 Pear slices with cheese Milk	1 piece Pizza with Cheese Topping D-23A (1½ oz meat alternate, ½ cup vegetable, 1½ bread) Steamed broccoli Pineapple wedges Milk	1 piece Squish Squash Lasagna D-59R (½ oz meat alternate, ½ cup vegetable, ½ bread) Apple slices with 3 T Peanut Butter Dip G-01 Milk
Week Three	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Black Bean Quesadilla (made with ½ tortilla, ¼ cup black beans, and 1 oz cheddar cheese) Corn Fruit Salad Milk	1 slice Broccoli Quiche D-08 (1½ oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable, 2 bread) Mixed Greens Salad Grape halves Milk	½ Toasted Cheese and Tomato Sandwich F-09 (1 oz meat alternate, ½ cup vegetable, 1 bread) Mixed vegetables Fresh plum Milk	1 piece Baked Scrambled Eggs D-15 (2 oz meat alternate) Whole wheat pita wedges Steamed spinach Peaches with yogurt Milk	1/2 cup Lentil Soup H-07 topped with ½ oz cheese (1 oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable) Cornbread Green beans Baked cinnamon apples Milk

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Week Four	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Vegetable Chili D-26 (2 oz meat alternate, $\frac{3}{8}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{4}$ bread)</p> <p>Corn Muffin Square A-02A</p> <p>Fresh pears</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>2 pieces Mexican Pizza D-13 (1$\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{2}$ bread)</p> <p>Whole wheat crackers</p> <p>Green salad with 1 T lowfat salad dressing</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ Peanut Butter and Jam Sandwich on whole wheat bread (made with 1 T peanut butter)</p> <p>Peas and carrots</p> <p>Apple slices with cheese</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Broccoli Cheese Soup H-05 ($\frac{3}{4}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable)</p> <p>Whole wheat pita bread with 3 T hummus</p> <p>Peach slices</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>1 Bean Burrito D-21A (2 oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable, 1 bread)</p> <p>Celery sticks</p> <p>Tropical fruit salad</p> <p>Milk</p>
Week Five	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>1 English Muffin Pizza (made with $\frac{1}{2}$ wholegrain English muffin, 1 oz mozzarella cheese, and 2 T tomato sauce)</p> <p>Three Bean Salad E-04</p> <p>Mixed berries with yogurt</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Split Pea Soup H-02 topped with $\frac{1}{2}$ oz shredded mozzarella cheese (1$\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{4}$ bread)</p> <p>Wheat crackers</p> <p>Steamed carrots</p> <p>Grape halves</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>2 Bean Tacos D-24A (2 oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable, 1 bread)</p> <p>Plantains</p> <p>Fresh orange slices</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>1 Toasted Cheese Sandwich F-13 (2 oz meat alternate, 2 bread)</p> <p>Green beans</p> <p>Fruit salad</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Vegetable Frittata D-01 (1$\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable)</p> <p>Whole wheat roll</p> <p>Banana slices</p> <p>Milk</p>
Week Six	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Multi-Bean Soup H-04 ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable)</p> <p>Whole wheat roll</p> <p>Apple slices with 3 T</p> <p>Peanut Butter Dip G-01</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>Cheese Quesadilla (made with 1 tortilla and 2 oz cheddar cheese)</p> <p>Black beans</p> <p>Corn</p> <p>Orange sections</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Vegetable Lasagna D-27 (1$\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{3}{4}$ bread)</p> <p>Whole grain crackers</p> <p>Mixed fruit</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Corn Pudding I-11 ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{4}$ slice bread)</p> <p>Pinto beans</p> <p>Brown rice</p> <p>Pineapple slices</p> <p>Milk</p>	<p>1 Egg Salad Sandwich F-10 (2 oz meat alternate, 2 bread)</p> <p>Stir-Fry Vegetables I-10</p> <p>Grape halves</p> <p>Milk</p>