ACD MENU PLANNING GUIDE

About This Guide
This guide includes sample menus and resources designed to help child care centers and homes participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) plan and serve healthy meals. The menus in this guide meet the CACFP requirements and strive to meet best practices.

Menu Planning Tips
- **Plan to plan menus**—Make time regularly to plan menus in advance. This prevents weekday stress by ensuring that you have everything you need and saves time in the long run.
- **Use cycle menus**—Cycle menus are repeating cycles of menus (usually 4-6 weeks). They are beneficial because they allow child care providers to reuse menu plans while incorporating a variety of foods.
- **Review menus before serving**—Take a look at the new menus you have created.
  - Do they meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements?
  - Do they include a mixture of new and familiar foods?
  - Do they incorporate color, variety, and contrast?
  - Do they meet any nutrition best practices?
- **Revisit menus after serving**—Consider what worked and what did not work after serving the menus you planned.
  - Did the children like the food?
  - Are you staying within budget?
  - Are you receiving as much reimbursement as possible?

Best Practices
These are the nutrition best practices that this guide strives to follow. They go above the CACFP meal pattern requirements.

**Vegetables and Fruits**
- Make at least 1 of the snack components a vegetable or a fruit
- Serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice
- Provide at least 1 serving of dark green, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas, starchy, and other vegetables once per week

**Grains and Breads**
- Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich (WG) grains per day

**Meat and Meat Alternates**
- Serve only lean meats, nuts, and legumes
- Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week
- Serve only natural cheese and choose low-fat or reduced-fat cheese
- Serve only unflavored milk to all participants

Additional Best Practices
- Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals
- Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods to no more than one serving per week
- Avoid serving non-credible foods that are sources of added sugars such as sweet toppings, mix-in ingredients sold with yogurt, and sugar sweetened beverages

New CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements

**BREAKFAST**
For each breakfast, choose one food from each of the following food groups:
1. Vegetables/Fruits
2. Grains/Breads OR Meats/Meat Alternates
3. Fluid Milk

**LUNCH/DINNER**
For each lunch/dinner, choose one food from each of the following food groups:
1. Meats/Meat Alternates
2. Vegetables OR Fruits
3. Vegetables
4. Grains/Breads
5. Fluid Milk

**SNACK**
For each snack, choose one food from two of the following food groups:
1. Vegetables
2. Fruits
3. Meat/Meat Alternates
4. Grains/Breads
5. Fluid Milk
# Spring/Summer Cycle Menus

## Week 1

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| **BREAKFAST** | 1. Egg omelet  
2. Mushrooms  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG Toast  
2. Honeydew melon  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG English muffin  
2. Mangoes  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat string cheese  
2. Fruit salad  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG Muffin  
2. Kiwi  
3. Unflavored milk |
| **LUNCH/DINNER** | 1. Tuna  
2. Green peas  
3. Broccoli  
4. WG Egg noodles  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat ricotta cheese  
2. Tomato sauce  
3. Mushrooms  
4. WG Lasagna noodles  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat cheddar cheese  
2. Refried beans  
3. Salsa  
4. WG Tortilla  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Hummus dip  
2. Snap peas  
3. Cherry tomatoes  
4. WG Pita bread  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Chickpeas  
2. Cucumbers  
3. Tomatoes  
4. WG bulgur wheat  
5. Unflavored milk |
| **SNACK** | 1. WG Crackers  
2. Low-fat cheese | 1. Banana slices  
2. Peanut butter | 1. Carrot sticks  
2. Hummus | 1. WG Cereal  
2. Unflavored milk | 1. WG Breadsticks  
2. Tomato sauce |
|     | 1. Baked sweet potatoes  
2. Apple slices | 1. WG bagel chips  
2. Pineapple | 1. WG Toast  
2. Sliced strawberries | 1. Soy yogurt  
2. Cereal snack mix | 1. Low-fat string cheese  
2. Pears |

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| **BREAKFAST** | 1. WG pancakes  
2. Strawberries  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Yogurt  
2. Cherries  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG Zucchini bread  
2. Raspberries  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Scrambled eggs  
2. Red peppers  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Soy yogurt  
2. Blueberries  
3. Unflavored milk |
| **LUNCH/DINNER** | 1. Eggs and ham  
2. Spinach  
3. Fruit salad  
4. WG Toast  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat cheese  
2. Mixed vegetables  
3. Salsa  
4. WG Tortilla chips  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Lentils  
2. Carrots/celery  
3. Apple slices  
4. WG Barley  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat cheese  
2. Baked potato  
3. Broccoli  
4. WG Bread stick  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Grilled chicken  
2. Asparagus  
3. Strawberries  
4. WG Bread  
5. Unflavored milk |
| **SNACK** | 1. Peaches  
2. Cottage cheese | 1. WG Soft pretzels  
2. Nectarine slices | 1. Low-fat yogurt  
2. Mixed berries | 1. WG Blueberry bread  
2. Orange slices | 1. Snap peas  
2. Hummus |
|     | 1. WG Flatbread  
2. Cantaloupe | 1. WG Rice cake (savory)  
2. Low-fat cheese | 1. WG Mini bagel  
2. Watermelon | 1. WG Pancakes  
2. Sliced bananas | 1. Low-fat cheese  
2. Halved grapes |
# SPRING/SUMMER CYCLE MENUS

## Week 3

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| **BREAKFAST**    | 1. WG cold cereal  
  2. Raspberries  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. Peanut butter  
  2. Banana slices  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. Boiled eggs  
  2. Sliced tomatoes  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG waffles  
  2. Mixed fruit  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. Cottage cheese  
  2. Pineapple  
  3. Unflavored milk |
| **LUNCH/DINNER** | 1. Tofu  
  2. Bok choy  
  3. Carrots  
  4. WG Egg noodles  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Baked chicken  
  2. Tomato sauce  
  3. Kale  
  4. WG Pasta  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat cheese  
  2. Black beans  
  3. Corn  
  4. Quinoa  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Peanut butter  
  2. Carrot sticks  
  3. Banana slices  
  4. WG Bread  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Fish fillet  
  2. Zucchini  
  3. Fruit cup  
  4. WG roll  
  5. Unflavored milk |
| **SNACK**        | 1. Bean dip  
  2. Celery  
  1. WG Waffles  
  2. Cherries | 1. WG Biscuit  
  2. Strawberries | 1. WG Roll  
  2. Lean deli meat | 1. WG Tortilla chips  
  2. Salsa | 1. WG Crackers  
  2. Egg salad |
|                  | 1. WG Melba toast  
  2. Watermelon | 1. Celery sticks/raisins  
  2. Peanut butter | 1. Blueberries  
  2. Unflavored milk | | 1. WG tostada shell  
  2. Refried beans |

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| **BREAKFAST**    | 1. Tofu scramble  
  2. Onion/green pepper  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG grits  
  2. Salsa  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. Lean ham  
  2. Beans  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. Egg and cheese bake  
  2. Mixed vegetables  
  3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG bagel  
  2. Cantaloupe  
  3. Unflavored milk |
| **LUNCH/DINNER** | 1. Tuna salad  
  2. Romaine lettuce  
  3. Tomatoes  
  4. WG Pita  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Sliced turkey  
  2. Red peppers  
  3. Hummus  
  4. WG bread  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Black bean burger  
  2. Tomatoes/lettuce  
  3. Carrot sticks  
  4. WG Bun  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Pinto beans  
  2. Corn  
  3. Tomatoes  
  4. WG Corn muffin  
  5. Unflavored milk | 1. Shrimp  
  2. Green bell pepper  
  3. Tomatoes  
  4. WG Rice  
  5. Unflavored milk |
| **SNACK**        | 1. WG Tortilla  
  2. Lean sliced ham  
  1. WG Corn muffins  
  2. Blackberries | 1. WG Pita bread  
  2. Honeydew melon | 1. WG Blueberry muffin  
  2. Low-fat yogurt | 1. WG cereal  
  2. Unflavored milk | 1. Sliced cucumbers  
  2. Yogurt dip |
|                  | 1. WG English muffin  
  2. Mangoes | 1. WG Hard pretzels  
  2. Fruit salad | | 1. Hard-boiled egg  
  2. Cherry tomatoes | 1. WG Toast  
  2. Soy nut butter |
## FALL/WINTER CYCLE MENUS

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| **BREAKFAST** | 1. Egg omelet  
2. Spinach  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG Toast  
2. Avocado  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG English muffin  
2. Tangerine  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. String cheese  
2. Grapefruit  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG Muffin  
2. Orange slices  
3. Unflavored milk |
| **LUNCH/DINNER** | 1. Chicken  
2. Salad mix  
3. Grapes  
4. WG Spanish rice  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat cheese  
2. Tomato soup  
3. Green beans  
4. WG Bread  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. White beans  
2. Swiss chard  
3. Carrots  
4. WG Noodles  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat cheddar cheese  
2. Green peas  
3. Peaches  
4. WG macaroni  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. BBQ ground beef  
2. Coleslaw  
3. Baked beans  
4. WG Bun  
5. Unflavored milk |
| **SNACK** | 1. WG Crackers  
2. Low-fat cheese  
1. Baked sweet potatoes  
2. Pears | 1. Apple slices  
2. Peanut butter | 1. Celery sticks  
2. Hummus | 1. Low-fat string cheese  
2. Plums | 1. WG Bread sticks  
2. Edamame |
|          | 1. WG bagel chips  
2. Fruit salad | | 1. WG Toast  
2. Avocado | | 1. WG Cereal  
2. Unflavored milk |
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| **BREAKFAST** | 1. WG hot cereal  
2. Pears  
3. Unflavored milk  
4. WG Toast  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Peanut butter  
2. Apple slices  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Boiled eggs  
2. Mixed fruit  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG waffles  
2. Plum slices  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Cottage cheese  
2. Peaches  
3. Unflavored milk |
| **LUNCH/ DINNER** | 1. Scrambled eggs  
2. Kale  
3. Apple slices  
4. WG Toast  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Chickpeas  
2. Butternut squash  
3. Raisins*  
4. WG Couscous  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Ham  
2. Black eyed peas  
3. Green peas  
4. WG Bread stick  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Turkey  
2. Potatoes  
3. Green beans  
4. WG Roll  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Pork  
2. Turnips  
3. Applesauce  
4. Wild rice  
5. Unflavored milk |
| **SNACK** | 1. Bean dip  
2. Carrot sticks  
1. WG Waffles  
2. Blueberries | 1. WG Biscuit  
2. Mixed berries | 1. WG Roll  
2. Lean meatball | 1. WG Tortilla chips  
2. Guacamole | 1. WG Crackers  
2. Tuna salad |

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| **BREAKFAST** | 1. Tofu scramble  
2. Broccoli  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. WG grits  
2. Hash browns  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Lean ham  
2. Pineapple  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Egg and cheese bake  
2. Clementines  
3. Unflavored milk | 1. Oatmeal  
2. Nectarines  
3. Unflavored milk |
| **LUNCH/ DINNER** | 1. Meatloaf  
2. Collard greens  
3. Mashed potatoes  
4. WG Roll  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Low-fat cheese  
2. Tomato sauce  
3. Mixed vegetables  
4. WG English muffin  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Lean beef ribs  
2. Split pea soup  
3. Applesauce  
4. WG biscuit  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Red beans  
2. Corn  
3. Pineapple  
4. WG Rice  
5. Unflavored milk | 1. Pork and beans  
2. Brussels sprouts  
3. Pears  
4. WG Bread stick  
5. Unflavored milk |
| **SNACK** | 1. WG Tortilla  
2. Lean deli chicken  
1. WG Corn muffins  
2. Sliced cucumbers | 1. WG Pita bread  
2. Tangerines | 1. WG Apple muffin  
2. Pumpkin yogurt | 1. WG cereal  
2. Unflavored milk | 1. Sliced red peppers  
2. Yogurt dip |

1. WG Biscuit  
2. Mixed berries  
3. Unflavored milk  
4. WG Roll  
2. Lean meatball  
5. WG Tortilla chips  
2. Guacamole  
1. Banana slices  
2. Unflavored milk  
2. Low-fat cheese  
1. WG Crackers  
2. Tuna salad  
1. WG Tostada shell  
2. Low-fat cheese  
1. Oatmeal  
2. Nectarines  
3. Unflavored milk  
1. Pork and beans  
2. Brussels sprouts  
3. Pears  
4. WG Bread stick  
5. Unflavored milk  
1. Sliced red peppers  
2. Yogurt dip  
1. WG Toast  
2. Almond butter
Menu Planning Resources and Recipes

From USDA CACFP

- **USDA CACFP Recipes**—These multicultural recipes have been specially selected to meet the new CACFP meal pattern requirements.
- **USDA Cookbook for Child Care Homes**—Try these kid-test, kid-approved recipes designed for child care homes and households.
- **USDA Cookbook for Child Care Centers**—Try these kid-test, kid-approved recipes designed for child care centers.
- **USDA Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit**—Pair delicious recipes with nutrition lessons from this garden-themed nutrition education kit for child care programs.
- **USDA Institute of Child Nutrition Recipes**—Find more than 200 child care recipes with CACFP crediting information.
- **What’s Cooking USDA Mixing Bowl**—Use this search tool to find CACFP-approved recipes. Filter search by course, food group, cooking equipment, cuisine, or cost.

From Around the Country

- **CACFP Menu Toolkit**—This toolkit provides the resources you need to plan menus and make recipes that are kid-friendly.
- **CACFP Menu Planning Guide**—This how-to guide includes 16 weeks of menus and 120 CACFP-reimbursable recipes.
- **CACFP Tofu Recipe Guide**—Are you new to tofu? This collection of CACFP-approved recipes is a great way to get started.
- **Multicultural Recipes**—Mix up your menus with child care recipes featuring flavors from around the world.
- **Seasonal Menus and Recipes**—Plan menus and recipes throughout the year that feature fresh, local foods.
- **Snacks that Count**—Looking for new snack ideas? This recipe book includes more than two dozen creative snack suggestions

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