

Frequently Asked Questions

WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide

(March 28, 2016)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What is a “food category”?

The term “food category” refers to the larger general grouping of foods, such as cheese, milk, eggs, peanut butter, canned fish, whole grains, etc. In the WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide (WAFL SG) food categories are displayed in white font and all capital letters.

2. What is the meaning of “Authorized food items are specific to each individual food category”?

This statement means that only the foods listed in the WAFL SG for the specific food category that matches the food category printed on the check may be bought. For example, when a check is for the Dry Beans, Peas or Lentils food category, the WIC participant may only buy what is allowed for the Dry Beans, Peas or Lentils food category under its corresponding “can buy” section in the WAFL SG. Participants cannot buy canned or frozen beans with this check.

3. Do participants have to buy everything that is printed on the check?

No, with the exception of infant formula. Participants must buy the full amount of infant formula printed on the check.

BREAKFAST CEREAL

1. Can participants buy authorized cereal if the package size does not add up to 36 oz?

Yes, participants can buy less than the full monthly nutrition benefit of 36 oz.

2. The package for an authorized cereal has changed; can participants still buy the cereal?

Yes, package and logo artwork, brand name, and product name changes are considered non-material changes; the product itself has not changed, and therefore, the product continues to be authorized, and participants may buy it.

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CANNED FISH

1. Can participants buy more than one type of fish with their WIC check?

Yes, as long as it is an authorized fish type and the number of ounces does not go over the amount printed on the check. For example, a participant could purchase three 5 oz cans of canned chunk light tuna and one can of canned pink salmon using one WIC check.

2. Which kinds of mackerel can participants buy?

North Atlantic Scomber scombrus or Chub Pacific Scomber scombrus mackerel, packed in water or tomato sauce, may be bought. King mackerel is not authorized. King mackerel will be labeled “king mackerel;” other kinds of mackerel may or may not specify on the can which type of mackerel it is but would be allowed. The best way for participants to identify authorized products is to avoid king mackerel.

CANNED MATURE BEANS

1. What are mature beans?

When the seeds in the bean pod grow to their full size and maturity, the term "mature beans" is used. Examples of mature beans are pinto beans, black beans, garbanzo beans and navy beans. Beans such as green beans, string beans, and wax beans are not mature beans.

2. What is in the CANNED MATURE BEANS food category?

This food category allows plain, cooked mature beans or lentils such as black beans, kidney beans, and pinto beans in 15–6 oz cans. See the [March 28, 2016 WAFL SG](#) for more information. Canned green beans, string beans, or wax beans are immature beans and are not allowed in this food category.

3. Which check can be used to buy canned mature beans?

Participants can only buy canned mature beans when “CANNED MATURE BEANS” is printed on the check.

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CHEESE

1. What does “blended” cheese mean?

When two or more types of cheeses are mixed together into a block, it is called blended or marbled. Colby-Jack cheese and Cheddarella are examples of blended cheeses.

EGGS

1. Why can’t participants buy brown eggs?

Brown eggs are more expensive than white eggs. The color of the egg does not affect the nutrition.

2. Why are you offering only large eggs?

Large eggs are the most commonly available size.

3. Why can’t participants buy specialty eggs?

Specialty eggs are more expensive than regular white eggs. Authorizing less expensive types of eggs helps WIC to contain costs and serve more participants.

4. I thought all eggs in California had to be cage-free. If this is the case, why do you prohibit cage-free eggs?

In 2010, Assembly Bill 1437 was signed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., requiring that all shelled eggs sold in California must comply with the animal confinement restrictions described in the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act. These requirements became effective on January 1, 2015. The Act does not require animals to be cage-free; it merely defines size requirements for cages. Therefore, eggs authorized by CDPH/WIC are not required to be cage free. Cage-free eggs are considered to be specialty eggs and are more expensive than regular white eggs.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (CANNED FRUITS)

1. Do participants have to buy canned fruits in cans?

No. “Canned” refers to the process of canning or preserving, not the can itself. Participants can buy any canned/preserved fruit packed in water or juice, without

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added sweeteners (sugar, artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie), salt, fats, or oils in any type of container, including but not limited to cans, plastic, or glass.

2. Can participants buy small fruit cup type containers?

Yes, they can buy any size and type of container, as long as the contents do not have added sweeteners (sugar, artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie), salt, fats, or oils.

3. Can participants buy applesauce in glass or plastic containers?

Yes, applesauce is allowed in any container type.

4. Can participants buy blends of applesauce with other fruits such as berries?

Yes, they are allowed if they do not have added sweeteners (sugar, artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie), salt, fats, or oils.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (CANNED VEGETABLES)

1. Do participants have to buy canned vegetables in cans?

No. "Canned" refers to the process of canning or preserving, not the can itself. Participants can buy any canned/preserved vegetable without added sweeteners (sugar, artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie) and without added sauces, fats, or oils in any type of container, including but not limited to cans, plastic, or glass. Canned vegetables that require a small amount of sugar for the canning process are allowed.

2. Can participants buy canned hominy?

Yes, canned hominy is a type of corn.

3. Can participants buy canned mixed vegetables containing mature beans with the Fruits and Vegetables check?

No, canned mature beans are only allowed when CANNED MATURE BEANS is printed on the check.

4. Why can't participants buy stewed tomatoes, tomato sauce, pizza sauce, spaghetti sauce, ketchup, salsa, and soup?

USDA does not allow tomato products with added sugar, fats, or oils. All of the listed items above typically contain at least one of these ingredients.

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FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (FROZEN FRUITS)

1. Can participants buy fruit pulp?

Yes, participants can buy fruit pulp and smoothie mixtures that contain only fruit as long as they have no added ingredients, oils, salt, or sweeteners (sugar, artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie).

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (FROZEN VEGETABLES)

1. Can participants buy mixtures of frozen vegetables that contain frozen mature beans such as soybeans or lima beans?

Yes, frozen beans or frozen bean and vegetable mixtures may be bought with the Fruit and Vegetable check.

2. Can participants buy frozen vegetables that can be cooked in the bag?

Yes, any container type is allowed. Frozen vegetables may not contain other ingredients such as seasonings, sauces, or grains.

5. What kinds of frozen potatoes can participants buy?

Participants can buy frozen potatoes without added sauces, fats, sugars, sweeteners, or oil. French fries, tater tots, hash browns and mashed potatoes are prohibited and cannot be bought even if they do not contain added sauce, fats, sugars, sweeteners (artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie), or oil.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES (FRESH)

1. Can participants buy white and red yams or potatoes?

Yes, any color of potato, yam, or sweet potato is allowed.

2. Can participants buy berries packaged in containers?

Yes, as long as there is no added sugar, sweeteners (artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie) oils, or fats.

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3. Can participants buy onions, garlic, chilies and jalapenos?

Yes, as long as they are not decorative, on a string, dried, or have added sauces, fats, oils, sugars, or sweeteners (artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie).

4. Can participants buy green onions?

Yes.

5. Can participants buy fruit roll-ups?

No, fruit roll-ups often have added sugar, oil, or fat and are prohibited.

FRUITS (DRIED)

1. Can participants buy dried fruit with the Fruits and Vegetables check?

Yes, dried fruits can be bought with the Fruits and Vegetables checks for women and children.

2. Is any dried fruit allowed?

No, only dried fruits without added fats, oils, natural or artificial flavors, or sweeteners (sugar, artificial, reduced-calorie, or no-calorie) are allowed.

3. Are dried vegetables allowed?

No.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES CASH VALUE VOUCHER (CVV)

1. Can participants mix fruits and vegetables with their Fruits and Vegetables check?

Yes, participants can buy a combination of fruits and vegetables forms (e.g., fresh, canned, frozen) with one check.

2. Does WIC specify allowed package sizes?

No, any size can be bought. The Fruits and Vegetables check is issued in a maximum dollar amount, not in package size.

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3. What happens if the participant's purchase price goes over the dollar amount limit on the Fruits and Vegetables check?

The participant can pay the difference using CalFresh benefits, cash, or credit. If the participant does not want to pay the difference, fruits and vegetables items can be returned to lower the purchase price.

4. If the purchase price is lower than the limit on the Fruits and Vegetables check, should the participant receive cash back?

No, the participant should not receive cash back.

5. Can participants combine Fruits and Vegetables checks of two family members and have a combined transaction so that they don't lose money?

No, each Fruits and Vegetables check must be used separately.

6. Can the Fruits and Vegetables check be used at farmers' markets?

Yes. Fruits and Vegetables checks can be used at farmers' markets. Lists of authorized farmers and markets can be found [here](#).

7. Is the Fruits and Vegetables check the only check where the participant can pay the money difference?

Yes.

8. Can a participant buy canned mature beans such as kidney, pinto beans, black-eyed peas, etc. with the Fruits and Vegetables check?

No. Participants cannot buy canned mature beans such as kidney, black, garbanzo, pinto or black-eyed peas, with the Fruits and Vegetables check. Canned mature beans may be bought only if "CANNED MATURE BEANS" is printed on the check.

9. Can a participant buy any kind of frozen beans with the Fruits and Vegetables check?

Yes. Participants can buy any kind of frozen beans, such as green beans, wax beans, black beans, pinto beans, and black-eyed peas with the Fruits and Vegetables check.

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INFANT FORMULA

- 1. Why are infant formula product information and pictures not included in the WAFL SG?**

Due to frequent changes to names and labels made by infant formula manufacturers, it is difficult to keep formula information in the WAFL SG current. Therefore, the information is not included in the WAFL SG and is instead housed on our website in the form of a flyer, which can be found [here](#). This flyer can be used as a tool by both vendors and participants and is to be printed for participants at the local agency, per their request.

INFANT FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AND INFANT MEATS

- 1. Can participants buy any brand of infant fruits and vegetables or infant meats?**

No, participants must buy products manufactured by the brands listed in the WAFL SG that meet the criteria under the categories' Can Buy sections.

- 2. Can participants buy both 3.5 oz and 4 oz containers of infant fruits and vegetables with the same check?**

No, participants must buy either the 3.5 oz or 4 oz containers. They cannot buy both with the same check.

- 3. Do participants have to buy all of the infant fruits and vegetables or infant meats on the check?**

No, participants can buy fewer containers, but they will not be able to buy the rest later as the check has already been used.

- 4. Are infant fruits with added fruit juice allowed?**

Yes, but products where juice is listed, as the first ingredient are not allowed.

- 5. Can participants still buy the 2-packs?**

Yes, participants can buy any multi-pack as long as the number of total containers adds up to the number printed on the check. For example, if the check is for 18 (4 oz) containers, participants can buy nine 2-packs of 4 oz containers.

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6. Do 2-packs count as one or two containers of infant fruits and vegetables?

A 2-pack contains two separate containers packaged into one unit. Therefore, a 2-pack is counted as 2 containers.

INFANT CEREAL

1. Can participants buy three 8 oz boxes of infant cereal with the Infant Cereal check?

No. The check specifies that 1 (8 OZ) AND 1 (16 OZ) INFANT CEREAL packages may be purchased. Participants are not allowed to divide the one (16 oz) package into two (8 oz) packages.

JUICE (BOTTLED AND CONCENTRATE)

1. Why did the front label of bottled and concentrate juice change from 120% to 80% Vitamin C (or more)?

The United States Department of Agriculture increased the amount of Vitamin C required for the Reference Daily Intake (RDI) for adults and children over 4 years of age, which consequently decreased the percentage of Vitamin C supplemented in juice; this decrease required California WIC to change the front label percentage requirement for juice from 120% to 80% Vitamin C (or more). Though the requirement states 80% Vitamin C (or more) is authorized, it is important to understand that products with higher amounts of Vitamin C are still WIC eligible. For example, 120% or 130% Vitamin C on the front label are still eligible, as long as they meet all other WIC juice requirements.

2. Why do the front labels of Ruby Red and Pink Grapefruit juice need to state 80% Vitamin C (or more) when the front label of White Grapefruit juice does not?

Federal regulations require that juices contain a certain amount of Vitamin C. Citrus juices, like white grapefruit juice, naturally contain the required amount of Vitamin C, so it is only non-citrus juices that are required to include the Vitamin C language on the front label. Ruby Red and Pink Grapefruit are not pure grapefruit juice because they are blended with non-citrus juices, and therefore, the labeling requirement ensures that participants purchase Ruby Red and Pink Grapefruits that meet federal regulations for Vitamin C content.

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3. The WAFL SG shows that participants can buy juice blends. Can a participant buy orange-tangerine juice?

No, participants cannot buy orange-tangerine because tangerine is not an authorized flavor. Participants can only buy juice blends that are blends of two or more authorized flavors as named on the front label. For example, cranberry-apple blend is allowed because both cranberry and apple are both authorized flavors.

4. What is in Concentrate Juice food category compared to Bottled Juice food category?

The Concentrate Juice food category includes both frozen and non-frozen concentrate juice. The Bottled Juice food category only includes the single strength, ready-to-drink, shelf-stable juice.

5. How do participants buy the maximum amount of juice?

- Children can get the full amount of juice if they buy two 64 oz bottles or 16 oz containers of concentrate juice.
- Women who are pregnant or are breastfeeding (e.g., mostly or fully) can get the full amount of juice if they buy three 11.5 or 12 oz containers of concentrate juice.
- Women who are breastfeeding a little or who are not breastfeeding can get the maximum amount of juice if they buy two 11.5 or 12 oz containers of concentrate juice.

MILK

1. Are participants required to buy store brand milk?

No, participants can buy any brand of milk that meets the requirements in the March 28, 2016 WAFL SG.

2. What is ultra-pasteurized milk?

Ultra-pasteurized milk is refrigerated fluid milk that has been heat-treated to approximately 280° F for 2 seconds and then chilled down rapidly, resulting in a product that is 99.9% free of bacteria. This is done so that the product lasts longer without spoiling. Once the container is opened, the milk will spoil at the same rate as regular milk.

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3. Why can't all participants buy whole milk?

Federal regulations only allow whole milk for children 12–23 months of age. All other participants may get low (1%) or nonfat milk. The allowed fat level that each participant may buy is printed on the check.

4. When can a participant buy evaporated milk or powdered dry milk instead of fluid milk?

Participants can buy evaporated or powdered dry milk when they have been issued a package that includes evaporated or powdered dry milk; evaporated or powdered dry milk must be printed on the check in order to be bought.

5. Can participants buy powdered dry milk and fluid milk using the same check?

No, a participant must choose a package with one or the other. Powdered dry milk and evaporated milk are not available together in one package.

PEANUT BUTTER

1. Why can't participants buy reduced fat or lowfat peanut butter?

Most reduced or low-fat peanut butters do not meet the federal regulations mandating that authorized peanut butters must contain at least 90% peanuts.

SOY

1. Why can't participants buy any brand of soy-based beverage?

Soy-based beverage must meet specific federal nutrient requirements. Currently, Pacific Ultra Soy Original, 8th Continent Soymilk Original, Silk Soymilk Original, and WESTSOY Organic Plus Soymilk Plain are the only products that meet these requirements.

2. What are the fat levels of the four allowed brands of soy-based beverage in comparison to the fat levels found in cow's milk?

Fat levels for 8 fluid ounces are:

- Pacific Ultra Soy Plain = 4 g (close to 2% cow's milk)
- 8th Continent Soymilk Original = 2.5 g (close to 1% cow's milk)

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- Silk Soymilk Original = 4.5 g (close to 2% cow's milk)
- WESTSOY Organic Plus Soymilk Plain = 4.5 g (close to 2% cow's milk)
- Whole cow's milk = 8 g
- 2% Reduced fat cow's milk = 5 g
- 1% Low fat cow's milk = 2 g
- Nonfat or skim cow's milk = 1 g

3. Are any of the authorized soymilks organic?

WESTSOY Organic Plus Soymilk Plain is a new organic soy beverage choice for participants as of March 28, 2016. Pacific Ultra Soy Plain does not meet USDA's definition of organic, though it is made with organic soybeans.

4. Are any other brands of soymilk allowed?

No, other soymilks do not meet the federal and state requirements.

5. What is the difference between refrigerated and shelf-stable soy-based beverage?

Shelf-stable soy-based beverage does not require refrigeration before it is opened.

TOFU

1. Why are some textures of certain brands of tofu not allowed?

They are not calcium-set or they are not in a 16 oz package.

2. Why can't participants buy bulk (not pre-packaged) tofu?

There is a risk of poor sanitation with bulk tofu, which could be a health risk.

WHOLE GRAINS

1. What brands of Whole Wheat bread can participants buy?

A brand-specific list of whole wheat bread is no longer required. Participants can buy any brand of whole wheat bread, including store bakery bread, in 16 oz packages that has "100% Whole Wheat" printed on the front label.

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2. Can participants buy 100% Honey Whole Wheat Bread?

Yes, as long as it is in a 16 oz package and “100% Whole Wheat” is printed on the front label.

3. Can participants buy hot dog buns or hamburger buns?

Yes, as long as they are in a 16 oz package and “100% Whole Wheat” is printed on the front label.

4. What kinds of tortillas can participants buy?

Participants can buy only the authorized corn or whole-wheat tortilla products listed in the March 28, 2016 WAFL SG.

5. What is the difference between the oatmeal on the cereal check and the oatmeal on the whole grain check?

The oatmeal allowed on the Breakfast Cereal check is instant oatmeal in individual serving packets. It contains the federally required amount of iron. The oatmeal allowed on the Whole Grains check can be bought in a 16 oz package or in bulk and there is no requirement for iron fortification for oatmeal bought using the Whole Grains check.

6. If a participant buys any of the allowed whole grains options sold in bulk and goes over 16 oz due to weight differences between the scales used to initially weigh it out and at the register, what are the options for the participant? Can she pay the difference?

The vendor can adjust the quantity to 16 oz because the WIC Program will not pay for a quantity exceeding the specified quantity on the check. Participants are not allowed to pay the difference on any check except for the Fruits and Vegetables check.

7. What brands of whole-wheat pasta are allowed?

Participants can buy only the authorized 16 oz whole wheat pastas listed in the March 28, 2016 WAFL SG.

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YOGURT

1. Which brands of yogurt can participants buy?

Participants can buy only the authorized yogurt brands, types, and flavors in 32 oz (quart-sized) containers listed in the March 28, 2016 WAFL SG.

2. Can participants buy individual-serving containers?

No, only 32 oz (quart-sized) containers are allowed.

3. Is Greek yogurt allowed?

No, only yogurt of regular texture can be bought. Greek yogurts and organic yogurts are more expensive than regular-textured yogurts. Authorizing less expensive types of yogurt allows WIC to contain costs and serve more participants.

4. Can participants buy whole yogurt?

Whole-fat yogurt is federally authorized for participants 12–23 months of age only. Women and older children must buy lowfat or nonfat yogurt. Allowed fat levels are printed on the check.