



2026 OFFICIAL COMPETITOR DOCUMENT

COMPETITOR POLICY & STANDARDS

THE STANDARD OF THE ARENA

Texas Food Championship
September 25-27, 2026 | Corpus Christi, Texas

COOK HARD. COMPETE FAIR. RESPECT THE ARENA.

Effective August 28, 2026

Official general policies and standards for registered 2026 TFC competitors.

00

WELCOME TO THE STANDARD

BEFORE YOU STEP INTO THE ARENA

Texas Food Championship was built to create a fair, professional and unforgettable Food Sport experience for every competitor who steps into the arena. These policies protect the integrity of the championship, our competitors, judges, partners, guests and the TFC name.

We want you competitive. We want you fired up. We want you here to win. We also expect every competitor to compete with integrity, respect the championship, follow the rules and represent themselves at a level worthy of Food Sport.

THE STANDARD

Know the rules. Be prepared. Respect the clock. Respect the judges. Respect the competitor beside you. Then go cook something worthy of Texas.

How these policies work. This document governs general competitor conduct, access, safety, eligibility, event operations and championship standards. Category-specific requirements remain governed by the 2026 Official Competition Rules and written category instructions issued by TFC.

The Competitor Portal is the official operational source for schedules, check-in information, parking, credentials, kitchen equipment, turn-in materials and championship-weekend updates. Competitors are responsible for reviewing current information before arriving.

IF DOCUMENTS CONFLICT

A written category rule or official written directive from TFC competition leadership controls the specific competition matter. TFC may issue reasonable operational or safety directives during championship weekend when necessary.

01

REGISTRATION & ELIGIBILITY

YOUR PLACE IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP

Registration is complete only after required registration information and payment have been received and accepted by TFC. Registration fees are final and non-refundable except where TFC expressly states otherwise in writing.

Competitors must meet the eligibility requirements for the category in which they are registered. False, misleading or materially incomplete registration information may result in removal without refund. A competitor position may not be sold, reassigned or transferred without prior written approval from TFC.

REGISTERED MEANS RESPONSIBLE

By participating, the Head Cook and registered team members agree to follow the Official Competition Rules, this Policy & Standards document, food-safety requirements and official TFC directives.

02

TEAM ROSTERS & COMPETITOR STATUS**WHO IS ALLOWED IN THE KITCHEN**

Each team may register no more than four active team members for competition. A fifth registered person may be designated as the alternate. All registered team members, including the alternate, must hold the required Food Handler Certification.

The alternate may replace an active team member only when that person is unable to participate before the competition begins. Once competition starts, the active team is locked and an alternate may not enter mid-competition.

Only properly credentialed competitors may enter restricted kitchen and Back of House areas. Guests, family members, sponsors and supporters may watch from public spectator areas but may not enter the kitchen or Back of House.

03

CHECK-IN, CREDENTIALS & ACCESS**YOUR WRISTBAND IS YOUR EVENT CREDENTIAL**

The Head Cook must complete competitor check-in Thursday, September 24, 2026 between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM and present valid photo identification. Team rosters, Food Handler Certifications and required competition documents are subject to verification.

Competitor wristbands are issued at Thursday check-in, are non-transferable and must remain on throughout championship weekend. Lost, cut or damaged competitor wristbands may be replaced at 50% of the current weekend rate.

Competitor credentials include all three festival days, Back of House entry and exit, and entry to the VIP Reception Area. VIP food and beverages and Taste of Texas are not included unless separately purchased or upgraded.

**NO WRISTBAND =
NO ACCESS**

Credential privileges may be suspended or revoked for misuse, transfer, unauthorized access or violation of event policies.

04

COMPETITOR CONDUCT & SPORTSMANSHIP**COMPETE HARD. COMPETE RIGHT.**

TFC expects championship-level conduct. Disrespectful, threatening, discriminatory, abusive, destructive or unsafe behavior has no place in the arena. Do not interfere with another competitor's workspace, equipment, ingredients, timing or turn-in, and do not attempt to influence judges or the scoring process.

Competitors must follow reasonable instructions from TFC competition leadership, safety personnel and event operations staff. Depending on severity, violations may result in a warning, corrective action, restricted access, a rule-based penalty, disqualification, credential revocation or removal from the event.

05

FOOD SAFETY, SANITATION & WORKSPACE

SAFE FOOD IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

Every active team member and alternate must maintain required Food Handler Certification. Competitors are responsible for safe receiving, storage, preparation, cooking, holding and service of all competition food.

Competitors must bring appropriate thermometers, cold-holding and storage items, ice and food-safety supplies not expressly listed as TFC-provided. Ice is not provided.

Station handwashing sinks are for handwashing only. The Back of House dish pit is reserved for TFC-provided equipment so it can be cleaned and reset; it is not a general competitor dishwashing area.

TFC may inspect food products, storage conditions and workspaces and may require correction or disposal of items that present a food-safety concern.

**YOUR FOOD. YOUR
RESPONSIBILITY.**

If you need it to safely execute your dish and TFC does not list it as provided, bring it.

06

INGREDIENTS, PRODUCTS & DISCLOSURE

WHAT YOU COOK MUST MATCH WHAT YOU PRESENT

Competitors supply their competition food and ingredients unless TFC specifically identifies an item as provided. The Sam's Club Pantry is supplemental backup inventory and is not a competitor's primary ingredient source.

Pre-made or purchased components must be disclosed on the Official Menu Turn-In Card. Purchased items required to be disclosed must remain sealed with receipts available as directed by competition leadership.

The final dish should materially reflect the dish description, cooking techniques and preparation methods submitted on the Menu Turn-In Card. Significant deviation may affect Execution scoring or result in action under applicable competition rules.

07

THE CLOCK, KITCHEN ASSIGNMENTS & TURN-IN**TIME IS PART OF THE COMPETITION**

Kitchen Arena competitors should arrive 45-60 minutes before their scheduled start and may access the assigned kitchen approximately 30 minutes before that start, subject to event operations. Scheduled start times do not change because a competitor arrives late.

Kitchen assignments are drawn at the mandatory competitor meeting Thursday, September 24 at 7:00 PM. Kitchen start times and turn-in times may be staggered by five minutes as assigned.

Turn-in must occur at the designated location and within the official turn-in window. Plates may be photographed at turn-in. Late, early, incomplete or improper turn-ins are governed by the Official Competition Rules and category instructions.

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JUDGING, SCORING & RESULTS**THE E.A.T. STANDARD**

TFC uses the World Food Championships E.A.T. methodology for applicable competitions: Execution 35%, Appearance 15% and Taste 50%. Certified judges score entries blind, and the lowest judge score is dropped in accordance with the scoring methodology used by TFC.

Competitors may not identify, lobby, pressure or interfere with judges. Questions regarding procedure should be directed to TFC competition leadership. Scores, placements and advancement decisions are not official until announced or published by authorized TFC leadership.

**JUDGES SCORE
THE PLATE**

Respect the process. A disagreement with a score is not, by itself, evidence of a scoring error or grounds to disrupt the championship.

09

EQUIPMENT, PROPERTY & EVENT RESOURCES**USE IT LIKE THE NEXT CHAMPION NEEDS IT**

TFC-provided equipment and smallwares remain event property and must stay within designated competition operations unless directed otherwise. Competitors provide specialty tools, personal cookware and equipment not expressly listed as provided.

Report equipment issues immediately. Competitors may be held responsible for damage caused by intentional misuse, reckless handling or unauthorized removal. Vendor booths are not competitor borrowing areas.

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MEDIA, PHOTOGRAPHY & CHAMPIONSHIP CONTENT**THE ARENA IS A PUBLIC EVENT**

TFC is a public festival and media event. Competitors should expect photography, video, interviews, livestreaming, social-media coverage and other documentation in and around competition areas.

By participating, competitors acknowledge that TFC and authorized media partners may capture and use event-day images, video and audio featuring competitors for event coverage, recap, archival, promotional and championship-related purposes, subject to applicable law and any separate written agreement.

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TFC NAME, LOGO & BRAND MARKS**PROTECT THE CHAMPIONSHIP BRAND**

The Texas Food Championship name, logos, championship marks, event graphics and related brand assets are protected TFC brand property or used by TFC under applicable rights. No competitor, sponsor, vendor or third party may reproduce, alter, sell, license or commercially exploit official TFC brand assets without prior written authorization.

Competitors may promote their participation and team identity, but official TFC branding may not be used for commercial merchandise, paid advertising, implied sponsorship or misleading endorsements without approval. TFC may require removal or correction of unauthorized brand use.

**REPRESENT TFC
ACCURATELY**

Do not imply that TFC endorses a product, sponsor, business or statement unless that relationship has been approved in writing.

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EVENT CHANGES, WEATHER & CANCELLATION**TFC IS A RAIN-OR-SHINE EVENT**

Competition times, locations, layouts, access routes or operational procedures may be adjusted when reasonably necessary because of weather, public safety, venue conditions, government action, equipment issues or other circumstances outside normal event control.

If TFC postpones or reschedules a competition or event component, registrations will generally transfer to the rescheduled opportunity when practicable. If TFC cancels a competition with no replacement or rescheduled opportunity, TFC will determine any available remedy based on the circumstances, costs already incurred and benefits already delivered.

Travel, lodging, ingredients, equipment, transportation and other competitor-incurred expenses remain the competitor's responsibility unless TFC expressly agrees otherwise in writing.

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PARKING, LOAD-IN & EVENT OPERATIONS

FOLLOW THE FLOW

Competitors must use designated competitor parking, entry gates, load-in routes and operational areas. Parking passes and credentials must be displayed or presented when requested. Vehicles in restricted, emergency, vendor or unauthorized areas may be relocated or towed as permitted by venue and event operations.

Overnight parking does not create a camping or sleeping privilege. Competitors may leave equipment inside vehicles at their own risk. BBQ and Live Fire teams remain subject to their specific pit, trailer, load-in and layout instructions.

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AWARDS, GOLDEN TICKETS & TEAM TEXAS

WINNING CREATES THE NEXT COMMITMENT

Awards are presented Sunday, September 27, 2026 at 10:30 AM on the Grand Stage. No awards will be released before the scheduled ceremony. The Head Cook is expected to attend.

Golden Ticket recipients who accept advancement become part of Team Texas and are expected to participate in required Team Texas activities, including official photos, the Team Texas podcast and the TFC Champagne Toast in Champions Club.

If a qualifying competitor declines a World Food Championships position, TFC may roll the Golden Ticket to the next eligible finisher until available Team Texas positions are filled, consistent with the applicable championship structure.

Team Texas support may include the World Food Championships entry fee, one hotel room per team, eligible Worlds travel support, Team Texas apparel, Team Texas Camp access, preparation support, on-site support, backup sous-chef access, partner connections and TFC media promotion. Specific benefits remain subject to written Team Texas terms and availability.

ACCEPTANCE IS A
COMMITMENT

A competitor who accepts a Team Texas invitation and then fails to appear at Worlds may lose eligibility to participate in World Food Championships and Texas Food Championship for one year, subject to TFC review of the circumstances.

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ENFORCEMENT, INTERPRETATION & FINAL AUTHORITY**PROTECTING FAIRNESS AND SAFETY**

TFC competition leadership has authority to interpret and administer these policies and the Official Competition Rules in good faith. Decisions may consider safety, fairness, event operations, category requirements and championship integrity.

Depending on the nature and severity of a violation, TFC may issue guidance or a warning, require corrective action, restrict access, assess a rule-based penalty, disqualify an entry, revoke credentials, remove a participant from the event or restrict future participation.

Serious safety threats, intentional cheating, credential fraud, harassment, violence, theft, deliberate interference with another competitor or knowing attempts to corrupt judging may warrant immediate action.

**THE GOAL IS NOT
TO CATCH PEOPLE.**

The goal is a championship competitors can trust - one where the rules mean something, the kitchens are safe and every plate gets a fair shot.

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UPDATES, NOTICES & COMPETITOR RESPONSIBILITY**STAY CURRENT**

TFC may update operational policies, schedules or procedures when reasonably necessary before or during championship weekend. Material updates will be communicated through the Competitor Portal, competitor meetings, email, written notices or official TFC staff.

Competitors are responsible for monitoring the Competitor Portal and attending required competitor meetings. Failure to review an update does not automatically excuse noncompliance with an officially communicated rule, safety requirement or schedule change.

THE STANDARD OF THE ARENA

BY ENTERING THE ARENA, YOU ACCEPT THE STANDARD.

WHAT WE EXPECT

Be prepared. Be safe. Compete with integrity. Respect the judges. Respect the clock. Respect the competitor beside you. Represent your team and Food Sport well.

Texas Food Championship exists to give competitors a stage worthy of the work it takes to get here. The policy is not the championship. The people are. These standards simply protect the arena so the cooking can decide the rest.

We built the arena. We brought the judges. We opened the road to Worlds.

NOW GO COOK SOMETHING WORTHY OF TEXAS.

OFFICIAL COMPETITOR RESOURCES

Use the 2026 Competitor Portal for the current Official Competition Rules, schedule, arrival and load-in guide, arena map, kitchen equipment list, check-in information, credentials, parking, E.A.T. scoring guide, awards information and Team Texas resources.

TEXAS FOOD CHAMPIONSHIP
September 25-27, 2026 | Corpus Christi, Texas