



Food and
Nutrition
Service

DATE: April 17, 2019

Park Office
Center

MEMO CODE: SP 22-2019, CACFP 09-2019, SFSP 08-2019

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SUBJECT: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Corn Flour in the
Child Nutrition Programs

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

This memorandum provides guidance on crediting coconut, hominy, corn masa, corn flour, and cornmeal in the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs), including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program. Previously, coconut and hominy did not meet the requirement for any component in the meal patterns, but could be served as an “extra” food. Based on stakeholder feedback, and to meet the growing and diverse cultural needs of our program participants, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is updating food-crediting guidance to allow coconut and hominy to credit in the CNPs. Additionally, FNS is updating the guidance on corn masa, corn flour, and cornmeal to simplify menu planning.

Coconut

Fresh and frozen coconut can be used to enhance the taste and presentation of salads, smoothies, and other dishes served with meals or as snacks. Recognizing its versatility, **Program operators now may credit fresh or frozen coconut as a fruit based on volume served.** Like other fruits, at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of fresh or frozen coconut must be served to credit toward the fruit component. Please note that dried coconut, as well as coconut flour and coconut oil, are not creditable in the CNPs.

Menu planners must consider coconut’s caloric and saturated fat content, which may limit its frequency of use in school menus due to the dietary specifications for calories and saturated fat. Juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, will continue to credit toward the fruit component per volume served.

Hominy

Hominy is a traditional food in Mexican and Native American cultures commonly served as a vegetable or as a milled grain product (e.g., hominy grits). Hominy is processed in a manner that increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients. Based on its multiple uses and widespread appeal, hominy may now credit towards the vegetable or grain component (depending on how it is offered) in a reimbursable meal or snack. In its whole form, hominy credits toward the vegetable component as a starchy vegetable. When hominy is offered in a dried, milled form, such as grits, it credits toward the grain component as a whole grain-rich (WGR) food.

Program operators now may credit hominy as follows:

- ¼ cup of canned, drained hominy credits as ¼ cup vegetable (and as a starchy vegetable for NSLP and SBP);
- ½ cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) dry hominy grits credits as 1 ounce equivalent grains (oz eq).

Corn Masa, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal

Masa is a dough or flour made from milled corn that has typically been soaked and cooked in an alkaline (lime) solution, which offers increased bioavailability of certain nutrients with a nutritional profile similar to whole grain corn. It is used for making tortilla chips, taco shells, tamales, pupusas, and other popular corn products. **Corn masa, corn flour, and cornmeal are now creditable as WGR ingredients;** therefore, corn products made with corn masa, corn flour, and cornmeal meet the WGR criteria.

Program operators now may credit corn masa, corn flour, and cornmeal in the same manner as all other creditable grain ingredients and foods. Crediting is determined by weight as listed in Exhibit A: Grain Requirement for Child Nutrition Programs, or by grams of creditable grain per portion.

With the issuance of this memorandum, FNS is rescinding *SP 02-2013: Corn Masa (Dough) for Use in Tortilla Chips, Taco Shells, and Tamales*, October 3, 2012. Additionally, FNS will update the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* to reflect these changes. To view the *Food Buying Guide*, please visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>.

FNS remains committed to simplifying the menu planning process for all CNP operators, promoting the efficient use of Program funds, and ensuring Program operators and participants have a wide variety of nutritious food choices. We recognize that crediting decisions have an impact on schools, child care centers, adult day

care centers, day care homes, the food industry, and most importantly, participating children and adults. FNS is committed to staying up-to-date with the evolving food and nutrition environment through continued engagement with a variety of stakeholders. Through these efforts, FNS will work to maximize the availability of wholesome food options while minimizing administrative burden in the CNPs.

State agencies are reminded to distribute this memorandum to Program operators. Program operators should direct any questions concerning this guidance to their State agency. State agencies with questions should contact the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

Original Signed

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