



# ACF Culinary Judge Handbook



American Culinary Federation  
The Standard of Excellence for Chefs

# ACF Culinary Judge Handbook

The ACF-certified culinary judge program was established to provide a nationwide pool of qualified judges for culinary competitions. Definitive prerequisites for approval have been established along with criteria to ensure qualifications are maintained. As the title implies, appointment as a culinary judge in the ACF confirms that an individual has attained the highest level of trust, professionalism, respect and ethical confidence from his/her peers. They have proven themselves in competition and demonstrated unquestioned judgment. As such, they have placed themselves in a position to fairly evaluate others in culinary competitions.

The screening procedure and selection process for culinary judges must, therefore, ensure only individuals with impeccable qualifications are selected. As the culinary profession is constantly updating its trends and standards, a system must also be in place to ensure those who judge remain current in an evolving world.

## Selection Procedure

After establishing their initial prerequisites, candidate judges are required to apprentice a minimum of five ACF-certified culinary competitions under the supervision of certified judges, and attend a training seminar at a regional conference or national convention (the candidate is solely responsible for coordinating his/her assignment as a judge with the lead competition judge and for all expenses incurred). Following completion of these training requirements, candidates will be reviewed by the Culinary Competition Committee and either approved or recommended for additional training. Decisions of the committee are considered final.

Administration of the judge program is performed by the Competition & Awards Administrator, while the authority for approving judges is reserved for the committee.

## Prerequisite for Being a Culinary Judge

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### Level I

The Level I Judge has demonstrated a high level of understanding and expertise in all areas of the judging arena.

#### Pre-Requisites

- Completed application
- Be an ACF member in good standing
- Be ACF certified at the CCC/CWPC level or higher
- Have won four (4) Gold medals within the last ten (10) years at an approved ACF competition or a major WACS approved culinary competition (Culinary Olympics, Culinary World Cup, Singapore Battle of the Lion)
- The four (4) medals must include:
  - one (1) in Category F4 or FP-1
  - one (1) in Category A and one in Category B OR two (2) in Category C (one of which needs to be in Category C1 or C2)
  - one (1) in either Category K, KP, or KG
  - additional gold medal can be in any category
  - WACS equivalent medals will be accepted
- Being a CMC; a past manager, or member of the ACF Culinary Team USA (official regional or national team only); fulfills the medal prerequisite for becoming a judge. However, all other criteria must still be met. ACF regional team members will need to add a gold medals in F or K.
- A gold medal in the Regional COY and PCOY competition may go towards the K category requirement or additional medal requirement. Winning or a Gold medal at the National COY or PCOY competition may go towards the F category requirement or additional medal requirement.

#### Apprentice Judging

- Once the pre-requisites are completed, verified and approved by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair the Culinarian will be required to "Apprentice Judge" at five (5) approved ACF competitions within two (2) years. These will require prior approval by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair.
- Submission and verification of the Apprentice Judge Evaluation forms that are submitted by the Lead Judge. All five (5) evaluations must be at a satisfactory level and given an approved for judging stamp.

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## Final Approval

- Once the Prerequisites and Apprentice Judging requirements are complete, the culinarian will be presented to the Culinary Competition Committee Chair for review and final approval. In a case that an application is rejected a recommendation by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair will be given to the applicant on what's needed for approval.

## Level II

The Level II Judge has demonstrated an expertise and achievement in hot food competitions. A Level II Judge may judge Category F, K & G and a Level I Judge must be on the panel or serve as the Lead Judge. Level II Judge may not serve as a lead judge and only judge hot food categories. The use of Level II judges must be approved by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair.

## Pre-Requisites

- Completed application
- Be an ACF member in good standing
- Recommendation letters from three (3) Level I Judges
- Be ACF certified at the CCC/CWPC level or higher
- Have won three (3) Gold medals within the last six (6) years at an approved ACF competition or a major WACS approved culinary competition (Culinary Olympics, Culinary World Cup, Singapore Battle of the Lion)
- The three (3) Gold medals must include:
  - one (1) in Category F4 or FP-1
  - one (1) in either Category K, KP or KG
  - A gold medal in the Regional COY and PCOY competition may go towards the K category requirement or additional medal requirement. Winning or a Gold medal at the National COY or PCOY competition may go towards the F category requirement or additional medal requirement.
  - WACS equivalent medals will be accepted

## Apprentice Judging

- Once the pre-requisites are completed and verified and approved by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair, the culinarian will be required to "Apprentice Judge" at five (5) approved ACF hot food competitions within two (2) years and one (1) of which all needs to be at the Regional or National level. These will require prior approval by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair.
- Submission and verification of the Apprentice Judge evaluation forms that are submitted by the Lead Judge
- All five (5) evaluations must be at satisfactory level and given an approved for judging stamp.
- Final Approval
- Once the Prerequisites and Apprentice Judging requirements are complete, the culinarian will be presented to the Culinary Competition Committee Chair for review and final approval. In a case that an application is rejected a recommendation by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair will be given to the applicant on what's needed for approval.

## Level II to Level I Pathway

Level II judges are encouraged to compete in cold food and earn a gold medal. Once earned, they will be commuted from Level II to Level I. However, there is another pathway:

## Pre-Requisites

- Completed application
- Be an ACF member in good standing
- Be ACF certified at the CCC/CWPC level or higher
- Served as a Level II Judge for three (3) consecutive years and in good standing.
- Must apprentice judge 4 cold food shows under guidance of Level I Judge or receive a gold medal in a Category A salon.

## Apprentice Judging

- Once the pre-requisites are completed and verified and approved by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair, the culinarian

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will be required to “Apprentice Judge” at four (4) approved ACF cold food competitions within three (3) years. These will require prior approval by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair.

- One (1) must be in category A
- One (1) must be in category B
- One (1) must be in category C
- One (1) must be in category D
- Submission and verification of the Apprentice Judge evaluation forms that are submitted by the Lead Judge All evaluation must be at satisfactory level and given an approved for judging stamp.
- Final Approval
- Once the Prerequisites and Apprentice Judging requirements are complete, the culinarian will be presented to the Culinary Competition Committee Chair for review and final approval. In a case that an application is rejected a recommendation by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair will be given to the applicant on what’s needed for approval.

## Level III Specialty

A Level III Judge has experience in one (1) major specialty and is considered a master in their craft. Competitions may use a Level III Judge only in the category of their expertise and will require a Level I judge on the panel. Level III Judge may not serve as a lead judge. The use of a Level III Judge must be approved by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair.

The specialty areas will include:

- Cake Decorating/Sculpting (including C3 and C4)
- Ice Carving
- Vegetable/Fruit Carving
- Tallow/Saltillage
- Bread Dough Centerpieces
- Pastry Centerpiece (Chocolate, Sugar, Pastillage, and Gumpaste)
- Master Baker (bread categories including C5)

## Prerequisite

- Completed application
- Portfolio of competition of work to include awards, pictures and any certification.
- Recommendation letters from three (3) Level I Judges

## Apprentice Judging

- Once the pre-requisites are completed and verified and approved by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair, the culinarian will be required to “Apprentice Judge” at two approved ACF competitions in the specialty of the culinarian. These will require prior approval by the Culinary Competition Committee Chair.
- Submission and verification of the Apprentice Judge evaluation forms that are submitted by the Lead Judge.
- Final Approval
- Once the Prerequisites and Apprentice Judging requirements are complete, the culinarian will be presented to the Culinary Competition Committee Chair for final approval.
- All judges must meet the requirements and go through

## Apprentice Judge Critiques

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The lead judge will evaluate the apprentice judge in the areas of culinary knowledge, professionalism, judgment and communication skills. Under no circumstances will Non-ACF Approved Judges have their scores count during the actual competition scoring assessment for competitors. Only the approved ACF Judges scores will count as the competitor’s final scores of that competition. Then the ACF National Office will review each competitor’s scores when they arrive and will verify this process was upheld, if there is any indication of mishandled

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scores the current competition committee will be notified and further actions will be taken. A formal critique will be forwarded to the Competition & Awards Administrator and placed in the applicants' file. It is the responsibility of the apprentice judge to make sure the critique is sent to and received by the national office. Lead judges are expected to out-brief apprentice judges following a competition, but the contents of the written critique will be considered privileged information releasable only to the Culinary Competition Committee.

Upon completion of the five apprentice periods, the applicant shall notify the Competition & Awards Administrator that he/she wishes to have their file reviewed by the Culinary Competition Committee for approval. The Competition & Awards Administrator will coordinate this review with the committee. Following the review and a vote, the chair will notify the candidate of the results of the review in writing within thirty days. If additional action is necessary before qualification is required, this will be specifically outlined. Decisions of the Culinary Competition Committee in matters related to judge candidates are considered final.

## Maintaining Currency

In keeping with ACF policies and procedures certified judges will be appointed by the Culinary Competition Committee for two calendar years at a time.

In order for a judge to be eligible for re-appointment he/she must meet the following criteria:

1. Retain currency as an ACF member in good standing.
2. Retain currency at the required level of ACF certification.
3. Judge a minimum of two competitions over the past two years\*.
4. Attend a judges training seminar once every two years.
5. Maintain the ACF Anti-Harassment training every two years.

An annual audit of judges will be conducted by the Competition & Awards Administrator to verify the above criteria are met. The results of this audit will be submitted to the Culinary Competition Committee for review. The committee will determine reappointment and removal of any judges. Serving as an examiner for the CMC test or judging WACS-sanctioned competitions fulfills this requirement.

## Judges' Commitments to Competitions

Judges are required to commit to participate in competitions up to four months in advance. While it is understood that scheduling this far out may be difficult, these commitments ease the burden on show planners who are budgeting travel expenses, printing programs and coordinating a multitude of other commitments. Best efforts should be made to keep judging commitments. If, however, a commitment must be broken, the judge is responsible for finding a suitable replacement.

## Dress Code

It is important to remember that judges represent the profession of chefs. Therefore, when judging a competition, judges must wear professional chefs' attire (clean, pressed chef jacket, black or black-and-white checkered pants and closed toed shoes or clogs OR clean pressed lab coat, dress slacks, dress shirt and tie, and dress shoes).

## Ethical Code of Conduct

In fulfilling the responsibilities of a judge, members may encounter a variety of issues and situations that require the exercise of fair and impartial judgment. Although the specifics of these issues and situations cannot be foreseen with particularity, fundamental ethical principles are available for guidance.

Within the framework of such principals, these Ethical Codes of Conduct are set forth:

1. I shall uphold the integrity and independence of the judging process.
2. I shall avoid the impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all activities.
3. I shall perform all specific duties impartially and diligently.
4. I shall refrain from any business activity inappropriate to judging responsibilities.
5. I shall preserve confidentiality of the competitor information and other judges' comments to which I am privy.

## Filing a Formal Complaint Against a Judge

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Competitors who feel an ACF-certified judge has violated any of the rules/guidelines for behavior above may submit, in writing, a formal complaint to the national office. The complaint must detail the specific behavior that is being questioned and should include the date and location of the competition. Anonymous complaints will not be deemed valid. When a formal complaint is received, a copy will be forwarded to the chair of the Culinary Competition Committee for review and action. If necessary, a full committee meeting or conference call will be scheduled to discuss the concerns raised and a suitable response formed. Copies of any complaints and actions taken against an ACF-certified judge will be kept in the respective judge's file.

# Application for ACF-Certified Culinary Judge

I hereby apply for approval as an ACF-certified culinary judge. I understand it is my responsibility to complete all prerequisites as outlined in the ACF Certified Culinary Competition Manual. I further understand that upon completion of all prerequisites my qualifications for judging will be reviewed by the Culinary Competition Committee, and their determination as to my approval or requirement for additional training will be final.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ACF #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACF Certifications & Expiration Dates

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Employment Information

Employment Establishment: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

## Competition Experience

ACF and WACS (attach continuation sheet if required)

Medal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Competition: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Medal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Competition: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Medal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Competition: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Medal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Competition: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Medal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Competition: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Medal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Competition: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved for Judge in Training (CCC Chair): \_\_\_\_\_

# Apprentice Judge Critique

Senior judges are required to complete this critique on apprentice judges performing under their tenure. The original should be sent to the Competitions & Awards Administrator for filing in permanent records and a copy provided to the apprentice judge.

It is the responsibility of the apprentice judge to follow up to ensure the Competitions & Awards Administrator has received this documentation.

Apprentice Judge Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Competition Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Host Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide comments and your evaluation of the above judge candidate. All comments will be held in confidence and released only to members of the CCC if required in the performance of their duties. (Attach additional sheets, if required.)

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Categories Judged: A  B  C  D  E  F  G  H  K  P

Student Team Culinary Knowledge Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Professionalism: \_\_\_\_\_

Judgment: \_\_\_\_\_

Communication Skills: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend this candidate for approval as an ACF culinary judge:  Yes  No

Comments/Recommendations:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Senior Judge's Name: \_\_\_\_\_