



Alabama State Department of Education

Child Nutrition School Meals Program

Guidance for Coffee in School Meals



COFFEE and 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.

NOTE: Commercially prepared coffee-flavored milks, such as lattes, cannot be counted as part of a reimbursable meal because they do not meet 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 must meet the Smart Snack standards for “other flavored and/or carbonated beverages” in the [Smart Snacks Products Calculator](#).

Low- and No-Calorie Beverages (High School Only)

With or Without Caffeine



Low Calorie Maximums: *

40 calories/8 fl oz

60 calories/12 fl oz

*Equivalent to 5 calories per fluid ounce.



No Calorie Maximums: *

10 calories/20 fl oz

*Less than 5 calories per 8 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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