

Tips for Feeding a Vegetarian on the Child Care Food Program (CCFP)

Vegetarian meals and snacks for children can meet the CCFP Meal Pattern requirements with some planning. By making substitutions to the regular menu where necessary, vegetarian children can be accommodated within the CCFP Meal Pattern requirements. The more foods that are excluded from the vegetarian diet, the more substitutions are required.

Types of Vegetarian Diets

Most vegetarian diets will fall into one of the following categories:

- Semi-vegetarian (sometimes called “flexitarian”) is the least restrictive. Semi-vegetarians eat mostly a plant-based diet, along with milk, milk products, eggs, and occasionally small amounts of chicken and/or fish.
- Lacto-ovo-vegetarians eat a plant-based diet, along with milk, milk products, and eggs. Legumes (dry beans, peas, and lentils), soy products, nuts, and seeds are eaten for protein instead of animal sources.
- Lacto-vegetarians include milk and milk products in their diet, as well as all plant-based foods.
- Ovo-vegetarians include eggs in their diet, as well as all plant-based foods.
- Vegan is the most restrictive of all vegetarian diets and includes only plant-based foods.

General Guidelines for Meeting CCFP Meal Pattern Requirements

All types of vegetarians will eat foods from the Vegetables, Fruits, and Grains components. Only the Fluid Milk component and Meat/Meat alternate component may need adjustment for vegetarian meals.

For vegetarian children who do not drink milk, CCFP allows non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk to be served, with a note from the child’s parent or guardian or medical provider. See the **Milk Substitutions & Creditable Milks in the Florida CCFP** list on the CCFP website for more information.

Although meat, poultry, and fish are omitted from most vegetarian diets, legumes (cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils), certain soy products, nuts and their butters, and seeds may be substituted to meet the meat/meat alternate requirement in the CCFP meal pattern. In addition, many vegetarian children will also eat cheese, eggs, and yogurt.

Nuts and seeds may fulfill no more than one-half of the meat/meat alternate requirement for lunch/supper. Children under four years of age are at high risk of choking. Nuts and seeds should be ground or finely chopped in meal preparation and nut/seed butters should be spread thinly.

Alternate protein products (APP) are processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources. APP may be used alone or in combination with other food ingredients to fulfill the meat/meat alternate component. All APP require CN labels or manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statements (PFS) to document that they have the proper protein levels by weight and digestibility. Tofu and soy yogurt are creditable for children ages one and older.

Menu Planning for Vegetarian Meals

Breakfasts are the easiest to plan for vegetarian diets since only three components are required: Fluid Milk, Vegetables/Fruits, and Grains. No substitutions are necessary except for those children who do not drink milk. Refer to the **Approved Milk Substitution List for Children Ages 1 and Older** on the CCFP website for more information.

Snacks are also fairly easy to plan for vegetarian diets since only two of the five components (Fluid Milk, Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, and Meat/Meat Alternate) are required to be served. For those snacks that include the Meat/Meat Alternate component, there are plenty of options that don't include meat. Refer to the section below on **Snack Ideas for Vegetarians** for suggestions.

Lunch/Suppers require the most planning for vegetarian diets since all five components are required: Fluid Milk, Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, and Meat/Meat Alternates. However, the **USDA Recipes for Child Care** (<https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>) offer over 100 vegetarian recipes that can be used for main dish items for lunch/supper to meet the CCFP meal pattern requirements. Refer to the section below on **Vegetarian Lunch/Supper Cycle Menus** for 6 weeks of menu ideas standardized recipes from the What's Cooking website.

Snack Ideas for Vegetarians

There are many ways to incorporate meat alternatives into snacks for vegetarian children. The following provide a few snack ideas with child appeal to get started. The portion sizes indicated below are for children ages 3-5. Adjust portion sizes according to the CCFP Meal Pattern requirements for children who are younger or older.

2 oz lowfat yogurt served with:

Any type of grain, such as ½ oz graham crackers or sprinkled with ⅓ cup oat cereal

Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup diced apricots; or make a fruit kebob with ¼ cup sliced strawberries and ¼ cup grapes cut in half; or make a parfait by layering with ½ cup mixed fruit and 1 Tablespoon of granola

¾ cup Yogurt Fruit Dip (USDA Recipe G-04) served with:

Any type of cut fresh fruit, such as ½ cup fresh apple slices or ½ cup fresh banana slices

½ oz cheddar cheese served with:

Any type of grain, such as ½ toasted mini bagel; or ½ oz whole wheat crackers; or melted on ½ whole wheat pita pocket

Any type of vegetable, such as ½ cup lightly steamed carrots and broccoli or ½ cup carrot and celery sticks

Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup apple slices or ½ cup pear slices

½ oz mozzarella cheese served with:

Any type of grain bread, such as melted onto ½ toasted English muffin with 2 Tablespoons of tomato sauce for a mini-pizza

1 oz lowfat cottage cheese served with:

Any type of grain, such as ½ oz graham crackers or ½ oz whole wheat crackers

Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup pineapple tidbits or ½ cup of diced peaches

1 Tbsp peanut butter served with:

Any type of grain, such as ½ slice whole wheat bread or ½ oz pretzels for dipping

Any type of fruit/vegetable, such as ½ cup apple slices; or ½ cup celery sticks; or spread on a banana half and sprinkled with 1 Tablespoon of granola

½ hard boiled egg served with:

Any type of grain, such as ½ slice toasted whole wheat bread or ½ toasted bagel

Any type of fruit, such as ½ cup fresh orange sections or ½ cup Carrot-Raisin Salad (USDA Recipe E-05)

¼ cup pureed black beans served with:

Any type of grain, such as ½ oz toasted whole wheat pita bread or spread on ½ oz toasted tortilla triangles with 2 Tablespoons salsa

Vegetarian Lunch/Supper Cycle Menus

Refer to Child Care Food Program Meal Pattern for Children when planning portion sizes for different age groups (portion sizes for main dishes below are for 3-5 year olds, all milk served is plain 1%.) Recipe name and numbers in bold refer to recipes in the USDA Recipes for Child Care, available on the web at: <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>

Week One	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>2 pieces Cheese Ribbon Sandwich F-05 (1 oz meat alternate, 1 bread) Peas and carrots Fresh apples slices with lowfat yogurt Milk</p>	<p>1 slice Spanish Quiche D-08A (1½ oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable, 2 bread) Steamed broccoli Tropical fruit salad Milk</p>	<p>1 Black Bean Mini Pizza on ½ wholegrain English muffin (made with ¼ cup black beans and 1 oz cheese) Shredded lettuce and chopped tomatoes Orange sections Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Macaroni and Cheese D-20 (1½ oz meat alternate, 1½ bread) Steamed spinach Pear slices Milk</p>	<p>½ cup Pasta Toss with Vegetables D-14 (¾ oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable, ½ bread) Whole wheat roll Apricot halves with lowfat yogurt Milk</p>
Week Two	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>½ cup Bean Soup H-08 topped with ½ oz shredded cheddar cheese (1½ oz meat alternate, ⅛ cup vegetable) Whole grain crackers Diced peaches Milk</p>	<p>½ Banana-Peanut Butter Sandwich F-03A (1 oz meat alternate, ⅛ cup fruit, 1 bread) Steamed carrots Strawberries with lowfat yogurt Milk</p>	<p>¼ cup Refried Beans I-13 (1 oz meat alternate) Baked tortilla wedges Mexicali Corn I-15 Pear slices with cheese Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Pizza with Cheese Topping D-23A (1½ oz meat alternate, ⅛ cup vegetable, 1½ bread) Steamed broccoli Pineapple wedges Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Spanish Broccoli Frittata J-8 (1 oz meat alternate, ½ cup vegetable) Whole wheat toast Apple slices with Peanut Butter Dip G-01 Milk</p>
Week Three	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>Black Bean Quesadilla (made with ½ tortilla, ¼ cup black beans, and 1 oz cheddar cheese) Corn Fruit Salad Milk</p>	<p>1 slice Broccoli Quiche D-08 (1½ oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable, 2 bread) Mixed Greens Salad Grape halves Milk</p>	<p>½ Toasted Cheese and Tomato Sandwich F-09 (1 oz meat alternate, ⅛ cup vegetable, 1 bread) Mixed vegetables Fresh plum Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Baked Scrambled Eggs D-15 (2 oz. meat alternate) Whole wheat pita wedges Steamed spinach Peaches with yogurt Milk</p>	<p>1/2 cup Lentil Soup H-07 topped with ½ oz. cheese (1 oz meat alternate, ¼ cup vegetable) Cornbread Green beans Baked apple with cinnamon Milk</p>

Week Four	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Vegetable Chili D-26 (2 oz meat alternate, $\frac{3}{8}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{4}$ bread)</p> <p>Corn Muffin Square A-02A Fresh pears Milk</p>	<p>2 pieces Mexican Pizza D-13 ($1\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{2}$ bread) Whole wheat crackers Green salad with 1 Tbsp lowfat salad dressing Milk</p>	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ Peanut Butter and Jam Sandwich on whole wheat bread (made with 1 Tbsp peanut butter) Peas and carrots Apple slices with cheese Milk</p>	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Broccoli Cheese Soup H-05 ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable) Whole wheat pita bread with 3 Tbsp hummus Peach slices Milk</p>	<p>1 Bean Burrito D-21A (2 oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable, 1 bread) Celery sticks Tropical fruit salad Milk</p>
Week Five	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>1 English Muffin Pizza (made with $\frac{1}{2}$ whole-grain English muffin, 1 oz mozzarella cheese, and 2 Tbsp tomato sauce) Three Bean Salad E-04 Mixed berries with yogurt Milk</p>	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Split Pea Soup H-02 topped with $\frac{1}{2}$ oz shredded mozzarella cheese ($1\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{4}$ bread) Wheat crackers Steamed carrots Grape halves Milk</p>	<p>2 Bean Tacos D-24A (2 oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable, 1 bread) Plantains Fresh orange slices Milk</p>	<p>1 Toasted Cheese Sandwich F-13 (2 oz meat alternate, 2 bread) Green beans Fruit salad Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Vegetable Frittata D-01 ($1\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable) Whole wheat roll Banana slices Milk</p>
Week Six	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	<p>$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Multi-Bean Soup H-04 ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{8}$ cup vegetable) Whole wheat roll Apple slices with Peanut Butter Dip G-01 Milk</p>	<p>Cheese Quesadilla (made with 1 tortilla and 2 oz cheddar cheese) Black beans Corn Orange sections Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Vegetable Lasagna D-27 ($1\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{3}{4}$ bread) Whole grain crackers Mixed fruit Milk</p>	<p>1 piece Corn Pudding I-11 ($\frac{1}{2}$ oz meat alternate, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable, $\frac{1}{4}$ slice bread) Pinto beans Brown rice Pineapple slices Milk</p>	<p>1 Egg Salad Sandwich F-10 (2 oz meat alternate, 2 bread) Stir-Fry Vegetables I-10 Grape halves Milk</p>