

GRAB AND GO LESSON

Defining Tofu and How It Credits in the CACFP

Nutrition and Meal Management

Purpose: This handout provides an overview of the basic types of tofu, how it credits in the CACFP, and some recipe ideas for planning menus.

Have you tried tofu in your menus? Tofu (or bean curd) is made from soybean, water, and a curdling agent called coagulant. It is prepared by coagulating condensed soy milk and then pressing the resulting curds into solid white blocks of varying softness. Tofu is widely used because of its sponge-like ability to take on the flavors of other ingredients. It is a great source of protein as it contains all essential amino acids and other essential vitamins and minerals that support good health.

Types of Tofu

There are several types of tofu, such as the following:

- Silken tofu is silky, creamy, and has the highest water content. Silken tofu looks like very thick yogurt and can be used as a thick cream, fresh cream cheese, or used in cheesecakes and dips.
- Soft tofu is similar to silken tofu but has a little firmer texture. It is a great substitute for soft cheese and protein in smoothies.
- Firm tofu is compact and is often packaged soaked in liquid. It is extremely versatile and can be chopped or crumbled to use in place of meat. It is often used in stir fries and stews as a filling or used to make spreads. Be sure to fully dry firm tofu before cooking, to ensure it absorbs the marinade and splatters less in the pan.
- Extra firm tofu has less water than firm tofu, which allows it to be pan-fried. It can be prepared much the same as firm tofu but has a firmer texture.

In the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), firm tofu and extra firm tofu are the only creditable types.

Creditable Types of Tofu

There are three additional requirements for serving creditable tofu in the CACFP:

- Choose commercially prepared tofu in which the basic ingredients are whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water.
- Select firm or extra firm tofu that features at least 5 grams of protein for a 2.2-ounce (1/4 cup) serving, which is creditable as 1.0-ounce equivalent meat alternate. This information is not found on the Nutrition Facts label; therefore, the best way to identify creditable tofu products is to select products with a Child Nutrition Label.
- Serve tofu that is easily recognizable as a meat substitute. For example, preparing tofu chunks in a stir-fry or using tofu in place of eggs for a morning scramble. It is important to note that when serving tofu, it cannot mimic another food component. In addition, it is not creditable if the food is blended into a recipe and not easily recognized as a meat substitute.

Other creditable soy products include tempeh, soy yogurt (must contain less than 23 grams of sugar for a 6-ounce serving), and some processed soy products with a Child Nutrition (CN) Label. For additional information on meeting the CACFP requirements for serving tofu and other soy products, refer to the policy memo, SP 53-2016, CACFP 21-2016: Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

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Using Tofu

A good practice is to use tofu occasionally to add variety in menu planning. For example, feature it once a week on the menu as a meat alternate. Since tofu is versatile, there are countless ways to use it.

When preparing tofu, it is best to begin by removing it from the packaging and rinsing it. Wrap the tofu in a paper towel, place it between two plates, and apply slight pressure to remove some of the excess water. It is then ready to be cut into slices, strips, cubes, or crumbles. As previously mentioned, tofu has minimal flavor on its own; it can be marinated, grilled, baked, and more.

Consider these tofu recipes as you begin to incorporate it in your menus:

- Sautéed Tofu and Broccoli – Multicultural: www.theicn.org/cnr/resources/595/main-dishes/111581/sauteed-tofu-and-broccoli-multicultural-3.pdf
- Chinese-Style Vegetables with Tofu: www.theicn.org/cnr/resources/588/center/111442/chinese-style-vegetables-with-tofu.pdf
- Spring Rolls: www.theicn.org/cnr/resources/591/vegetables/111688/spring-rolls.pdf

There are a variety of ways to use tofu as a creditable meat alternate in the CACFP setting. Knowing how to use tofu as a meat replacement and as a regular meat alternate will be sure to add variety to your existing menus. It is important to remember that tofu is not part of the infant meal pattern and can only be used in the child and adult meal patterns of CACFP.

References

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

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Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2021). *Grab and go lesson: Defining tofu and how it credits in the CACFP*. University, MS: Author.

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