

MEAL QUALITY ARIZONA

Food plays an important role in child development. This document represents requirements and best practices for developing menus and providing meals that support healthy growth and development.

MEAL Quality means all foods are in nutrient-dense forms, lean or low fat, and prepared without added fats, sugars, or salt.

MENU Quality means there is variety across the week and the day.



Nutrition requirements for licensing are closely aligned to the CACFP meal pattern requirements. Providers must serve the required snacks and meals based on hours and time of attendance.

There are **5** components



GRAINS



FLUID MILK



MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES
(M/MA)



VEGETABLES



FRUIT

BREAKFAST

Required

- GRAINS
- FRUIT
- FLUID MILK

Optional Substitutions

- MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES INSTEAD OF GRAIN
- VEGETABLES INSTEAD OF FRUIT

LUNCH/SUPPER

Required

- GRAINS
- MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES
- FRUIT
- VEGETABLES
- FLUID MILK

Optional Substitutions

- SECOND VEGETABLE INSTEAD OF FRUIT

SNACKS

Required Pick 2

- GRAINS
- MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES
- FRUIT
- VEGETABLES
- FLUID MILK

Important Notes

Licensing allows meat/meat alternate to substitute for the grain at any meal/snack up to 3x per week.

CACFP allows meat/meat alternate to substitute for the grain at breakfast only up to 3x per week.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

BEST PRACTICE *Encourages* VARIETY

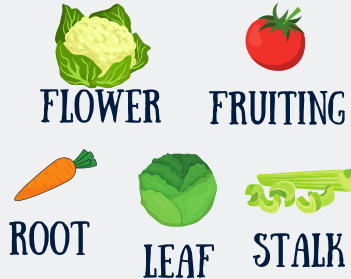
Serve a vegetable at least 2 times per day.



COLOR

DRIED RAW BAKED
BROILED CANNED
MASHED FROZEN STEAMED

PREPARATION



TYPE

JUICY SOFT CRISP
TART SWEET
UMAMI BLAND CRUNCHY















FLAVOR AND TEXTURE



Juice can be served as the fruit component. There are minimum and maximum amounts that can be served.

AMOUNT PER AGE

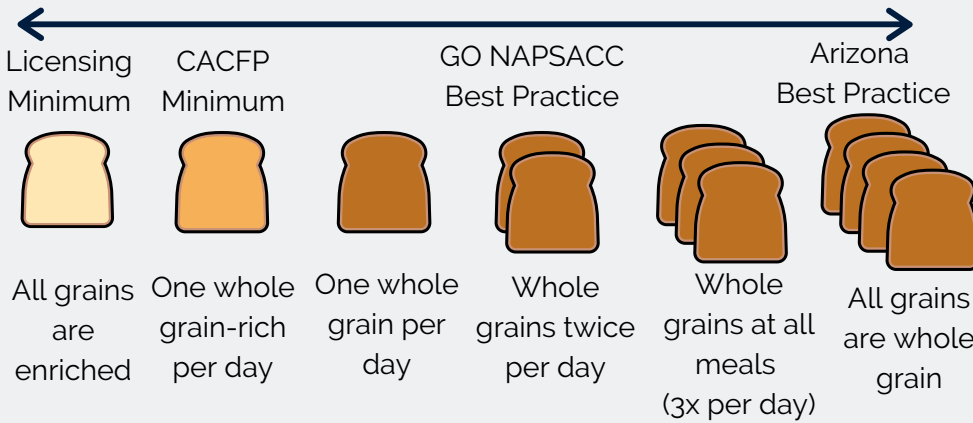
Maximum Frequency

	M	T	W	TH	F
LICENSING Maximum 1x per day					
CACFP Maximum 1x per day					
EMPOWER 2x per week or less					
GO NAPSACC 2 times per week					
AZ BEST PRACTICE	JUICE IS NOT SERVED.				

GRAINS



THE CONTINUUM OF GRAINS



WHOLE GRAIN

Whole grain foods are made with all three parts of the grain; **Germ Endosperm Bran**

VS

Whole grain-rich means the majority of the grains used are whole, and the remaining grains are enriched.

WHOLE GRAIN RICH

BEST PRACTICE Encourages:

- Serving a variety of grains like rice, oatmeal, pasta, crackers, bread and tortillas.
- Serving whole grains as often as possible.

MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATES



BEST PRACTICE Encourages:

- Serving only natural, low-fat or reduced fat cheeses.

LIMITING use of processed meats, like deli meats or hotdogs, to no more than once a week.

- Serving lean, and high quality meats as often as possible.

Yogurt must be within the allowable sugar limits if participating in CACFP.

EXAMPLES OF



MEAT ALTERNATES

FLUID MILK



Whole milk is required for 1 year olds.

Low fat or fat free milk is required for children ages 2 and older.

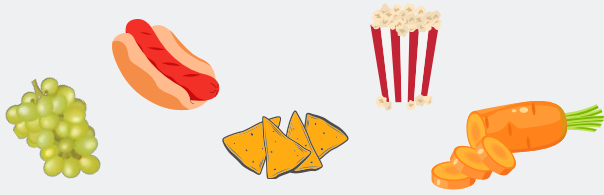
Flavored milk can only be served to children ages 6 and older.

BEST PRACTICE Encourages LIMITING THE USE OF FLAVORED MILK.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Choking Risks Foods that are round, hard, thick, sticky, or slippery are common choking hazards. Modify these types of foods based on children's ages and developmental abilities.

EXAMPLES



CHANGE THE SHAPE AND TEXTURE!

Cook hard foods to soften them.

Infants- Cut to 1/4" pieces

Toddlers- Cut to 1/2" pieces



Special Situations In the case of special dietary needs or unexpected menu adjustments, you must document substitutions and modifications according to regulatory requirements.

MENU SUBSTITUTIONS are menu changes for all children, within the same component.

EXAMPLES:

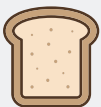
Fruit



Fruit



Grain



Grain



Changes to the menu can be made at any time. Changes and substitutions must be within the same component to ensure meals and snacks meet the requirements.

MENU MODIFICATIONS are individual accommodations for special dietary needs.

EXAMPLES:

No Dairy



Soy Milk



No Gluten



Rice



Modifications for special dietary needs must be accommodated to ensure participant safety. Modified meals can be claimed under CACFP when appropriate documentation is on file.

This document contains shared meal quality guidance for regulatory requirements and best practices and was developed as a collaboration between the following organizations:



The above organizations would like to thank the Arizona Early Childhood Education Association for contributing provider feedback.