

Crediting Combination Foods

Contractors must ensure acceptable documentation is maintained for combination food products such as pizza, chicken nuggets, macaroni and cheese, and sloppy joes. If the combination food is purchased from an outside food source such as a food distributor, grocery store, or caterer; a Child Nutrition (CN) Label or Product Formulation Statement (PFS) must be on file to serve the food as part of a reimbursable meal. If the combination food is made on-site, a standardized recipe must be on file.

Required Documentation:

Documentation is required to show that the combination food has sufficient quantities of meat/meat alternate (M/MA), grains, vegetables, and/or fruit to meet the meal pattern. Otherwise, it may not be counted towards a reimbursable meal.

There are three forms of acceptable documentation:

- Child Nutrition (CN) Labels
- Product Formulation Statements (PFS)
- Standardized Recipes

CN Labels:

A valid CN Label on a product communicates how the product contributes to USDA meal pattern requirements. Validity of CN Labels can be verified at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/usdausdc-authorized-labels-and-manufacturers>.

- 1) Contractors must maintain original CN Label logo and crediting statement, or a photocopy or photograph of the original CN Label. Photocopies or photographs must be attached to the original product carton. Photocopies or photographs must be visible and legible.
- 2) A CN label with a watermark may be used when the CN logo and contribution statement are used on product information other than the actual product carton and is presented as a separate document.
- 3) If the original CN Label, or the valid photograph or photocopy of the original CN Label is not available, contractors may provide the Bill of Lading (invoice) containing the product name and:
 - A hard or electronic copy of the CN Label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor.

Product Formulation Statements (PFS):

If a valid CN Label is not available, the contractor must obtain a PFS.

- 1) PFS must be on signed letterhead that demonstrates how the processed product contributes to the meal pattern requirements.
- 2) Templates for documenting meal components are available on the FNS website at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/food-manufacturersindustry>.
- 3) PFS may be modified for various products contributing to more than one meal component. The crediting information for each meal component may be documented on the same PFS.
- 4) Creditable ingredients listed in the PFS must match a description in the **Food Buying Guide*** for Child Nutrition Programs available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>.
- 5) PFS should verify that the product's contribution to the meal pattern requirements is not greater than the serving size of the product (i.e., a 2.15 ounce beef patty may not credit more than 2.00 ounce M/MA).
- 6) PFS should assure that the creditable components are in the finished product.

Crediting Combination Foods, *continued*

Standardized Recipes:

Standardized Recipes are recipes that have been carefully adapted and tested to ensure they will produce a consistent product every time they are used. USDA-created standardized recipes can be found at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/usda-standardized-recipe>. A standardized recipe will help ensure that the best possible food items are produced every time and shall include the following:

- Recipe title, category (main dish, vegetable, soup/salad)
- Ingredients, weight and volume
- Preparation instructions, cooking temperature
- Serving size, recipe yield
- Cooking and serving equipment

***Food Buying Guide:**

The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs has all the current information in one manual to help you and your purchasing staff:

- Buy the right amount of food and the appropriate type of food for your program(s)
- Determine the specific contribution each food makes toward the meal pattern requirements