



## The Healthy Option

### USDA Foods

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

Revised  
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*The mission of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people with access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.*

*USDA's 15 nutrition assistance programs are the first line of our Nation's defense against hunger. The most well known include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called the Food Stamp Program; the National School Lunch Program; and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).*



USDA Foods are better than ever. We continually assess the foods we offer for their quality and appeal to school children. Over the years, they have kept pace with nutrition, science, and technological advancements and have changed to conform to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and MyPyramid – USDA's food guidance system.

Each year, USDA provides a significant amount of food to eligible domestic agencies for distribution. In 2009, USDA is scheduled to provide over two billion pounds of nutritious food to State distributing agencies through our nutrition assistance programs. While the majority of food goes to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program, USDA Foods play an important role in feeding America's people of all ages — from infants to the elderly — while supporting the American farmer.

- Over the past two decades, USDA has reduced the levels of fat, sodium (salt), and sugar in the foods we provide while keeping them tasty and acceptable to children.
- USDA promotes fruits and vegetables as an important part of a nutritious diet. In Fiscal Year 2008, USDA purchased \$535 million worth of fruits and vegetables for our programs.
- For more than a decade, USDA has successfully partnered with the Department of Defense to supply more than 60 types of high quality fresh fruits and vegetables to participating schools. These purchases increased from \$4 million in FY 1993 to \$50 million in FY 2008.
- For the past two decades, all canned fruits are packaged in light syrup, water, or natural juice. Unsweetened apple sauce is available to all USDA Foods programs.





## In Schools

- USDA Foods make up about 15 to 20 percent of the food used in school meals provided by the National School Lunch Program. The rest is bought in the commercial market.
- Schools choose what USDA Foods they order. More than 180 products are offered to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program, including fruits, vegetables, meats/fish/poultry, rice, cheese, beans, pasta, and flour and other grain products.
- Schools are free to have their USDA Foods further processed into menu items their students will like. In fact, about half the basic food provided by USDA are processed into a ready-to-use end product. But again, it's the local schools that decide.

- Butter has not been offered to schools since 1997 and, effective SY 2008, shortening was eliminated as an offering.
- In 2008, trans fats were eliminated from our frozen potato products.
- Since 1992, beef patties with a fat level as low as 10% have been offered. Other lower-fat meat offerings include 97% fat-free ham, 95% fat-free turkey ham, turkey taco filling, and diced chicken.
- Meatless spaghetti sauce, several varieties of low- and reduced-fat cheeses, and other lower fat items are available.
- In 2008, parboiled brown rice, whole-grain spaghetti, and rotini became new products to be followed by whole-grain macaroni. USDA offers an array of whole-grain products such as wheat flour, whole-grain corn, rolled oats, and regular brown rice.
- In School Year 2009-10, the sodium levels in all USDA canned vegetables are being reduced to 140 mg per serving. This greatly exceeds the Food and Drug Administration's "healthy" standard for sodium, which is 480 mg per serving. Providing low-sodium USDA vegetables to schools helps them lower the sodium levels in their menus. Schools continue to have the option to order salt-free frozen vegetables, as well.

## From USDA to Your School: The National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

What's for lunch? For over 30 million school children each school day, the answer is a meal that contains nutritious USDA Foods. The food USDA provides is about 15 to 20 percent of the food used in the nutritionally balanced meals served each day in more than 101,000 schools and residential child-care institutions participating in the National School Lunch Program. The remaining 80 percent of the food used by schools is purchased in the commercial market. But, wherever the food is obtained, National School Lunch Program meals must meet program requirements and Federal dietary guidelines as assessed over a one-week period. Since 1946, the National School Lunch Program has served more than 214 billion lunches to students across America.



## Other USDA Food Programs

### Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

Hunger doesn't take a summer vacation. USDA's Summer Food Service Program provides nutritious USDA Foods for use in meals served to children during their summer vacation from school (and long vacation periods for schools on year-round schedules) in needy areas.

### Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP provides nutritious USDA Foods for meals and snacks served to children and adults in day care facilities, such as child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. The program also provides meals to children in emergency shelters and snacks to youth in after school programs.

### Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

CSFP works to improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women and other new mothers up to 1 year post partum, infants, children (up to age 6), and older people at least 60 years of age, by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA Foods.

### Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

FDPIR provides monthly food packages to low-income people residing on Indian reservations or to low-income Native Americans living in designated areas near Indian reservations. The program serves as an alternative to SNAP for those living in remote areas of reservations and offers participants a selection of more than 70 products.

### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP provides emergency food and nutrition assistance to low-income Americans, including the elderly and homeless. The program supplies USDA Foods to States, which then distribute them to local agencies that serve the public directly through household distributions (such as food banks), or congregate feeding sites (such as homeless shelters and soup kitchens).

### Disaster Food Assistance Program

The Disaster Food Assistance Program provides foods for shelters and other mass feeding sites, disaster SNAP benefits, and foods for distribution directly to households in need in certain limited circumstances. Ensuring that people have access to food is perhaps one of the most immediate concerns following a disaster, such as a storm, earthquake, civil disturbance, or a flood. Existing USDA Foods stored at State, local, and school warehouses intended for the NSLP, TEFAP, and other USDA Foods assistance programs are used.

## Helpful Links

**Commodity Food Network**

[www.commodityfoods.usda.gov](http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov)

**USDA Foods: Healthy Choices, American Grown**

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/commodityfoodfacts.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/commodityfoodfacts.htm)

**USDA Foods in Schools**

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/)

**Food Processing and USDA Foods**

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/processing/national/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/processing/national/default.htm)

**Food and Nutrition service**

[www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)

**Quick Facts on FNS Programs**

[www.fns.usda.gov/cga/FactSheets/ProgramFactSheets.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/FactSheets/ProgramFactSheets.htm)

**The National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**

[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/)

**Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/)

**Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/)

**Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/)

**Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpi/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpi/)

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/)

**Disaster Food Assistance Program**

[www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fd-disasters/about\\_disasters.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fd-disasters/about_disasters.htm)

**MyPyramid.gov**

[www.mypyramid.gov/](http://www.mypyramid.gov/)



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