



Alabama State Department of Education

Child Nutrition School Meals Program

Guidance for Coffee in School Meals



COFFEE GUIDANCE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Students in grades 9-12 may be served coffee as part of a reimbursable meal or as an a-la-carte item. Certain guidelines apply.

COFFEE and REIMBURSABLE MEALS:

Coffee and sweetener may be added to 8 ounces of milk **before** or **after** the Point-of-Sale (POS).

- The recipe must include 8 ounces of milk in addition to any sweeteners and coffee. The cup size must be greater than 8 ounces to ensure the minimum milk requirement.
- If the coffee or sweetener has added calories or added sugars, it must be included in the nutrient analysis.

Any added sweeteners must be factored into calorie limits and adhere to added sugar limits for **flavored milk** beginning program year 2025-2026: flavored milk may contain no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces or 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces for a la carte.

NOTE: Commercially prepared coffee-flavored milks, such as lattes, may be counted as part of a reimbursable meal **only** if the product label clearly states, “flavored milk”. This ensures that the product meets the federal standard of identity to be labeled as milk.

COFFEE and A LA CARTE:

1% or fat-free milk, when offered as an a-la-carte item, may be flavored with regular coffee and sweetener.

- The coffee beverage must meet Smart Snack standards for “other flavored and/or carbonated beverages” in the [Smart Snacks Products Calculator](#). Calories from 1% or fat-free milk do not count towards the calorie limit when incorporated into the coffee beverage (See Q&A 15, Page 5 of [SP 23-2014 \(V. 3\)](#)).
- Commercially prepared coffee that does not clearly label “flavored milk” on the product must meet the Smart Snack standards for “other flavored and/or carbonated beverages” in the [Smart Snacks Products Calculator](#).
- Commercially prepared coffee that is labeled as “flavored milk” on the product label is considered milk and does not require Smart Snack calculation. Fluid milk may contain no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces or 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces.



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This guidance has been established to address frequently asked questions regarding coffee drinks in school meal programs. Please note that this information is not newly released but has been clarified by the USDA.





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COFFEE GUIDANCE FOR ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Please note that both caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee are not allowable for students in grades K-8 as part of a reimbursable meal or as an a-la-carte item.

FLAVORED MILK:

Flavored milk that mimics the taste of coffee but contains no actual coffee **is allowed** for all grade levels. It must be clearly labeled as “flavored milk” on the product label. This ensures that the product meets the federal standard of identity to be labeled as milk.

- Flavored milk may contain no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces or 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces for a la carte.
- Note the Smart Snack volume limits for milk:
 - 8 oz for grades K-5
 - 12 oz for grades 6-8



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