



2026 TEXAS FOOD CHAMPIONSHIP OFFICIAL COMPETITION RULES & REGULATIONS

Master Competitor Packet

Location: Water's Edge Park – Corpus Christi, Texas

Dates: September 25–27, 2026

The Texas Food Championship is the Official Texas Super Qualifier for the World Food Championships. This competition is built using the standards, structure, and judging philosophy of the World Food Championships, while also including Texas Food Championship-specific rules designed to improve event flow, fairness, safety, and competitor experience.

This rulebook is the official governing document for all competitors, assistants, judges, and participants. Every competitor is expected to read this packet in full before arriving on site. By registering, checking in, or competing, each competitor agrees to follow these rules and accept all decisions made by Texas Food Championship officials as final.

The goal of this packet is simple: no confusion, no surprises, and no guessing. If something is not clearly stated, competitors should ask for clarification before competing.

1. Competitor / Head Cook

1a. Definition of Head Cook

A competitor is officially defined as the **Head Cook**. The Head Cook is the person registered to compete and is the primary person responsible for the dish, the team, the station, the equipment, and all rule compliance.

The Head Cook is the person TFC officials will communicate with regarding judging, penalties, schedule updates, rule questions, inspections, and turn-in procedures.

If an assistant makes a mistake, violates a rule, behaves poorly, or causes a safety issue, the Head Cook is still responsible. The team operates under the Head Cook's name.

Example:

If an assistant brings a pre-marinated protein into the Kitchen Arena, that violation belongs to the Head Cook's team, even if the Head Cook did not personally prepare or purchase the item.

1b. Eligibility Requirements

To compete as a Head Cook in the Texas Food Championship, competitors must meet the following requirements:

- Must be at least eighteen (18) years of age at the time of competition.
- The only exception is the Texas Jr. Chef Championship, which is limited to competitors ages twelve (12) through seventeen (17).
- A Head Cook may compete in more than one Texas Food Championship category.



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- A Head Cook may not judge any Texas Food Championship category during the same event year.
- A Head Cook may only earn one (1) Golden Ticket to the World Food Championships.

The one Golden Ticket rule is important. If a competitor wins multiple qualifying opportunities, TFC and WFC rules will determine how additional Golden Ticket opportunities are reassigned.

Example:

If a competitor wins Texas Burger Championship and then later wins People's Choice in another qualifying category, that competitor may only claim one Golden Ticket. The additional opportunity may be passed down or reassigned based on TFC/WFC guidance.

1c. Jr. Chef Eligibility

The Texas Jr. Chef Championship is designed specifically for younger competitors.

Jr. Chef competitors must be:

- At least twelve (12) years old.
- No older than seventeen (17) years old.
- Able to safely participate in a timed cooking environment.
- Accompanied and supported according to TFC youth competition guidelines.

Because this is a youth category, TFC reserves the right to require additional supervision, waivers, or safety restrictions.

1d. Family Restrictions

Immediate family members may not compete against one another in the same category.

Immediate family includes:

- Spouse
- Parent
- Child
- Sibling
- Grandparent
- Grandchild

This rule exists to avoid the appearance of collusion, shared preparation, shared strategy, or unfair influence.

Example:

A husband and wife may not both compete separately in the Texas Burger Championship. However, one may compete as the Head Cook and the other may serve as an assistant, as long as all assistant rules are followed.

1e. Head Cook Responsibilities

The Head Cook is responsible for:

- Reading and understanding all rules.
- Attending mandatory meetings.



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- Ensuring the team arrives on time.
- Ensuring all ingredients comply with TFC rules.
- Ensuring all required documents are submitted.
- Maintaining food safety.
- Keeping the station clean.
- Managing assistants.
- Turning in food on time.
- Communicating respectfully with officials, judges, volunteers, and other competitors.

Failure to understand a rule is not a valid excuse for violating it.

2. Team Structure and Assistants

2a. Team Composition

Each team may consist of:

- One (1) Head Cook
- Up to three (3) assistants

Maximum total team size is four (4) people.

The Head Cook may choose to use fewer assistants or compete alone.

2b. Kitchen Arena Working Limit

In the Kitchen Arena, no more than three (3) people may be actively working in the station at one time.

This means that even if a team has four total members, only three may be actively cooking, prepping, plating, cleaning, organizing, or handling food inside the station at the same time.

Teams may rotate people in and out, but the active working number may never exceed three.

Example:

A team has one Head Cook and three assistants. During prep, the Head Cook and two assistants are working. The third assistant may step in only if one of the others steps out of active work.

2c. BBQ and Live Fire Team Areas

BBQ and Live Fire teams must remain within their assigned space. These spaces are larger than Kitchen Arena stations, but all equipment, tents, storage, coolers, fire vessels, tables, supplies, and team activity must stay within the assigned footprint.

Teams may not extend into:

- Walkways
- Fire lanes



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- Neighboring team spaces
- Public traffic areas
- Judging or operations areas

2d. Assistant Restrictions

Assistants may not:

- Compete as a separate Head Cook in the same category.
- Judge any TFC category.
- Assist multiple teams competing directly against one another in the same active category.
- Interfere with another team's work area, turn-in path, or judging process.

Example:

An assistant may not help two different Burger competitors during the Texas Burger Championship. That would create a fairness issue.

2e. Minor Assistants

Assistants may be minors if approved and properly supervised. The Head Cook is responsible for the minor's safety, behavior, and compliance with all rules.

TFC may remove any assistant, including a minor, if that assistant creates a disruption, safety concern, or rule violation.

3. Competition Structure

3a. Overview

The Texas Food Championship includes three major competition formats:

1. Kitchen Arena Championships
2. BBQ and Live Fire Championships
3. Cash Challenges and Special Events

Each format operates differently. Competitors must understand the specific rules for their category.

3b. Kitchen Arena Championships

Kitchen Arena Championships are timed, single-round culinary competitions.

These competitions focus on:

- Execution
- Appearance
- Taste



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Each competitor cooks once in their category. Scores from that round determine the winner.

3c. BBQ Championship

The Texas Pitmasters Championship is a multi-turn-in BBQ competition. Instead of one dish, BBQ competitors are evaluated across multiple categories.

The official scoring turn-ins are:

- Chicken
- Mystery (will be given to all pitmasters on Thursday)
- Ribs
- Brisket

Each official turn-in contributes to the overall Texas Pitmasters Championship score. Individual turn-ins will be awarded as well.

3d. Live Fire Championship

The Texas Live Fire Championship includes official turn-ins and optional cash challenges.

Official Live Fire turn-ins are:

- Friday: Steak
- Saturday: Open / Chef's Choice

Live Fire competitors must cook with wood or charcoal only. Gas and electric heat sources are not allowed.

3e. Cash Challenges

Cash Challenges are optional crowd-facing competitions. They are designed to give competitors additional earning opportunities and create a strong guest experience.

Cash Challenges:

- Are optional.
- Provide a \$250 H-E-B Gift Card.
- Include a featured ingredient provided by TFC.
- Require 250 sample portions.
- Are judged by 250 ticketed People's Choice voters.
- Do not count toward official championship scoring.
- Do not award Golden Tickets.

4. Official Championship Categories

4a. Texas Pitmasters Championship



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The Texas Pitmasters Championship is a multi-turn-in BBQ competition designed to identify the best overall pitmaster team. Competitors must show consistency across multiple proteins and formats, not just one strong dish.

This category rewards fire control, timing, tenderness, seasoning, smoke profile, appearance, and overall execution. Because multiple turn-ins contribute to the final score, teams must manage time, equipment, product, and consistency across the full BBQ schedule.

4b. Texas Burger Championship — Battle of the Cities

The Texas Burger Championship, also known as Battle of the Cities, invites chefs to represent their city through a signature burger. The burger should showcase creativity, flavor, balance, and a clear point of view.

Judges will look for more than a stacked burger. They will evaluate whether the bun, patty, toppings, sauce, cheese, texture, and overall bite work together as one complete dish.

Example:

A burger with too many toppings may look impressive but score poorly if it is messy, unbalanced, or difficult to eat.

4c. Texas Pro Chef Championship

The Texas Pro Chef Championship is designed for experienced culinary professionals. This category emphasizes advanced technique, clean execution, elevated plating, and flavor development.

Competitors should expect judges to evaluate culinary decision-making, not just taste. Proper cooking technique, sauce work, knife work, balance, and plate composition all matter.

4d. Texas Bacon Championship

The Texas Bacon Championship requires bacon to be featured as the central ingredient. Bacon should not be treated as a garnish or afterthought.

The dish may be sweet, savory, or a combination of both, but bacon must remain clearly identifiable and important to the dish.

Example:

A dessert with a tiny sprinkle of bacon on top may not meet the intent of the category. A bacon caramel, bacon brittle, bacon jam, or bacon-forward savory dish would better demonstrate the required focus.

4e. Texas Seafood Championship

The Texas Seafood Championship celebrates seafood and coastal culinary influence. Competitors must demonstrate proper seafood handling, seasoning, cookery, and balance.

Seafood should be cooked carefully. Overcooked shrimp, dry fish, rubbery shellfish, or muddy flavors may negatively affect Execution and Taste.

4f. Texas Dessert / Bakery Championship



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The Texas Dessert and Bakery Championship evaluates baking precision, pastry technique, structure, texture, and flavor balance.

Competitors may present baked goods, plated desserts, composed pastries, or creative dessert applications. Judges will evaluate sweetness balance, technical execution, appearance, and whether the dish feels complete.

4g. Collegiate Culinary Championship

The Collegiate Culinary Championship is designed for student chefs and culinary students. This category gives emerging culinary talent a professional competition platform.

Judges will evaluate technique, creativity, discipline, and execution. This category is not only about winning; it is about showcasing the next generation of culinary leadership.

4h. Texas Live Fire Championship

The Texas Live Fire Championship focuses on cooking over wood and charcoal. Competitors must demonstrate fire management, timing, technique, and flavor development.

Live Fire is not simply grilling. It may include direct grilling, indirect cooking, smoking, ember cooking, open-flame cooking, roasting, or other approved wood/charcoal-based methods.

4i. Texas Pasta & Noodle Championship

The Texas Pasta & Noodle Championship evaluates pasta or noodle technique, texture, sauce balance, and dish composition.

Competitors may use Italian, Asian, Southern, fusion, or original approaches. The dish must still clearly honor pasta or noodles as a central component.

4j. Texas Jr. Chef Championship

The Texas Jr. Chef Championship is designed to encourage young culinary talent in a structured and supportive competition environment.

Judges will evaluate foundational technique, creativity, confidence, sanitation, and the ability to complete a dish within the rules. Safety and positive development are especially important in this category.

5. Kitchen Arena Competition Format

5a. Categories Covered

The Kitchen Arena format applies to:

- Texas Burger Championship
- Texas Pro Chef Championship
- Texas Bacon Championship



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- Texas Seafood Championship
- Texas Dessert / Bakery Championship
- Collegiate Culinary Championship
- Texas Pasta & Noodle Championship
- Texas Jr. Chef Championship

This format does not apply to BBQ or Live Fire.

5b. Assigned Start Times

Each competitor will receive a specific start time. Competitors do not all begin at the same time. Starts are staggered in five-minute intervals.

This prevents crowding, protects judging quality, and ensures food reaches judges at the correct time.

5c. Cooking Time

Each Kitchen Arena competitor receives ninety (90) minutes to cook.

The 90-minute clock begins at the competitor's assigned start time.

Competitors should plan carefully. All cooking, preparation, assembly, and plating must fit within the allowed time.

5d. Turn-In Window

At the end of the 90-minute cook time, each competitor has a five-minute turn-in window.

Total time from start to completed turn-in is ninety-five (95) minutes.

The dish must be fully placed in the correct turn-in area before the window closes.

5e. No Early Turn-In

Competitors may not turn in early.

This rule exists because the staggered schedule is built to maintain judging flow. Early turn-ins can disrupt judges, table captains, staff, and other competitors.

5f. No Late Turn-In

Competitors may not turn in late.

There is no grace period. A dish that is not turned in during the assigned five-minute window is disqualified.

Example:

If your window is 11:30 AM to 11:35 AM, the dish must be turned in during that window.

At 11:35:01 AM, the window is closed.

5g. Judging Presentation



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Competitors will briefly present their dish to the judges. The purpose of this presentation is to identify the dish and provide basic context. Keep in mind you are judged by what you explain.

Competitors may state:

- Dish name
- General concept
- Required ingredient usage
- Major cooking technique

Competitors may not:

- Argue
- Lobby
- Explain mistakes
- Ask judges questions
- Engage in extended discussion
- Attempt to influence scoring

There is no Q&A portion.

6. Menu Turn-In Card

6a. Requirement

All Kitchen Arena competitors must complete and submit the official Texas Food Championship Menu Turn-In Card.

The Menu Turn-In Card is not optional. It is part of the competition process and is directly tied to Execution scoring.

6b. Purpose

The Menu Turn-In Card allows judges and officials to understand what the competitor intended to make and how it was supposed to be executed.

This protects both the competitor and the judges.

It helps judges determine:

- Did the competitor execute the promised dish?
- Were the declared techniques actually used?
- Was the required ingredient used properly?
- Were any pre-made items disclosed?
- Did the final dish match the submitted concept?

6c. Required Information

The Menu Turn-In Card must include:

- Team / competitor name
- Chef name
- Championship category
- Dish name



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- Dish overview in 2–3 sentences
- Cooking techniques being used
- Primary protein or featured item
- Pre-made or purchased items
- Required or sponsor ingredient
- Explanation of how the required ingredient is used
- Competitor signature
- Date

6d. Dish Overview

The dish overview should be clear and direct. It should not be vague.

A good dish overview explains what the judges should expect.

- **Good example:**
“Seared Gulf shrimp with roasted corn cream, charred poblano relish, and crispy masa crumble. Shrimp will be seared, corn will be roasted and blended into sauce, and poblanos will be fire-charred for the relish.”
- **Weak example:**
“Shrimp dish with sauce and garnish.”

6e. Cooking Techniques

Competitors must list the major cooking techniques they intend to use.

Examples include:

- Grilling
- Roasting
- Smoking
- Sautéing
- Frying
- Braising
- Baking
- Poaching
- Steaming
- Charring
- Emulsifying
- Reducing
- Pickling during the cook time

If the final dish uses a different major technique than declared, Execution deductions may apply.

Example:

If a competitor declares a grilled steak but turns in a pan-seared steak, judges may deduct Execution points because the technique does not match the card.

6f. Pre-Made / Purchased Items

Competitors must disclose anything not made from scratch during the competition.

This includes:

- Store-bought sauces
- Store-bought breads



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- Pickles
- Condiments
- Spice blends
- Tortillas
- Pasta
- Broths
- Stocks
- Jams
- Doughs
- Baked components
- Any prepared or partially prepared products

Pre-made or purchased items must be:

- Listed on the Menu Turn-In Card
- In original unopened packaging
- Supported by receipts
- Approved through inspection

Failure to disclose pre-made items may result in point deductions or disqualification.

6g. Required / Sponsor Ingredient Usage

If a category includes a required or sponsored ingredient, competitors must clearly state how it will be used.

The required ingredient must be meaningful. It cannot be hidden, token, or purely decorative.

- **Acceptable example:**
A required bacon ingredient is used in a bacon jam, bacon fat vinaigrette, and crispy bacon garnish.
- **Weak example:**
A tiny crumble of bacon is sprinkled on top but does not impact the dish.

6h. Execution Commitment

By signing the Menu Turn-In Card, the competitor confirms that the final dish will reflect the techniques, ingredients, and preparation methods described.

This does not mean every minor detail must be identical, but the core dish must match.

6i. Deviation Penalties

Significant deviation from the Menu Turn-In Card may result in Execution deductions.

Examples of significant deviation:

- Declaring smoked chicken but turning in fried chicken.
- Declaring scratch-made sauce but using store-bought sauce.
- Declaring handmade pasta but using packaged pasta.
- Listing a required ingredient but barely using it.
- Omitting a major component listed on the card.



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7. Judging Methodology

7a. E.A.T. Scoring

Texas Food Championship uses the E.A.T. scoring structure:

- Execution: 35%
- Appearance: 15%
- Taste: 50%

7b. Execution — 35%

Execution evaluates whether the competitor successfully performed the dish as intended.

Judges may consider:

- Cooking technique
- Proper doneness
- Sanitation
- Time management
- Accuracy to the category
- Accuracy to Menu Turn-In Card
- Required ingredient usage
- Professional handling of ingredients
- Overall technical success

Example:

A steak cooked to the intended temperature with proper sear and rest time scores better in Execution than a steak that is overcooked or poorly sliced.

7c. Appearance — 15%

Appearance evaluates the visual quality of the presentation dish.

Judges may consider:

- Plate composition
- Cleanliness
- Color balance
- Portion structure
- Visual appeal
- Stability
- Whether the dish looks intentional

Appearance is not about being fancy. It is about whether the plate looks appetizing, organized, and professional.

7d. Taste — 50%

Taste is the largest scoring category.

Judges may consider:

- Flavor balance
- Seasoning



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- Texture
- Temperature
- Sauce quality
- Overall impact
- Whether the dish makes sense as a complete bite.

A dish can look beautiful and still score poorly if the flavors are unbalanced.

8. Required and Sponsored Ingredients

8a. Requirement

Some categories may include a required or sponsored ingredient.

When assigned, the ingredient must be incorporated into the dish.

8b. Identifiable Use

The ingredient must be identifiable to judges. It does not have to dominate the dish, but it must be present and meaningful.

8c. No Substitution

Required or sponsored ingredients may not be substituted unless TFC grants written approval.

8d. Penalty

Failure to properly use a required or sponsored ingredient may result in a minimum five-point deduction.

In severe cases, if the ingredient is completely omitted, additional penalties may apply.

9. People's Choice – Kitchen Arena

9a. Kitchen Arena People's Choice

People's Choice applies to Kitchen Arena competitions unless otherwise stated.

Each competitor must prepare fifteen (25) People's Choice portions.

9b. Portion Size

Each portion must be at least two (2) ounces.

The portion should represent the competition dish as closely as possible.

9c. Timing

People's Choice begins immediately after official judging and lasts thirty (30) minutes.

9d. Service

Competitors serve People's Choice portions directly from their station or assigned area.

9e. Exclusions



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Kitchen Arena People's Choice does not apply to:

- BBQ official scoring categories
- Live Fire official scoring categories
- Cash Challenges

Cash Challenges have their own People's Choice system.

10. Food Safety and Ingredient Control

10a. Food Handler Certification

All Head Cooks must hold a valid Food Handler Certification.

TFC may request proof before or during the event.

Failure to provide valid certification may result in point deductions, removal from competition, or disqualification.

10b. Onsite Preparation

All competition food must be prepared onsite during the official competition time.

No pre-preparation is allowed unless explicitly permitted.

Not allowed (unless approved):

- Pre-chopped vegetables
- Pre-marinated proteins
- Pre-seasoned proteins
- Pre-cooked sauces
- Pre-made doughs unless disclosed and approved
- Pre-assembled components
- Pre-smoked meats
- Homemade sauces made before arrival

10c. Store-Bought Ingredients

Store-bought ingredients are allowed if they are:

- Disclosed when required
- Supported by receipt
- In original unopened packaging
- Safe for use
- Not prohibited by category rules

10d. Receipts

Competitors must retain receipts for ingredients.

Receipts may be requested during inspection. Failure to provide receipts may result in ingredient removal or point deductions.



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10e. Meat and Seafood

All meat and seafood must be stored safely and held at proper temperatures.

Proteins must be raw at the start of competition unless category rules allow otherwise.

No pre-seasoned, pre-marinated, or pre-cooked proteins are allowed unless manufacturer-enhanced and clearly labeled.

10f. Shellfish

Live shellfish, including oysters, clams, and similar products, may be allowed if stored safely and supported by proof of purchase.

TFC officials may inspect shellfish for safety.

10g. Inspection

TFC officials may inspect:

- Ingredients
- Coolers
- Packaging
- Receipts
- Workstations
- Equipment
- Food temperatures

Refusal to cooperate with inspection may result in disqualification.

11. Equipment and Competition Spaces

11a. Kitchen Arena Space

Each Kitchen Arena competitor receives a 12' x 12' cooking station.

Competitors must keep all equipment, tools, supplies, coolers, and activity within the assigned space.

11b. Kitchen Arena Provided Equipment

Kitchen Arena stations may include:

- Five-burner residential range with oven
- Microwave
- Prep table
- Power access
- Water access
- Mixing bowls
- Sheet trays
- Chef knives
- Pots and pans



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- Access to a shared outdoor grill area, if designated by TFC

Competitors should not assume that specialty tools will be provided.

11c. Allowed Small Appliances

Allowed small appliances may include:

- Blender
- Immersion blender
- Hand mixer
- Food processor
- Waffle iron
- Ice cream maker
- Stand mixer
- Small spice or coffee grinder

Any appliance not listed must be approved by TFC before use.

11d. Prohibited Kitchen Arena Equipment

The following are not allowed inside Kitchen Arena unless specifically approved by TFC:

- Personal grills
- Smokers
- Open flame devices
- Torches
- Sterno
- Flame-lit warmers
- Candles
- Butane burners
- Propane burners

11e. Live Fire Space

Each Live Fire team receives a 40' x 20' space.

This space is intended for open-fire cooking, prep, safe fire management, and guest-facing presentation.

11f. Live Fire Provided Equipment

Live Fire teams may receive:

- Prep table
- Storage shelf
- Yoder smoker or designated sponsored cooking equipment
- Assigned cooking footprint

Additional equipment must be brought by the competitor unless otherwise stated.

11g. Live Fire Fuel Rules

Live Fire competitors may use:

- Wood



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- Charcoal

Live Fire competitors may not use:

- Gas
- Propane
- Electric heat
- Electric holding equipment
- Pellet-driven electric accessories unless specifically approved

All fire must be contained in a safe fire-resistant vessel. Fires may not be built directly on the ground.

11h. BBQ Space

Each BBQ team receives a 40' x 20' space.

All pits, smokers, cookers, tents, tables, storage, coolers, and supplies must remain within the assigned footprint.

11i. BBQ Fuel Rules

TFC BBQ competitors may use:

- Wood
- Charcoal
- Pellets

TFC BBQ competitors may not use:

- Gas
- Propane

This is a TFC-specific BBQ rule and may differ from certain WFC BBQ allowances.

11j. General Space Rules

All competitors must:

- Stay within assigned space
- Keep walkways clear
- Keep fire lanes clear
- Avoid blocking neighboring teams
- Maintain safe equipment placement
- Clean up after competition

12. Entry and Turn-In Requirements

12a. Kitchen Arena Turn-In



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Kitchen Arena competitors must submit:

- One presentation dish
- Five judge sample portions
- People's Choice portions, if applicable

12b. Presentation Dish

The presentation dish is used for Appearance scoring and overall visual evaluation.

It must be stable and transportable.

12c. Judge Samples

Judge samples must represent the presentation dish as accurately as possible.

A judge sample should not be missing major components found on the presentation dish.

12d. Plating Height and Extension

No part of the food presentation may be elevated more than three (3) inches above the base of the platter.

No part of the entry may extend more than three (3) inches beyond the edge of the platter.

These rules exist for fairness, transport safety, and judging consistency.

12e. Skewers and Toothpicks

If a skewer, toothpick, or similar item is used, it must be clearly visible.

Hidden sharp objects create safety risks for judges and staff.

13. Texas Pitmasters Championship

13a. Overview

The Texas Pitmasters Championship is a multi-turn-in BBQ competition. The overall winner is determined by cumulative scoring across official BBQ categories.

There will be Category winners for each of the categories, and winners will receive a golden ticket and prize money.

13b. Official Scoring Categories

Official scoring categories are:

- Chicken
- Mystery
- Ribs
- Brisket



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13c. BBQ Turn-In Format

Each official BBQ scoring category requires:

- One presentation item or presentation portion
- Five sample portions

13d. BBQ Scoring

BBQ is scored using:

- Execution: 35%
- Appearance: 15%
- Taste: 50%

The lowest judge score is dropped.

Each official category represents 25% of the overall Texas Pitmasters Championship score.

13e. BBQ Mystery Category

Mystery details will be provided according to the event schedule and/or cook's meeting instructions.

Competitors should be prepared to adapt.

13f. BBQ Cash Challenges

BBQ Dessert and BBQ Tailgate are Cash Challenges and do not count toward official BBQ scoring.

14. Texas Live Fire Championship

14a. Overview

The Texas Live Fire Championship evaluates cooking over wood and charcoal heat.

Competitors must demonstrate fire control, timing, creativity, and proper execution.

14b. Official Turn-Ins

Official Live Fire turn-ins are:

- Friday: Steak
- Saturday: Open / Chef's Choice

14c. Live Fire Cooking Methods

Approved methods include:



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- Direct grilling
- Indirect grilling
- Smoking
- Roasting
- Ember cooking
- Open flame cooking
- Spit roasting if approved and compliant
- Other wood/charcoal methods approved by TFC

14d. Prohibited Heat Sources

Live Fire does not allow:

- Gas
- Propane
- Electric heat
- Electric holding
- Flame devices not approved by TFC

15. Cash Challenges

15a. Overview

Cash Challenges are optional competitions designed to feed guests and create additional prize opportunities.

They are different from official judged championship turn-ins.

15b. Participation

Competitors may choose whether to participate.

Participation in a Cash Challenge is not required to remain eligible in the main championship unless otherwise stated.

15c. Provided by TFC

Each participating competitor will receive:

- One \$250 H-E-B Gift Card
- The main featured ingredient for that challenge

15d. Competitor Responsibility

The competitor is responsible for purchasing all additional ingredients needed for the challenge using the H-E-B Gift Card.

No additional reimbursement is guaranteed.

Competitors should budget carefully and design a dish that can be executed within the stipend.



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15e. Featured Ingredient

The featured ingredient must be used and must be identifiable in the dish.

The featured ingredient should be treated as an important part of the dish, not a garnish.

15f. Portion Count

Each competitor must prepare 250 sample portions.

15g. Portion Size

Each portion must be:

- No less than 2 ounces
- No more than 4 ounces

Portions should be consistent. Competitors should avoid serving some guests larger portions and others smaller portions.

15h. People's Choice Voting

Cash Challenges are judged by 250 ticketed People's Choice participants.

Each ticketed voter will sample the participating dishes and vote according to the voting system established by TFC.

15i. Winner

The competitor with the highest number of valid votes wins the Cash Challenge.

15j. No Golden Ticket

Cash Challenges do not award Golden Tickets.

15k. No Impact on Official Scoring

Cash Challenges do not affect:

- BBQ overall scoring
- Live Fire official scoring
- Kitchen Arena category scoring
- Second Chance Qualifier eligibility

16. Second Chance Qualifier

16a. Purpose

The Second Chance Qualifier gives competitors who did not earn a Golden Ticket through category champion or People's Choice champion another opportunity to qualify for the World Food Championships.



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Selection for the Second Chance Qualifier will be conducted by lottery-style drawing. Any eligible competitor who wishes to participate must request to be entered into the drawing. The first ten (10) names selected will receive a spot in the Second Chance Qualifier.

Competitors selected must be present and prepared to compete immediately following the Awards Ceremony on Sunday. If a selected competitor is not present, ready, and able to compete at that time, their spot will be forfeited and the next name drawn will take their place.

16b. Format

The Second Chance Qualifier will be a mystery basket-style competition.

16c. Ingredients

All ingredients will be provided by TFC.

Competitors do not need to purchase or prepare ingredients in advance.

16d. Outside Ingredients

Outside ingredients are not allowed unless specifically approved by TFC.

16e. Golden Ticket

The winner of the Second Chance Qualifier receives a Golden Ticket.

17. Sunday Brunch Challenge

17a. Purpose

The Sunday Brunch Challenge is designed to support the guest experience before the awards ceremony and provide BBQ and Live Fire competitors with an additional cash opportunity.

17b. Participation

Participation is optional.

17c. Eligible Teams

The Sunday Brunch Challenge is open to BBQ and Live Fire teams.

17d. Stipend

Participating teams may receive a stipend or support as determined by TFC.

17e. Judging

The Brunch Challenge may be judged by People's Choice or another format announced by TFC.

17f. No Golden Ticket

The Sunday Brunch Challenge does not award a Golden Ticket and does not affect official championship scoring.



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18. Conduct and Decorum

18a. Professional Conduct

All competitors, assistants, judges, volunteers, and staff are expected to behave professionally.

18b. Zero Tolerance

TFC has zero tolerance for:

- Harassment
- Threats
- Hate speech
- Abusive language
- Intoxication during active competition
- Drug use
- Physical aggression
- Interference with competitors
- Disrespect toward officials or judges

18c. Social Media Conduct

Negative or harmful public commentary toward TFC, official sponsors, judges, officials, volunteers, or competitors may result in penalties, suspension, or future event restrictions.

18d. Sponsor Respect

Competitors may not disparage official TFC sponsors or intentionally interfere with sponsor activations.

19. Branding and Sponsor Conflicts

19a. Team Branding

Competitors may wear branded apparel or display team branding unless it conflicts with TFC rules or official sponsors.

19b. Sponsor Conflicts

TFC reserves the right to restrict branding that conflicts with official TFC sponsors.

Example:

If TFC has an official bacon sponsor, a competitor may not create a display that appears to promote a competing bacon brand as an official event sponsor.

19c. Unauthorized Use of TFC Marks

Competitors and outside brands may not use Texas Food Championship logos, marks, titles, or official designations without approval.



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20. Golden Ticket Rules

20a. Non-Transferable

Golden Tickets are non-transferable.

They may not be sold, gifted, reassigned, or transferred by the competitor.

20b. One Golden Ticket Per Competitor

A competitor may only claim one Golden Ticket from TFC.

20c. WFC Approval

All Golden Ticket qualifications are subject to WFC eligibility rules and final approval.

20d. Reassignment

If a competitor is unable to accept or use a Golden Ticket, TFC and/or WFC may determine whether it is reassigned.

21. Infraction Policy

21a. Overview

TFC follows the WFC-style infraction structure, which may include:

- Point deductions
- Time penalties
- Disqualification
- Suspension
- Permanent ban

21b. Who Assigns Penalties

Potential infractions may be reported by officials, Cheferees, judges, or event staff.

Final penalty decisions are made by designated TFC leadership.

21c. Disqualification Infractions

Disqualification may result from:

- Late turn-in
- Missing turn-in window
- Interfering with another competitor's turn-in
- Threatening behavior
- Hate speech



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- Drug or alcohol use during active competition
- Major food safety violations
- Cheating or collusion
- Refusal to follow official instructions

21d. Point Deductions or Time Penalties

Point deductions or time penalties may result from:

- Failure to attend registration
- Failure to attend cook's meeting
- Failure to use required sponsored product
- Missing Food Handler Certification
- Use of pre-marinated food
- Use of pre-cooked food
- Use of opened ingredients
- Failure to provide receipts
- Turn-in tray elevation or extension beyond limits
- Menu Turn-In Card violations
- Unsanitary station
- Cooking outside assigned space

21e. One-Year Suspension

A one-year suspension may result from:

- Failure to appear after registering without proper notice
- Failure to follow through on a special-event commitment
- Negative public conduct involving sponsors, competitors, officials, or event personnel

21f. Permanent Ban

A permanent ban may result from:

- Attempting to harm, threaten, disparage, or interfere with TFC staff, officials, judges, sponsors, volunteers, or competitors
- Severe misconduct
- Repeated violations



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22. Registration and Check-In

22a. Registration

Registration must be completed according to TFC deadlines.

Entry fees are non-refundable unless otherwise stated by TFC.

22b. Onsite Check-In

The Head Cook must complete onsite check-in.

Assistants may not check in on behalf of the Head Cook unless specifically approved.

22c. Failure to Check In

Failure to check in may result in penalty or disqualification.

23. Liability and Waivers

23a. Assumption of Risk

Competitors understand that cooking competitions involve risk, including:

- Burns
- Cuts
- Smoke exposure
- Fire
- Weather
- Equipment damage
- Food handling risks

23b. Waivers

All Head Cooks must sign required waivers.

TFC may require assistants to sign waivers.

23c. Personal Property

TFC is not responsible for:

- Lost items
 - Stolen items
 - Damaged equipment
 - Weather-related damage
 - Product loss
-

24. Weather and Emergency Protocol

24a. TFC Authority



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TFC may modify, delay, relocate, or cancel portions of the event due to:

- Weather
- Safety concerns
- Fire concerns
- Emergency conditions
- Venue requirements
- Government restrictions

24b. No Guarantee of Schedule

TFC will make every effort to follow the published schedule, but safety and operational needs may require changes.

24c. Final Decisions

All weather and emergency decisions are final.

25. Final Authority

25a. Rule Interpretation

TFC officials have full authority to interpret and enforce all rules.

25b. Disputes

Disputes must be brought to TFC officials respectfully and in the proper manner.

25c. Final Decisions

All decisions made by TFC officials are final.

Final Statement

These rules are designed to protect competitors, judges, sponsors, guests, and the integrity of the Texas Food Championship.

The purpose of this packet is to make expectations clear before the event begins. Competitors should arrive prepared, organized, and ready to compete at a professional level.

Texas Food Championship is building a platform to elevate chefs, pitmasters, students, young culinary talent, and Texas food culture. These rules help ensure that every competitor has a fair opportunity to succeed.