

Tennessee State Farm to School Junior Chef Competition

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When and where is this event taking place?

The fifth annual Tennessee State Junior Chef Competition will be held March 9, 2023 at Nashville State Community College – Southeast Campus.

2. Who can participate in the competition?

Any Tennessee student in grades 9-12 is eligible. Each team must have two to four members. Teams may have up to two alternate students, but the total number of team members on the day of competition may not exceed four. NOTE: Alternate team members must also submit their contact information and release forms.

3. How can I be involved in Junior Chef?

If you are a student in grades 9-12, you can participate in the competition by assembling a team to compete in the Tennessee State Junior Chef Competition.

If you are a parent, teacher, farmer, chef, or other community member, you may reach out to any of your local Junior Chef teams to volunteer your time or resources to support them. At the state level, you may volunteer or sponsor the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) Farm to School Junior Chef Competition by contacting Lynsey Paul at Lynsey.Paul@tn.gov for more details.

4. How will recipes be judged?

All entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Taste – kid-friendly and flavorful
- Appearance – presentation on plate
- Creativity – ingenuity of ingredients used
- Best and most use of local ingredients – highlighting local and seasonal foods
- School food service appropriate – time/cost affordability, nutrition level

5. How do I register my team?

Team applications and all other forms are available on the department's School Nutrition's [web page](#). A parental permission and release form is needed for each student participant. **Final application deadline is January 31, 2023. Applications must be emailed to Lynsey.Paul@tn.gov by the team sponsor/coach.** Teams are encouraged to sign up as soon as possible.

6. What are the registration fees?

There is no registration fee. However, teams should understand that they are financially responsible for their participation in the competition. Teams are responsible for their own transportation for the competition. Mileage reimbursement will be provided by the state for one team vehicle. Lodging for the competition will be provided by the state **only for student rooms**. Teams will need to provide their own

cooking utensils, any desired uniforms, etc. **The ingredients that will be provided for the teams by the department are ingredients indicated on their team application and recipe, unless otherwise noted as a specialty item that is not easily accessible.**

7. What do we do once we've registered?

Ensure that you submit your signed Permission and Release forms for EACH team member (including alternates), your recipe, and your application by the deadline. The department will review your recipe and contact you if changes are needed. Practice, practice, practice!

8. What if there is more than one application from one school?

It is at the discretion of the school to determine what team will move on to the state competition. If the school is unable to come to a consensus, then there must be a cook-off within that school to determine who will advance to the next competition. The team coach/school nutrition supervisor and their staff will be in charge of coordinating that event.

9. Can I ask a local business to sponsor my team? How can I do that?

Teams are welcome and encouraged to find local businesses and organizations to sponsor their participation costs. Here are four steps to keep in mind when searching for a team sponsor:

- Think of some of your favorite businesses (restaurants you frequent, movie theaters, stores you like to shop, etc.).
- Write a letter to these businesses explaining the Tennessee Junior Chef Competition, why your team would like to participate, and how the businesses could offer support to your team. Make sure you include your contact information and how much funding you think your team would need.
- Follow up with the business via phone or in-person visit.
- Don't forget to send your sponsoring business a thank-you note. They would love to see pictures of your team at the competition and hear about the dishes you prepared. Showing your gratitude to your sponsors will go a long way in prolonging your relationship.

10. How can my team find a chef to work with?

Including a professional chef on your team can benefit your team in many ways. Your chef can help come up with creative and innovative ways to incorporate local and seasonal ingredients. By teaching proper cooking skills, chefs can help students ensure consistency in their recipes. When recruiting a chef to help your team:

- Consider asking one of the chefs from your school cafeteria for help! They have a wealth of information relating to the National School Lunch Program standards, preparing foods that kids love, and cooking on a large scale.
- Your school district, or a surrounding school district may have a culinary program that employs a chef that may assist you.
- Think about your favorite restaurants. Do they have a chef that could help?
- Once you find a chef, prepare to write them a letter or contact them via phone or in person to explain what the Farm to School Junior Chef Competition is and why their assistance is so vital to your team's success. Keep in mind *when* you contact the chef (i.e., right around lunch and dinnertime might be inconvenient for them).

11. What do we need to bring with us, and what will be provided?

Please review the [Farm to School Junior Chef Rules & Guidelines](#) for a complete list of equipment you will need to bring. for a complete list of equipment you will need to bring.

12. How much time do teams have to cook?

Teams have 1.5 hours to prepare their dish and .5 hour to clean up their station. Remember that teams may not bring any prepared foods to the competition and must perform all food preparation at the event.

13. Can our adult/chaperone help us cook?

No, team coaches or supervisors may **NOT** assist with the cooking process during competition.

14. Is it okay if we don't use at least two of the local products provided by the department?

No. All competing recipes must include at least two local ingredients from the local foods list. If you would like to use a local item that is not listed on the foods list, you may contact Lynsey.Paul@tn.gov to receive approval for that item. These ingredients will be provided by the department (only provided at the final competition) and will be waiting for you upon your arrival to the competition. You are encouraged to use more than the minimum number of local items (more points are awarded for additional local items).

15. What other ingredients are we allowed to use?

Your team may utilize the ingredients provided by the department. **Again, your team may not complete any preparation of ingredients before the event; anything your team makes from scratch must be completed during the competition. (Unless noted as a specialty seasoning item or equivalent)**

16. How will judging work?

Judges will follow the official Tennessee State Junior Chef Competition Judge's Sheet. This document can be found on the department's School Nutrition [web page](#). Teams will be judged on teamwork, culinary skills, food safety and sanitation practices, overall flavor, dish presentation, and their ability to present their dish to the judges and eloquently answer any follow-up questions.

17. How will the recipes be reviewed?

Once you have submitted your recipe, the Tennessee Junior Chef recipe committee will review your recipe for school food service replicability and at least two local ingredients. If your recipe does not meet the criteria, we will contact you, and will request that you make changes. We request that recipes confirm compliance with the Tennessee Junior Chef rules, including food safety requirements, presence of local ingredients, compliance with food service criteria, etc. The submitted recipes also confirm the quantities of the local product that the department will provide for your team.

18. How many servings should my recipe make?

Your recipe should make:

- One full serving for display (these servings will be judged for presentation and will be on display for the judges and the audience).
- Five small servings for the judges to taste your dish.
- Leftovers may be utilized for audience samples

For example: If a team made a chili as their dish, they would dish one full serving into a presentation bowl to set on display for the judges and the audience to view. The team would also dish out five smaller serving sizes for the judges to taste—these could be around 4-6 oz. serving cups. Finally, the team would portion out the rest of their dish into smaller sample sizes (think 2 oz. serving cups). Ultimately, each team must use their own discretion when determining the sample sizes for the judges.

Note: Teams will NOT be penalized if their dish does not make enough sample cups for the audience. The idea behind the samples is to ensure that the teams do make enough of their dish for judging purposes and to engage the audience in the competition.

19. Tennessee Junior Chef Timeline:

- District cook-off* (if more than one team in a given school/district). The district will be responsible for the event.
- State cook-off
- Winners announced
- State cook-off winners go on to the Southeast Regional competition

*Note: District cook-offs must be planned by the individual district. Districts AND regions may feel free to utilize cooking competitions already in place through 4H, FCCLA, and other organizations. If a district or region plans to use a cooking competition sponsored by another organization, the district or region MUST let the Farm to School Specialist know prior to the competition date.