

School Food Success Developing Recipes with California Fruits + Vegetables

May 21, 2025

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CALIFORNIA FOOD
FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS®



School Food Success

Developing Recipes with California Fruits + Vegetables

May 21, 2025

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Agenda

- Introducing the California Food for California Kids[®] Network
- Nourishing Students
- Recipe Development with LunchAssist
- Local Procurement with CDFA
- Resources
- Q + A
- Closing





CALIFORNIA FOOD
FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS®



150

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

37

COUNTIES



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Meet LunchAssist!



Jen McNeil
RDN, SNS



Jackie Roller
RDN, SNS



Joselyn Caceres
RDN, CDCES



Camille Biazzo
MPA, RDN



Amanda Mercer
MS, RDN



Ally Mrachek
MS, RDN, IBCLC, SNS



Emily Dunklee
CPH, SNS



Rochelle Davies
RDN, LN, SNS



Caroline Olson
RDN, LN



Catherine Karnatz
MPH, RD



Teresa Motlas
MS, RD, LN



Dennis Mwaura



Kammy Benson



Mike Munna



Elisabeth Mendoza



Emma Finn
MOG



Shine Benitez

Discovering Fruits and Vegetables with Early Learners

Nourishing Students



NOURISHING STUDENTS

Discovering Fruits and Vegetables with Early Learners

Connecting the classroom, cafeteria, and garden for our youngest learners and offering experiences that lead to a life-long love of California grown fruits and vegetables.

- Simple, Student-Approved Recipes
- Virtual Menu Planning Sessions
- Educator Professional Development and Resource Kits



Introducing

Vince Caguin

Director of Strategy and
Innovation,
Center for Ecoliteracy



Nourishing Students: Recipes for Discovering Fruits and Vegetables with Early Learners







Recipe Development with LunchAssist

Getting Started: Choosing a Recipe

Recipe

=

A set of instructions for preparing a particular dish, including a list of the ingredients required.



Recipes Have Deep Meaning



- Connect us to the **past**
- Can connect us to our **own** culture and identity
- Act as a bridge to **other** cultures and identities
- Recipes are **love**
- Recipes tell **stories**

Where Do School Recipes Come From?

- ☐ ICN, USDA, and other School Nutrition Cookbooks
- ☐ Neighboring Districts
- ☐ School Nutrition Team Recipe Development
- ☐ Home Cookbooks
- ☐ Your Own Home Cooking!



Best Practice: No matter the recipe source, test it in your school kitchen and modify as needed!





**How do we go from a
"regular recipe" to a
"standardized recipe"?**



**We must use standardized
recipes in School Meal Programs.**

A Standardized Recipe is...

- ☐ Tried, adapted, and retried **at least 3 times**
- ☐ Found to produce the **same** good results and yield **every** time
- ☐ When **exact** procedures are used with the same type of equipment and the same quantity and quality of ingredients



Required Recipe Elements

☐ Name & ID Number

☐ Category

☐ Yield

☐ Serving size

☐ Ingredients

☐ Equipment & utensils

☐ Instructions

☐ HACCP details

☐ Creditable components



Benefits of a Standardized Recipe

- Reliable Nutrition Content
- Improved food safety
- Improved allergy & Special Diet safety
- Quality and quantity management
- Reliable forecasting
- Cost control
- Training
- Positive expectations



How do we get started?



How to Review a Recipe

1. Read the entire recipe through before cooking!
2. Examine the list of ingredients
3. Review the preparation techniques (chopping, peeling, etc.)
4. Examine the required equipment
5. Review the weights and volumes
6. Review the cooking time and temperatures
7. Verify the recipe yield and serving size



Take Notes on Recipe Modifications

- **Yield**
 - Servings per recipe
 - May need to scale the recipe to make a larger yield
- **Meal pattern contribution**
 - Enlist the help of the Menu Planner or Dietitian
 - Use USDA's online tool, the Recipe Analysis Workbook



Refine the Recipe Until Satisfied

- Test and retest the recipe
- Scale the recipe
- Calculate meal components
- Note changes to measurements and yield
- Continue this process until satisfied with the recipe results!



Note the Exact Yield + Portion Size



Let's create a compliant
recipe together!

How to Create Compliant Recipes

Using an existing recipe:

- Example Recipe: Tuscan Kidney Bean Salad
- Yield: 50 servings
- Portion Size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- Credits as: $\frac{1}{2}$ c V ($\frac{3}{8}$ c Beans, Peas, & Lentils + $\frac{1}{8}$ c Veg)
- Ingredients:
 - Kidney Beans
 - Celery
 - Carrot
 - Onion Powder
 - Italian Dressing



How to Create Compliant Recipes

Using an existing recipe:

Test the recipe as written to ensure it's something you would like to serve to your students!

How to Create Compliant Recipes

Using an existing recipe:






Review the current recipe yield, crediting math, and portion size.

Use the Food Buying Guide & Recipe Analysis Workbook to double-check how each portion currently credits towards the meal pattern.

Review the meal pattern to see how you'd like this credit in your operation.

CACFP Ages 3-5 “Preschool” Meal Pattern for Preschool & TK

Preschool Meal Pattern

	Breakfast		Lunch	
	1–2 years	3–5 years	1–2 years	3–5 years
 Milk	½ cup (4 fl oz)	¾ cup (6 fl oz)	½ cup (4 fl oz)	¾ cup (6 fl oz)
 Fruits			⅛ cup	¼ cup
 Vegetables	¼ cup	½ cup	⅛ cup	¼ cup Optional: A second, different vegetable may be served in place of fruit at lunch.
 Grains	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	½ oz eq	½ oz eq
 Meats/Meat Alternates	Optional: Meats/meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component up to three times per week at breakfast. Minimum serving size for both age groups is ½ oz eq.		1 oz eq	1½ oz eq

NSLP Lunch Meal Pattern for TK & K*

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Meal Components	Amount of Food ¹ per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ²	2 ½ (½)	2 ½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ²	3 ¾ (¾)	3 ¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark Green Subgroup ³	½	½	½
Red/Orange Subgroup ³	¾	¾	1 ¼
Beans, Peas, and Lentils Subgroup ³	½	½	½
Starchy Subgroup ³	½	½	½
Other Vegetables Subgroup ^{3,4}	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetables from Any Subgroup to Reach Total	1	1	1 ½
Grains (oz. eq.) ⁵	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.) ⁶	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups) ⁷	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Dietary Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week⁸			
Minimum-Maximum Calories (kcal)	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10
Added Sugars (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Limit: In place through June 30, 2027	≤1,110 mg	≤1,225 mg	≤1,280 mg
Sodium Limit: Must be implemented by July 1, 2027	≤935 mg	≤1,035 mg	≤1,080 mg

*Preschool may also follow the NSLP Lunch Meal Pattern *if* meals are co-mingled

SBP Breakfast Meal Pattern for TK & K*

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Meal Components	Amount of Food ¹ per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ²	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ²	0	0	0
Dark Green Subgroup	0	0	0
Red/Orange Subgroup	0	0	0
Beans, Peas, and Lentils Subgroup	0	0	0
Starchy Subgroup	0	0	0
Other Vegetables Subgroup	0	0	0
Grains or Meats/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.) ³	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Fluid Milk (cups) ⁴	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Dietary Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week⁵			
Minimum-Maximum Calories (kcal)	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated Fat (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10
Added Sugars (% of total calories)	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Limit: In place through June 30, 2027	≤540 mg	≤600 mg	≤640 mg
Sodium Limit: Must be implemented by July 1, 2027	≤485 mg	≤535 mg	≤570 mg

*Preschool may also follow the SBP Breakfast Meal Pattern *if* meals are co-mingled

How to Create Compliant Recipes


Using an existing recipe:

- Example Recipe: Tuscan Kidney Bean Salad
- Yield: 50 servings
- Portion Size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- Credits as: $\frac{1}{2}$ c V ($\frac{3}{8}$ c Beans, Peas, & Lentils + $\frac{1}{8}$ c Veg)
- Ingredients:
 - Kidney Beans
 - Celery
 - Carrot
 - Onion Powder
 - Italian Dressing

We want this to credit
as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup beans



So we will increase the amount of
beans in the recipe and make the
portion size a “heaping” #8 scoop



How to Create Compliant Recipes

Using an existing recipe:

Make adjustments to the recipe so it works within your meal pattern:

- Yield
- Portion Size
- Ingredients

How to Create Compliant Recipes

Using an existing recipe:

Test the adjusted recipe and continue to repeat this process until you are satisfied with:

- Taste
- Appearance
- Crediting
- Portion Size
- Yield

How to Create Compliant Recipes

Using an existing recipe:

Finalize the recipe for your operation with one more final check of the USDA Food Buying Guide crediting math and the serving size and yield.

The Food Buying Guide is a Top Notch Resource for Menu Planning 🌟😊

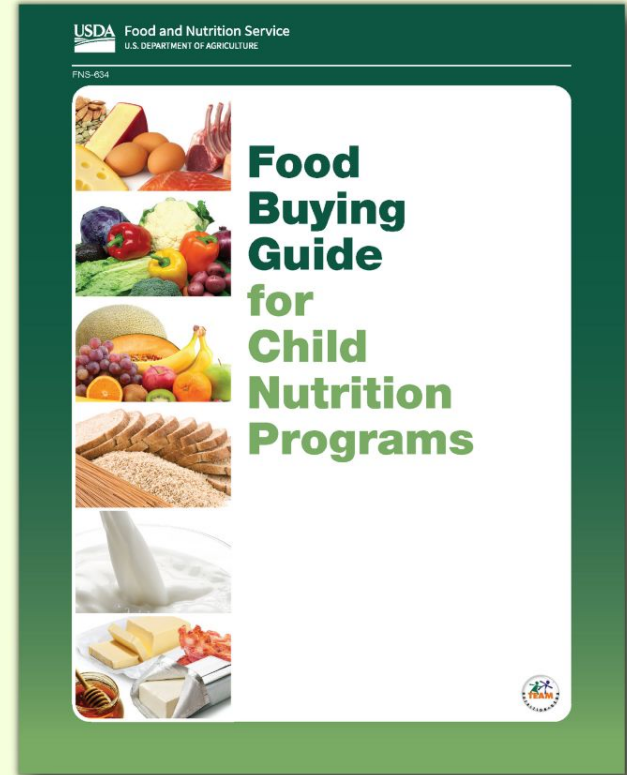


Image Credit: USDA

Biggest Mistakes

1. Crediting math
2. Portion size
3. Yield
4. Serving utensil
5. Recipe instructions

← Ways your recipe can be
out of compliance with
USDA rules

We often see recipes that list portion size by weight when school staff are using a volumetric portioner that doesn't align with the recipe yield



Taste Testing

New is...

scary



New is...

exciting!





Gather Feedback!

- Offer tastings & taste tests
- Conduct student surveys
- Conduct community surveys
- Ask questions
- Listen to feedback
- Take notes





Taste Testing with TK-K

- Get staff buy-in
- Promote it ahead of time
- Visit the classrooms or taste test during lunch in the cafeteria
- Offer versions:
 - Red Beans & Rice
 - Just red beans
 - Just rice
- Use emojis or thumbs up/down
- Keep portions very small
- Be aware of allergies and choking hazards

Promoting Local & Seasonal Menu Items

**National Farm
to School Month**



All of October

CA Crunch Day



1st week of October

**Farm to Summer
Week**



One week each June

Recipe Resources

- [USDA Recipe Standardization Guide for School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [USDA Food Buying Guide](#)
- [USDA Recipe Analysis Workbook \(RAW\)](#)
- [ICN's Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [National CACFP Sponsors Association](#)
- [Project Bread](#)
- [Center for Ecoliteracy](#)
- [Healthy School Recipes](#)
- [Pisanick Partners](#)
- [Chef Ann Foundation](#)



Guest Speaker

Jennifer Huang, RDN, MS

Regional Producer Engagement Specialist

Southern Region

CDFA Office of Farm to Fork



CA Farm to School Program Staff

NORTH COAST REGION:



Network Lead -
[Pamela Lee](#)



Producer Specialist -
[Meerae Park](#)

BAY AREA REGION:



Network Lead -
[Lizzy Elliott](#)



Producer Specialist -
TBD, Position Open

SOUTH COAST REGION:



Network Lead -
[Jacqueline Day](#)



Producer Specialist -
[Chris Massa](#)

GREATER LA REGION:



Network Lead -
[Sophia Riemer Bopp](#)



Producer Specialist -
[Tracey Kimura](#)

SUPERIOR REGION:



Network Lead -
[Jenn Rogge](#)



Producer Specialist -
[Mike Whamond](#)

CENTRAL REGION:



Network Lead -
TBD, Position Open



Producer Specialist -
[Michael Ackley-Grady](#)

SAN JOAQUIN REGION:



Network Lead -
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Projects Coordinator -**
[Rachel Finkes](#)



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[Andi Davis](#)





Community of Practice call



Monthly e-newsletter



IG
@cafarmtoschool



Conference

Any questions?
jennifer.huang@cdfa.ca.gov

Thank you!



Photo Credit: San Luis Coastal USD

Time for a Poll!

Resources

Join the California Food for California Kids Network

California Food for California Kids is an initiative of the Center for Ecoliteracy that builds the capacity and commitment of public school districts to provide all students with fresh, locally-grown school meals and develop connections between the cafeteria, classroom, and garden.



Center for Ecoliteracy Resources

PUBLICATIONS

[Fresh from California](#)

[Nourishing Students Resources](#)

[California Food for California Kids Celebration Resources](#)

VIRTUAL EVENTS

[School Food Success: Recipe Crediting Event Recording](#)

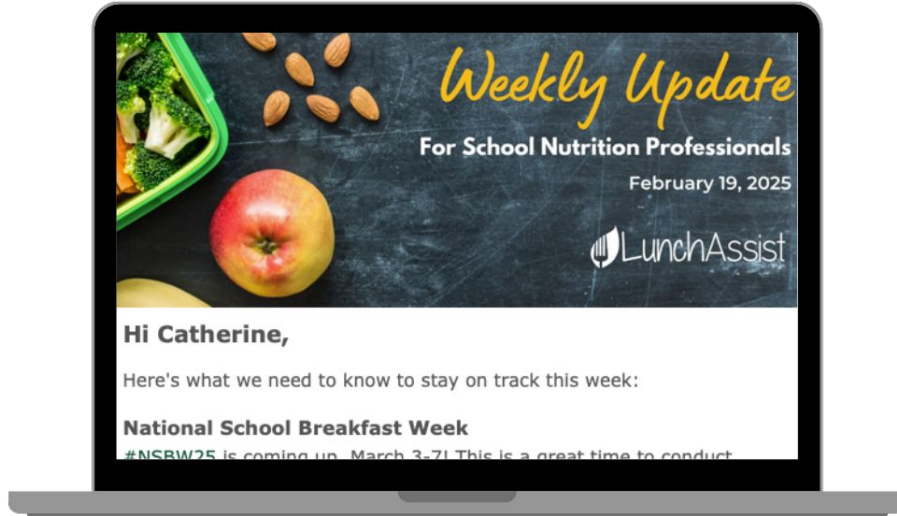
[School Food Innovator Series Archive](#)

School Food Innovator Series SY 2025-26 – *coming soon!*

LunchAssist Resources

LunchAssist Weekly Update Newsletter

LunchAssist “The Lunch Break” Webinar Series



Stay up-to-date on School Nutrition news, policy updates, events, and get free resources into your inbox each week.

Partner Organization Resources

ASPHN: [Farm to ECE Farmer Connections](#)

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

CDFA Office of Farm to Fork: [CA Farm to School Network Call](#)

Thursday, May 29, 2025

Friends of the Earth: [Climate-Friendly Plant-Based Recipes for Schools](#)

SGSO Network: [Indigenous Connections from Classroom to Cafeteria](#)

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

SGSO Network: [Fundraising and Collaborative Sustainability Virtual Gathering](#)

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Q + A

Thank you!



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