



Provincial School Food Guidelines

A Resource for Volunteers



The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and their partners are committed to improving access to healthy foods and drinks for school-aged children and youth. Provincial School Food Guidelines (SFG) are a tool for schools and school food providers to support them in offering these foods and drinks at school and school-sponsored events.

Since students eat many meals and snacks in these settings, having access to the healthiest foods and drinks available is important. A healthy school food environment can:

- help nourish students to be ready to learn;
- connect what is taught about healthy eating in the classroom with foods and drinks they access at school and school-sponsored events;
- reduce students' exposure to foods high in sugar, salt and saturated fats;
- provide opportunities to make healthy choices; and,
- support eating well long term.

Involvement of parents and caregivers, teachers, students, school staff, school councils, volunteers and school food providers, is important in supporting the use of the SFG. Having everyone get involved, understand the value of the guidelines and support the changes is key to the successful implementation of the SFG.

How volunteers can support the use of the Provincial School Food Guidelines

Provincial School Food Guidelines (SFG) apply to all foods and drinks that are sold and/or served at school, including in cafeterias, breakfast and lunch programs, canteens, vending machines, and any foods used for fundraising. The SFG also apply to foods and drinks offered at school sponsored events (e.g. sports, drama) after school and on weekends.

What children and youth choose to eat and drink depends largely on what choices are available to them. Breakfast and lunch programs at school, as well as canteens at school or school events, provide opportunities for children and youth to access healthy options. Shifting to offering more **vegetables and fruits** – fresh, frozen and canned are all great choices, **protein foods**, **whole grains** and **water** will support a healthier school food environment.

If you are shopping for foods and drinks for a school breakfast or lunch program, or if you are running a canteen at a school event (e.g., sport tournament), it is important to be aware of what foods fit the SFG and what foods do not fit the SFG. The tables and information on pages 3-5 will provide this guidance and help you to determine what can be offered.

Many healthy foods and drinks can be part of school food programs, and offered in canteens at school events. For canteens at school events, such as sports tournaments, schools have reported that the following options have worked well:

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- chili with a whole grain roll
- homemade soups (e.g., moose or turkey)
- macaroni and cheese
- grilled cheddar cheese sandwiches on whole grain bread
- whole grain bagels or English muffins with margarine, jam or cream cheese
- grilled burgers made with ground beef, moose or turkey on whole wheat buns

For healthy snack ideas for canteens, check out the [Canteen Ideas for School](#) resource. Students and their families have asked for healthy foods and drinks to be available in these settings, so promote your new approach to the canteen and talk with the school community about the types of foods and drinks they would like to see offered. Some schools use posters or social media to advertise their delicious and healthy canteen items in advance and at the event.

Some schools seek sponsorship for school events. Keep in mind that any sponsorships should support the healthy food environment. Event titles (e.g., sporting tournaments), signage or banners, food sponsorships, gift cards or prizes etc. should all reflect the SFG. Some schools in the past have partnered with fast-food chains to sponsor these events, this sends mixed messages to students and the school community, and does not align with the SFG. Instead, local non-food businesses may agree to support these events and have their name promoted such as sports equipment stores or hardware stores.

The SFG also apply to anything used for school fundraising. Check out the [Fundraising Ideas for Schools](#) resource for suggestions.



Using the School Food Guidelines

The following information can support school staff, volunteers and food providers to determine what foods and drinks can be sold and/or served at school and school-sponsored events.

Vegetables and Fruit

Healthiest Choices	Do not sell or serve
<p>These foods and beverages can be sold or served at school</p>	<p>These foods or beverages are higher in sodium (salt), sugars and/or saturated fat and cannot be sold or served at school</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh vegetables and fruits • Frozen vegetables and fruits • Canned vegetables (use lower sodium varieties when possible or rinse before using) • Canned fruits or fruit cups (in juice or light syrup) • Fruit sauces (100% fruit with no added sugar, e.g., unsweetened apple sauce) • Dried fruits (100% fruit with no added sugar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% fruit juice, fruit drinks, punches or cocktails • Vegetables in sauces (pre-packaged) • Canned fruits in heavy syrups • Battered and/or deep fried vegetables • French fries/potato wedges (par-fried)* • Chips (regular or baked) • Sweetened gelatin/jellied desserts • Fruit cups in gelatin/jelly • Prepared pie filling • Processed fruit snacks (e.g., fruit leathers, gummies) • Frozen fruit bars or fruit-based freezies • Products with non-sugar sweeteners added

* Par-fried: Most French fries or potato wedges on the market are par-fried, meaning the potato is cut up and partially deep fried prior to being frozen or packaged. The potatoes are not browned in the process so can be mistaken for not being fried. Review product information to ensure the potato product being used is not par-fried. Potato products that are not par-fried (e.g., pre-cut potatoes, pre-cooked potatoes) can be sold and/or served at school if they contain 200 mg of sodium or less and 1 g of saturated fat or less in a 85 g portion.

Whole Grains

Healthiest Choices	Do not sell or serve
<p>These foods and beverages can be sold or served at school</p>	<p>These foods or beverages are higher in sodium (salt), sugars and/or saturated fat and cannot be sold or served at school</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grains such as barley, rye, whole oats, bulgur and quinoa • Whole grain bread products* (bread, bagels, tortilla wraps, pitas, buns, bannock, naan, pizza crust, flatbread, etc.) • Oatmeal (unsweetened) • Whole grain cereals, hot or cold (with 8 g of sugar or less per 30 g or 3/4 cup portion) • Whole grain muffins or loaves (with 8 g of sugar or less and 2 g of saturated fat or less in a 35 g piece) • Whole grain pancakes or waffles • Whole grain crackers (with 2 g of saturated fat or less and 270 mg of sodium or less in 30 g or 6 larger snack crackers) • Granola bars or cereals bars (with 8 g of sugar or less in a 24-40 g bar) • Plain popped corn • Brown rice • Whole grain wild rice* • Whole grain pasta* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastries, croissants, pies, cookies⁺, donuts, cinnamon buns, sweet buns, cakes, brownies, squares • Pre-seasoned noodles, pasta or rice • Canned rice or pasta • Hot or cold cereals that are not whole grain • Hot or cold cereal (even if whole grain) with chocolate, candies or marshmallows • Coated granola or cereal bars (e.g. covered or dipped in chocolate or yogurt) • Puffed rice cereal bars (e.g. Rice Krispie squares) • Energy bars and protein bars • Toaster pastries • Cheesies, puffs, twists, crisps, straws, pretzels (regular or baked) • Nacho or tortilla chips • Products with non-sugar sweeteners added

* The availability of whole grain products is changing quickly and as demand for these products increases, availability and price should improve. School food providers are encouraged to offer whole grain (or whole wheat) versions whenever possible. If there are any concerns with accessing these foods for schools, please contact the Regional Nutritionist to discuss.

+ Cookies cannot be served at school. Some school food providers make cookies with healthier ingredients (e.g., whole wheat flour or oats) however, these are still not acceptable to sell or serve at school.

Protein Foods

Healthiest Choices	Do not sell or serve
<p>These foods and beverages can be sold or served at school</p>	<p>These foods or beverages are higher in sodium (salt), sugars and/or saturated fat and cannot be sold or served at school</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legumes (beans, peas, lentils) – fresh, canned, dried • Nuts and seeds* • Hummus • Baked beans • Eggs • Tofu • Fresh/frozen chicken, turkey, beef, pork, wild game⁺ • Extra lean or lean ground meat • Fresh / frozen fish, seafood • Canned fish • White milk (2% Milk Fat (M.F.) or less) • Chocolate milk (available through the School Milk Foundation) • Unsweetened fortified soy beverage (or flavoured with 20 g of sugar or less in 250 mL) • Yogurt drinks (with 20 g of sugar or less in 200 mL) • Hard/block cheese (e.g. cheddar, mozzarella, Havarti) including pre-portioned or sticks/strings of cheese (not processed) • Cottage cheese • Yogurt (unsweetened or with 16 g of sugar or less in a 100 g serving) • Yogurt tubes (with 16 g of sugar or less in a 50-60 g tube) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercially battered and/or breaded pre-fried meat, fish, chicken, turkey (e.g., chicken nuggets, chicken fingers)^x • Deli meats - bologna, pepperoni, salami, ham, turkey, chicken and roast beef • Weiner/hot dog • Bacon • Sausage • Ice cream, frozen yogurt, frozen dessert • Homemade or pre-packaged milk shakes • Processed cheese – spread, slices or sauce (e.g., Cheez Whiz) • Pudding • Products with non-sugar sweeteners added

* Nuts and seeds are healthy protein food choices. Most schools do not permit peanuts and/or tree nuts due to allergy awareness. If your school does allow peanuts and/or tree nuts, they are considered healthy choices to sell or serve at school.

+ Any food service provider who serves wild game needs both a Food Establishment License and a Wild Meat Service License.

o Other plant-based beverages like rice and coconut are low in protein and are not part of the Protein foods category. Unsweetened types of other plant-based beverages are listed with beverages.

x Most breaded products on the market are pre-fried, meaning the product is deep fried prior to being frozen or packaged. Review product information to ensure the product being used is not pre-fried. Products that are not pre-fried (e.g., pre-baked chicken burgers) can be sold and/or served at school if they contain 3 g of saturated fat or less and 350 mg of sodium or less in a 60 g portion.

Beverages

Canada's Food Guide recommends making water the drink of choice. Try offering plain water in school food programs or at school-sponsored events. Other naturally flavoured waters that do not contain juices, sugar or non-sugar sweeteners can also be offered.

Healthy beverage options other than water can include:

- Milk
- Unsweetened fortified plant-based beverages (e.g., soy, almond, rice, coconut, etc.)
- Unsweetened coffee and teas*

* These beverages can be sold or served in high school only and can be made available to students or staff. Condiments i.e., milk, cream and sugar can be served on the side. Non-sugar sweeteners cannot be served.

The following beverages cannot be sold or served at school or school-sponsored events:

- Water with added juices or artificial flavours and/or sweetened with sugar or non-sugar sweeteners
- 100% fruit juice
- Fruit drinks, punches and cocktails
- Vitamin water
- Sports drinks
- Energy drinks or energy shots
- Soft drinks/pop (regular and diet)
- Slushy drinks
- Sweetened iced tea
- Sweetened hot or cold coffee or tea drinks
- Homemade or pre-packaged milk shakes
- Bottled/pre-prepared smoothies
- Packaged hot chocolate (regular or "lite")



Food Safety

It is also important to keep safe food handling in mind when preparing or serving foods for school or school events. The following food safety tips can help avoid food-borne illnesses:

Clean

- Hands, surfaces, and utensils frequently .

Cook

- All meats, poultry, fish and eggs to the proper internal temperature.
- Use a thermometer to check the temperature.

Chill

- All perishables and leftovers promptly to reduce the growth of bacteria.
- Thaw frozen foods in a refrigerator or a microwave oven, not at room temperature.

Separate

- Raw meats from raw vegetables and fruits, and raw food from prepared food.
- Use different cutting boards and utensils to avoid cross-contamination.
- Store packaged raw meats in pans on lower refrigerator shelves, below ready-to-eat foods, to prevent contamination caused by dripping.

For more information on free online training modules on a variety of food safety topics, visit [SkillsPassNL](#). These short modules are helpful for quickly introducing or refreshing you on food safety concepts.



For more support in using the School Food Guidelines, contact:

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