

## Best Practices

The following best practices are optional guidelines for increasing the quality of meals served in your program beyond the meal pattern requirements.

### *Vegetables and Fruits*

- Make at least one of the two required components of snack a vegetable or a fruit.
- Serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, frozen, or dried) more often than juice.
- Provide at least one serving from each vegetable subgroup per week. The subgroups of vegetables are: dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans and peas (also known as legumes), starchy vegetables, and other vegetables.



### *Grains*

- Provide 2 servings of whole grain foods per day.



### *Meat & Meat Alternates*

- Serve only lean meats, nuts, and legumes.
- Limit serving processed meats, such as hot dogs and deli meat, to no more than one serving per week.
- Serve only natural cheeses, and choose low-fat or reduced-fat varieties.



### *Milk*

- Serve only unflavored milk to all participants. If flavored milk is served to children 6 years old and older, use the Nutrition Facts Label to select and serve flavored milk that contains no more than 22 grams of sugar per 8 fluid ounces, or the flavored milk with the lowest amount of sugar if flavored milk within the sugar limit is not available.



### *Pre-Fried Food*

- Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods (such as chicken nuggets, fish sticks) to no more than one serving per week.



### *Added Sugar*

- Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as sweet toppings like honey, jam, or syrup; mix-in ingredients sold with yogurt like honey, candy, or cookie pieces; and sugar sweetened beverages including sport or fruit drinks or sodas.



### *Local Foods*

- Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals. This best practice helps children learn where food comes from, and helps improve the quality of the meal.