

Smart Snacks in School Nutrition Standards

Smart Snacks in School Nutrition Standards and A la Carte Items

Reimbursable meals under programs authorized by the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act follow specific regulations. All other foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus during the school day must meet the “Smart Snacks in School” standards. The Smart Snacks in School regulations establish standards for all foods and beverages sold to students other than the reimbursable meals. The definition of a school day is midnight until 30 minutes after the dismissal school bell rings.

Entrée items for sale as a la carte foods on the day they are served as part of the meal and the day after are exempt from the Smart Snacks nutrition standards on those days. This exception serves to send a consistent nutritional message about school meals since such entrees already fit into a balanced and nutritionally sound meal and represent a healthier choice for students who do not want the whole meal.

Side items, snack foods, beverages, and any entrées not served as part of the reimbursable meal will need to comply with the Smart Snacks nutrition standards, which include calorie, fats, sugar, and sodium limits, in order to be sold to students in school.

Foods subject to Smart Snacks standards must:

- Be a whole grain-rich grain product; or
- Have as the first ingredient a fruit, a vegetable, a dairy, or a protein food; or
- Be a combination food that contains at least ¼ cup of fruit and or vegetable.

In addition, such food items must also meet several nutrient requirements:

- Calorie limits:
 - Snack items: ≤ 200 calories
 - Entrée items: ≤ 350 calories

- Sodium limits:
 - Snack items: ≤ 200 mg
 - Entrée items: ≤ 480 mg
- Fat limits:
 - Total fat: ≤ 35 percent of calories
 - Saturated fat: < 10 percent of calories
 - *Trans* fat: zero grams
- Sugar limits:
 - ≤ 35 percent of weight from total sugars in foods.

Nutrition Standards for Beverages for all foods sold in schools.

Schools may sell:

- Plain water (with or without carbonation)
- Unflavored or flavored fat-free and 1% (low-fat) milk
- Milk alternatives permitted by NSLP/SBP
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice diluted with water (with or without carbonation) and no added sweeteners.

Additional beverage standards by grade level:

- Elementary schools may sell up to 8-fluid-ounce portions of milk and juice.
- Middle schools and high schools may sell up to 12-fluid-ounce portions of milk and juice.
- There is no portion size limit for plain water.

High schools are allowed to sell additional “no calorie” and “lower calorie” beverage options:

- ≤20-fluid ounce portions of calorie-free, flavored water (with or without carbonation);
- ≤20-fluid ounce portions of other flavored and/or carbonated beverages that contain <5 calories per 8 fluid ounces or ≤ 10 calories per 20 fluid ounces;
- ≤12 fluid ounce portions of “lower calorie” beverages that contain ≤ 40 calories per 8 fluid ounces or ≤ 60 calories per 12 fluid ounces.

For more information on Smart Snacks, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks>.