



MEALTIME MEMO



December 2023 – Celebrating With Creditable Grains



December is a month full of holiday celebrations, such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and more. It is also a great time to model healthy habits by showing different ways to celebrate. We traditionally think grain-based desserts like brownies, cakes, and cookies are essential during festivities. However, several healthy grain options can be included as part of a meal or snack. This Mealttime Memo will give you suggestions to navigate celebrations in a healthy way.

Grain-Based Desserts

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) aims to reduce the amount of added sugars and solid fats children eat in child care. One method is not allowing grain-based desserts to be part of reimbursable meals and snacks. Below is a chart of common grain-based desserts that are not creditable and grain items that are creditable.

Grain-Based Desserts (NOT Creditable in the CACFP)	Not Grain-Based Desserts (Creditable in the CACFP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brownies • Cakes, including coffee cakes and cupcakes • Cereal bars, breakfast bars, and granola bars • Cookies, including vanilla wafers • Doughnuts, any kind • Fig rolls/bars/cookies and other fruit-filled rolls/bars/cookies • Gingerbread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banana bread, zucchini bread, and other quick breads • Cereals that meet the sugar limit and are whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified • Cornbread • Crackers, all types • French toast • Muffins

- Ice cream cones
- Marshmallow cereal treats
- Pie crusts of dessert pies, cobblers, and fruit turnovers
- Sweet bread puddings
- Sweet biscotti, such as those made with fruits, chocolate, icing, etc.
- Sweet croissants, such as chocolate-filled
- Sweet pita chips, such as cinnamon-sugar flavored
- Sweet rice puddings
- Sweet scones, such as those made with fruits, icing, etc.
- Sweet rolls, such as cinnamon rolls
- Toaster pastries

- Pancakes
- Pie crusts of savory pies, such as vegetable pot pie and quiche
- Plain croissants
- Plain or savory pita chips
- Savory biscotti, such as those made with cheese, vegetables, herbs, etc.
- Savory bread puddings, such as those made with cheese, vegetables, herbs, etc.
- Savory rice puddings, such as those made with cheese, vegetables, etc.
- Savory scones, such as those made with cheese, vegetables, herbs, etc.
- Teething biscuits, crackers, and toasts
- Tortillas and tortilla chips
- Waffles

Questionable Grain Items

What if you are unsure if a grain you want to serve is a grain-based dessert? A grain item is a grain-based dessert and not creditable if:

- It is perceived as a dessert or sweet treat, like cake or pie.
- It is shaped like a grain-based dessert, like a cookie or granola bar.
 - Some grain-based desserts are labeled with a different name, like breakfast flat instead of granola bar or breakfast round instead of a cookie. If this is the case, choose another option.

What if you want to make a type of grain-based dessert from scratch with healthy ingredients, such as whole grain granola bars or oatmeal cookies?

- Even if the grain-based dessert contains whole grain-rich ingredients or is made from scratch with healthy ingredients, these items are still considered grain-based desserts and are not creditable on the CACFP.

Use [Exhibit A](#) in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs to check if questionable items are creditable.

Still Too Much Added Sugar?



Some creditable grain items may contain a lot of added sugar. When choosing a grain item to serve, compare the different brands, and choose the one with less added sugar. Limit dessert-flavored items like chocolate or caramel and those with

icing or sweet coatings or contain candy, marshmallows, or flavored chips.

For example, choose a whole grain blueberry muffin rather than a chocolate chip muffin with a sugary topping.

Celebration Substitutions

For special days, you may want to serve festive items. Here are some examples of food choices that can be celebratory and fun for kids!

Instead of serving:	Try:
Cake or brownies	Quick bread or muffins (banana, pumpkin, or zucchini)
Cereal bars or granola bars	Whole grain bagel, whole grain tortilla chips, or tortilla with cinnamon and fruit
Cinnamon rolls or doughnuts	Cornbread, oatmeal, pancakes, or waffles topped with colorful, sliced fruit (blueberries, peaches, strawberries)
Cookies	Graham crackers, whole wheat crackers, whole grain-rich dry cereal, pretzels, or rice cakes
Toaster pastries	Whole wheat toast topped with fruit or nut butter

Lots of Ways to Celebrate

Many healthy foods are served during traditional celebrations. For example, oranges at Christmas, applesauce for Hanukkah, and black-eyed peas during Kwanzaa. Talk about these holidays with the children and taste some of the healthy foods. Teach children that there are other ways to celebrate besides using food. Celebrate by reading a special book or having a dance party. Valentine's Day is a great time to explore heart-healthy activities.



Mealtime Discussion Prompts

Mealtime is an excellent opportunity to discuss different types of celebrations that are traditions for the children in your program.

- What are some holidays or traditions you celebrate in your family?
- What is your favorite activity during this celebration?
- What types of food do you eat during this celebration?
- How do you participate in making the food?



Menu Ideas

The menu ideas contain creditable grain items you can use to celebrate.

Breakfast



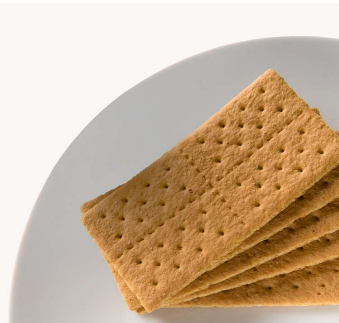
Orange Cranberry
Quickbread
(Grain)
Sweet Potato Fries
1% Milk

Lunch/Supper



Roasted Turkey
Cornbread Stuffing
(Grain)
Baked Brussels Sprouts
Orange Slices
1% Milk

Snack



Graham Crackers
Mixed Berries
Water

Recipes



- The [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#) has USDA-standardized recipes for child care centers and family child care homes.
- The [Child Nutrition Recipe Box: New CACFP Lunch/Supper Recipes](#) has standardized recipes per age group (3–5 and 6–18 year-olds) and for servings of 6, 25, and 50.

References

- Institute of Child Nutrition. (n.d.). *Arroz con queso (rice with cheese) – USDA recipe for child care centers*. Child Nutrition Recipe Box. <https://theicn.org/cnrb/recipes-for-centers-grains-breads/arroz-con-queso-rice-with-cheese-usda-recipe-for-cacfp/>
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- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2022). *Food buying guide for child nutrition programs, Exhibit A: Grain requirement for child nutrition programs*. <https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov/Content/TablesFBG/ExhibitA.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2018, November 15). *Thirty on thursday: Grain-based desserts in the CACFP*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/thirty-thursdays-grain-based-desserts-cacfp>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2020, March 06). *Grain-based desserts in the CACFP*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grain-based-desserts-cacfp>
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Previous 2023 Mealtime Memos

