

CALORIE RANGE

New Requirements

School meals offered to each age/grade group must meet, on average over the school week, the minimum and maximum calorie levels specified in the following table:

Calorie ranges for breakfast		
Grades K–5 350–500	Grades 6–8 400–550	Grades 9–12 450–600
Calorie ranges for lunch		
Grades K–5 550–650	Grades 6–8 600–700	Grades 9–12 750–850

Foundations

School meal requirements have focused on providing at least the minimum quantities of food for students who may not have regular access to good nutrition.

Students need enough food energy to grow and learn. USDA requires a minimum calorie level. This is very important for those free and reduced price meal eligible students who may rely on school meals for a large part of their calorie and nutrient needs. It is also important that schools do not overfeed students and so a maximum level has been established.

What is a Calorie?

Calories are units of energy. Just like a car needs gas to run, the human body needs calories for energy. Calories come from three groups: carbohydrates, protein and fats.



Using USDA Foods

USDA Foods only distributes canned fruits in light syrup or fruit juice to decrease calories from sugar. The fat content in the specifications for USDA ground beef products has decreased in recent years and now provides a leaner product with fewer calories per serving.

Menu Tips

Sometimes schools struggle to meet the minimum calorie requirements while staying under the maximum fat requirements in meals. There are several steps to take to add calories and nutrients to meals without increasing the fat.

- Offer students additional servings of whole grain products and healthy side dishes to increase nutrients without large increases in total fat intake.
- Offer students fresh fruits for side dishes and desserts. Offer fresh vegetables as side dishes to increase nutrients and fiber. Limit the offering of added cheese, cream-based sauces, high-fat salad dressings and condiments.
- Plan daily menus to provide the calories needed each day to stay within the calorie range for the weekly average.
- Keep portion sizes age appropriate and consistent.

AREA**NEW REQUIREMENTS**

Calorie Range	As a weekly average, SFAs shall offer meals that meet specific calorie ranges for each age and grade group.
Trans Fat & Saturated Fat	SFAs shall eliminate foods containing trans fats and reduce saturated fats to less than 10% of calories.
Whole Grains	One half of the grains served shall be whole grain or whole grain-rich until school year 2014–2015 when all grains must be whole grain or whole grain-rich.
Fruits	SFAs shall offer at a minimum, one fruit on all points of service for breakfast and lunch. When using frozen and canned fruits, SFAs shall use products that are packed in natural juice, water, or light syrup.
Vegetables	SFAs shall provide a variety of vegetables throughout the week, making sure dark green and red/orange vegetables are each offered at least one time per week.
Milk	SFAs shall offer only fat-free (skim) flavored or unflavored and low-fat (1%) milk at all meals. SFAs shall eliminate 2% and whole milk offerings.
Legumes	SFAs shall offer legumes (dry beans and peas) at least one time per week.
Sodium	SFAs shall reduce sodium 25–50% over a ten year implementation schedule.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Fiber	SFAs should offer meals with at least one gram of fiber per 100 calories.
Condiments	SFAs should not have salt or sugar dispensers or packets available. SFAs shall accurately reflect condiment usage in nutrient analysis and on production records. SFAs are encouraged to use low-fat condiments and/or control portions of high-fat condiments.
À la Carte	SFAs shall limit à la carte foods to those that meet the recommended nutritional guidelines for foods served in schools.