



# American Culinary Federation

## Student Pastry Chef of the Year

### 2026 Regional Qualifier Guidelines

Updated: July 19, 2025

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

#### Preparing for the Competition:

Students selected to compete at the 2026 Regional Qualifiers will follow the following guidelines:

SPCOY	SP3 - Modernization of Classical Pastry Classical Choice: Gâteau St-Honoré Practical and Contemporary Patisserie, Student, Individual	Nine (9) Individual portions; three (3) for tasting, remaining for display/critique <b>or</b> One (1) entremet to serve eight (8) to ten (10), three (3) for tasting, remaining for display/critique
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#### SP-3 Practical and Contemporary Patisserie, Student, Individual “Modernization of Classical Pastry”

While maintaining the integrity of the original version, Student Pastry Chefs are required to use the Ingredients from the original recipe and are encouraged to use modern techniques, sensibilities and presentation combined with classical principles to create their new presentation.

#### General Guidelines:

Classical Choice: Gateau St. Honore, France. Primary sources for this description are:

The New International Confectioner, editor Wilfred J. Fance F.INST.B.B., pg. 727 explains the construction: Roll out a disc of puff pastry, then egg wash edge. Pipe a ring of choux paste around the edge with a plain nozzle. Bake in moderate oven. Pipe out petite choux about the size of walnuts and egg wash lightly. Bake till brown and dry inside. Fill the puffs with cream from the bottom, dip them in caramelized sugar and adhere to the ring. The center is filled with Chiboust Cream and piped in a linear pattern with a St. Honore Tube.

Another acceptable source is: Eighth Edition of Professional Baking by Wayne Gisslen, published by Wiley. Recipes, construction, and visual information are on page 376. An example of the Chiboust cream recipe is also in this edition as well on page 274.

Either of these versions and their make up are appropriate examples of this classical pastry. Further research is encouraged on the part of the student to learn the origin of this classic French Pastry.

- Contemporary version **must** include, but not be limited to:
  - A base of short **or** flakey dough, properly prepared and baked.
  - Petite choux puffs, properly prepared and baked.
  - At least 1 soft inclusion, such as an aerated cream or mousse, examples are but not limited to Bavarian, Chiboust, and Diplomat creams can be featured.
  - Aerated creams must be inside the puffs **and** on the pastry itself as well.
  - Puffs **must** be garnished in some way with, but not limited to, cooked sugar, Glacage, spray chocolate, tempered chocolate, craquelin, pectin Nappage to name a few.
- Other considerations for components **may** include sponge or biscuit, cooked or macerated fruits, nuts, ganache, caramel, feuillette, and gianduja to name but a few.
  - A combination of the above-mentioned components is encouraged **but not required**.
- Student Pastry Chefs may present this modernized pastry as:
  - Nine (9) individual portions (maximum 100g each portion), with three (3) of these portions presented plated for judging and the remaining six (6) presented any style on platter of the candidate's choice, or



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one (1) entremet to serve eight (8) to ten (10) people, with a maximum weight of 1000 g. The entremet must be portioned, with the 3 tasting portions served on plates for judging. All service, and plating must be performed during and within the plating window.

- Competitors have fifteen (15) minutes for set-up, ninety (90) minutes for production, ten (10) additional minutes for plating and fifteen (15) minutes for clean-up.
- Nine (9) individual portions (maximum 100 g each portion), presented on their choice of service-ware in any style they see fit **or** 1 entremet to serve eight (8) to ten (10) people, with a maximum weight of 1000g.
- Competitors must provide four (4) packets for the judges. These must be presented to the judges in a 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 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:

- Ingredients for the recipe are allowed to be pre-scaled and measured; however, no pre-mixing is allowed unless specified.
- No advance preparation or cooking is allowed unless specified.
- Cleaned and peeled fruits are acceptable.
- Glazes may be brought in assembled, but from refrigerated state, not warmed and ready to apply.
- Dessert syrups may be brought in.
- Finished sauces are allowed to be brought in and may be served inside vessels upon presentation.
- The following ready-made doughs may be brought in: bric (brick and filo (phyllo) dough. Puff pastry dough can be brought in but only in bulk form. ***It may not be a commercially made dough.*** Pate brisee, etc. may also be brought in its bulk amount, not pinned out or shaped.
- The use of commercial purees for the dessert is allowed but the puree should be unaltered in any way from its original packaging.
- Pate a Choux **must** be manufactured during the competition.
- Sponges and cakes may be baked off and brought in as sheets without any trimming or shaping.
- If used, ice cream, sherbet, granita and/or sorbet bases may be brought in ready to freeze at the competition site.
- All combinations of ingredients must be completed during the competitor's allotted production window.
- Competitors are allowed to bring in only the whole and raw materials in the amounts stated in their recipes. However, judges may allow variances in amounts for products that require further preparation (i.e. flour for dusting, eggs for egg wash).
- Note: The following food colorings are not allowed for use:
  - Red Dye #3 (Erythrosine)
  - Red Dye #40 (Allura Red AC)
  - Yellow #5 (Tartrazine)



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- Blue #1 (Brilliant Blue FCF)
  - Blue #2 (Indigo Carmine)
  - Titanium Dioxide (White E171)
- Competitors must bring their own food ingredients.

#### **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.

#### **Timeline and Guidance:**

Window	Timing	Guidance
Set up Window	10 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, ovens can be pre heated, products may be unwrapped for initial preparations
Production Window	90 minutes	All production leading to service of the course must be done within this window, including all technical skills, knife cuts, and fabrication
Service Window	10 minutes	Students can begin service of their course immediately as this window opens and the menu must be completed in the allotted time
Cleanup Window	15 minutes	Students 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

#### **Uniform:**

Competitors must wear the following:

- White chef coat
- Black pants
- Black shoes or clogs
- Competition toque
- Full apron

#### **Judging Process:**

- Competitors will be evaluated by a panel of distinguished chefs who will serve as kitchen judges and tasting judges.
- 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



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requires additional product or equipment they will need to make a request to the floor judge.

- 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.