Rules & Guidelines

The goal of the Texas 4-H Food Show is to provide an opportunity for 4-H members to highlight their culinary skills while also improving their presentation and interview skills. More than 100,000 youth participate in the 4-H Food & Nutrition Project, learning how to prepare nutritious and safe meals and snacks and adopt behaviors that can help reduce their risk for chronic disease. This contest challenges members to create a dish using healthy ingredients in addition to learning in-depth information related to their dish and its nutritional value.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop healthy eating habits to reduce the risk of chronic disease.
- Develop food preparation, safety, and nutrition skills.
- Provide leadership and public speaking opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for participants to connect MyPlate and Dietary Guidelines to their daily lives.
- Learn about nutrients and the health benefits they provide to your body.

1. **Participation**. Participants must be 4-H members currently enrolled in a Texas 4-H Youth Development County program and actively participating in the Food and Nutrition project.

2. **Age Divisions**. Age divisions are determined by a participant's grade as of August 31, 2026, as follows:

Division	Grades	
Junior	3*, 4, or 5	**Must be at least 8 years old*
Intermediate	6, 7, or 8	
Senior	9, 10, 11, or 12*	**Must not be older than 18 years old*

3. There will be three age divisions in BOTH Food Show & Food Challenge. Youth may participate in BOTH events. Students will not be permitted to participate in any other age division other than the one in which they are enrolled as. (i.e. no moving up in age division).

4. **Entries per county**. Each county may enter one 4-H member per Food Show category per age division.

5. **Categories**. There are four Food Show categories: Appetizer, Main Dish, Side Dish, and Healthy Dessert. The 2025-2027 Food Show Theme is "Food Truck Favorites". From gourmet tacos to sizzling stir fries and mouthwatering health inspired desserts, food trucks bring bold flavor and innovative dishes to the streets-now it's your turn to bring that energy to the kitchen!

    - Appetizer – Traditionally an appetizer is a small dish or food that is eaten prior to the main course. When selecting recipes for this category, contestants should consider foods that are lower in fat, sodium, and calories to not ruin one's appetite.

    - Main Dish –The main dish is usually the heaviest, heartiest, and most substantial dish in a meal. In a meal consisting of several courses, the main dish is served during the main course and is the featured dish of the meal. The key ingredient is usually meat or another protein food, but they may contain other foods.
    - Side Dishes – Side dishes are foods that are usually served along with a main dish or as accompaniments to the main course. Suggested dishes may include salads, cooked vegetables, cooked fruit, pasta or rice dishes, and/or combination vegetable dishes.

- Healthy Desserts – Healthy can still mean delicious when it comes to desserts. Dishes in this category should be served at the end of the meal or for special occasions. Contestants should modify traditional recipes with healthy substitutions and consider MyPlate and Dietary Guidelines when selecting recipes for this category.

6. **Advancing to Texas 4-H Roundup**. The first-place entry in each Senior category will advance to state. The same recipe entry that was used at County and District level must be used at the State level. The same recipe cannot be entered more than once to the Food Show at Texas 4-H Roundup. The Texas 4-H Food Show is set for Tuesday, June 8th, 2027, in College Station.

7. **Recipe**. When selecting a recipe for competition, please remember:
   - Recipes should be written in the standard recipe format using the included Recipe Submission Checklist.
   - Oven time limit is 75 minutes in each category.
   - No alcohol or ingredients containing alcohol may be used.
   - Keep in mind what ingredients will be available or in season for all levels of competition: county, district, and state. Additionally, please consider if ingredients will be available in local grocery stores as needed for competition.
   - Contestants are only allowed to enter one recipe (no multiples).
   - Contestants must not use any copyrighted recipes.
   - Contestants must enter the same recipe at district that they qualified with at the county level. Seniors must also enter the same recipe at state that they qualified with at the district level.

8. **Garnishes**. Only edible garnishes are allowed. Participants will be asked to remove any other material besides a serving utensil, napkin, and edible garnish from the serving tray.

9. **Rules & Guidelines**. Contestants will follow all State Food Show rules.
   - ***Please note***. The state rules are written for Seniors who have qualified for the Food Show at Texas 4-H Roundup. The state rules discuss preparation at a contest site. For the District 8 Food Show, contestants will bring their prepared dish to the contest. Contestants should prepare their own dishes at home; parents may supervise but should not be preparing the food.

10. **Theme**. This year's 4-H Food Show theme is "Food Truck Favorites" … From gourmet tacos to sizzling stir-fries and mouthwatering health inspired desserts, food trucks bring bold flavors and innovative dishes to the streets-now it's your turn to bring that energy to the kitchen! Whether it's a globally inspired street food dish, a classic American favorite with a twist, or a fusion creation all your own, this gives you a chance to be creative and make it your own!

11. **Contest Resources**

    Participants are encouraged to use the following resources as a foundation to learn nutrition, food safety, and food preparation knowledge. Participants should not solely rely on these resources but seek other credible resources to expand their knowledge and expertise.

12. Nutrition Resources

- Food Safety
  https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/projects/food-nutrition/
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans
  http://health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/
- Preparation Principles & Function of Ingredients
  https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Preparation-Principles-and-Function-of-Ingredients.pdf
- Know Your Nutrients
  https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Know-Your-Nutrients_FINAL.pdf
- Nutrient Needs at a Glance
  http://fcs.tamu.edu/food_and_nutrition/pdf/nutrient-needs-at-a-glance- E-589.pdf

13. Theme Resources

- Dinner Tonight
  - https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/
- USDA
  - https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/05/27/usda-provides-food-safety-tips-grilling-pros-and-beginners
  - https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/grilling-food-safely

14. **Contestants Bring to District 8 Contest**:

- ***District 8 4-H Food Show Recipe Form & Project Experiences Form***.. **Paperwork for all age divisions needs to be uploaded at registration. Only PDF files will be accepted. Those with incomplete or incorrect paperwork will not have paperwork to be judged.** Judges will be provided copies of each contestant's paperwork.
  i. ***Juniors & Intermediates*** – Junior and Intermediate paperwork only includes the District 8 4-H Food Show Recipe Form.
  ii. ***Seniors*** – Senior paperwork includes the District 8 4-H Food Show Recipe Form and Project Experiences Form. **(Seniors. Please note that if you qualify for state you will need to use the state forms, however, do NOT use the state forms for this contest.)**
- ***Prepared dish***. 4-H members are encouraged to bring a single serving or a small dish rather than the whole recipe, so there will not be as much waste if the food needs to be thrown away. The dish should be presented to the judges as if it were about to be placed on a table for a family dinner.
- ***Presentation:***. Serving of the entry dishes will not occur. Contestants will need to be prepared to explain what the serving size of their dish is. Contestants will present their knowledge on serving sizes to the judging panel. Judges will not taste the dish.
- ***Serving Tray***. Contestants must bring their own serving trays if needed to safely transport the dish. Fancy or elaborate placemats, linens, centerpieces, candles, etc. are not to be included with the dish as it is presented for judging interviews. Contestants should only use dishes and utensils appropriate and necessary to present their dish.

15. **Orientation.** Participant orientation for Food Show will be conducted the morning of the contest.

16. **Preparation**. Food must be prepared prior to arrival at the District Food show. There will be tables in the Assembly Hall for participants to set their dish as they wait to be judged. They can put the finishing touches on the dishes in that area immediately prior to judging. Participants will have only about 10 minutes for preparation time, clearing their area quickly, and move their dish to the waiting area. There will be no timers. There will be LIMITED prep time. Parents are not allowed in the waiting or judging area in the Assembly Hall.

17. **Five Minute Presentation**. All contestants should prepare a maximum five-minute oral presentation to introduce themselves and their dish. To earn maximum points, participants must use the 5-minute presentation to describe their inspiration in choosing your recipe, how recipe relates to the current food show theme, and the following areas of the scorecard: Knowledge of Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Nutrition Knowledge, Food Preparation, and Food Safety Concerns.

18. **Four Minute Question & Answer**. Judges will have the opportunity for a maximum four-minute interview asking questions applicable to the attached scorecard. It includes, but is not limited to, basic nutrition, food safety, food preparation, chronic disease prevention, age-related nutrition, or other areas of health, as well as project experiences. Judges may ask additional questions related to general food and health, food systems, food safety, or food/health issues.

19. **Serving**. At the conclusion of the question-and-answer period, the participant will have one minute to cover how much a serving portion on their dish is. This will allow the participants to share their knowledge of serving size but not have to serve the judges. Judges will not taste the food.

20. **Skills Showcase.** There will not be a Skills Showcase. Those seniors who qualify for the state contest will need to get with their FCH agent to work on this piece of the contest.

21. **Judges' Comments**. Judges will have four minutes to write comments and score participants.

22. **Knowledge Showcase.** There will not be a Knowledge Showcase. Those seniors who qualify for the state contest will need to get with their FCH agent to work on this piece of the contest.

23. **Awards**. The top five scoring individuals in each category will be recognized. Awards will be held in Barn C, at the conclusion of the Food Challenge contest. .

24. **Contest References & Forms**. Refer to the following website for specific rules, score sheets, and forms: http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/events/roundup/.

25. **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is not chaperoning this event. The individual parent/guardian or their designee that brings the youth to the event is the chaperone and expected to stay at the event location**

D8 4-H FOOD SHOW

Recipe Submission Checklist

Recipes for 4-H Food Show should adhere to the guidelines below. Please use this checklist to ensure recipes are correctly written. This form does not need to be submitted at the Food Show. This form is for guidance only.

DOES YOUR RECIPE HAVE ALL OF THESE PARTS?	**YES**	**NO**
Name of recipe		
Complete list of ingredients		
Size cans, number of packages, cans, etc. given		
*EX: 10 oz box chopped frozen spinach NOT Spinach, box of spinach or frozen spinach		
Description for combining all ingredients		
LIST OF INGREDIENTS		
Ingredients are listed in order in which they are used in directions		
Ingredients listed as they are measured. *EX: ¼ cup chopped onion, not ¼ cup onion chopped. *EX: 1 green pepper, chopped, not 1 chopped green pepper		
Measurements given in common fractions		
*Ex: 1/4 cup, 2 tablespoons, 1 teaspoon		
All measurements are spelled out, not abbreviated. *Ex: cup, teaspoon, tablespoon, size can, etc. *Ex: 4-ounce can		
No brand names are used.		
Complete description of ingredients is included		
*EX: low-fat; packed in syrup; reduced fat; etc.		
DIRECTIONS		
Clear instructions used for every step of combining and cooking the ingredients		
Short, clear sentences used		
Correct wording used to describe combining and cooking processes		
Size and type of pan stated		
Oven temperature and cooking times given		
Number of servings or how much the recipe would make included		

D8 4-H FOOD SHOW

Sample Questions

1. How do you balance your daily menu to ensure that you get proper amounts of food from the food groups?
2. Name food groups and amounts that are required from each food group each day.
3. What function does each ingredient perform in the recipe?
4. What are the basic preparation principles involved in preparing this dish?
5. What food safety practices did you use during preparation?
6. What is considered a serving of your dish?
7. If substitutions are possible, what are they?
8. What and what amount of important nutrients are found in your dish?
9. What is the function of the nutrients found in your dish?
10. What change have you made in your dietary habits as a result of your 4-H food project?
11. Tell about your community service and leadership through the year's food project?
12. What were your goals for your foods project and what are some activities you did in this project?
13. What do you consider your most important learning experience in this year's food project?
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your project?

These are sample questions. Judges are free to ask any question related to the 4-H Food & Nutrition Project.

D8 4-H FOOD SHOW

2026 District 8 4-H Food Show
Recipe Form – All Age Divisions

Name: **County:**

Age Division ____ Junior ____ Intermediate _____ Senior

Category ____ Appetizer ____ Side Dish _____ Main Dish _____ Healthy Dessert

Name of Recipe:

Type recipe here: *(Check the Texas 4-H Food Show Guide for Recipe Submission Checklist and Example format.)*

D8 4-H FOOD SHOW

2026 District 8 4-H Food Show
Project Experiences – Seniors Only

Name:			**County:**	
Age Division			__x__ Senior	
Category	____ Appetizer	_____ Side Dish	_____ Main Dish	_____ Healthy Dessert
Name of Recipe:				

Limit to current year's experiences, including project activities, community service, and leadership. Limited to space below.