



American Culinary Federation Pastry Chef of the Year 2027 Regional Qualifier Guidelines

Updated August 11, 2026

Preparing for the Competition

Chefs selected to compete at the 2027 Regional Qualifier will follow the following guidelines:

PCOY	Contemporary Cold Buffet Pastry Composition Petite Tarts Individual KWP - Category	Nine portions of Signature Petite Tarts intended for Buffet Service. 3 For Tasting and 6 for display and critique
-------------	--	---

Contemporary Patisserie, Individual KWP Category

General Guidelines

Competitors will produce one (1) Contemporary Cold Buffet Pastry Composition of Petite Tarts for buffet service. Materials used for construction of these contemporary petite tarts are the competitor's choice and will respect the following guidelines for makeup and production:

- A total of nine (9) petite portions of individual tarts, composition is competitor's choice.
- Portions to be between 5cm and 10 cm in diameter, and weight not to exceed 120 grams.
- Composition of tarts must have a **minimum of five (5) of the following components**:
 - **A baked crust or shell.** Examples of this composition are, but not limited to, pâte sucrée, pâte brisée, pie dough, crispy cookie pastes, nuts, coconut, baked meringue, to name a few. This shell can be baked with the required filling or baked separately and then assembled with required items after. **Dough may be brought in bulk; shells must be pinned out, formed or created during competition.**
 - **A baked filling or batter.** This filling/component may be baked with the tart crust or placed into the tart after it is prepared. Some examples are, but not limited to, frangipane, cream cheese filling, or a sponge or biscuit baked first, cut out and added into prepared shell. Some of these fillings, while they may require refrigeration, do not meet the criteria below of a separate refrigerated dairy element. **The fillings may be brought in prepared, ready to bake into shell. The cake or sponge may be brought in baked off, cut, and ready for construction.**
 - **Fruit.** Some examples are fresh, in the form of a marmalade, baked filling, presented inside or outside the pastry, etc. **Fruit mixtures may be brought in prepared.**
 - **A dairy-based cream requiring refrigeration, aerated cream, or mousse.** Examples include but are not limited to: Crème brûlée, crèmeux, whipped ganache, panna cotta, diplomat cream, Bavarian cream, fruit or chocolate-based mousses, or ganache. Chantilly cream as a piped garnish does not meet this criterion. **Bases may be made and brought in assembled but must be molded or shaped for construction during competition. Aerated creams/mousses are to be made during competition.**
 - **A hand-crafted decorative ornament.** Piped chocolate ornaments, precise sugar decors, cigarettes, or curls are a few examples. **These decorations must be made during competition. Lace ornaments using commercial molds to create them are not allowed.**



American Culinary Federation Pastry Chef of the Year 2027 Regional Qualifier Guidelines

Updated August 11, 2026

- **The competitor may be asked to carry the platter to a separate table for judges' evaluation.**
- Judges will serve themselves from the buffet platter onto plates provided by the competitor.
- Materials used for construction of these contemporary petite tarts are the competitor's choice.
- Construction of pastry may include other materials such as:
 - Dacquoise and Meringues
 - Crispy Inclusions: Feuilletine
 - Soft Inclusions: Caramel, Marmalade
 - Cooked or Macerated Fruit
 - Finishing: Glacage, Spray Chocolate, Pectin Nappage
 - Garnishes: Fruit, Chocolate, Nuts, Cooked Sugar
- Competitors have ten (10) minutes for set-up, seventy-five (75) minutes for production, fifteen (15) additional minutes for plating and service and ten (10) minutes for clean-up.
- Competitors must bring their own food, tools, cookware, and chinaware.

Packets for the Judges

- Competitors must provide three (3) packets for the judges. The packets must be presented in packet form upon entering the kitchen at the designated competition start time. The packets should be prepared using 12pt, Times New Roman font and be stapled in the upper left-hand corner of the packet. Please do not use binders or report covers that may inhibit easy access and reference for the judges. At a minimum, each packet will include the following (in this order):
 - **A written menu**, as it would be presented to a guest or customer
 - **A color photograph** of the dish (should be current and representative of what the judges will receive)
 - **A detailed sketch or drawing** of each pastry identifying the materials used inside and outside each pastry; computer-assisted drawings are acceptable.
 - **All recipes, including ingredients, quantities, and procedures.**

Ingredient Guidelines

- Mold use is allowed for construction.
- The candidates who showcase a variety of hand skills, such as hand cut, piping, craftsmanship, correct temperatures and textures, and unique finishes will receive the higher scores.
- Construction and finishing should represent a variety of contemporary styles, techniques, and presentation skills.
- Sponges and cakes may be brought in baked off and shaped as necessary for the presentation.
- Cookie doughs, crispy cookie pastes, and crispy elements used as decorative garnishes may be brought in unbaked.



American Culinary Federation Pastry Chef of the Year 2027 Regional Qualifier Guidelines

Updated August 11, 2026

- Soft inclusions such as Crèmeux, Ganache, Caramel, Marmalades, cooked or macerated fruits may be brought in prepared, ready for shaping or molding for construction during the competition. **This does not include aerated fillings, such as mousses, crème chiboust, Bavarians, diplomat creams, etc., which must be manufactured on site**
- Glazes may be brought in prepared, but from refrigerated state, not warmed and ready to apply.
- Dessert syrups and dessert sauces may be brought in completed. If a dessert sauce is intended to accompany the dessert, it may be presented in a vessel at the time of the judge's tasting.
- The required handmade garnishes or ornaments must be made during the competition. Each portion must be adorned with at least one (1) garnish / ornament.
- Ingredients for the recipe are allowed to be pre-scaled and measured; however, no pre-mixing is allowed other than components specified above.
- All ingredients and materials should be labeled and identified and presented to judges during set up.
- Note: The following food colorings are not allowed for use:
 - Red Dye #3 (Erythrosine)
 - Red Dye #40 (Allura Red AC)
 - Yellow #5 (Tartrazine)
 - Blue #1 (Brilliant Blue FCF)
 - Blue #2 (Indigo Carmine)
 - Titanium Dioxide (White E171)

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.
- Competitors should choose equipment that can be supported by the number of outlets and wattage provided. Time will not be adjusted for equipment malfunctions that result from the provided wattage being overrun.
- Please keep in mind that you will be limited to the number of outlets provided, and the use of power strips will not be allowed.
- The amount of space available is limited so only bring in the appropriate amount of equipment.



American Culinary Federation Pastry Chef of the Year 2027 Regional Qualifier Guidelines

Updated August 11, 2026

Timeline and Guidance:

Window	Timing	Guidance
Set Up window	10 Minutes	Chefs 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 preheated, products may be unwrapped for initial preparations
Production Window	75 Minutes	All production leading to service of the course must be done within this window
Service Window	15 Minutes	Chefs can begin service of their course immediately as this window opens and the menu must be completed in the allotted time
Clean Up Window	10 Minutes	Chefs 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:

- Chef coat
- Black pants
- Kitchen-appropriate 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 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.

Presidential Wildcard (Effective June 2026)

In order for a competitor to move forward to the ACF National Championship from any of the ACF Region Qualifiers, they must score a minimum of a 70 Bronze Medal. In the event that there is no competitor who scores a 70 Bronze Medal in any given category, the highest scoring non-winning competitor from the other regions will move forward. This applies to all Region Qualifier Competitions.