

May 2026

# CACFP MONTHLY UPDATE

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# Thank You

## **Thank You for Joining Us at the CACFP Annual Training!**

Thank you to everyone who attended the CACFP Annual Training in Brewer on April 28, 2026. We appreciate you taking the time to join us and help make this year's training a success. We received a lot of positive feedback on the sessions and are glad to hear that participants found the training informative and valuable.

If you have additional feedback, we encourage you to complete our post-training survey here: <https://forms.office.com/g/Kt6f5LQHPv> Your input helps us continue improving future trainings and resources.

Also, if you had a question you meant to ask during training—or thought of one afterward—we'd still love to hear from you. Please submit your questions here: <https://forms.office.com/g/YHW3as6UjS> We will compile all submitted questions and provide answers in the next CACFP Monthly Update so everyone can benefit from the information.

Thank you again for your participation and for your continued commitment to CACFP. We look forward to staying connected throughout the year.



# March

# Claim Submission

**June 1, 2026** is the last day to submit  
your **March 2026** claim

*We strongly encourage you to submit claims as early as possible and not wait until the last minute. Planning ahead allows time to address any questions or issues that may arise, especially considering the two-step claim approval process.*

# CACFP Open Office Hours

## **Need Help with CACFP? We're Here for You!**

Have questions about your CACFP budget, sponsor or provider agreements, provider sheets, or other program requirements?

Join our monthly CACFP Office Hours from 2:00–3:00 p.m. on Microsoft Teams.

During this open session, CACFP staff will be available to answer your questions, provide technical assistance, and offer guidance to support your program's success!

May 11, 2026

June 8, 2026

[Use this link to join the CACFP Open Office Hours](#)

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## Maine CACFP Sponsors

### Interest in Independent Association Development

The Maine CACFP Team is not establishing or leading a CACFP Sponsors Association. We are, however, collecting information from sponsors who may be interested in independently developing or participating in such a group. Completing this [form](#) will help connect interested parties and gather input to support potential future collaboration.

# Sugar Limits in Breakfast Cereals

Breakfast cereals (including ready-to-eat, and flavored instant cooked cereals) served in the CACFP must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce (28 grams), which is equal to 21.2 grams of added sugars per 100 grams of cereal.

The USDA Calculating the Added Sugars Limit for Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program tool- [Calculating Added Sugars Limit for Breakfast Cereals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) is a helpful resource used to determine if cereals meet the added sugar limits.

To calculate if a breakfast cereal meets CACFP sugar limits, divide the added sugars in grams by the serving size in grams and if the answer is .212 or less, then the product meets the sugar limits.

When looking at ingredient labels, keep in mind that “added sugars” are not just “sugar”, such as cane sugar, and turbinado sugar. “Added sugars” also include other types of added sweeteners, such as corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, rice syrup, honey, and molasses.

# Spring Into Fresh Menus

Spring is the perfect time to refresh your CACFP menus with fresh, seasonal produce. This KidKare article highlights simple ways to swap winter items for spring favorites, build easy-to-manage cycle menus, and ensure all foods remain CACFP-creditable. It also shares practical tips for staying organized, maintaining accurate records, and meeting portion requirements—so you can update your menu without adding extra work.

 [Click Here to Read the Article](#)

# Kitchen Confidence

## CACFP Measurements Made Simple

Accurate measuring is key to staying confident and compliant in CACFP meal service. Even small differences in portion sizes can affect crediting, consistency, and compliance with meal patterns.

### Why it matters

CACFP foods must be served in specific creditable amounts (cups, tablespoons, fluid ounces). Using different or inconsistent measurements can easily lead to incorrect portions.

### Quick conversions to remember:

Culinary Measurement Conversions		
Unit	Equivalents	
1 tablespoon	3 teaspoons	½ fluid ounce
⅛ cup	2 tablespoons	1 fluid ounce
¼ cup	4 tablespoons	2 fluid ounces
⅓ cup	5 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon	2 ¾ fluid ounces
½ cup	8 tablespoons	4 fluid ounces
⅔ cup	10 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons	
¾ cup	12 tablespoons	6 fluid ounces
1 cup	16 tablespoons	8 fluid ounces
1 pint	2 cups	16 fluid ounces
1 quart	2 pints	32 fluid ounces
1 gallon	4 quarts	128 fluid ounces
1 pound	16 ounces	

## Helpful tips for daily prep

- Stick to one measurement system (cups or tablespoons) when possible
- Use standardized measuring tools for consistency
- Double-check mixed dishes like casseroles and soups
- Remember: fluid ounces and dry ounces are not interchangeable

## Why it helps

Consistent measuring supports accurate meal crediting, reduces errors during reviews, and ensures children receive balanced meals every time.

**Final tip:** When in doubt, measure it out—those extra seconds help ensure accuracy and confidence in every meal served.

# CREDITING COMBO FOODS? REMEMBER!



## Standardized Recipe

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**RECIPE**

**CN**

USDA 02/00

five, 875 oz. breaded fish nuggets with APP provides 2.0 oz. equivalent meal/alternative meat alternative for the Child Nutrition Meal Pattern Requirements. (Use of this log of scope and statement authorized by log statement the Nutrition Service, USDA 08/00)

**CN LABEL**

## Product Formulation Statement

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**PFS**

**Required for Crediting Combo Foods in CACFP!**

# May Harvest of the Month

## Maine Wild Blueberries

### FUN FACTS

Maine has 44,000 acres of wild blueberries that grow naturally in fields and barrens that stretch along the Downeast coast to the state's southwest corner. Wild blueberries hold a special place in Maine's agricultural history—one that goes back centuries to Maine's Native Americans.

SOURCES: Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine, University of Maine Cooperative Extension



[Child Nutrition - Harvest of the Month Blueberry Fact Sheet - 12.17.2024.pdf](#)

[Child Nutrition - Harvest of the Month Blueberry Recipes for Schools - 12.17.2024.pdf](#)

Join the Maine Harvest of the Month (HOM) Program! Take the pledge and join dozens of schools and childcare sites in bringing more healthy, local food to Maine children while supporting Maine farmers and producers!

By participating in the Maine Harvest of the Month program, CACFP Sponsors are pledging for the school year to:

- Serve the local HOM product at least 2x per month (local = Maine grown or caught)
- Display HOM materials provided by the Department of Education's Child Nutrition team

In return, the DOE Maine Harvest of the Month team pledges to provide participating Sponsors with:

- Printed marketing materials (IE: posters, recipe cards, stickers)
- Program training and ongoing technical support, as needed
- A monthly newsletter
- Recognition in participating in HOM

# Serving Vegetables in the CACFP

- Helps children and adults get important nutrients like potassium, folate (folic acid), vitamin A, and vitamin C.
- Provides dietary fiber, which contributes to a feeling of fullness.
- Adds color, crunch, and flavor to meals and snacks.
- Helps reduce the risk of certain diseases, like heart disease and Type 2 diabetes, later in life.





## Giving Vegetables Credit: How Vegetables Count in the CACFP

- Vegetables served in amounts smaller than  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup do not credit toward a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, supper, or snack.
- Raw leafy green vegetables (spinach, kale, collards, and lettuce) credit for half of the amount served. For example, one cup of raw leafy greens credits at  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of vegetables. 1 cup raw spinach =  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of vegetables.
- Cooked leafy green vegetables credit for the entire amount served. For example, 1 cup steamed spinach = 1 cup of vegetables.
- Snack-type vegetable products, such as potato chips, do not contribute toward the vegetable component.
- Dry beans and peas (legumes), including black beans, split peas, and lentils, can credit as vegetables or as meat alternates, but cannot credit toward both components in the same meal.
- Pureed vegetables used in smoothies credit as 100% vegetable juice. Juice may only be served once per day in the CACFP.
- A second, different vegetable can be served in place of the fruit component at lunch and supper.
- Institutions and facilities that serve primarily American Indian or Alaska Native participants may substitute vegetables for grains. Additionally, all institutions and facilities in American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands may serve substitute vegetables for the grains component. Any creditable vegetable, including vegetables such as breadfruit, prairie turnips, plantains, sweet potatoes, and yams, can be substituted for grains.



# Make Friday Try-Days in the CACFP

**\*Use vegetables that are grown in your area for a taste-testing event\***

 <b>Spring</b>	 <b>Summer</b>	 <b>Fall</b>	 <b>Winter</b>
Asparagus	Bell Peppers	Brussels Sprouts	Beets
Broccoli	Corn	Cauliflower	Cabbage
Lettuce	Crookneck Squash	Pumpkins	Kale
Spinach	Tomatoes	Sweet Potatoes	Winter Squash

## [Serving Vegetables in the CACFP](#)

[CACFP Halftime: Serving Vegetables in CACFP | Food and Nutrition Service](#)



# How Does Your Garden Grow?

Recipes where fresh produce takes center stage



Dig in and discover what's growing underground! These vegetables are fun to dig up and even more fun to eat.

Get all 24 recipes, serving sizes and crediting information in this year's recipe book.

[NCA 2026 Recipe Book](#)

Your 2026, How Does Your Garden Grow? Calendar and CACFP Training Toolkit from the National CACFP Association is available at any time for your use. Sign up to receive access to the 2026 Calendar Training Materials delivered to your inbox monthly! [Sign-up for training materials!](#)

# May Monthly Activity Pages

## NCA May 2026 Materials

Activity pages focus on the importance of watering plants in a garden, which will be turned into a fun physical activity with the Water Can Relay. Children will also enjoy the Sugar Snap Pea Stir Fry and the Peas in a Pod craft.

### May



#### Learn It Thirsty Plants

All living things including children and plants need water to live and grow. Providing water to plants helps seeds sprout, move nutrients throughout, stand tall and when paired with sunlight makes its own food through photosynthesis. Show children how plants take up water. Add food dye to a jar filled with water and place a fresh cut white flower in the jar. Have children observe what happens overtime.

#### Eat It Sugar Snap Pea Stir Fry

Sugar snap peas, remove stem and string  
Vegetable oil  
Soy sauce  
Garlic cloves, sliced



Over medium-high heat, warm vegetable oil in a large skillet. Add the sugar snap peas and cook for 3-5 minutes stirring frequently. Halfway through cooking add garlic and soy sauce. Remove from heat once sugar snap peas are bright green and slightly tender.

#### Laugh About It

Where does the gardener sleep?  
In the flower bed.



#### Create It Peas in a Pod

Cut out the three peas and pod from the template at [cacfp.org](http://cacfp.org). Instruct children to color or paint all their pieces. Glue the pod onto construction paper for a background. Then the children will glue in their three peas. Add eyes and faces with craft supplies for a little fun.



#### Play It Water Can Relay

Divide the group into two lines. At the start of each line, place a bucket full of water and several plastic water glasses. At the finish line you have determined, place an empty watering can. When you say go, the children will take turns using their plastic cups and running to fill up the watering

#### Read It

*From Seed to Plant* by Gail Gibbons  
*Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert  
*Growing Vegetable Soup/Sembrar sopa de verduras Board Book: Bilingual English-Spanish* by Lois Ehlert



#### Grow It

Adding mulch to the garden bed or container helps the soil retain water.

#### Fun Fact

Plants need water to combine with carbon dioxide to complete photosynthesis.



# National CACFP Association to Host Provider Day Celebration for Child Care Providers



**Provider Day**  
— Free Event! —  
**SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2026**  
**11:00 AM - 1:00 PM EASTERN**



[cacfp.org/provider-day](https://cacfp.org/provider-day)

The graphic features a white background with colorful brushstroke accents in blue, green, yellow, and red. A circular inset shows a woman and a young girl smiling and interacting. The text is centered and uses a mix of bold black, green, and red fonts.

Registration and event information are available at [cacfp.org/provider-day](https://cacfp.org/provider-day).

By combining recognition, resources and training, Provider Day aims to acknowledge the dedication of child care providers while offering ideas that support their daily work with children.

The National CACFP Association will host Provider Day, a free virtual event for child care providers, on Saturday, May 16, 2026. The event takes place during Provider Appreciation Month and during the association's 40th anniversary year.

Provider Day is designed as both a training opportunity and a celebration of the important role child care providers play in supporting children, families and communities every day. Attendees will receive practical education and resources related to nutrition, early learning and child development.

Attendees can earn up to 2.5 hours of continuing education units (CEUs). Registration is free, and all live sessions will also be available on demand through May 31, 2026.

The program recognizes the contributions of providers who participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federal nutrition program that helps child care settings serve balanced meals and snacks while supporting healthy eating habits and development.

Three live sessions will offer practical tools for child care providers:

- The Provider Perk Party with Free Resources for Your Program, presented by Alexia Thex, MEd, president of the National CACFP Association. The session will introduce free tools and resources available to help providers strengthen their nutrition education efforts and program operations.
- Present, Calm and Connected: Building Mindfulness in Early Childhood, presented by Tracy Cheney, MEd, Dr. Day Care Family and education consultant with Three Cheers Consulting. The training will explore practical ways educators can incorporate mindfulness into daily routines to support children's focus, emotional regulation and social-emotional development.
- Using Your Menu to Spark Learning & Play, presented by Isabel Ramos-Lebron, MS, RDN, LD, senior nutrition education specialist with the National CACFP Association. The session will demonstrate how a one-week CACFP menu can serve as a foundation for activities that encourage nutrition education, learning and play.

# Considering Every Child's Experience

As we continue to design engaging, creative learning experiences for children, it can be helpful to pause and consider how certain materials might be received by all learners in our care.

Sensory tables filled with rice or beans, or art projects using food items like macaroni, are often chosen with great intention—they're tactile, accessible, and fun. At the same time, for children experiencing food insecurity, these materials may carry a different meaning. What feels like play to some may feel confusing or even upsetting to others who are learning that food is something to be carefully used and not always guaranteed.

This isn't about eliminating creativity or second-guessing every choice, but about widening our lens. When possible, we might explore non-food alternatives that offer similar sensory or creative experiences, or simply remain mindful of the diverse experiences children bring with them into the classroom.

Small shifts in awareness can go a long way in creating environments where every child feels safe, respected, and understood. Thank you for the care and thoughtfulness you bring to your work each day.

# Upcoming Training Opportunities



## **Produce Webinar Series – Fresh, Safe, and Nutritious: Buying and Serving Fresh-Cut Produce.**

**May 6th 2026 3pm EST**

Fresh-cut produce may offer real operational advantages such as reduced skilled labor and equipment, consistent serving sizes, and convenience. However, fresh-cut produce carries no kill step and must be handled properly to prevent contamination from farm to fork. In this webinar, school nutrition professionals will learn safety control steps throughout the chain of custody from farm to fork, including what to look for at your processing facility, writing fresh-cut specifications, and industry guidance. For fun, don't miss the live culinary demonstration on fresh-cut packaging yields, weights, and volume measures.

**To Register:** <https://ilearn.theicn.org/learn/courses/787/produce-webinar-series-fresh-safe-and-nutritious-buying-and-serving-fresh-cut-produce-may-6th-2026-3pm-est>

# SAFETY FIRST

Handling Food Safety Recalls in the CACFP

CACFP101  
WEBINAR

Tuesday  
May 19,  
2026

3:00 PM ET

RECALL

## CACFP: Safety First: Handling Food Recalls in the CACFP

May 19th 2026 3 pm EST

Food recalls can happen at any time and knowing how to respond quickly and correctly is essential to keeping children safe. This webinar will walk CACFP operators through the basics of food recalls, including why they occur and how they impact your program. Learn simple, practical steps for identifying recalled foods, responding appropriately, and communicating with staff and families. Join us to build confidence in handling food recalls while maintaining compliance and protecting the health of the children in your care.

**To Register:** <https://ilearn.theicn.org/learn/courses/789/cacfp-safety-first-handling-food-recalls-in-the-cacfp-may-19th-2026-3pm-est>

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## CACFP: Nurturing Healthy Habits: Promoting Positive Eating Behaviors in Children

June 16th 2026 3pm EST

Establishing healthy eating habits early in life sets the foundation for children's growth, development, and lifelong well-being. In this webinar, participants will explore how nutrition in the early years influences health outcomes and why those early food experiences matter. This session will provide practical, easy-to-apply strategies to help children develop positive relationships with food. Participants will learn how to create supportive mealtime routines, build encouraging food environments, and use interactive activities to make healthy eating enjoyable. Whether working in child care settings or supporting families, attendees will leave with tools and ideas they can immediately implement to promote healthy eating behaviors in children.

**To Register:** <https://ilearn.theicn.org/learn/courses/791/cacfp-nurturing-healthy-habits-promoting-positive-eating-behaviors-in-children-june-16th-2026-3pm-est>



## **Dignity at the Table: Nutrition and Compliance in Adult Day Care**

**Thursday, July 16, 2026 | 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm Eastern**

Adult Day Care programs serve participants with diverse nutrition needs, functional abilities, and health conditions. In this webinar, you'll explore practical strategies for supporting the health and dignity of adult participants while maintaining CACFP compliance. Topics include therapeutic diets, texture modifications, functional dining considerations, and how to navigate documentation and regulatory requirements within the program. Learning Objectives: Identify common nutrition needs and functional dining considerations for adults participating in CACFP programs. Recognize key CACFP compliance considerations for Adult Day Care programs.

**To Register:** <https://info.cacfp.org/ap/Events/Register/AnFxDXKfVCdCN>



## **Thursday, July 30, 2026 | 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm Eastern**

Did you know that the CACFP provides nutritious meals and snacks to over 4.5 million children and adults every day? This program is more than a meal—it's a powerful way to strengthen your program while making a meaningful difference in your community.

By participating in the CACFP, you can empower your program to serve healthy and nutritious meals, receive valuable reimbursement, and access a nationwide network of caregivers and resources. This not only helps enhance nutrition security but also makes your program more competitive by showing families your commitment to their well-being.

Join us to explore how the CACFP can transform your program and help you create a lasting impact on the children and families you serve!

**To Register:** <https://info.cacfp.org/ap/Events/Register/nvFOjn4iECNCZ>

# **SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT**

## **RSU 41**

### **The Bearcat After School Program: Empowering MSAD #41 A Penquis Recreation Initiative**

The Bearcat After School Program is more than just a safe place for students to stay after the bell rings—it is a vibrant hub of movement, mentorship, and Maine heritage. Operating under the Penquis Recreation umbrella and led by Dawn McLaughlin and Eric Joyner, our program serves 30 students from Monday through Thursday (2:30 PM – 5:15 PM). Our mission is to foster the core values of respect, honesty, responsibility, and caring through a curriculum that challenges students physically, emotionally, and mentally. We pride ourselves on offering a diverse educational experience that goes far beyond standard homework help:

- Themed Learning Nights: We bridge the gap between school and home with specialized Nutrition, Science, Literature, and Parent Nights.
- Cultural & Local Heritage: Students engage in Wabanaki Studies, honoring the history and culture of Maine's Indigenous peoples, alongside regular visits to the Milo Town Library.
- Outdoor Education & Wellness: As a program rooted in the Maine landscape, we feature Outdoor Education Modules, monthly trips to the Ice Rink
- Active Bodies, Active Brains: We keep kids moving with the 100 Mile Club and the Walking Classroom, ensuring that physical activity is integrated into every learning moment.

The Bearcat program thrives thanks to a powerful network of local supporters and donors who believe in our students' potential:

- Major Supporters: We are incredibly grateful for the generous donations from TradeWinds Market, the Kiwanis Club, and Bissell Brothers.
- Grants & Funding: Our program is bolstered by a grant from the Maine Charities Foundation. Additionally, a nutritious supper meal is served to every child which is funded through the Department of Education's Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- Legacy of Giving: We are deeply honored by the gifts in memoriam from the Estate of Donald McLaughlin and Elaine Lewis, whose legacy continues to support the growth and happiness of our local youth.
- Signature Events: Our weekly Bearcat Trivia Night serves as a cornerstone fundraiser, bringing the community together for a night of fun and support.

We believe every child deserves a seat at the table. Our tiered pricing model is designed to be inclusive and stress-free for families:

- Weekly Rates: \$10 or \$20 per week (based on ability to pay).
- Family Discount: A second child from the same household attends for free.
- Our Promise: We use income-based numbers to determine fees, and no child is ever turned away due to an inability to pay.

Dawn, thank you  
for sharing!!



Dawn McLaughlin