

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Grain-Based Desserts

What are grain-based desserts?

Grain-based desserts are identified by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* as sources of added sugars and saturated fats. Foods such as cookies, sweet pie crusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, toaster pastries, cakes, and brownies are considered grain-based desserts and are not creditable in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). If you serve them, the entire meal may not be reimbursable. As a result, meal planners need to be prepared to determine what food items qualify as grain-based desserts.



Grain-based desserts are not creditable in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Why did the USDA make the change regarding grain-based desserts?

In 2017, USDA stopped crediting grain-based desserts as these products contain high amounts of added sugar and fat and very few nutrients. Diets high in added sugar can contribute to health problems, including obesity and type 2 diabetes. The goal is to help children create healthy eating habits by eliminating or reducing grain-based desserts.

How can you determine what qualifies as a grain-based dessert?

There is no set amount of sugar or fat that labels a product a grain-based dessert. Use common knowledge of the product when planning. Grain-based desserts are those items with a footnote 3 or 4 in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs Exhibit A. These items are also shaded red for ease of visibility. When planning your menu, ask yourself a few questions. Is the food item iced or dessert-flavored (chocolate, caramel, butterscotch, etc.)? Does it contain custard filling or candy? Is it in the shape of a cookie or packaged like a dessert? If so, it is not creditable.



What can you serve instead?

The goal is to provide [healthy and nutritious alternatives](#) for children in your care.

- For breakfast, instead of donuts or cereal bars, try serving whole grain pancakes or waffles, topped with bananas or other sliced fruit, or oatmeal topped with diced apples.
- For lunch, rather than serving granola or sweet pastries, serve whole wheat bread or whole wheat pasta.
- For snacks, instead of cookies, serve whole grain tortilla chips and salsa or whole wheat crackers and peanut butter.
- Of course, for celebrations or special occasions, grain-based desserts are allowed; just know they will not be reimbursed.

For a complete list of grain-based desserts and whole grain-rich options, [see this chart from the USDA](#).

Healthy Habits

As always, it is important to keep up healthy habits, and COVID-19 reminds us of how necessary it is to practice healthy hygiene behaviors. Here are a few [tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) for healthy and safe food preparation and meal service.

- Serve meals in classrooms instead of a cafeteria or group dining room.
- Plate each child's meal separately so that children are not using the same serving utensils.
- Separate duties so that staff members who prepare food do not diaper children, and vice versa.
- Designate one sink that is used only for food preparation.
- Wash hands before preparing food and after helping children eat.
- Ensure that children wash their hands before and immediately after eating.



References

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This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds.
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Suggested Reference Citation:
Institute of Child Nutrition. (2020). *Mealtime memo for child care: Grain-based desserts*. University, MS: Author.

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07/01/2020

