



American Culinary Federation Student Team National Championship 2025 Regional Qualifier Guidelines

Updated: September 11, 2024

American Culinary Federation, Inc. • Attention: Administration • 6816 Southpoint Pkwy, Ste 400 • Jacksonville, FL 32216 • (800) 624-9458 • www.acfchefs.org

Preparing for the Competition:

Teams selected to compete in the 2025 Qualifier have met the requirements and have satisfied the guidelines for filing for the competition and have met the filing timeline. The Student Teams must follow the below Guidelines.

Composition and Role of the Team:

The team will be comprised of five (5) members designated with working stations to execute the four (4) course menu. All five (5) members of the team have an equal role in the production of the menu without limitations in the Set-Up, Production, Clean-Up and Service of the four (4) course menu. The team will determine which member(s) will serve as the expeditor/service coordinator who will help coordinate service to the judges. In addition, they will be responsible for applying, if required, any finishing touches, garnishes and saucing tableside.

Requirements:

- Student Teams will have fifteen (15) minutes for Set-Up, ninety (90) minutes for Production Time, twenty (20) additional minutes for Plating and fifteen (15) minutes for Clean-up.
- Student Teams will produce a signature four (4) course menu to serve four (4).
- Three (3) plates will be for the tasting judges and the remaining one (1) dish will be for display.
- Teams should focus on the use of the regional palette of flavors and available ingredients; continuity and compatibility of ingredients throughout the menu while incorporating varied cooking techniques including modern techniques.
 - The menu theme and utilization of local ingredients and techniques will fall under ten (10) points toward Overall Menu Composition and Skills Displayed.
- The themed menu must include the following courses.
 - Fish Course as a starter— Utilizing a species of round or flat fish per SKC11 guidelines and at least one (1) other seafood accompaniment i.e., bivalves, crustaceans, cephalopods, utilized in any manner within the dish. Team's Choice
 - Salad Course - Team's choice
 - Main Course – Utilizing any protein from the SKC Guidelines. *A minimum of two (2) cooking techniques must be applied to the main protein.* Team's Choice.
 - Dessert Course of the Team's choice

General Guidelines:

- Teams will be required to showcase cooking skills commensurate with those expected of advanced culinary students. These would include technical skills performed at the highest levels including butchery, classical cuts and an array of cooking methods and techniques to produce a great tasting and attractively presented menu.
- The Student Team should display cohesiveness and demonstrate great teamwork.
- Teams must provide for the four (4) course meal, six (6) sets of menu packets. These must be presented to the judges in packet form (simple stacked pages with one (1) staple) upon entering the kitchen at the stated competition start time.

The packets for the judges should be easy to follow and include:

- A menu written as it would be presented to the guest.
- A color, close-up photo of both dishes (should be current and representative of what the judges will



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receive).

- Followed by the recipe including ingredients, quantities, and procedures.
- The packet should be produced with standard formatting of Times New Roman 12pt font and include only a staple at the upper left-hand corner of the packet—no binders, covers or anything to inhibit easy access and reference for the judge.
- Packets are to be provided to judges on-site on the day of the competition.

Ingredient Guidelines:

- Teams are expected to bring in only the whole and raw materials in the amounts stated in the recipe to execute the assignment. Products should be weighed, separated, and clearly marked.
- Washed peeled and sectioned fruits, vegetables and cut mirepoix are allowed for the four (4) course cooking phase. Fruits and vegetables are not to be brought in shaped but may be sectioned according to the team's needs. Leeks may be split for cleaning purposes.
- Appropriate stocks for the four (4) course meal may be brought in, but neither finished sauces nor clarified broths are allowed. Additionally, stocks should be unaltered without further reduction from what is obtained after the initial straining of the liquid. Samples of each stock should be presented to the floor judge for assessment.
- Puff pastry, bric (brick) dough, and filo (phyllo) may be brought in.
- The use of commercial fruit purees for the dessert is allowed but the puree should not be altered in any way from its original packaging.
- Cooked ice cream bases and/or sorbet bases may be brought in ready to freeze at the competition site.
- The separation of whole shell eggs should be demonstrated in the production window.
- Sponges may be brought in as sheets without any trimming or shaping.
- Frozen inserts for paco jet type machines may be brought in pre-frozen.
- All marinated and brined items brought in advance must be demonstrated and prepared in their proper culinary production sequence before the pre-prepared items can “swapped out” for the pre-marinated or brined ones.
- Proteins must be brought whole, and butchery skills and utilization of trim will need to be displayed.
- Utilization of usable trim and by-products in your menu is fully expected and show's one's cooking skills.

Competition Kitchen:

- A kitchen diagram and a list of equipment provided will be sent to each competitor by the ACF national office once the kitchen design has been established. This will include the refrigeration and freezer space available and the number of electrical outlets.
- Competitors must bring their own tools, cookware, small specialty equipment, and chinaware.
- Please keep in mind that you will be limited to the number of outlets provided and the use of power strips will be at the discretion of the lead judge.
- Time will not be adjusted for equipment malfunctions that result from the provided wattage being overrun. Competitors should choose equipment that can be supported by the number of outlets and wattage provided.
- The amount of space available is limited so only bring in the appropriate amount of equipment.
- Additional equipment, such as tabletop burners and deep fat fryers as example, will be at the discretion of



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the lead judge and based on the requirements of the host site.

- Teams are required to work within the assigned kitchen/station boundaries. Not adhering to this rule will result in point deductions.
- Teams are required to save their food and non-food waste in separate designated containers (clear third pans) and dispose of them into a designated common trash receptacle *once reviewed* by a Judge. In addition, usable food trims must be properly labeled and put away.
- Cell phones ARE NOT PERMITTED in the kitchen during your cooking window. Teams may use mechanical timers or app-based timers on devices such as iPad or tablets set to “airplane mode” to discourage communication with managers, coaches, and any other supporters not within the competition kitchen.
- Teams are allowed to use speed racks or carts while entering and exiting their kitchens, to bring all equipment and supplies needed to properly execute their menus. **During the production window ONLY ONE (1) speed rack will be allowed to remain in the kitchen area.**
- Once in the competition set-up window, **team members are not permitted to leave the kitchen for any reason until breakdown is completed.**
- Competitors are discouraged from using silicone molds and stencils in concepting their menu; instead, they are encouraged to use more hand skills of formation and piping. These items are not prohibited, however, using them more than once would not be favorable and would affect culinary skills score.

Timeline and Guidance:

Window	Timing	Guidance
Set up Window	15 Minutes	Students should move into their stations and set up for effective execution; no cooking to occur in this window however, water may be set to heat, immersion circulators can be turned on, products may be unwrapped for initial preparations
Production Window	90 Minutes	All production leading to service of menu must be done within this window, including all technical skills, knife cuts, and fabrication
Service Window	20 Minutes	Teams can begin service of their menu immediately as this window opens and must conclude the service of the four courses at its conclusion
Cleanup Window	15 Minutes	Teams are to leave at the conclusion of this window with the kitchen in the same condition as it was when they entered their set-up window. All remaining food items should be displayed and labeled for judging

Uniforms

Competitors must wear the following:

- White chef coat
- Black pants
- Black shoes or clogs
- Competition toque (provided by ACF)
- Full apron



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Role of the Team Manager and Coaches & other member of the group:

The manager and coach do not have a role during the competition. Once you arrive at the competition window, your work is done. There is absolutely no communication with the team either verbal, non-verbal or through any other means. This includes during the set-up, production, service, and breakdown windows. This will result in immediate DISQUALIFICATION of the team. Once breakdown is concluded and the team is released from the kitchen, the manager and coaches may communicate with their team. Manager and coaches are required to be present during their team's critique.

Judging Process:

- Competitors will be evaluated by a panel of distinguished chefs who will serve as kitchen judges and tasting judges.
- Discussion, gesturing or any other verbal or non-verbal communication to the team from its manager, coaches, or any other supporters of the team in ANY of the competition windows will result in immediate disqualification of that team.
- After the "set-up window" time is complete, competitors will not be allowed to leave the competition kitchen. All dishes and equipment will need to remain in the kitchen until after the cooking window is closed. Any infractions of this rule will result in loss of points or disqualification at the discretion of the judges. In the event a competitor requires additional product or equipment they will need to make a request to the floor judge.
- Critiques for individual teams will be done in private with all judges; teams are encouraged to bring in those involved with their team including support staff from the school and/or chapter, parents, guardians or caregivers of the student team members, and administration of the associated schools. No others will be permitted in the critique. This is done to provide an opportunity for open and honest dialogue between the judges and competitors.
- The lead judge will have the discretionary right to clear a viewing area with the intention of maintaining the integrity of the overall competition.
- All the judge's decisions are final.



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Show: 2025 Regional Qualifier Team: _____
 Date: _____ Category: Student Team of the Year

Tasting Criteria		Maximum Points	Fish Course Course	Salad Course	Main Course	Dessert Course
	Serving Methods and Presentation	10				
	Portion Size and Nutritional Balance	5				
	Flavor, Taste, Texture, Doneness	35				
	Individual Course Score	50				
	Full Menu Score (max. 200)					
	÷ 4 for Total Menu Score (max. 50)					

Comments:

Awards Guidelines for Standards on 60 points System	
60	Gold Distinction
54-59.99	Gold
48-53.99	Silver
42-47.99	Bronze
00-41.99	Diploma

Menu Progression	Points	Points Given
Use of the regional palette of flavors and available ingredients; continuity and compatibility of ingredients throughout the menu while incorporating varied cooking techniques including modern techniques.	0-10	

Total Menu Score (0-50)	Menu Progression Score (0-10)	Final Tasting Score (0-60)

Judge's Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____



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KITCHEN SCORE SHEET

Show: 2025 Regional Qualifier Team: _____

Date: _____ Category: Student Team of the Year

Criteria	Maximum Points	Actual Points
Sanitation/Food Handling & Safety	20	
Mise en place/Organization	10	
Teamwork	10	
Culinary and cooking techniques	20	
Proper utilization of ingredients, timing and workflow	20	
Total (maximum 80)		→
Total ÷ 2 (maximum 40)		→
Timing Deduction (1 point deduction for every minute late)	Up to 10 points	-
Adjusted Final Kitchen Score		→

NOTES:

Awards Guidelines for Standards on 40 points System	
40	Gold Distinction
36-39.99	Gold
32-35.99	Silver
28-31.99	Bronze
00-27.99	Diploma

Judge's Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____



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STUDENT TEAM OF THE YEAR QUALIFER TEAM TALLY SHEET

Team: _____ Date: _____

Kitchen/Floor Scores		
Judge 1	0-40	
Judge 2	0-40	
Judge 3	0-40	
Subtotal		

Tasting Scores		
Judge 4	0-60	
Judge 5	0-60	
Judge 6	0-60	
Subtotal		

Kitchen Score Subtotal	
Divided by number of kitchen judges	÷
TOTAL KITCHEN SCORE (maximum 40)	
Service/Tasting Score Subtotal	
Divided by number of tasting judges	÷
TOTAL TASTING SCORE (maximum 60)	
Total Kitchen Score + Total Tasting Score (maximum 100) Final Score	

Award Guidelines	
100	Gold w/distinction
90 – 99.99 points	Gold
80 – 89.99 points	Silver
70 – 79.99 points	Bronze
60 – 69.99	Diploma

Prepared By: _____

Judge's Signature: _____

Print Name: _____



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Student Team of the Year Qualifier Final Tally Sheet

Team	Total Score (max. 100)
Competitor 1	
Competitor 2	
Competitor 3	
Competitor 4	
Competitor 5	
Competitor 6	
Competitor 7	
Competitor 8	
Competitor 9	
Competitor 10	

Judge 1 (Lead) Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____

Judge 2 Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____

Judge 3 Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____

Judge 4 Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____

Judge 5 Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____

Judge 6 Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____