



Vegetarian Meals in the CACFP

When a parent requests that vegetarian meals be served to their child(ren), it is still possible to meet the USDA Meal Pattern requirements. There are several types of vegetarian diets so parents should be specific on what they wish their child to be served.

Lacto-Vegetarians avoid all animal flesh and eggs, but will consume milk and dairy products.

Lacto-Ovo Vegetarians avoid all animal flesh, but will consume eggs, milk and dairy products.

Pesco Vegetarians eat a vegetable based diet, including eggs and dairy, with occasional inclusion of fish. They do not eat meat or poultry.

Vegans avoid all animal flesh and animal products including dairy. A child on a vegan diet will need to be served a creditable soy milk in place of cow's milk in order for their meals to be reimbursable.



In most cases, a vegetarian meal would be a modification of what is already planned to be served to the other children. Creditable vegetarian meals may also be served to the other children in care.

It is acceptable for the vegetarian parent to willingly provide a special food, that would not normally be stocked by the provider, in order to complete a meal pattern requirement. However, to still be reimbursable, no more than one food per meal may be supplied by the parent, with all the other required foods supplied by the provider. This parent-provided exception is only valid when a special dietary request has been made.

CACFP Meat Alternates for No-Meat Diets

- Eggs
- Cheese
- Cooked dry beans (navy, black, northern, pinto, etc.)
- Cooked dry peas and lentils
- Nuts and seeds
- Nut and seed butters
- Tofu¹
- Yogurt

Non-Creditable Meat Alternates in the CACFP

- Foods labeled as "meat substitutes"
- Protein drinks or supplements
- TVP (Textured Vegetable Protein) unless the source is soy²
- Yogurt drinks

¹ Determining if a tofu is creditable is addressed on page 47 of the HCN Provider Handbook.

² Specifications for soy-based TVP products that may be credited for the CACFP are available from the Heartland Child Nutrition office.

Examples of Vegetarian Lunches or Dinners that Follow the CACFP Meal Pattern

Peanut Butter Sandwich Cheese Cubes Celery Sticks Grapes Whole Grain Bread Milk	Vegetarian Chili (made with beans or lentils) Tomato Sauce (in chili) Apples Saltine Crackers Milk
Scrambled Egg Hash Browns Pears Whole Grain Toast Milk	Cottage Cheese Sugar Snap Peas Peaches Graham Crackers Milk
Grilled Cheese Sandwich Tomato Soup Tossed Salad Whole Grain Bread Milk	Yogurt Veggie tray Fresh Strawberries Waffle Milk
Refried Beans Lettuce/Tomato (in taco) Oranges Whole Grain Tortilla Milk	Cheese Pizza with added cheese Green Beans Cauliflower with Dip Pizza Crust Milk
Lentil Spaghetti (lentils in place of gr. beef) Spaghetti Sauce Peaches Pasta Milk	Egg Bake Mixed Vegetables Applesauce Cheesy Breadsticks Milk