



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

Updated August 11, 2026

Preparing for the Competition

Students selected to compete at the 2027 Regional Qualifier will adhere to the following guidelines:

SCOY	Practical and Contemporary Hot Food Cooking, Student Individual SKC-5 Category Protein – 2 Bone-In Pork Loin	Four (4) portions: three (3) for tasting, one (1) for display/critique
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Practical and Contemporary Hot Food Cooking, Student, Individual SKC-5 Category Guidelines Bone-In Pork Loin (chine-bone may be removed)

General Guidelines

- Student competitors will fabricate and prepare four (4) portions of a finished entrée plate based on the protein selected by the committee and prepared with fresh local/seasonal ingredients within their region and of their choice. Three (3) plates are for tasting and one (1) is for display and critique. The practice of solid foundational cooking accompanied with current industry trends and techniques are encouraged.
- The utilization of ingredients should have compatibility and harmonize with the chosen protein.
- The finished entrée must showcase the main protein and *at least* two (2) different cooking techniques, accompanying sauces and/or relishes, compotes, or chutneys, etc., starch and appropriate vegetable garnishes.
- Other considerations for components may include baked, fried or dehydrated garnishes, condiments, forcemeats, vegetable purees, pickled elements, etc.
- Student chef candidates are encouraged to consider concepting an entrée that would be at home on a fine dining menu as a stand-alone entrée, not considered as part of a multi-course, or wine tasting menu.
- A combination of the above-mentioned considerations is encouraged but not required.
 - Competitors have ten (10) minutes for set-up, seventy-five (75) minutes to fabricate and cook, fifteen (15) additional minutes for plating and ten (10) minutes for clean-up.
 - Of the four (4) portions prepared, three (3) are for judges' tasting and one (1) is for display/critique.

Packets for the Judges

- Competitors must provide four (4) judges packets. 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)
 - **All recipes, including ingredients, quantities and procedures.**



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Ingredient Guidelines

- Recipe ingredients are allowed to be pre-scaled and measured; however, no pre-mixing is allowed.
- No advance preparation or cooking is allowed.
- Cleaned, peeled, and cut mirepoix ingredients are acceptable. Chopped herbs, shallots, and garlic are also acceptable.
- Fruits and vegetables are not to be brought in shaped but may be sectioned and peeled according to needs. Salads may be cleaned and washed, but not cut or shaped in any form. Leeks may be split for cleaning purposes.
- No finished soups or sauces or clarified consommés are allowed. Basic stocks may be brought in and should be unaltered without further reduction from what is obtained after the initial straining of the liquid. Samples of all stocks should be presented to the kitchen judge for assessment.
- The following ready-made dough may be brought in: brioche (brick), puff pastry, and filo (phyllo) dough. No other finished doughs are permitted.
- The use of pasteurized whole eggs, egg yolks, and egg whites are permitted.
- 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.
- Pickling of fruits and vegetables can be done prior to the competition; again, the pickling process must be demonstrated during the production window.
- Dried legumes, fruits, and vegetables (i.e. beans, dried cherries, sundried tomatoes, dried mushrooms, etc.) may be soaked prior to competition.
- 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 shows one's cooking skills.
- 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.
- Competitors must bring their own food items and ingredients as well as any plateware needed.

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 not be allowed.
- 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.



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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 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, including all technical skills, knife cuts, and fabrication
Service Window	15 minutes	Students 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	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

Clothing:

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 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.