



South Carolina Farm to School Jr. Chef Competition Tips and Frequently Asked Questions

Tips

- Consult the experts: Connect with your school district's School Nutrition Program Director and/or Menu Planner. They are familiar with the school meal pattern and nutrition standards, recipe development and menus, and ingredients commonly available and used in school nutrition programs.
- Review the requirements of the National School Lunch Program with your cafeteria manager or Food Service Director.
- Discuss what USDA Foods (Commodities) are typically available for use by School Nutrition Departments.
- Discuss pricing for items needed with your Food Service Director.
- Ask local chefs and farmers for recipe ideas and tips on local products and how to highlight seasonal produce.
- Hints on writing recipes:
 - Use as few ingredients and as few steps in preparation as possible to make the recipe labor efficient. List ingredients, quantities and directions in the order in which they are used in preparation. Include timing and temperatures in recipes and directions.
 - Write directions in a step fashion (i.e. step one, step two, etc.). Make the directions as clear, concise and complete as possible.
 - Include type of cooking equipment needed.
 - Consider the School Nutrition Program's operation budget.
- Research popular menu items at restaurants, and new trends in flavors. Consider different but complimentary flavors, textures, etc.
- Complete a student taste test.
- Ensure recipe contains sufficient information and meets minimum requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who can participate?

All enrolled South Carolina high school students, in grades 9-12, that attend a school participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) are eligible to participate in the competition. Each team must have two to five students. Only one team per school may enter the Recipe Contest.

2. How do I enter?

The application packet is available from your local Food Service Department or online at the South Carolina Department of Education Health and Nutrition website:

<https://www.ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/health-and-nutrition/> or

<https://fft.ed.sc.gov/highlights/farm-to-school/#jrchef> A completed application (including a completed recipe) and photograph of the dish must be submitted to the South Carolina Department of Education by **October 20, 2023**.

Entries may be submitted via email to cstrong@ed.sc.gov or by mail to:

South Carolina Dept. of Education: Office of Health and Nutrition

Attn: Chris Strong

1429 Senate St.

7th Floor Office of Health and Nutrition

Columbia, SC. 29201

3. Does my team have to get approval of our recipe from our school district's School Nutrition Program?

No. But teams are **strongly encouraged** to work with their school district's School Nutrition Program to develop the recipe and proper pricing information. This collaboration and partnership between the students, adult supervisors and the district school nutrition program will assist in promoting your team's success.

4. Is there a registration fee?

No. There is not a registration fee for this competition.

5. What are the judging criteria for the Junior Chef Contest? (See Judges Score Sheet)

Recipe entries will be judged and scored on:

- Meeting the NSLP meal pattern and nutritional guidelines
- Recipe presentation
- Creativity
- School nutrition program reproducibility (Costing of Recipe and Nutritional Analysis)
- Use of USDA Foods
- Use of South Carolina grown products

6. Additional criteria for the Junior Chef Competition? (See Judges Score Sheet)

Recipes will be judged on overall appeal (kid friendly), adherence to NSLP standards and meal pattern, appearance and execution, taste, presentation, pre costing of recipe, sanitation and food safety. See the Junior Chef Competition Guidelines for more information.

7. What is the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)?

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low cost or free lunches to children each school day.

8. What are the required components for the school lunch meal?

Meals offered in the NSLP must meet a meal pattern and nutrition standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The meal pattern consists of five components, fruit, vegetable, grain, meat/meat alternate, and milk. Each must be offered in required amounts. Contact your local food service manager for more information.

9. What is the USDA Foods Program?

The USDA Foods Program provides healthy foods to schools for use in preparing school meals. USDA Foods include a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, dairy products, whole grains, lean meats and other protein options. To learn more, check out the USDA Foods Fact Sheet. A list of USDA Foods available for School Year 2023-24 is available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-fis/usda-foods-available>

10. What is the Farm to School Program?

The term farm to school encompasses efforts that bring locally or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias; hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes; and the integration of food based education into the regular standards-based classroom curriculum. To learn more, visit the National Farm to School Network at: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>

11. What are the goals and benefits of the Junior Chef Competition?

The goals and benefits of the Student Chef Competition are:

- To encourage students to engage with school nutrition and learn about our program.
- To develop healthy, student-friendly recipes that include local products that can be incorporated into the school nutrition program.
- Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their culinary skills in a competitive environment.
- Student will gain valuable knowledge and skills in recipe development, food preparation, teamwork and local food systems.

12. What is a whole grain?

Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel. The kernel has three parts – the brain, the germ, and the endosperm. Usually the kernel is cracked, crushed, or flaked during the milling process. If the finished product retains the same relative proportions of bran, germ and endosperm as the original grain, it is considered a whole grain.

Examples of whole grains include whole-wheat flour, cracked wheat, wheat berries, rolled oats, brown rice, wild rice, etc.

13. How is whole grain-rich defined?

Whole grain-rich is a term referring to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) criteria for school meal requirements for grain. Foods that meet the whole grain-rich criteria for the school meal program contain at least 50 percent of the grains in the product are from a whole grain. The remaining 50 percent or less of grains, if any, must be enriched.

14. How do I know if a grain ingredient in my recipe meets the whole grain-rich criteria?

If the ingredient statement lists a whole grain ingredient as the first ingredient (or the second ingredient behind water) the product is considered a whole grain rich product. Consult your local food service director for more information.

15. How can I find out what products are locally grown in South Carolina?

You can search for products grown in South Carolina on the South Carolina Department of Agriculture's Certified South Carolina Grown website. <https://agriculture.sc.gov/>

16. Should teams bring their own equipment to the cooking competition?

Teams will be provided with identical equipment, utensils and supplies. Please review the Junior Chef Competition Overview for a list of items that will be provided to teams for the cooking competition. Teams may bring special equipment or utensils that are not on the list, if they wish.

17. How much time do teams have to prepare, cook, and plate their recipe?

Teams competing must prepare, cook, and plate their recipe (yield of six servings) in 1.5 hours. There will be additional 30 minutes for clean up.

18. Can our adult/team supervisor help us cook?

No. Only students may be involved with any aspect of the preparation process before or during the competition.

19. What is the attire for students on the day of the cooking competition?

Students should dress appropriately for food preparation. Appropriate attire includes chef attire/coat if available, long pants, and closed-toed, low heel shoes with non-slip soles. Jewelry is not allowed. Hair must be properly restrained, and no nail polish is allowed. Students will be provided with hair nets and aprons.

If you have additional questions, contact Chris Strong at cstrong@ed.sc.gov