

# What Are Combination Foods?

And how do they fit into CACFP Menus?

This course is created for child care homes and centers and provides 1 hour of Nutrition Training. Wildwood CACFP 2024



COMBINATION FOODS are defined as foods that contain more than one whole food ingredient. Combination foods can be served at Breakfast, Lunch/Supper or Snack. In the image to the left, there are 3 combination foods: mixed fruit, a sandwich, and vegetable soup/stew. The maximum number of food components that can be claimed in a single combination food is 3.

Combination foods can be as simple as cereal with milk or as detailed as a fancy breakfast quiche. Combination foods come in two general types: those that contain only foods from the same food group, as seen in the fruit salad above, and those that contain foods from more than one food group, as seen in the sandwich above. The fruit salad shown above credits as a fruit component because it includes only fruit (grapes, berries, melon, pineapple). The sandwich may credit toward the bread/grain, meat/meat alternate and vegetable components, depending on the amount of each ingredient.

The key to mastering combination foods is measuring the individual ingredients to ensure a sufficient amount of each food component is included in the meal for every child claimed. In the meal pictured above, the vegetables on the sandwich may not be enough to count as the entire vegetable component, which helps to explain why the vegetable soup/stew was added as a side dish. By serving the sandwich and the soup, the provider can be certain that each child gets a full serving of veggies to meet the minimum requirement for the Child and Adult Care Food program (CACFP) Meal Pattern.

## To Count Toward CACFP Reimbursement:

- Each food item on the menu must be present in at least the minimum amount for the age of the child. This includes combination foods. Minimum portion sizes are listed in the meal pattern chart included with this training.
- Each food item on the menu must be recognizable in the original form, not hidden or disguised. If a food item is hidden within a recipe and listed on the menu, at least half of the minimum portion of that food item must be served on the side as a recognizable item. Consider Cauliflower Mac-and-Cheese. When hiding cauliflower in a pasta dish, the provider may leave the cauliflower off the menu altogether and instead serve a different, additional vegetable to count toward the vegetable component of the meal, or the provider may serve  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the minimum portion of cauliflower separate from the combined dish so that the children learn to recognize the food and know what they are eating.
- Recipes for scratch-made combination foods must be on-file at the home/center for review by Licensing, USDA, CACFP State office and/or Wildwood staff.

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- Child Nutrition Labels (CN Labels) for store-bought combination foods must be on file at the home/center for review by Licensing, USDA, CACFP State office and/or Wildwood staff.
- Several items from the same food group may add up to the minimum amount needed. (examples: several types of fruit = mixed fruit OR vegetable soup & lettuce/tomato on a sandwich = mixed vegetables)

Note: Ingredients smaller than the minimum requirement should not be included on the menu (for example, onions or other flavorful veggies used in small amounts).



## Combination Foods at Breakfast Might Include:

- Ready-to-eat cereal with milk and/or fruit
- Oatmeal with fruit mixed in
- Yogurt with fruit and/or granola
- Fruit and/or vegetable smoothie with milk or yogurt
- Breakfast sandwich: English muffin/bagel, egg/cheese/ham
- Scrambled eggs or omelet: eggs/cheese/meat, vegetables
- Pancakes or waffles with berries and/or yogurt
- Breakfast casserole: eggs/cheese/meat, hashbrowns, vegetables

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## Combination Foods at Lunch/Supper Might Include:

- Grilled or cold sandwiches or wraps: grain, meat/cheese, vegetable
- Soups, stews, chili: vegetables, pasta/rice/barley, beans/meat/cheese
- Burgers: meat/cheese, bun/bread, vegetables
- Tacos/Burritos: meat/cheese/beans, vegetables, tortilla/shell
- Spaghetti/Lasagna: pasta, meat/cheese, vegetable (sauce)
- Pizza: crust, meat/cheese, vegetables (sauce does not credit)
- Rice & Beans: rice, beans, vegetables
- Casserole: rice/pasta, meat/cheese, vegetables
- Salads made from a combination of fruit and/or vegetables.



## When it Comes to Snack, the Combinations Are Endless!

Snacks include any two food items from two different food groups that are served in the appropriate portion for the age of the child. The entire Snack could be a combination food like yogurt and granola, or one of the Snack components could be a combination food like mixed fruit.

## Special Considerations:

Keep in mind that many condiments are not creditable and should not be listed on the menu. A few common condiments, which are NOT creditable, are listed below:

Cream cheese

Jam or jelly

Fruit preserves

Whipped cream

Marshmallows

Maple syrup

Ketchup

Mustard

Pickle relish

Mayonnaise

Cheese sauce

Ranch dressing

Fruit flavored syrup

Barbeque sauce

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## Watch Out For Non-Creditable Combination Foods

Most store-bought combination foods, like those listed below, don't meet CACFP standards and should not be included on menus. Even though these foods may be prepared or cooked on-site, they require special documentation because they are commercially manufactured. Talk to your field representative or site monitor to help determine which items are creditable and which are not.



- Chicken Nuggets, Fish Sticks, Corndogs, Meatballs, Hot Dogs
- Macaroni & Cheese
- Canned SpaghettiOs or Ravioli
- Frozen Entrees: lasagna, fettuccine, pizza, burritos
- Jell-O or Marshmallow-type fruit salad



Note: Store-bought combination foods may credit for reimbursement only if the current Child Nutrition (CN) Label for the exact product being served is on file. Additional training is available regarding Child Nutrition (CN) Labels and Product Formulation Statements (PFS).



## Scratch-Made vs. Store-Bought

- Scratch-made (home-made) combination foods are made in the home or center from individual ingredients. Because you control the ingredients and measure each food item, scratch-made items may meet minimum portion requirements for CACFP Meal patterns.
- Store-bought combination foods are purchased from retail stores or commercial vendors and CANNOT be used to meet CACFP patterns without special documentation.
- Responsibility for keeping recipes and CN Labels on file falls to the provider.

Note: Heating/cooking a store-bought item is not the same as following a recipe and making the item from scratch.

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## CACFP MEAL PATTERNS

### BREAKFAST

Serve Milk, Vegetable or Fruit, Grain\*

COMPONENT	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18	ADULTS
Milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup	1 cup
Vegetable, Fruit or Both	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Grain*	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq

\* Meat and meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week.  
oz eq = ounce equivalents

### LUNCH / SUPPER

Serve All Five Components

COMPONENT	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18	ADULTS
Milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup	1 cup*
Vegetable	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Fruit	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Meat/Meat Alternate	1 oz	1 1/2 oz	2 oz	2 oz
Grain	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq

\* A serving of milk is not required at supper meals for adults.  
oz eq = ounce equivalents

### SNACK

Select Two of the Five Components

COMPONENT	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18	ADULTS
Milk	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1 cup	1 cup
Vegetable	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1/2 cup
Fruit	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1/2 cup
Meat/Meat Alternate	1/2 oz	1/2 oz	1 oz	1 oz
Grain	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq

oz eq = ounce equivalents

Refer to USDA FNS Exhibit A for further guidance on grain serving sizes.



Fluid Milk



Vegetable



Fruit



Meat/Meat Alternate



Grain



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After reviewing the course content, click [HERE](#) to take the online test.  
(or you can type this address into your browser: <https://forms.gle/6x3LyaT5HGRvmf6g6>)

Read and complete each question carefully to ensure an accurate certificate.

Thank you for choosing us for your training needs

Wildwood CACFP

...for those who care for children

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