



WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION **IN A NUTSHELL**

Tofu in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP)

General Standards

- Tofu is a plant-based source of protein. It is cholesterol-free, low in saturated fat, and high in polyunsaturated fats. Also known as soybean curds, tofu is highly versatile and has many uses in cooking. Tofu is especially useful as a dairy or meat substitute. With proper meal planning, tofu can be part of a healthful diet for most children and adults.
- The ability to offer tofu as a meat alternate allows meal providers in USDA Child Nutrition Programs to further diversify their menus and better meet the dietary needs of vegetarians and culturally diverse groups.
- The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGAs) notes that consumption of a balanced variety of protein foods, including plant-based protein sources, can contribute to improved nutrient intake and health benefits.
- USDA memorandum [SP53 CACFP21-2016](#) explains how to credit tofu in the NSLP, SBP, and CACFP.

General Guidelines

When offering Tofu to students in USDA child nutrition programs (CNP), operators must follow the following guidelines:

1. Tofu must be commercially prepared and meet the following definition, established in [7 CFR 210.2](#) and 226.2: *“a soybean-derived food...basic ingredients [in tofu] are whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water.”*
2. Noncommercial tofu and soy products (e.g., homemade products) are not creditable. Soft or silken tofu that is incorporated into drinks, such as smoothies, or other dishes to add texture or improve nutrition, such as in baked desserts, does not credit toward the meat/meat alternate component. A Child nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statements (PFS) is required for commercially prepared tofu products.

Nutrient Standards and Crediting

- 2.2 ounces ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) of commercially prepared tofu, containing at least 5 grams of protein, credits as 1.0 ounce equivalent meat alternate (per [SP53 CACFP21-2016](#)).

- For menu and recipe planning, 1 pound of tofu with 37 grams of protein contains 7.28 quarter-cup servings and provides 7.25 ounce equivalents meat alternate for food-based menu planning requirements (per [USDA Food Buying Guide](#)).

How to Use Tofu

- Tofu has a very mild, neutral flavor, enabling it to absorb any flavor it is paired with.
- Tofu must be prepared prior to use.
 - Tofu packaged in water and must be drained and pressed to remove excess water. Once drained, place blocks of tofu on a perforated hotel pan then put that into a regular hotel pan that fits. Add another clean hotel pan on top of tofu blocks. Place at least two #10 cans on top to evenly weigh down the tofu to press out water. Let sit for at least 15-30 minutes.
 - Freezing tofu will change the consistency of the finished product, making it chewier, more meat like. It will be able to absorb marinades and develop a crispy outside when oven fried. To freeze: slice extra firm tofu into $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ inch slices and spread in a single layer on a sheet pan. Once frozen, slices can be moved to freezer bags and stored in the freezer for up to one month. When ready to use, thaw in refrigerator and gently press all remaining water from slices.
- Firm and Extra Firm Tofu can be sliced, diced, or crumbled and used in stir-fry recipes as well as oven fried, grilled, baked, scrambled, uncooked, cold, or hot.
- Recipes can be found online at [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#) and the [Let's Cook, Wisconsin School Meals Rock](#) cycle menu webpage.

Resources

1. [Code of Federal Regulations 210.10 Meal Requirements for Lunches and Requirements for Afterschool Snacks](#)
2. Cook's Illustrated, Cook's Science, 2016 Penguin Random House Publishers, Chapter 14, Tofu, pp 119-126.
3. [There are Many Ways to Prepare Tofu](#) The Humane Society of the United States, You Tube Video.
4. [USDA MyPlate](#)