



Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

Park Office  
Center

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DATE: August 22, 2019

MEMO CODE: SP 34-2019, CACFP 15-2019, SFSP 15-2019

SUBJECT: Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina in the Child Nutrition Programs<sup>1</sup>

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

This memorandum rescinds and replaces *SP 22-2019, CACFP 09-2019, SFSP 08-2019 Crediting Coconut, Hominy, Corn Masa, and Corn Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs*. This updated memorandum provides guidance on crediting coconut (including dried coconut), hominy, corn masa, and masa harina and clarifies how to identify popular products made from corn that can credit towards the grain requirements in the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs), including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

Prior to April 17, 2019, when the previous memorandum was published, coconut and hominy did not meet the requirement for any component in the meal patterns but could be served as an “extra” food. Based on stakeholder feedback, and to meet the growing and diverse cultural needs of our Program participants, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has updated food-crediting guidance to allow coconut and hominy to credit in the CNPs. Additionally, in this memorandum, FNS is updating and clarifying our crediting guidance for corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal. The attached Questions and Answers provide more information about crediting these foods in the CNPs.

## Coconut

Fresh, frozen, and dried coconut can be used to enhance the taste and presentation of salads, smoothies, and other dishes served with meals or as snacks. Recognizing its versatility, Program operators now may credit fresh or frozen coconut as a fruit based on volume served. Dried coconut now credits as a fruit at twice the volume served. Like other fruits, at least  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of fresh, frozen, or dried coconut must be served to credit toward the fruit component. Coconut water, labeled as containing 100-percent juice, can

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to the Congressional Review Act (5 U.S.C. §801 et seq.), the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs designated this memorandum as not a major rule, as defined by 5 U.S.C. § 804(2).

credit toward the fruit component as juice per volume served. Please note that coconut flour and coconut oil are not creditable in the CNPs.

Menu planners must consider coconut's caloric and saturated fat content, which may limit its frequency of use in school menus due to the dietary specifications for calories and saturated fat.

As a point of clarification, because it is now creditable as a fruit in the NSLP and SBP, fresh coconut also may be served in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

## **Hominy**

Hominy is traditionally served in Mexican and Native American cultures as a vegetable or as a milled grain product (e.g., hominy grits). Based on its multiple uses and widespread appeal, hominy may now credit towards the vegetable or grain component in a reimbursable meal or snack.

Program operators now may credit hominy as follows:

- ¼ cup of canned, drained hominy or cooked, whole hominy (from dried hominy), credits as ¼ cup vegetable (starchy vegetable for NSLP and SBP).
- ½ cup of cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) of dry hominy grits credits as 1 ounce equivalent whole grain (1 serving grain for SFSP and NSLP Afterschool Snack).

## **Corn Masa, Masa Harina, Corn Flour, and Cornmeal**

Since the release of the April 17, 2019, memo, FNS has received many questions from stakeholders on the crediting method for corn masa, masa harina, corn flour, and cornmeal. As such, we want to provide clarification on the guidance issued in *SP 22-2019, CACFP 09-2019, SFSP 08-2019*.

Program operators now may calculate contributions from corn masa, masa harina, nixtamalized corn flour, and nixtamalized cornmeal in the same manner as all other creditable grain ingredients and food items. Crediting is determined by weight as listed in *Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs*, or by grams of creditable grain per portion. However, if any non-whole corn ingredient is labeled as *enriched*, or includes nutrients sub-listed after the corn ingredient in the ingredient statement, such as: *yellow corn flour (folic acid, riboflavin, niacin, and thiamine)*, then the corn ingredient can contribute only to the enriched grain requirements. Corn that is not “whole” or “enriched” or is not treated with lime (nixtamalized) does not credit as a grain in the CNPs. Please refer to the attached Questions and Answers for more detailed information about crediting these foods.

In addition to rescinding and replacing *SP 22-2019, CACFP 09-2019, SFSP 08-2019*, FNS has also rescinded *SP 02-2013: Corn Masa (Dough) for Use in Tortilla Chips, Taco Shells, and Tamales*, dated October 3, 2012 and *TA 01-2008: Crediting of Corn Meal*

*(Cornmeal) and Corn Flour for Grains/Breads Component*, dated December 11, 2007. FNS will update the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* and the *Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs* to reflect these changes. To view the *Food Buying Guide*, please visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>.

State agencies are reminded to distribute this memorandum to Program operators. Program operators should direct any questions concerning this guidance to their State agency. State agencies with questions should contact the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

**Original Signed**

Angela M. Kline  
Director,  
Policy and Program Development Division

Attachment

**Questions and Answers:  
Crediting Hominy, Corn Masa, and Masa Harina  
in the Child Nutrition Programs**

**1. What is “nixtamalization”?**

Nixtamalization is a process in which dried corn is soaked and cooked in an alkaline (slaked lime) solution. This process increases the bioavailability of certain nutrients. Nixtamalized corn is used to make hominy, corn masa (dough from masa harina), masa harina (corn flour), and certain types of cornmeal. Nixtamalized corn, such as hominy, corn masa, and masa harina are considered whole grain when evaluating products for CNP meal requirements.

**2. Is additional documentation required to count nixtamalized corn ingredients toward the WGR requirements?**

Ingredients labeled as hominy, corn masa, or masa harina do not require additional documentation to count toward the whole grain-rich (WGR) requirements. However, some products made with cornmeal and/or corn flour ingredients may require additional information on a product formulation statement (PFS) to count toward the WGR requirement. If the PFS indicates that cornmeal or corn flour ingredients are nixtamalized, these ingredients can be considered whole grain.

**3. What type of grits are creditable as whole grain in the CNPs?**

Grits specifically labeled as *hominy grits* and products specifying that the corn is whole corn can be credited as whole grain. Products labeled as *enriched grits* may be credited as enriched grains. Grits labeled simply as *grits*, *stone ground corn*, or *degermed corn* are not creditable in the CNPs.

**4. In addition to products labeled as corn masa, masa harina, and hominy, how can Program operators identify products made with nixtamalized corn?**

There are two ways Program operators can identify products made with nixtamalized corn:

- 1) If a product made with corn includes one of the following Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved whole grain health claims on its packaging, the corn in the product is at least 50 percent whole grain:
  - *Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers.*

- *Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease.*

Please note, for NSLP and SBP, any remaining grain(s) must be enriched. For CACFP, the whole product is considered WGR if the packaging includes the FDA whole grain health claim.

- 2) If the ingredient statement indicates the corn is treated with lime (for example, “ground corn with trace of lime” or “ground corn treated with lime”), then the corn is nixtamalized. Because it is nixtamalized, the corn ingredient credits as though it is whole grain.

**5. Can Program operators use a State agency WIC list to identify WGR products?**

Yes. If a product is included on any State agency’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)-approved whole grain food list, it can credit towards the WGR requirements regardless if the product has non-creditable grain ingredients anywhere in the ingredient statement. Program operators can document compliance by obtaining a copy of any State agency’s WIC-approved whole grain food list. For a list of WIC State agency contacts, please see: [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-contacts](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-contacts).

**6. Should nixtamalized corn ingredients be evaluated as if they are whole grain when considering a product as part of the *Smart Snacks in School* standards?**

Yes. Nixtamalized corn is considered a whole grain when evaluating products for the *Smart Snacks in School* standards.