



# Smoothies

## Program Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

Most kids don't eat enough fruits, vegetables and dairy foods<sup>1</sup> – and getting kids excited about consuming those nutritious foods can be a challenge. Smoothies are a trendy, appealing solution that are both kid-friendly and dietitian-approved.

### Why are smoothies important?

Adding smoothies to your school menus can help enhance the image of your program, increase student participation, and increase your department's revenue. They are extremely versatile, with numerous flavor combinations that keep menus fresh.

Smoothies can be incorporated during breakfast, lunch, or supper service as a part of the reimbursable meal or served as an a la carte option. Additionally, smoothies may credit toward meal pattern requirements for milk, meat alternatives (yogurt), fruits and vegetables.

**Increased Child Nutrition Revenue** Schools that added smoothies to their breakfast menu increased average daily participation (ADP) by over 40%.<sup>2</sup>

**Increased Fruit Consumption** Smoothies have shown to increase the number of students eating a full serving of fruit at breakfast by 40%.<sup>3</sup>

### Enhances the Image of Your Nutrition Program:



Irving ISD conducted a pilot at two sites to see how the students would accept smoothies and to get an idea of how feasible they would be from an operational standpoint. After this pilot, we decided to implement smoothies at all secondary schools to align our menus with the trends that we see in the restaurants.

- Amber Marvel, M.S., SNS,  
Purchasing, Nutrition and Menu Operations Coordinator.





## Can smoothies count toward a reimbursable meal?



Yes! Schools participating in USDA Child Nutrition Programs, including supper, for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) may credit the Smoothies at any meal or snack:

- Smoothies – fruit, vegetables, yogurt (meat alternate) and milk

For more details on crediting specific components, see USDA guide [Offering Smoothies as Part of Reimbursable School Meals: Grades K-12](#).



## Can smoothies be sold a la carte?



Smoothies are served as part of a reimbursable menu may also be sold a la carte on the day they are served and the day after. Smoothies may also be served a la carte any day if they meet [Smart Snacks in School guidelines](#), but consider the difference between beverage smoothies and food smoothies. See more details on smoothies as smart snacks in [USDA memo SP 23-2014](#) (V.3, Questions 8-13).



## Will preparing smoothies be time-consuming for my staff?



There are many options for preparing and serving smoothies, and those will vary based on your district/campus. Thorough planning, with the right equipment, will help ensure that preparation is not labor-intensive. Many components of smoothies can be prepared the night before, limiting the work needed on the morning of service.



## What equipment will I need to prepare smoothies?



Equipment needs will vary by district/campus. Consider the quantity you will need to produce, your storage facilities and your budget to implement a new program. However, commercial immersion blenders are a great, budget-friendly option when preparing a large quantity of smoothies, such as those served as part of a reimbursable meal. Commercial immersion blenders allow your staff to easily prepare large batches of smoothies prior to meal service and are typically lightweight enough to be used by any staff member.

## More questions?

Reach out to your [Local Dairy Council](#) to learn more!

### References:

1. USDA and USDHHS. [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), 2020-2025. 9th Edition
2. Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools. [Innovation Smoothie Program Boosts Breakfast Participation](#).
3. Health Education & Behavior. [Impact of Fruit Smoothies on Adolescent Fruit Consumption at School](#). January 2015.