



MEALTIME MEMO



September 2023 – Tools for Determining Amounts of Food to Purchase



Do you ever wish you could snap your fingers and the next week’s shopping list would appear? [The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) offers tools to help you do that with a mouse click or tap of the finger.

This Mealtime Memo describes the three versions of the Food Buying Guide that will help Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) operators know how much food to purchase and prepare.

What Is the Food Buying Guide?

The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG) is a USDA resource that helps you plan how much food to buy and prepare based on the minimum meal pattern serving sizes. It exists in the following formats:

- PDF with download and print options
- Interactive Web-Based Tool
- Mobile App for use on the go with smartphones and tablet devices

You can find the three options on the [FBG](#) website.

Each format has one section for the five meal components in the CACFP meal pattern. Each section

Training on the Food Buying Guide

A variety of eLearning training modules and webinars are available to assist in understanding and using the FBG and all its features. Access all of these training resources and more at the [Food](#)



shows food item details for these four areas:

[Buying Guide: Training Resources](#) web page.

- Food As Purchased, AP (ex., fresh, frozen, canned, or dried)
- Purchase Unit (ex., pounds, ounces, #10 can)
- Servings per Purchase Unit, edible portion, EP
- Serving Size Per Meal Component

Putting the Food Buying Guide Into Practice

Let's see how to use the FBG with an example menu item, acorn squash, a fall food favorite. Below are images from the Food Buying Guide PDF, Interactive Web-Based Tool, and Mobile App for acorn squash. Notice all three images provide the same information in a slightly different format for cooked, drained, pared, and mashed acorn squash.

Food Buying Guide Example

Let's determine how much acorn squash you need to purchase if your program serves 100 3–5-year-old children at lunch.

The menu calls for cooked, drained, pared, mashed acorn squash at lunch, so you'll need 100 ¼-cup servings. (Per the [CACFP Meal Pattern](#), ¼ cup is the minimum serving size of vegetables for 3–5-year-olds). How much fresh acorn squash do you need to purchase?

Use the *Servings per Purchase Unit, EP*, to know how much a pound provides.

- 1 pound provides 4.70 ¼ cup servings

Since you need 100 servings, divide the total servings (100) by the servings/pound (4.70) to get how many pounds of acorn squash to purchase.

- $100 \text{ servings} \div 4.70 \text{ servings/pound} = 21.27 \text{ pounds}$
(round up to 21.30 pounds)
So, you need to purchase 21.3 pounds of fresh acorn squash to provide 100 ¼-cup servings.

Let's do a calculation if you only need 75 servings.

- $75 \text{ servings} \div 4.70 \text{ servings/pound} = 15.95 \text{ pounds}$
(round up to 16 pounds)

Food Buying Guide PDF

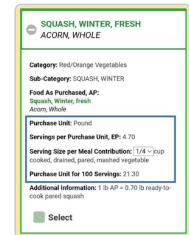
Section 2 - Vegetables			
1. Food As Purchased, AP	2. Purchase Unit	3. Servings per Purchase Unit, EP	4. Serving Size per Meal Contribution
Red/Orange Vegetables - SQUASH, WINTER			
Squash, Winter, fresh Acorn, Whole	Squash (~0.5 lb)	2.00	1/4 cup vegetable; 1/2 small squash baked in skin
	Whole Squash (~2.10 lb)	8.50	1/4 cup vegetable; baked squash flesh
	Pound	7.49	1/4 cup baked squash flesh (1/4 cup vegetable)
	Pound	4.70	1/4 cup cooked, drained, pared, mashed vegetable

Food Buying Guide Interactive Web Tool

Food As Purchased, AP	Purchase Unit	Servings per Purchase Unit, EP	Serving Size per Meal Contribution
Squash, Winter, fresh Acorn, Whole	Squash (~0.5 lb)	2.00	1/4 cup vegetable; 1/2 small squash baked in skin
Squash, Winter, fresh Acorn, Whole	Whole Squash (~2.10 lb)	8.50	1/4 cup vegetable; baked squash flesh
Squash, Winter, fresh Acorn, Whole	Pound	7.49	1/4 cup baked squash flesh (1/4 cup vegetable)
Squash, Winter, fresh Acorn, Whole	Pound	4.70	1/4 cup cooked, drained, pared, mashed vegetable

FBG Mobile App

So, you need to purchase 16 pounds of fresh acorn squash to provide 75 ¼-cup servings.



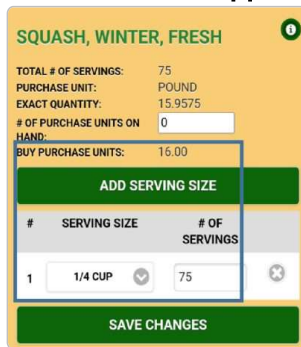
FBG Calculator

You can determine the amounts to purchase yourself (as explained in the examples above). Or with a mouse click or tap on a screen, the FBG Calculator will do the math for you!

The Interactive Web-Based Tool and Mobile App feature the FBG Calculator. On the Web-Based Tool, the FBG Calculator is on the Welcome page and on the Tools pull-down list. On the Mobile App, use the menu on the top right corner to open up tools and locate the FBG Calculator. Below are screen images of each tool using our 75 ¼-cup serving example.

In the FBG Calculator, you create a shopping list and add the food item(s). In our example, fresh acorn squash is cooked, drained, pared, and mashed. Enter the following information into the FBG Calculator:

FBG Mobile App



- SERVING SIZE: ¼ cup is selected
- # OF SERVINGS: 75 is entered

The FBG Calculator updates to show that you must purchase 16 pounds of fresh acorn squash to provide 75 ¼-cup servings.

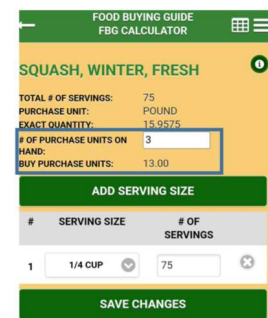
FBG Interactive Web Tool

Food Item Description	Purchase Unit	Number of Purchase Units on Hand	Number of Servings	Exact Quantity	Buy Purchase Units	Action
Squash, Winter, fresh Acorn Whole, 1/4 cup cooked, drained, pared, mashed vegetable	Pound	0	75	15.9575	16.00	Add Serving Size
		Serving Size	Number of Servings			
1	1/4 cup	75		Remove Serving Size		

Adjust for On-Hand Inventory

The FBG Calculator has an extra feature. You can enter the number of purchase units you have on hand, and the FBG Calculator shows how much more you need to buy.

In the screen image from the Mobile App, you can see that if 3 pounds of fresh acorn squash is on hand, then you must purchase 13 more pounds.



Calculate for Multiple Serving Sizes

Both versions of the FBG Calculator allow you to input multiple serving sizes if you want to calculate amounts for different age groups. The example below uses acorn squash for lunch. You need to know

the number of children you will serve per age group and the minimum serving sizes per age group from the [CACFP Meal Pattern](#). Use the information from the table to input into the FBG Calculator.

Age Groups	Number of Children	CACFP Meal Pattern Minimum Serving Sizes
1-2 year-olds	25	1/8 cup
3-5 year-olds	50	1/4 cup
6-12 year-olds	60	1/2 cup

SQUASH, WINTER, FRESH

TOTAL # OF SERVINGS: 135
 PURCHASE UNIT: POUND
 EXACT QUANTITY: 38.8299
 # OF PURCHASE UNITS ON HAND: 5
 BUY PURCHASE UNITS: 34.00

ADD SERVING SIZE

#	SERVING SIZE	# OF SERVINGS
1	1/8 CUP	25
2	1/4 CUP	50
3	1/2 CUP	60

SAVE CHANGES

1. Add each serving size ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
2. Type in the number of children to serve for each serving size (25, 50, 60)
3. Include any inventory on hand (5 pounds)

The FBG Calculator does the math for you. The amount to purchase is 34 pounds for this menu example.

The Food Buying Guide helps take the guesswork out of food purchasing decisions. The FBG Calculator makes quick work of calculations with just a couple clicks of your computer mouse or taps on your smart device. Put these helpful tools to work for your program!

Menu Ideas

The following menu ideas provide a variety of foods, colors, and textures appropriate for young children. Some recipes contain multiple meal components listed in parentheses after the recipe.

Breakfast



Scrambled Eggs
Roasted Potatoes
1% Milk

Lunch/Supper



Barbecue Beef Sliders
(Meat, Grain)
Mashed Acorn Squash
Sliced Kiwi
1% Milk

Snack



Baked Tofu Bites
Pineapple Tidbits
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.). *Baked tofu bites for ages 3–5*. <https://theicn.org/cnrb/ages-3-5/age-3-5-6-servings/baked-tofu-bites-usda-recipe-for-family-child-care-centers/>

Institute of Child Nutrition. (n.d.). *Barbecue beef sliders for ages 3–5*. <https://theicn.org/cnrb/ages-3-5/age-3-5-6-servings/barbecue-beef-sliders-usda-recipe-for-family-child-care-centers/>

Institute of Child Nutrition. (n.d.). *Child nutrition recipe box*. <https://theicn.org/cnrb/>

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Institute of Child Nutrition. (n.d.). *Food buying guide series*. iLearn <https://theicn.docebosaa.com/learn>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2022, March 01). *Food buying guide for child nutrition programs: Training resources*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-training-resources>

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