

# Cheese



Cheese can be a healthy part of a balanced diet in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Choosing reduced and low-fat cheeses allow children to enjoy cheese in some of their favorite foods without the extra fat and calories, while still providing them with all the other nutritional benefits of cheese.

## CACFP Crediting for Cheese

Cheese can be credited in the meat/meat alternates group.

### What is reimbursable?

Natural Cheese (cheddar, Swiss, mozzarella, Parmesan, feta, etc.)

Processed Cheese (American)

Cottage Cheese

Ricotta Cheese

Cheese Food Substitutes

Cheese Spreads

Cheese Spread Substitutes

Pimento Cheese

Reduced fat, low-fat, nonfat, and lite versions of the above cheeses

\* Any item labeled with the wording "imitation" cheese or cheese "product" does not meet the CACFP requirements and cannot be reimbursed.

### What is not reimbursable?

Cheese Products

Imitation Cheese\*

Cream Cheese

Neufchatel Cheese

Powdered Cheese

Cheese cannot be credited toward the milk requirement.

Cheese is a good source of protein, calcium, zinc, vitamin A, and phosphorus.

There are over 2,000 different varieties of cheese.

## Serving Sizes

How much cheese is a serving for 3-5 year olds at lunch/dinner?

- ◆ 1 1/2 ounces natural and processed cheese or cheese substitutes
- ◆ 3 ounces (3/8 cup) cottage cheese, ricotta, cheese food, or cheese spread

How much cheese is a serving for 3-5 year olds at snack?

- ◆ 1/2 ounce natural and processed cheese or cheese substitutes
- ◆ 1/8 cup (2 tablespoons) cottage cheese, ricotta, cheese food, or cheese spread

## Storing Cheese

Store cheese in the refrigerator at 34-38° F. Wrap opened cheese tightly in plastic wrap to prevent mold spores from spoiling the cheese. If mold does grow on the outside of a hard cheese such as cheddar, Swiss, or Parmesan, simply trim off at least one inch around the mold to salvage the remaining cheese. Mold on soft cheeses such as ricotta, shredded cheeses, and cream cheese should be thrown out because the mold can easily penetrate to the rest of the cheese. The shelf life of hard cheeses is about 6 months in the refrigerator while softer varieties only last for about a week.



# Cheese Snacks

## Cheese Snack Ideas

These simple, healthy snacks provide protein and fiber to help children feel full until their next meal.

- ◆ Whole grain crackers topped with low-fat cheese
- ◆ Low-fat cottage cheese served with peaches, pears, apples, pineapple, or cantaloupe
- ◆ Open-faced grilled cheese: place slices of low-fat cheese on top of a piece of whole wheat bread. Broil in the oven until the cheese is melted
- ◆ Low-fat cheese cubes with vegetables such as cucumbers, carrots, cauliflower, and cherry tomatoes
- ◆ Fruit kabob: alternate chunks of low-fat cheese with grapes, strawberries, apples, and other favorite fruits
- ◆ Whole wheat tortilla filled with fat-free refried beans, low-fat cheese, and salsa
- ◆ Celery with low-fat cheese spread
- ◆ Quesadilla: add low-fat shredded cheese to a whole-wheat tortilla and microwave until cheese is melted. Add salsa, if desired, and cut into wedges
- ◆ Low-fat string cheese and fruit
- ◆ Sandwich kabob: alternate whole wheat bread, low-fat cheese, meat, and tomatoes on a skewer

## Jam and Cheese Tortilla Snack

- 1 6-inch whole wheat tortilla
- 1 tablespoon strawberry jam
- 1 1-ounce low-fat string cheese

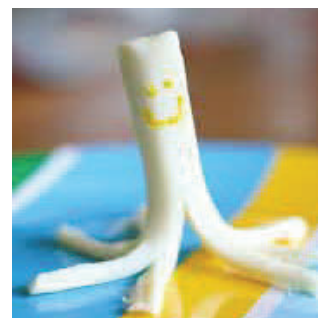
Spread tortilla with jam and top with cheese. Roll up. Place, seam side down, on a microwave plate. Microwave on high 15 seconds or just until warmed. Makes 2 servings for 3-5 year olds at snack.

- ✓ Meat/Meat Alternates
- ✓ Grains/Breads

Source and photo: [www.kraftrecipes.com](http://www.kraftrecipes.com)



## Fun Cheese Recipe for Children



## String Cheese Octopus

- 1 1-ounce low-fat string cheese
- Toothpick
- Mustard

Split the string cheese into 8 sections on one end. Pull each section a little more than halfway up. To draw the face, use a toothpick to etch in the shape and then use a little mustard to fill in the face. Makes 2 servings for 3-5 year olds at snack.

- ✓ Meat/Meat Alternates

Source and photo: [www.icanteachmychild.com](http://www.icanteachmychild.com)



### Michigan Office

139 W Lake Lansing Rd, Suite 120 • East Lansing, MI 48823  
Telephone: (800) 234-3287 • Fax: (517) 332-5543

### Association for Child Development

[www.acdkids.org](http://www.acdkids.org)

### Illinois Office

4415 W Harrison St, Suite 535 • Hillside, IL 60162  
Telephone: (800) 284-5273 • Fax: (708) 236-0872

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