



American Culinary Federation  
The Standard of Excellence for Chefs

**American Culinary Federation  
Personal Certified Executive Chef™,  
PCEC™  
Practical Exam Candidate Guide**

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# General Savory and Pastry Guidelines

## General Guidelines

1. Candidates must provide all ingredients for use during their certification practical exam as outlined in the exam components for each level. Exception would be allowed for test sites that choose to provide ingredients.
2. No advance preparation or cooking is allowed with the exception of the following: vegetables can be peeled; salads may be cleaned and washed, but not cut or shaped in any form; and beans may be pre-soaked.
3. Candidates are allowed to bring in only the whole and raw materials. No finished sauces are allowed; however, basic stocks (beef, veal, chicken, vegetable, or fish) may be brought in as necessary for the assignment. No commercially produced stocks or bases are permitted. No clarified consommés are allowed.
4. Candidates shall bring his/her own personal tools, including knives, small wares and plain white china (plates, platters, bowls, etc.) to display the finished dishes. Exception would be made for test sites that choose to provide china.
5. Dry & wet garbage receptacles, as well as usable trim receptacles, must be maintained and presented to evaluators upon completion of the test.
6. Dishes or test components should be presented to evaluators at any time during the testing period for tests where no service windows are designated at the end of the cooking time. For tests with designated service windows, dishes should be presented at that time.
7. Basic nutritional balance in recipe development in the simplest form means the candidate should use the following guidelines in formulating a balanced, nutritionally sound recipe.

Daily caloric intake should range between 1300 to 3000 calories *per day* with:

- 45% - 65% of calories from carbohydrates
- 20% - 35% of calories from fat with less than 10% from saturated fat
- 10% - 35% of calories from protein
- 300 mg or less of cholesterol
- 2400 mg or less of sodium

## Savory Guidelines

- Ingredients and garnishes should harmonize with the main part of the dish and conform to contemporary standards of nutritional values.
- Unnecessary ingredients should be avoided and practical, acceptable cooking methods should be applied.
- Dressing the rims of the plate results in an unacceptable appearance.
- Meat and vegetable juices should not make a dish look unappetizing.
- Vegetables must be cut or turned uniformly.
- Plate arrangement and decoration should be practical yet appealing and should comply with daily standards.
- In general, portion weight should be in keeping with the norms of accepted practice and nutritional balance.
- Plated portions must be proportional to the dish itself and the number of persons specified.
- A type-written menu describing each dish to be prepared must be given to the evaluators.

## Pastry Guidelines

The following list should provide a good checklist of what is considered the most general guidelines for candidates who are preparing to take the practical test:

- Prepare various icings and flavors (butter cream, white cream, and royal icing) from scratch. The icing will be used during the test.
- For items involving cake, prepare cakes and tiers that are level on top with straight sides, logical height, and proportional.
- For each test item, cover cakes with an icing that is smooth, flawless, with no air bubbles, water spots, knife marks, sanding, patches, or crumbs.
- Prepare colored icings that are of consistent shading and use color that is balanced, harmonized, and appropriate to the theme or decorative motif.
- Apply borders, writing, central decorations, and trims that are uniform, free of air bubbles, smooth, free of small drying cracks, precise, and neat.
- Apply flowers and leaves that have definite shaped petals with proper form, correct number of petals, coloring, and detail as close to nature as possible.
- For each item, create a decorative design that is balanced, proportioned, appropriate to techniques or theme, not over-decorated, and structurally stable.
- Decorations for cakes can not be brought in; only the raw materials necessary to make them.
- Ingredients for recipes can be pre-scaled and measured; however no pre-mixing is allowed.
- Only the raw ingredients and materials in the amounts needed to execute the assignment may be brought in.
- No finished sauces are allowed.

## Assessment Guidelines

The assessment for certification practical testing is divided into four general areas: Food Safety and Sanitation; Organization; Cooking Skills and Culinary Techniques; Taste and Presentation.

1. **Food Safety & Sanitation** will be measured using required industry standards.

- a) Food Safety and Sanitation is assessed as acceptable or unacceptable. An unacceptable score in this area by two or more evaluators is considered an overall failure regardless of the total points achieved by the candidate.

Here is a general guideline on food safety and sanitation the candidate needs to follow:

- b) Food Safety and Sanitation. The cutting boards are scrupulously clean. Knives are sharp. The toolbox/knife bag is clean and sanitary inside. Sanitizing solution is at the right strength, not over- or under-powered, and is being used properly to sanitize hands and equipment in-between uses. Candidates are using towels correctly and not wiping debris off a table and then wiping a knife or a plate with the same towel. Candidates are not using their aprons as hand wipes. Products are stored at the correct temperature. Gloves are being used when the last contact with food is occurring, for example, plating up. Sores and cuts are properly treated and covered. Areas are kept sanitized, particularly during fish to meat to vegetable or dairy transitions. Frequent hand washing and sanitizing is taking place.

2. **Organization Skills** will be measured using industry standards for the following:

- Mise en place/organization
- Proper utilization of all ingredients
- Timing of service and follow-up

Here are two general guidelines on organization and work flow the candidate needs to follow:

- a) Organization. Table is kept clear of nonessentials, such as equipment not needed for the next 30 minutes. Candidate is working systematically on one job at a time, using correct cutting motions and the correct knife for the job, organizing products properly in a refrigerator, rack cart, knife, or equipment storage. Candidate understands how the useable waste is stored for future uses. Floor spills are attended to quickly. The candidate is not using the dish area as a storage dump. The candidate has an organized withdrawal from the kitchen, leaving it as clean as it was found.
- b) Work flow. The candidate practices smooth transitions from one job to another. The candidate has a logical progression of jobs; for example, chops herbs or minces garlic at the same time. The candidate maintains proper timing of the menu items.

3. **Cooking Skills and Culinary Techniques** will be measured using industry standards for the following:

- Proper cooking techniques, skills, and fundamentals
- Creativity, skills, and craftsmanship
- Portion size

Here are two general guidelines on cooking skills and technique the candidates need to follow:

- a) Cooking Techniques and Skills. The candidate should pay attention to detail as described by the classical cooking technique specified. The candidate should use the proper technique as stated in the test criteria, such as properly deglazing a pan rather than simply adding wine or a liquid; properly browning the mirepoix, not just heating it; correctly roasting and basting the product as needed, not just placing the product in the oven; or poaching items rather than simmering them. The candidate uses correct methodology and techniques in preparing forcemeat and demonstrates a variety of different techniques.
- b) Butchery and Boning Skills. The candidate is efficient and profitable in the removal of muscle from meat or poultry carcasses or fish from a bone. Sinew and/or fat removal and correct tying methods will be evaluated.

4. Taste and Presentation Skills will be measured using industry standards for the following:

- Overall presentation including the use of appropriate garnishes
- Overall nutritional balance
- Ingredient compatibility
- Flavor, taste, texture, and doneness

Here are four general guidelines on taste and presentation the candidate needs to follow:

- a) Serving Methods and Presentation. **Hot Food Hot!** and **Cold Food Cold!** (including plates) Food is fresh and colorful, visibly seasoned, presented with some height, easy to eat, and pleasing to the eye. Meat/fish slices are even, straight, and evenly shingled. Items are closely placed together to help maintain temperature and keep the plate from resembling a “smiling face” and no “party-on-the-plate décor”.
- b) Portion Size and Nutritional Balance. Components of the meal are balanced so that the main item is complemented in size/amount by the accompanying garnish(es) and/or sauce. The necessary nutritional standards are being adhered to. The protein weight is within the set limits.
- c) Ingredient Compatibility. Ingredient colors harmonize. Ingredient amounts are correctly portioned to give a perfect harmonization. Have any of the ingredients been duplicated?
- d) Flavor, Taste, Texture, and Doneness. The flavors typically associated with the specific food ingredients in the menu and recipes are profound. For example, the duck broth tastes like duck. Doneness temperatures are correct. Stated vegetable cuts are correct. The stated cooking techniques have been applied correctly. The textures correspond to what was implied in the recipe. The flavor of the sauce or vinaigrette reflects what the recipe states and is of the correct consistency. The correct degrees of caramelization have been shown.

## The Kitchen, Work Space and Equipment

To ensure consistency throughout the certification testing program, all testing facilities will offer candidates a high-level testing venue which includes appropriate equipment and space configurations as specified in the guidelines below.

The test site will provide ample space to include refrigeration, work area, sinks, ranges and oven space for each candidate. Sufficient access to fryers and grills will be provided, although candidates may share this equipment. A large clock will be visible in the examination area for accurate time keeping. There will be a candidate staging area for ingredient check-in by the evaluators. First aid equipment and materials will be available if needed.

At a minimum each test site will provide the following:

- 4-burner stove with standard oven *per candidate* (portable burners are not acceptable)
- 45 sq. ft. usable table/counter working space *per candidate*
- 4 cubic feet refrigeration space *per candidate*, at a close proximity to the station
- adequate cubed ice supply
- one hot and cold hand sink *per three candidates*
- one hot and cold ware washing sink *per four candidates*
- 2 power outlets *per candidate*, located at their work station
- ample garbage receptacles placed at every station, and a community receptacle within the testing facility
- portion/measuring scales to be available for candidates, balance scale for pastry, measuring in ounces and pounds
- marble slab and microwave oven required for pastry candidates
- one five quart mixer *per pastry candidate*
- cutting boards
- evaluator's table should include: silverware, napkins, water glasses, clipboards, pads, pencils, calculator, and stapler
- ample supply of appropriate cleaning equipment including brooms, mops, paper towels, plastic wrap, foil, detergent, sanitizers, and buckets

Each station will provide a basic set of pots, pans, and hand tools (see list). Additional kitchen equipment is to be supplied in a common area. In the event that a test site is unable to supply all the stations with a full set of station equipment, the candidate may be asked to bring along some of the items needed to complete the set.

**Individual Equipment:**

2	3 qt. mixing bowls	1	rubber spatula
2	small sauce pans	1	solid spoon
1	medium sauce pan	1	slotted spoon
1	large sauté pan	1	2 oz. ladle
1	medium sauté pan	1	6 oz. ladle
2	small sauté pans	1	small whisk
2	small bain marie inserts	1	wooden spoon

**The Community Kitchen:**

The community kitchen should include small appliances which can be shared by all candidates. Food safety and sanitation supplies must be furnished by the test site. Candidates are expected to bring their own plastic gloves, if needed, for production or service. At a minimum, each test site shall provide the following in the community kitchen:

butchers twine	chinoise	grill
food processors	portion scales	fryer
measuring containers	microwave	proof box
food blenders	food mixers	
balance beam scales		

**Ingredients:**

Exam candidates are required to bring all of their own ingredients. However, a test site may choose to provide common staples and optional items to the candidates. This list of common staple and optional items is to be made available to all registered candidates at the time of registration.



## ACF Practical Exam Passing Form

Test Date \_\_\_\_\_ ACF Member # \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Test Site \_\_\_\_\_

Test Administrator \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Certification for which this candidate **passed**:

- Certified Culinarian®
- Certified Pastry Culinarian®
- Certified Sous Chef®
- Certified Working Pastry Chef®
- Certified Chef De Cuisine®
- Certified Executive Chef®
- Certified Executive Pastry Chef®
- Personal Certified Chef™
- Personal Certified Executive Chef™

Congratulations! You have successfully completed the requirements for this exam. This form serves as your official record of participation in the ACF Practical Certification Examination. This practical exam score is valid for one year from the test date listed above. When you apply for certification, please send a copy of it with your certification application.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Test Administrator

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Personal Certified Executive Chef

## Practical Exam Guidelines

- Candidates are responsible to bring all ingredients for the exam.
- Sanitation skills will be monitored at all times for compliance with standard rules.
- Sanitation infractions could lead to a failing grade.
- Professional Uniform: All Candidates must wear white chef coat, white toque, black or black and white checkered pants, leather shoes or clogs and have clean apron and side towels.
- Candidates should submit a typed copy of their menus to the examiners prior to the start of the exam.
- Candidates should bring their plates unless the test site has agreed to provide them.

**Exam Time: 4 hours**

**Service Window: 15 minutes**

During the time allotted for the exam, candidates must prepare and exhibit the following skills, finish each according to industry standards, and present final products to the evaluators.

### The candidate shall exhibit the following:

Utilizing all the ingredients in this Market Basket, prepare 2 different three course menus including a fish, salad and main course, all with appropriate accompaniments. All ingredients need not be used in both menus, however they may be, and any additional groceries are permitted. Two portions of each course will be prepared and plated. Each ingredient must be used at least once. The amounts given are only suggested as a guideline; you may not need to use all the amounts that are listed.

- 1 each 10 ounce Salmon filet
- 2 each 1.25 pound live Maine Lobster
- 2 each Whole chickens 2.5 – 3.5 pounds each (fabricate to your menu's specifications during the exam)
- 2 ounces smoked bacon
- 1 pound fresh spinach
- 2 heads Boston lettuce
- 1 piece Belgian endive
- 1 pound Carrots
- 3 each Russet or Yukon potatoes
- 2 each Globe Artichokes
- 2 each Bartlett pears or Granny Smith apples
- 1 pint Grape Tomatoes

The three courses shall include (need two separate menus):

- Fish course (including both seafood items):appetizer side
- Salad course (tossed, with extra dressing served on the side)as part of a three-course meal
- Main course (with two or more accompanying vegetables and starch):approximately 6-7ounces protein

The meal must include at least:

- 4 classical vegetable cuts (i.e. Julienne, Tournée, Brunoise, Alumette, Small dice, Paysanne, and Batonette)
- 4 different cooking methods must be shown (i.e., fry, broil, sauté, roast, boil, poach, steam or grill)
- Appropriate vegetable and starch accompaniment for the main course (may bring in additional ingredients and prepare then for plate accompaniments)
- An emulsified vinaigrette (ingredients must be brought in)
- 4 different sauces using different methods (i.e., roux based, reduction, or butter)

**Notes:**

- Candidates may not present their food outside of the service window unless specifically instructed by the proctor or test administrator.
- Appropriate organization, safety, and sanitation skill contribute greatly to each candidate's success.
- Immersion Circulators are not allowed during the exam.
- Emulsified Vinaigrette dressing must be made by hand.
- The candidate may add any supporting or "common kitchen" ingredients to the groceries which are needed.
- Candidates are encouraged to pre-marinate any proteins and serve those at the exam, as long as the butchering and pre-marinating process is demonstrated during the exam. For example, the day before the exam, butcher a chicken and marinate it for the following day. During the exam, demonstrate the process with another whole chicken and then properly store it "for future use".

**ACF Certification Practical Exam Score Sheet  
Personal Certified Executive Chef (PCEC)**

Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ ACF Member #: \_\_\_\_\_

Facility/Site: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification level tested: \_\_\_\_\_

**Food Safety & Sanitation**

\_\_\_\_\_ Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_ Unacceptable

COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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**Mise en Place (20 Points)**

Organization/ Work Habits (0-10)

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Utilization of Ingredients & Use of Allotted Time (0-10)

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COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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**Cooking Skills and Culinary Techniques (40 Points)**

Skills and Craftsmanship (0-30)

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Serving & Portion Size (0-10)

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COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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### Taste and Presentation Skills (40 Points)

Prepare 2 different three-course menus including a fish, salad, and main course, all with appropriate accompaniments. Two portions of each course will be prepared and plated. The meal must include 4 classical vegetable cuts, 4 different cooking methods must be shown, appropriate vegetable and starch accompaniment for the main course, an emulsified vinaigrette, and 4 different sauces using different methods.

Each ingredient must be used at least once:

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 each 10 ounce Salmon Filet                 | 2 each 1.25 pound live Maine lobster |
| 2 each whole chickens                        | 2 ounces smoked bacon                |
| 1 pound fresh spinach                        | 2 heads Boston lettuce               |
| 1 piece Belgian endive                       | 1 pound carrots                      |
| 3 each Russet or Yukon potatoes              | 2 each Globe artichokes              |
| 2 each Bartlett pears or Granny Smith apples | 1 pint grape tomatoes                |

The three courses shall include (need two separate menus):

Fish Course One (Including both seafood items): appetizer portion.

\_\_\_\_\_ Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_ Unacceptable

COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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Fish Course Two (Including both seafood items): appetizer portion.

\_\_\_\_\_ Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_ Unacceptable

COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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Salad Course One (tossed, with extra dressing served on the side: as part of three course meal.

\_\_\_\_\_Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_Unacceptable

COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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Salad Course Two (tossed, with extra dressing served on the side: as part of three-course meal.

\_\_\_\_\_Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_Unacceptable

COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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Main Course One (two or more accompanying vegetables and starch); approximately 6-7 ounces protein.

\_\_\_\_\_Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_Unacceptable

COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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Main Course Two (two or more accompanying vegetables and starch); approximately 6-7 ounces protein.

\_\_\_\_\_Acceptable \_\_\_\_\_Unacceptable

COMMENTS/EXPLANATIONS:

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Flavor & Texture (0-30) \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation and Nutritional Balance (0-10) \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Test Score (0-100)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Exam Time 4 Hours – Set up Time** \_\_\_\_\_ **Start Time** \_\_\_\_\_ **Window Closed** \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ACF Member #: \_\_\_\_\_



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## ACF Practical Exam Candidate Written Critique Form

**Directions:** Test Administrators will complete this form based on a summary of all three evaluators.

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

ACF# \_\_\_\_\_

Test Site: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Certification Level: \_\_\_\_\_

**Domain 1- Safety and Sanitation:**

**Domain 2- Organizational Skills:**

**Domain 3- Craftsmanship Skills:**

**Domain 4- Finished Product Skills:**

***All candidates, regardless of the outcome of their exam, will receive a copy of this form prior to leaving the exam site.***