

Utah 4-H Cooking Challenge

Contest Guideline - Update Feb 2025

Description:

A team of two members or an individual contestant will prepare and complete a dish highlighting the challenge ingredient. Dish must be completed and presented to the judges within a 40-minute timeframe. Contestants must prepare one complete plates of the dish for the judges. Contestants can prepare an appetizer, main course or a dessert.

Contestants will have up to 3 minutes to:

- describe the dish presented
- tell how they highlighted the challenge ingredient
- share some facts/knowledge about the challenge ingredient.

Entries:

Contestants may enter as an individual or a team of two. State level competition is open to only intermediate (6th-8th graders) and Senior (9th-12th graders) 4-H members at the state level. All grades divisions are as of Sept. 1 of each 4-H year.

State Awards:

- Blue Ribbons will be awarded to youth with high levels of overall performances based on the 4-H Cooking Challenge scorecard.
- First place individual or team of two will receive a State 4-H Winner's Jacket for Senior at the state level. Intermediate divisions winners will receive a hoodie at the state level.
- County awards, if applicable, will be determined by the county.

Contest Eligibility:

1. 4-H Cooking Challenge is open to all 4-H members in 3rd through 12th grade as of September 1st of each 4-H year (September through August) the contest is held. County competition will be held for all three age divisions:
 - Junior 3rd through 5th grade as of September 1st of each 4-H year
 - Intermediate 6th through 8th grade as of September 1st of each 4-H year
 - Senior 9th through 12th grade as of September 1st of each 4-H yearOnly Intermediate or Senior age contestants can advance to the state competition. It is up to the county's discretion if they choose to hold a qualifying or practice event prior the state competition. If no county qualifier is held, youth from that county will be able to complete at the state competition. There is no national competition for this contest.
2. All contestants must be active members of 4-H in order to compete.
3. Contestants may only compete each year until they have won 1st place in their age division at the state level. Once contestant has been awarded the state championship in their age division, they can no longer compete in the 4-H Cooking Challenge Contest in that age division.

- Example: If a contestant is designated as the Intermediate State Champion at age 11, the 4-H member can no longer compete in the 4-H Cooking Challenge until they advance to the Senior age division. Or if a contestant is the Senior State Champion at age 14, the contestant can no longer compete in the 4-H Cooking Challenge for their remaining years in their 4-H.

Challenge Ingredient:

Each 4-H year (September to August) a different challenge ingredient will be selected that must be highlighted in the prepared dish. Below is the list of challenge ingredients by 4-H year:

2024-2025 – Whole Grains	2029-2030 – Egg
2025-2026 – Pitted Fruit	2030-2031 – Cheese
2026-2027 – Beans	2031-2032 – Beef (or protein substitute)
2027-2028 – Turkey	2032-2033 – Berries
2028-2029 – Spinach	2033-2034 – Zucchini

Contest Rules:

1. Contestants must supply all their own equipment & all the ingredients for the dish they have chosen to prepare for the Cooking Challenge Contest. This will include disposable plates and appropriate flatware to serve the judges the prepared dish.
 - Contestants will NOT have access to a kitchen facility; therefore, dirty dishes should be placed in a plastic container, bag or box to be cleaned at home.
2. Contestants should be prepared to only use one heat source at a time during the preparation phase of the contest to avoid electricity issues. Multiple heat sources may be used, but only one can be used at a time. All heat sources must be electronic (no open flame). Many of the USU Extension Offices have electronic hot plates. If you need one at the state competitions, check with your county office.
 - Example: Heat source might include such equipment as a hot plate, toaster oven, Instapot, electric skillet etc.
3. Contestants should dress appropriately for the preparation of food (i.e. no full or draping sleeves; closed-toe shoes only; hair appropriately restrained, etc.). Teams have the option of coordinating clothing, aprons or hair coverings, but is not required.
4. No electronic devices (phones, tablets, smart watches, etc.) will be allowed during the contest.
5. All food preparation must be completed at the competition site (nothing can be prepared ahead of time).
 - Purchased items can be prepared ahead of time (example: if making a grilled cheese, you can use store bought bread and by shredded or sliced cheese, however you cannot pre-slice a cheese block)
 - If rinsing is required, participants are encouraged to bring their own bucket and water.

6. Educational programs of the Utah State University Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Persons or participating teams in need of auxiliary services, accessibility needs, with special dietary concerns or food allergies should contact the contest coordinator prior to the contest.

Contest Procedures:

1. A short orientation will be provided for all contestants prior to the start of competition time.
2. Contestants will be directed to their assigned cooking/preparation station.
3. Contestants will have 40 minutes to prepare a dish, present up to a three-minute presentation, and clean up their assigned preparation area. The presentation must include:
 - Explain the dish presented
 - Tell how they highlighted the challenge ingredient
 - Share some facts/knowledge about the challenge ingredient.
4. Contestants must incorporate and highlight the challenge ingredient into their dish.
5. Dish may be either an appetizer, main dish or dessert.
6. If contestants are a team of 2, they must work together on all aspects of the contest and share the responsibilities.
7. Contestants must prepare one complete plate of the dish for the judges. They must provide disposable plates and flatware for the judges' dishes to use. There are usually three judges.
8. Contestants will be evaluated by judges on the following criteria:
 - proper food safety and practices
 - food preparation skills
 - creative use of the challenge ingredient
 - Overall appearance of the presented dish
 - 3-minute presentation – describe dish, highlight challenge ingredient & facts about challenge ingredient
 - Quality and taste of the food
 - Effective use of time managementDescriptions of each element can be found on the 4-H Cooking Challenge Preparation Scorecard.
9. Only participants and contest officials will be allowed in the food preparation area; however, spectators may watch from assigned areas.
10. Contest officials are not responsible for any equipment malfunctions the team may experience during the preparation period.
11. After the preparation phase of the contest, each individual or team will give a presentation to a panel of judges. All team members must participate in the presentation.
12. Judges may taste the contestant's dish at their personal discretion
13. Following the 3-minute presentation, the judges may ask questions, which will be considered by the judges scoring.

Utah 4-H Cooking Challenge

Scorecard

Name _____

County _____

Name _____

County _____

Name of Recipe: _____

Type of Dish: _____ Main Dish _____ Appetizer _____ Dessert

Items to be Scored	Fair	Good	Excellent	Points Earned	Comments
Food Safety: (15pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeared to be prepared and cooked properly; when preparing meat, a thermometer was used. • Personal hygiene: hands were properly washed (hair restrained, nails, jewelry, etc.) • Contestant(s) kept food clean, i.e. no taste food and reuse spoon, refrained from coughing/sneezing, licking fingers, etc. • Countertops and utensils were all properly cleaned and sanitized after use 					
Food Preparation: (15pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibited knowledge of how to use equipment safely (heat, utensils, sharps, etc.) • All preparation was completed on-site (nothing was prepared beforehand) • Degree of difficulty in food preparation technique(s) was utilized 					
Creative Use of Challenge Ingredient: (15pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the meal show creativity in the use of the challenge ingredient? 					
Overall Appearance of Presented Dish: (10pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall appealing visual appearance, including aroma • Looks appetizing, contrast in color, texture, temperature, flavor and shapes • Foods are arranged in a pleasing manner, i.e. garnishes used effectively, appropriate portion sizes, etc. 					
3 Minute Presentation: (20pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good voice projection, speaks with poise, ease and confidence, maintains eye contact with judges • Presenter's clothes and hair are appropriate and clean • Demonstrates knowledge on dish • Stays within allotted time • Recipes (4 copies) prepared and clearly written 					
Quality & Taste of the Food: (15pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appetizing flavor, tasteful • Natural flavors are enhanced by the appropriate use of spices/seasonings 					
Time Management: (10pts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient time was allowed for preparation, presentation, and clean up • Used effective time management methods • Workspace is used effectively • Area is clean and tidy at the conclusion of the Presentation • Minus 5 points for use of electronic devices • Minus 1 point for every 2 minutes over 40 minutes 					

