

Proteins



When menu planning, consider offering, selling, or serving nutritious foods from the "Serve Frequently" section most often and offering the "Serve Infrequently" foods less often. When offering foods from the "Serve Infrequently" foods, consider offering smaller serving sizes. Infrequently is defined as placed or occurring at wide intervals in space or time¹. This may look different between schools. For example, if offering a 4-week menu cycle, this could look like offering the food once or twice during the cycle. Schools are encouraged to plan meals and snacks to best meet the needs of their student population and determine when and where changes are possible.

Serve Frequently

- Legumes (beans, peas, lentils, edamame), fresh/canned/dried/frozen
- Hummus or other bean spreads
- Eggs
- Tofu, tempeh
- Chicken, turkey (fresh/frozen)
- Lean beef and pork (fresh/frozen)
- Game (e.g., deer, elk, moose)*
- Extra lean or lean ground meat (e.g., chicken, turkey, beef, pork)
- Fish and shellfish (fresh/frozen)
- Canned fish
- Hard cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Paneer
- Yogurt or Greek yogurt
- Nuts, seeds, nut butters and seed butters**
- Plain (unsweetened) milk (0–2% MF)
- Plain (unsweetened) yogurt drinks
- Plain (unsweetened) kefir (0–2% MF)
- Plain (original or unsweetened) fortified soy beverages[^]

Serve Infrequently and in smaller serving sizes

- Commercially battered and/or breaded meat, fish, chicken, turkey (e.g., chicken nuggets, chicken strips)
- Deli meats (e.g., bologna, pepperoni, salami, ham)
- Hot dogs, wieners
- Bacon
- Sausages, pork breakfast links
- Corned beef
- Beef jerky
- Processed cheese – spread, slices or sauce
- Ice cream, frozen yogurt, frozen dessert
- Milkshakes (homemade or pre-packaged)
- Pudding
- Products that are deep-fried, contain sugar substitutes or supplemental ingredients (e.g. caffeine, amino acids)

¹ [Merriam Webster dictionary](#)

*Work with your local Environmental Health Officer

**May be dependent on school food allergy policy

[^] Other plant-based beverages, like almond and oat, are low in protein and are not part of the Protein Foods.