

## Healthy Meals in Schools Programme

### Guidelines – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### Criterion 1

- Food in the four food groups (1) brown rice and wholemeal bread, (2) fruit, (3) vegetables, (4) meat and alternative protein food, shall be made available in every main meal.

Vegetables and fruit shall be served in the following amounts:

- Vegetables: At least two heaped dessert spoons
- Fruit: At least half a serving. Examples of half serving of fruit are ½ small apple and ½ wedge of watermelon

Self-service of fruit is acceptable.

#### Four food groups

- What are the types of food that have to be served as a balanced main meal, i.e. in the four food groups?***

The following table includes a non-exhaustive list of foods that are and are not required to be served as a balanced meal. For example, two pieces of roti prata have to be served as part of the four food groups while siew mai does not.

<b>Examples of food that are required to include four food groups when served</b>
1. Plain roti prata <sup>1</sup> , 2 regular pieces (120g)
2. Roti john, 1 regular sandwich (250g)
3. Roti jala, 4 pieces (320g)
4. Chapatti, 2 pieces (90g)
5. Tortilla/Pita wrap with filling, 1 piece (200g)
6. Macaroni cheese, 1 bowl (210g)
7. Egg Banjo, 1 piece (180g)
8. Baguette/Sandwich with savoury filling; 2 slices of bread (110g)
9. Sushi./Gimbap; 8 pieces (280g)
10. Pizza, 2 slices (120g)
11. Chicken burger, 1 piece (130g)
<p>These examples are listed based on the assumption that the serving size of these items is similar to those of main meals (e.g. rice, noodles) served in schools. It is required to comply with criterion 1 (include food in the 4 food groups, serve at least 2 heaped dessert spoons of vegetables and at least ½ serving of fruit). If the serving size of these items is smaller than those of main meals, it is not required to comply with criterion 1.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Homemade roti prata shall be prepared according to the Healthy Meals in Schools Programme criteria (e.g. ghee and butter are not used).

<b>Examples of food that are <u>not required</u> to include 4 food groups when served</b>
1. Different types of pau
2. Siew mai
3. Soon kueh
4. Chee cheong fun
5. Popiah (non deep fried)
6. Putu mayam
7. Muah chee
8. Tau huay
9. Tau suan
10. Red/green bean soup
11. Cookie
12. Peanut butter/jam sandwich
13. Waffle/pancake (plain/peanut/jam/ chocolate chips/banana)
14. Bun (with or without filling)
15. Cake/muffin
16. Nachos with cheese
17. Breakfast cereals with or without milk
18. Lor mai kai/fan choi
These examples of food are listed based on the assumption that these food are commonly consumed as snacks.

i. First Food Group: Brown rice and wholemeal bread

- **Are brown rice and wholemeal bread the only type of staple that can be served?**  
‘Brown rice and wholemeal bread’ is the name of the food group in My Healthy Plate. Food from this food group can also include other local staples e.g. noodles, wraps, pumpkin, potato etc. Please ensure that Criterion 2 (wholegrains) is also met.

ii. Second and Third Food Group: Fruit & vegetables

- **Are tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and bell peppers considered as fruit or vegetables?**  
Botanically, anything with seed is a fruit. However in Singapore’s context, these are considered and eaten as vegetables.
- **Can fruit be replaced with vegetables in meals?**  
Both fruit and vegetables should be consumed daily without one replacing the other as they are two different groups that offer unique combination of nutrients and phytochemicals. For instance, vegetables in general are higher in iron, folate, and vitamin K while fruit are generally higher in vitamin C, especially considering fruit are usually eaten raw and this could retain the heat-sensitive vitamin C. By consuming both fruit and vegetables, children could get the wide range of important nutrients and phytochemicals contained in them.
- **What is two heaped dessert spoons of vegetables?**  
Two heaped dessertspoons of vegetables is approximately 50 - 75g (about ½ - ¾ serving) depending on the type of vegetables.

- **What is ½ serving of fruit?**

Examples of ½ serving of fruit is ½ apple (65g), 1 small banana and 5 grapes.

- iii. Fourth Food Group: Meat and alternative protein food

- **Can mock meat be served for vegetarian dishes?**

Non pre-deep-fried mock meat can be served (refer to Criterion 4).

### Criterion 2

Include wholegrains in food:

- a) Rice/porridge: At least 20% unpolished rice, e.g. brown rice shall be mixed with other rice of choice
- b) Noodles<sup>2</sup>: Only wholegrain oriental noodles<sup>3</sup>/instant noodles to be served from January 2020.
- c) Bread: Only wholemeal/wholegrain bread shall be used to prepare sandwiches

- **What are the types of wholegrains that can be served?**

The following table is a non-exhaustive list of wholegrains that can be served in schools. If you are unsure, let the canteen committee know of your request so that they can check with HPB.

Brown rice/porridge	Chapatti	Quinoa
Mixed brown rice/porridge	Oats	Millet
Wholemeal noodles & pasta	Wholemeal biscuit	Unrefined barley
Brown rice beehoon	Soba (made with buckwheat)	Buckwheat
Red cargo rice	Black glutinous rice	Purple rice

- **Can instant noodles without the HCS logo be allowed to be sold in school?**

Yes, if the instant noodles are not deep-fried, wholegrain, and meet the following requirement as an equivalent to HCS instant noodles: ≤8g/100g total fat, ≤0.1g/100g trans fat, ≤400mg/100g sodium.

- **Is white french loaf (baguette) allowed to be sold? The wholemeal variant is difficult and expensive to obtain in the market.**

Yes, it is allowed as the wholemeal variant is not easily available in the market.

### Criterion 3

Use skinless poultry and lean meat when preparing food.

- **Is skinless chicken thigh allowed to be served?**

Yes, chicken thigh is allowed.

<sup>2</sup> For spaghetti, minimum 20% of the wholegrain variant must be included.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of oriental noodles include yellow noodles, kuey teow, and bee hoon.

#### Criterion 4

Deep-fried food, pre deep-fried food upon purchase (e.g. pre deep-fried chicken nuggets and pre deep-fried French fries) and preserved food (e.g. sausages, ham, luncheon meat, preserved vegetables, preserved eggs) shall not be sold.

- Are commercial products which undergo the par-fry process, allowed to be served?***  
 Par-frying is a process that involves food being fully submerged in oil, as with the deep-frying process, but at a shorter cooking time. Food that are par-fried will also be considered as pre deep-fried and will not be allowed for sale in schools.
- Are achar and kimchi allowed for sale?***  
 No, these contain added salt during the preservation process and therefore not allowed.
- Is cheese tofu allowed to be served?***  
 No, it is not allowed as cheese tofu is usually pre deep-fried.
- Is crab stick allowed to be served?***  
 Yes, crab stick is allowed for sale in schools.
- Are egg noodles allowed to be served?***  
 Most commercially available dried egg noodles have been pre deep-fried. For example, ee-fu noodles are not allowed. Therefore, schools are encouraged to use fresh noodles. Please ensure that Criterion 2 (wholegrains) is also met.
- Are fish cakes allowed to be served?***  
 Fish cakes are usually pre deep-fried items and will not be allowed for sale in schools. However, if canteen vendors are able to look for the non pre deep-fried (e.g. steamed) variety of fish cakes, those will be allowed.

[Commercial] Pre deep-fried Fish Cake



[Commercial] Non deep-fried Steamed Fish Cake



- Are commercial fish fingers with the healthier choice symbol allowed to be served?***  
 All food items which have been pre deep fried, with or without the HCS logo will not be allowed for sale in school canteen/cafes.

- ***Is mock meat allowed to be served?***  
Assessors will have to observe if the mock meat is pre deep-fried visually and check the nutrition information panel on the packaging. If the meat is not pre deep-fried, and the total fat is <10g/100g and the sodium is <600mg/100g, then it is allowed.
- ***Are sausages, ham and luncheon meat allowed to be served?***  
Only sausages, ham and luncheon meat that have no (zero) nitrite with <450mg/100g sodium and <10g/100g total fat can be sold in schools. HPB will require a lab report of these no-nitrite sausages, ham or luncheon meat from the suppliers prior to sale in schools. Once every two years, an audit laboratory check of these food products will be conducted to ensure the nitrite content is as per committed and fulfil the HCS criteria.
- ***Is seaweed allowed to be served?***  
Most seaweed sold commercial are with added salt/sugar and are not allowed. Dried seaweed without added salt is allowed.
- ***Is it acceptable to use preserved vegetables which have been pre-soaked for a day (to get rid of excess sodium), in soups?***  
No, it is not allowed. This is to encourage the use of natural ingredients, for example, mushrooms, tomatoes, celery, garlic, onions, herbs and spices, for flavouring instead of salt or salt-preserved food ingredients.
- ***Are taupok and taukee allowed to be served?***  
Taupok is usually pre deep-fried and therefore it is not allowed.

As taukee is beancurd strips that are usually not pre-deep-fried, it is allowed in food preparation, but should not be a replacement of protein items such as meat/fish/egg.

#### Criterion 5

When high fat ingredients (e.g. coconut milk/cream, cheese, mayonnaise, cream) are used, half or more of the required amounts of such ingredients shall be replaced with reduced-fat alternatives (e.g. reduced-fat evaporated milk, reduced-fat cheese, reduced-fat mayonnaise and reduced-fat cream).

Use oils with the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) in food preparation.

Butter, lard, hard margarine, ghee and shortening shall not be used.

- ***Is coconut milk allowed to be served?***  
Yes, coconut milk is allowed to be used with at least 50% of coconut milk replaced with reduced-fat coconut milk, full cream milk or equivalent.
- ***Is mayonnaise allowed to be served?***  
Yes, mayonnaise is allowed to be used with at least 50% to be replaced by a lower/reduced fat counterpart. HCS mayonnaise is recommended as it is significantly lower in fat as compared to average commercial mayonnaise. Alternative to using HCS mayonnaise can be commercial mayonnaise labelled as lower/reduced fat (at least 25% less fat than the original mayonnaise of the same brand). If mayonnaise is homemade, it has to meet the HCS criteria for salad dressings/mayonnaise which is  $\leq 5\text{g}/100\text{g}$  total fat,  $\leq 500\text{mg}/100\text{g}$  sodium and  $\leq 15\text{g}/100\text{g}$  sugar.

- ***Is margarine allowed to be served?***

There are two types of commercial margarine: hard margarine and soft margarine. Hard margarine can be left at room temperature and it will remain hard and not melt. However, hard margarine is high in saturated fat and will not be allowed.

Soft margarine is allowed and need to be refrigerated otherwise it will be very soft if left at room temperature. The total fat for soft margarine is contributed mainly by unsaturated fats (good fats), which is the main composition of fat present in healthier plant oils (e.g. soyabean oil, canola oil) used to produce soft margarine.

#### Criterion 6

Gravy/sauce/oily or salty soup shall not be served unless upon request. When requested, do not serve more than two dessertspoons of gravy/sauce/oily or salty soup. This criterion is not applicable to noodles/pasta.

- ***Is it acceptable to give more than the recommended two dessertspoons of gravy to the students upon request?***

Except for noodle and pasta dishes, there should be no more than two dessertspoons of gravy/sauce being served per meal portion.

#### Criterion 7

Stalls selling snacks shall only sell homemade snacks (e.g. salads, sandwiches) with the sugar content equal to or less than one tablespoon (15g) per serving, or commercially prepared products with the HCS or HCS-equivalent.

- ***Is HCS Jello product allowed to be sold as a drink or snack?***

Under the HCS list, this product is considered to be “miscellaneous/snack” instead of “beverage”.

- ***Do the following need to be served according to the 4 food groups - steamed yam cake, lor mai kai, fan choy, glutinous rice and garlic bread?***

These items are not required to be served according to the 4 food groups as the serving sizes of these food items are usually in small portions (not the size of the main meals) and they are usually consumed as a snack.

- ***A snack stall is selling a set of three pieces of half-sliced wholemeal bread (not full sized meal) with a little egg filling and lettuce. Can it be exempted from Criterion 1 – the four food groups?***

Yes. It can be exempted from Criterion 1, considering that 1 ½ slices of wholemeal bread are barely 1 serving and this item is served in the snack stall where most of the items (e.g pau, siew mai, kueh, cake) are not considered as main meals.

- ***Are small amounts of Oreo, Nutella and Mcvities biscuits allowed to be used in homemade desserts such as Oreo cupcakes?***

Yes, they are allowed so long as the sugar content per serving is <1 tablespoon (15g) of sugar.

## Criterion 8

Sale of drinks and desserts with less sugar.

- a) For commercially prepared sweetened drinks and commercially packed drinks such as canned and bottle beverages, the sugar level shall follow the table below, or refer to the list of drinks allowed for sale in school at HPB's Healthy Meals in School Programme website<sup>4</sup>.

Types of drink	Sugar level (per 100ml)
Asian drinks / Ready-to-drink tea	≤ 6g
Juice drinks	≤ 6g
Carbonated drinks	≤ 7g
Sports drinks	≤ 6g
Dairy / Soya / Malted	≤ 6g (added sugar)
Yoghurt / Cultured milk drinks	≤ 7g (added sugar)
Pure fruit & vegetable juices	≤ 12.5g (no added sugar)

- b) Drinks, including commercially packed drinks and freshly brewed/squeezed beverages such as homemade barley and fruit juice, can only be sweetened with sugars. Non-sugar substitute such as sugar alcohol (e.g. sorbitol and xylitol) and intense sweeteners (e.g. acesulfame K, sucralose, aspartame) are not allowed.
- c) At least 10% of all the commercially prepared drinks and commercially packed drinks sold in the school shall be calorie-free (e.g. bottled water).
- d) For homemade drinks and desserts (e.g. barley, coffee, tea, green bean soup, soya bean pudding),
- the sugar content shall be equal to or less than 6g/100ml
  - solid ingredients (e.g. canned fruit in syrup, “pearl”/ “bubble”, chin chow and sago) that are sweetened shall not be used
- e) No sweeteners (e.g. syrup, sugar, honey) shall be added to homemade fruit juices or freshly brewed/squeezed drinks.

• **How do I calculate the amount of sugar in my drink?**

You can calculate the amount of sugar added (rule of thumb, 1 teaspoon of sugar is 5g) and divide it by the total amount of ingredients in the drink/dessert, followed by multiplying the answer by 100%. Your final answer should be ≤6%. Otherwise, you have to further reduce the amount of sugar added so that the end product will contain only ≤6% sugar.

• **I am selling grass jelly drink (chin chow), can the drink contain the jelly?**

Yes, the drink can contain the jelly as long as the jelly is not pre-soaked in syrup.

• **Are drinks with sugar alcohol (e.g. sorbitol, xylitol, maltitol, isomalt, lactitol, mannitol and erythritol) allowed?**

Drinks with sugar alcohol are not allowed.

### Others

• **Where can I purchase healthier ingredients and approved beverages?**

You may refer to the list of suppliers for healthier ingredients and approved beverages on HPB's Healthy Meals in School Programme website<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hpb.gov.sg/schools/school-programmes/healthy-meals-in-schools-programme>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hpb.gov.sg/schools/school-programmes/healthy-meals-in-schools-programme>