

# GRAB AND GO LESSON

## Benefits for Using Standardized Recipes in the CACFP

### Nutrition and Meal Management

**Purpose:** This handout provides three benefits for using standardized recipes in the CACFP.

Did you know that using a standardized recipe can help you meet the meal pattern requirements? A standardized recipe has been tried, tested, and evaluated for use in specific settings. Child care settings are a great place for operators to incorporate standardized recipes for three key benefits: crediting information, portions and budget, and accountability.

### Crediting Information

A standardized recipe can provide crediting information for serving meals to children that align with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements. For example, a child care operator prepares a baked chicken casserole. This dish features a grain, a meat, and a vegetable. Without a standardized recipe, it may be difficult to know how much to serve to meet the CACFP requirements.

Using a standardized recipe removes the guesswork for preparing meals. Particularly, USDA's standardized recipes for the CACFP have been tried, tested, and evaluated to guarantee that it will produce the same amount and quality each time. Each recipe lists the types of ingredients (fresh, frozen, etc.), the amount of each ingredient (weights and measures), and how to prepare the recipe. In addition to providing portions and crediting, this allows for planning menus and purchasing ingredients more efficiently.

### Portions and Budget

Standardized recipes can be used to expand the variety and flavors in your daily menu offerings. At the same time, the portions and meal pattern components are already calculated. This will ensure that each child is getting proper nutrition and that meals can be reviewed and approved when a State agency conducts an audit.

For example, a cook needs to portion out a serving of the Mediterranean Tuna Salad standardized recipe for 3–5-year-olds. The recipe indicates the amount for one portion of a grain/bread, a meat/meat alternate, and a vegetable. Following, the cook would need to include an additional vegetable or a fruit, along with the age-appropriate milk, to meet the meal pattern for lunch.

Standardized recipes help plan proper portions to be served and stay within a budget by reducing food waste. These types of recipes are very specific, which is helpful when creating a shopping list. The ingredients are already measured and listed, making it easier to determine how much will need to be purchased. This gives child care settings an advantage. When the exact amounts are identified, it is less likely they would not have enough of a product. It also helps in controlling the amount of food waste by not preparing too much and helps control food costs by not overbuying.

# GRAB AND GO LESSON

## Benefits for Using Standardized Recipes in the CACFP

### Nutrition and Meal Management

#### Accountability

To follow CACFP guidelines when preparing recipes, all children should be receiving the same meal components at all mealtimes. Standardized recipes are a reliable way to prove that this regulation is being met when a State agency conducts an audit. An auditor will typically ask for standardized recipe documentation.

For a variety of standardized recipes, refer to the Institute of Child Nutrition's Child Nutrition Recipe Box website (<https://theicn.org/cnrb/>). These recipes have been tried in a controlled setting, tested using specific tools in a kitchen environment, and evaluated so that the final products always give the same quality and quantity and credit towards the CACFP meal pattern.

#### References

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2018, January 1). *Food buying guide for child nutrition programs*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2020, May 22). *Team nutrition recipes*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition-recipes>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2016). *Child and adult meals*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2016). *Child meal pattern*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Standardized recipes*. <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/program-requirements/menu-planning/standardized-recipes>

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA employer.

For more information and the nondiscrimination statement in other languages:  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/fns-nondiscrimination-statement>

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2021). *Grab and go lesson: Benefits for using standardized recipes for CACFP*. University, MS: Author.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by the University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The University cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images. Please contact [helpdesk@theicn.org](mailto:helpdesk@theicn.org) for more information.