

CACFP Tuesday Talks: Meal Production Questions and Answers

The following two resources demonstrated in the Meal Production Webinar can be found under [Guidance Memorandum 12](#), *Meal Requirements*, in the *Meal Production* section.

- Meal Requirements Calculator
- USDA Food Buying Guide (FBG) Calculator

For more information on how to use Production Records, check out the [CACFP E-Learning courses](#) for the following components:

- Child Care Centers, Outside of School Hours, Emergency Shelters, and Head Starts: *Production Records*
- Adult Day Care Centers: *Production Records*
- At-Risk Afterschool Centers: *Production Planning*

1. Are programs required to use the Meal Requirements Calculator and Food Buying Guide (FBG) Calculator?

No. Programs are not required to use these tools. However, they are available to assist programs to ensure enough food is being purchased and prepared for all age groups being served at each meal and snack being claimed for reimbursement.

2. What if I cannot find a specific food item in the FBG Calculator?

Try to find a food item that is similar to the description provided in the FBG Calculator. If you are still having a hard time finding what you need, let your consultant know, as we can pass this information to USDA to request the food item to be added to the FBG.

3. Can I use the Exhibit A Grains Tool in the Food Buying Guide to determine the amount of grains to purchase and prepare?

Yes, this is an option. To use this tool, specific information for the grain item you plan to serve, such as the nutrition facts label, is required. There is a training video on how to use the tool. It can be found under the *Help Tab > Training Videos* within the USDA FBG website.

4. Do I need to log in to the FBG or can I go in as a guest each time?

Ideally, creating a login will allow the user to save and access food items in your Favorites list, shopping lists, and analyzed recipes using the Recipe Analysis Workbook. If you log in as a guest each time, this information will not be saved or available for future use.

5. Where can we find the production records?

The Production Records are located under [Guidance memorandum 12](#), *Meal Requirements* in the *Production Records* section.

6. Why do I need to complete Production Records?

Production Records are a tool to document the amounts of food to prepare to ensure that enough is made so all participants receive the correct amount per the meal pattern. DPI recommends completing the production records prior to the meal, such as the week or month before. Programs also have the option of completing a cycle production record if they use a cycle menu.

All programs, except for emergency shelters and family daycare home providers, must document how much food was prepared for each meal service claimed for reimbursement.

7. The lines in the Production Record are too small. Can I create my own production record if it includes all required components?

Yes, the Production Records are a tool to use to document the amounts required and prepared; however, if you have another form that includes all the required information, you may use that form. Also note, the Production Record posted on the DPI website is PDF-fillable, so programs can type into the Production Record and it will auto fit the information into the cells.

8. Do I need to fill in the Amounts Required column on the Production Record?

Not necessarily. Some programs may not need to complete this column when there is a full understanding of meal production, and the program staff have demonstrated they are purchasing and preparing enough food for all meals and snacks claimed for reimbursement. Keep in mind, the Amounts Required information is needed to determine the Amounts Prepared. The Amounts Prepared column must be completed to document the quantity of food used when preparing each meal and snack.

9. How do I list more than one meat/meat alternate (M/MA) for a mixed entrée on the Production Record? There are not separate lines on the Production Record to list each M/MA separately.

List each meat and/or meat alternate and how much was prepared of each on the M/MA line. For example, if ground beef and cheese are used to meet the minimum serving size for the M/MA, identify how much of each is being purchased and prepared. See example below.

Projected Participants		Component	Foods to be Served	Amounts Required	Amounts to be Prepared	Comments ³
Monday		M/MA	Ground Beef / Cheese	50 oz / 50 oz	4.25 lbs / 3.25 lbs	<input type="checkbox"/> CN Label

10. Can we record meat as “cooked” versus “fresh” meat on the Production Record?

Yes, as long as you specify ‘cooked’ chicken, beef, etc. when recording the Foods to Be Served on the Production Record.

11. Why do I need to include the fat percentage of the ground beef on the Production Record?

This is helpful information to ensure enough meat is purchased and prepared based off the specific food item. If a program were to use a ground beef with a higher fat content, more raw ground beef must be purchased and prepared to ensure there was enough cooked meat available for the meal service to meet meal pattern requirements.

12. How should I record fresh fruits and vegetables? Can I put 10 apples vs. 5 pounds on the Production Record?

The amounts to prepare should include total quantity and/or size of items in order to demonstrate the amounts served meet CACFP requirements. Pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables range in size, it is best practice to record the totals in pounds versus number of the item. That is how the amounts are provided in the FBG Calculator as well. The FBG Calculator tells you how many pounds of a specific fruit or vegetable to purchase based on the total number of cups calculated from the meal pattern.

13. How do we measure fresh fruits and vegetables in the FBG, like apples, oranges, pineapple, etc.?

Fresh fruits and vegetables are normally purchased by the pound, but the meal pattern has fruit and vegetable portions in cups. After you determine the total amount required (in cups) from the Meal Requirements Calculator and how much to purchase (in pounds) from the FBG Calculator, you would use the appropriate scoop size or measuring cup to portion out the minimum serving size to each participant.

14. How does a tossed salad credit towards the minimum serving size for vegetables?

When serving a salad, you must take into account that twice the amount of leafy greens, such as lettuce, spinach, kale, etc. must be served to credit to the meal pattern for the vegetable component. Therefore, 1 cup of leafy greens credits as 1/2 cup of vegetable. If other vegetables are served in the salad, like tomatoes, carrots, broccoli, or cucumbers, these may also credit towards the vegetable component (1/2 cup = 1/2 cup). For example, when serving a tossed salad to a 3-5 year old at lunch or supper, they require 1/4 cup vegetable; therefore, you could serve 1/4 cup lettuce, which credits as 1/8 cup vegetable, and 1/8 cup of other vegetables for a total of 1/4 cup vegetable.

15. If I serve lettuce and tomatoes with tacos, do I need to serve another vegetable?

If the lettuce and tomato combined meet the minimum serving size for the vegetable at the meal service, it may credit as the vegetable. For example, a 6-year old requires a vegetable serving size of 1/2 cup, therefore, a 1/2 cup creditable vegetable between the tomatoes and lettuce would need to be on the taco or plate to credit as the vegetable (see Question 14 regarding crediting lettuce to the CACFP meal pattern). However, when lettuce and tomato are served with tacos, they are often served as a garnish and not enough is served, so we recommend serving another vegetable that meets the minimum serving size.

16. Do I have to specify the actual type of fruit and vegetable, such as fresh vs. canned?

Yes. Different forms of fruits and vegetables yield different amounts, so this information is needed to ensure enough food is purchased and prepared based on the specific food item. For example, if we planned to serve pineapple and need 16 cups to meet the fruit component, the following would be required based off the two different forms:

- Fresh Pineapple: 10 pounds
- Pineapple Chunks Canned, undrained (#10 can): 2 - #10 cans.

17. Do I have to specify how many pieces / slices / etc. are in different grain packages? For example, 8 buns/pack or 10 tortillas/pack or 20 slices / loaf?

Yes, documenting specific package sizes shows that enough food was available at the meal. Further, documenting this information when completing Production Records during the meal production process helps the meal preparer know how much to prepare and the food shopper know how much to purchase.

In addition, when programs record items in general terms, (i.e., one box, one bag, or one package), this does not provide enough information to show that enough food is available to meet meal pattern requirements. Products from all components can be purchased in various sizes and options, so it is important to be as specific as possible on the Production Records. For example, tortillas come in different sizes (6-inch, 8-inch, 12-inch) and in different package amounts (6 per package, 10 per package, 20 per package). This is important to record because it makes a difference in how much needs to be purchased and prepared.

18. If I only need 5 cups of whole milk, why should I have 1 gallon available?

Programs have the option to purchase milk in the size that best fits their needs, so if storage is an issue and/or you have very few one-year-olds, 1/2 gallons may be a better option. The important thing is that enough milk for all ages served is available and the minimum amounts are served to each participant based off their age, using the minimum serving sizes on the CACFP Meal Pattern chart.

19. Do I have to plan for adults?

We encourage programs to have adults, such as classroom teachers, eat meals with the children to model good eating habits such as trying new foods. With that said, programs that plan to serve meals to adults must include them in meal production planning to ensure enough food is purchased and prepared for all participants and adults for the meal service.

20. Are all grains being converted from cups to ounces?

Ounce Equivalents for grains goes into effect October 1, 2021. Some grains like cooked cereals, rice, pasta, and ready-to-eat cereals will continue to be in cup serving sizes and not ounce equivalents. Check out the [Ounce Equivalents for Grains](#) website and resources found under [Guidance Memorandum 12](#) for additional information and resources.

21. Why are 13-18 year olds included on the CACFP Meal Pattern and Production Record?

This age group is specific to At-Risk Afterschool programs and Emergency Shelters participating on the CACFP. These programs can provide meals for participants that fall into that age range. The serving sizes for 13-18 year olds is the same as the serving sizes for the 6-12 year olds.

22. Meals are served in separate classrooms. Do I need to break down minimum servings for each class, or as long as food is available can I approximate to individual classrooms?

Production Records are a tool to help you prepare enough food and document that enough food is available for all participants at a meal or snack. When dividing out food for each classroom, staff must deliver enough food for the number of participants in each room. Amounts provided cannot be an approximate amount because the minimum amounts per the CACFP meal pattern must be available to the participants to be able to claim the meal for reimbursement. This is when serving pre-plated or family style meals.

A good way to ensure that enough food is delivered to each classroom is to measure out the meal pattern serving sizes for the number of participants in each room, for example, measure out 10 - 1/4 cup servings (or 2 1/2 cups) of fruit at breakfast for a classroom of 1-2 year olds.