

CACFP Tuesday Talks: Using Product Labels to Credit Cereal, Yogurt & Combination Foods Questions and Answers

The following resources shown in the Product Labels Webinar can be found under [Guidance Memorandum 12](#):

- [CACFP Reference Guide](#) (GM 12: Crediting Foods section)
- [Crediting Store-Bought Combination Foods](#) (GM 12: Meat/Meat Alternate section)

1. Can I freeze a creditable yogurt and serve it as frozen yogurt?

Yes, Program operators may freeze creditable yogurt and serve it frozen. However, this is discouraged, as it is perceived as a dessert. Commercial (store-bought) frozen yogurt is similar to ice cream and is not creditable.

2. What are the equations at the top of the cereal and yogurt sugar limit charts for?

You can use the equations to determine if a cereal or yogurt meets sugar limits. This way is a little more difficult, however, it is an option. The sugar limit charts were created as an easy way to determine if cereal and yogurt meet requirements.

3. Do I need to keep a label for cereal to show that it is whole grain (WG)?

That depends. If the cereal is on the CACFP Reference Guide (which includes all cereals on the Wisconsin WIC list) and has an asterisk (*) next to it, that means the cereal meets the sugar limits and the asterisk means the cereal is WG. Therefore, you do not need to keep the label for these cereals on file. One example is Cheerios, which meets the sugar limits and is WG. Cereals that do not have an asterisk next to the name are not WG. For cereals that are not on the WIC list, you must keep the label on file, and it must include the ingredients to show that the cereal is WG.

4. I know that Raisin Bran is above the sugar limits and not ok to serve. Can I serve corn or bran flakes and put raisins on top?

Technically, the answer is yes since both corn & bran flakes meet CACFP sugar limits and raisins are creditable as fruit. However, we recommend serving the cereal and raisins separate and let the participants decide if they want to put the raisins in the cereal or not. If serving raisins to meet the fruit requirement at breakfast, you must serve the minimum amount. Dried fruit credits as twice the volume served (1/4 cup raisins = 1/2 cup fruit).

5. When do we have to start keeping these labels?

Labels for store-bought combination foods have been required for a long time. Labels for yogurt, cereal, and whole grain rich items have been required since October 1, 2017, when the new meal pattern changes were implemented.

6. How long do we need to keep the labels?

All CACFP records must be kept on file for 3 years plus current year. However, labels must be kept for as long as you are serving the item- so possibly longer. Labels for products you no longer purchase can be filed away and discarded after 3 years. Keep current labels readily available.

7. Why do we need to keep all these labels? That's a lot of storage.

Labels are required to be kept on file for cereal, yogurt, whole grain rich and store-bought combination foods to prove they credit to the CACFP meal pattern. Only creditable foods may be served in a reimbursable meal. Without labels for these items, it is not known if they are creditable.

To save on storage space, we recommend taking pictures of labels and copying on both sides of the paper. However, make sure all parts of the label are readable (not blurry, cut off, or too dark to read). Only keep current labels in a binder or file folder that is accessible. Labels for products no longer used can be stored somewhere else. If you purchase the same item, you only need to keep one label for that product on file. You do not need to keep the label every time the item is purchased. Lastly, for cereals on the WIC list, you do not need to keep the label on file.

8. We are a Sponsoring Organizations with more than one site on the CACFP. Our admin office orders food for all sites and keeps the labels on file. Is this ok or does each site have to keep a copy of the labels on file?

If the sponsor orders food for all sites, it is okay to keep the labels at the admin office. However, for combination food items, the sponsor must make sure each site has the information needed to know how much food to serve to each participant. That could mean that each site gets a copy of the CN label or PFS, or the sponsor could create a document or cheat sheet with the needed serving size information on it.

9. I buy my food from a food distributor (Sysco). How do I ensure the foods I order meet CACFP requirements before I purchase them?

For combination foods such as chicken nuggets, ask for the CN label prior to ordering to ensure the product has one. Some distributors have books or lists of CN-labeled products and the list provides how each item contributes to the meal pattern. You can obtain the list, highlight the items you purchase, and keep it on file in lieu of obtaining each CN label.

For cereals, you need to know the brand before buying. If the cereal is listed on the WIC cereal list, that cereal is ok to purchase. If the cereal is not on the WIC list, and for yogurts, contact the distributor and ask for the product information (Nutrition Facts label) so you can check that each cereal and yogurt meets sugar limits and cereals are WGR if you plan to serve it as the whole grain rich item.

10. I get my meals from a vendor, do I need to get copies of the labels from them?

For programs that get their meals from a vendor, the vendor must supply the site with copies of all cereal, yogurt, whole grain rich, and CN labels or Product Formulation Statements (PFS). It is still the program's responsibility to ensure that all foods provided by the vendor meet requirements. Programs cannot assume that foods provided by a vendor always meet CACFP requirements. In fact, there have been times the vendor has sent items that do not meet CACFP requirements, such as cereals over the sugar limit or combination items with no CN label or PFS. As a program participating on the CACFP, you are ultimately responsible to make sure all foods are creditable.

11. Can you give brand examples of creditable chicken nuggets and fish sticks?

The DPI does not keep a list of CN-labeled products since each store and distributor carries different products, and manufacturers may change recipe formulas which may change crediting information. You must obtain the CN label or PFS for the specific item purchased.

12. We buy halal hotdogs and gyros that do not have a CN label. How do I credit these items?

Contact the manufacturer to obtain a product formulation statement. If the items are processed meats that are 100% meat, they are creditable without a CN label or PFS.

13. Why do you need a different CN label if you purchased the same exact item from a different store then where you obtained the label? Even if the size, ingredients, and manufacturer is exactly the same?

If the product is the exact same and has the same item number, you can use the same label. You must pay attention to the item number to make sure that the products are the same. What you cannot do is purchase a different item from the same manufacturer at the same store or different stores and apply the label from one item to another.

14. Why can't I use the Nutrition Facts Label to determine the serving size for store-bought combination foods since the serving size is at the top?

The serving size at the top of a Nutrition Facts label is not the serving size for a CACFP meal. The Nutrition Facts Label is used for the general public to provide nutrition information for a specified amount of the food item. It is not to be used to determine serving sizes in the CACFP. You must obtain and use the CN label or product formulation statement (PFS).

15. You mentioned that meatballs and hamburger patties require a CN label, why is that?

Meatballs have multiple ingredients in them, for example, breadcrumbs and possibly other fillers. Some hamburger patties and other store-bought processed meats also might have fillers (i.e. byproducts, cereals, binders, or extenders). This means that the item is not 100% meat and requires a CN label or Product Formulation Statement (PFS) on file prior to serving to verify that the item credits to the CACFP and to know how much is needed to be served. Common binders and extenders are listed in GM 12 such as soy flour, starchy vegetable flour, calcium reduced dried skim milk, modified food and vegetable starch, soy protein concentrate, cereal, isolated soy protein, dried milk, carrageenan, and hydrolyzed milk protein.