D8 4-H FOOD CHALLENGE

Rules & Guidelines

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 teams of 4-H members to create a dish using only a predetermined set of ingredients. From these ingredients, team members must identify and prepare the dish, then make a presentation about it to the judges.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide opportunities for participants to exhibit their knowledge and skill when preparing and presenting a dish
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn from other team members
- Promote teamwork
- Give participants opportunities for public speaking
- Provide leadership opportunities

RULES

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.

   4-H members that were part of a first-place team for a category in the Food Challenge at Texas 4-H Roundup are eligible to compete again.

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*

   There will be three age divisions in BOTH Food Show & Food Challenge. Youth may participate in BOTH events.

   In Food Challenge, Juniors may move up to the Intermediate age division when participating on a team that has a true Intermediates (based upon grades listed above) on it. No one may move up to the Senior age division. NO individual may move down to a younger age division. Individuals are not permitted to move up for Food Show.

3. **Teams per county**. Each county may enter a maximum of two (2) Junior teams, two (2) Intermediate teams, and two (2) Senior teams.

   The first and second place teams in both age divisions should advance to the district contest. At the county contest, this will require that all teams within one age division be judged against each other and placed (not judged and placed according to food category).

   Teams Advancing to Texas 4-H Roundup. Only Seniors may advance to state. Each district may advance four (4) teams (first-place team in each category at District). Teams advancing to state will not automatically be assigned to the same category as they were at district. The state Food Challenge is scheduled for Wednesday, June 9th , 2027 in College Station.

4. **Members per team**. Each team will have at least three (3) and a maximum than four (4) members. Also, see rule #2.

5. **Substitution of Team Members**. Substitution of team members should only be made if necessary. Only the same number of 4-H members qualifying at the county level will be eligible to participate at the district level. No more than two team members may be substituted, up to the day of the Food Challenge. ***The substitute 4-H member must have participated in the county foods contest to be eligible.***

6. **Entry Fee**. Each individual will be required to pay a registration fee of $15 through the TX4H system by the deadline.

7. **Food Categories**. There will be four food categories in each age division: Appetizer, Main Dish, Side Dish, and Healthy Dessert. Teams will be randomly assigned to a category, which will not be announced until the day of the contest.

8. **Preparation.** Each team will create an entire dish/recipe (not a full meal) using the provided key ingredient and grocery store items. Teams must select and use at least two items and will be provided the maximum number of items they can select during orientation. Dishes/recipes created should include two or more servings. Teams should present the entire dish/ recipe to the judges and communicate during their presentation what an individual serving size should be. Teams will be responsible for determining the number of servings their dish provides. Teams should not create side or multiple dishes with their ingredients/grocery store items

9. **Attire**. Each team will have the option of wearing coordinated clothing and/or aprons. Team members must wear closed-toe shoes and hair restraints. No electronic devices or jewelry (except for medically required) are allowed in contest. This includes cell phones, smart watches, or other communication devices.

10. **Resource Materials provided at contest**. Resource materials will be provided for each team at the contest. These include: The Science and Function of Ingredients and Cooking Fact Sheet, Fight Bac - Fight Food Borne Bacteria Brochure, Know Your Nutrients, Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and Food Safety Fact Sheet. **No other resource materials will be allowed. Teams may not use their personal copies of the resources during the contest. ****

11. **Supply box**. Each team must supply their own equipment for the challenge. Boxes are limited to 40" x 24" x 40". Teams may bring only the supplies listed in the supply box section. The contest committee may measure any and/or all boxes to determine compliance to size. If boxes are out of compliance, teams may be disqualified. Large, moving type dollies may not be used to transport boxes. Smaller rolling dollies that can remain under the supply box in the preparation area may be used.
An EMPTY tub for dirty dishes may be placed on top of the supply box.

12. **Pantry Ingredients.** Each team may include in their equipment box the following "pantry" ingredients which they may use when preparing their dish if desired. There is no requirement to use these items, nor is it mandatory that teams include these in their supply box. These items must be in their original purchased or picked form. (Boxed, canned, stalks/stems, etc.)

- Salt
- Pepper
- Oil (up to 17 oz)
- 1 jar chicken bouillon
- 1 medium onion
- 2 (up to 16 oz) cans vegetables and/or fruit – team choice
- Rice (white or brown) or pasta (up to 16 oz) – team choice
- Cornstarch (up to 1lb) or Flour (up to 1lb) – team choice
- 3 dried herbs and/or spices (up to 3 oz each – team choice)

13. **Awards**: The top five high scoring teams in each food category will be recognized with awards during the in-person awards program. Any awards not picked up during the awards program, will be the responsibility of the County Agent to collect and distribute at their office. No awards will be mailed.

14. **Participants with disabilities**. Any competitor who requires auxiliary aids or special accommodations must contact the District Extension Office at the time of registration. Those accommodations will need to be inserted into the appropriate boxes in the registration process.

15. **Contest References & Forms.** Refer to the following website for additional rules, scorecard, and forms: http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/events/roundup/. All district scoresheets and forms can be found here: http://agrilife.org/d84h/events- and-activities/food-challenge-food-show/.

16. **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.**

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Supply Box

Each team will bring an equipment box containing **only one** each of the following items, unless a different quantity is noted:

- Bench Scrapper
- Bowls (up to 4-any size)
- Calculator
- Can opener
- Colander
- Cookie Cutters (up to 2 – team choice)
- Cutting Boards (up to 4)
- Disposable tasting spoons (no limit)
- Dry measuring cups (1 set)
- Electric skillet
- Extension cord (multiple outlet or strip style)
  (Teams should be certain the extension cord is compatible (2-prong/3-prong) with the plugs on their electrical supplies.)
- First aid kit
- Food thermometer
- Fork
- Gloves
- Grater
- Hand sanitizer
- Hot pads (up to 5)
- Kitchen shears (1 pair)
- Kitchen timer
- Knives (up to 6)
- Liquid measuring cup
- Manual pencil sharpener
- Measuring spoons (1 set)
- Meat Tenderizer
- Non-stick cooking spray
- Note cards (1 package – no larger than 5x7)
- Paper towels (1 roll)
- Pancake turner (up to 2)
- Pencils (no limit)
- Plastic box & trash bag for dirty equipment (An empty tub for dirty dishes may be placed on top of supply box)
- Pot with lid
- Potato masher
- Potato peeler
- Rolling pin
- Sanitizing wipes (1 container)
- Serving dishes/utensils
  1 plate/platter, 1 bowl, 1 utensil
- Skewers (1 set)
- Skillet with lid
- Spatulas (up to 2)
- Stirring spoon
- Storage bags (1 box)
- Tongs (up to 2)
- Toothpicks (no limit)
- Two single-burner hot plates OR one double-burner plate (electric only!)
- Whisk

Pantry Items:

3 dried herbs/or spices(up to 3oz each-team choice)
Salt, Pepper, Oil (up to 17 oz)
1 jar chicken bouillon
1 medium onion
2 (up to 16 oz) cans vegetables and/or fruit (team choice)
Rice* (white or brown) or pasta* (up to 16 oz) (team choice)
**must be uncooked/dried*
Cornstarch (up to 1lb) or Flour (up to 1lb((team choice)

Rules of Play

1. **Check-in**. Teams will report to assigned registration area (Assignments will be given prior to contest)
2. **Orientation**. An orientation will be provided for all participants.
3. **Stations and Grocery Store.** Each team will be directed to a cooking/preparation station. Each team will receive an information sheet with their contest category and "key" ingredient for that category (no ingredient amounts, recipe, or instructions will be provided at the station). The "key" ingredient will be representative of one of the following categories: Appetizer, Main Dish, Side Dish, Healthy Dessert.

   Teams will have access to a "grocery store" of additional ingredients which can be combined with the team's "key" ingredient to create an original recipe/dish during the contest. The "grocery store" will include items commonly found in grocery stores such as produce, canned goods, crackers, dairy products, etc.

   Teams must select and use at least two additional items from the "grocery store" and will be provided the maximum number of items they can select during orientation. Teams will not be required to analyze cost of recipe, nor will this be included in the presentation or scoring of the contest.
4. **Resources and Instructions**. General guidelines, resources and instructions will be located at each station to assist the team.
5. **Time**. Each team will have 40 minutes to select grocery store items, prepare the dish, plan a presentation, and clean up the preparation area.
6. **Participants only**. Only participants and contest officials will be allowed in food preparation areas.
7. **Preparation**. Each team will create an entire dish/recipe (not a full meal) using the provided key ingredient and grocery store items. Dishes/recipes created should include two or more servings. Teams should present the entire dish/ recipe to the judges and communicate during their presentation what an individual serving size should be. Teams will be responsible for determining the number of servings their dish provides. Teams should not create side or multiple dishes with their ingredients/pantry items.
   a. Teams are challenged to be creative and develop an original recipe with the ingredients provided.
   b. Teams will determine the exact amount of each ingredient used based on their original recipe.
   c. The key ingredient and/or grocery store ingredients selected should be used to garnish the dish.
   d. Note cards and the Food Challenge Worksheet may be used to write down the recipe that the team creates, along with notes related to nutrition, and food safety. Teams should be exact on ingredients used, preparation steps, cooking time, temperature, etc.
8. **Food and Equipment Safety**. A safe and sanitary working environment must be maintained during the contest. Each station will have food and kitchen safety resources. Teams should follow the steps listed to ensure proper food and equipment safety is followed. Judges will be scoring teams on food and equipment safety during the preparation phase of the contest. Teams should also discuss safety steps used during the presentation phase of the contest.

   Gloves: Gloves do not have to be worn throughout the contest; however, there should always be a barrier between your hand and any food touched. A barrier includes gloves and/or cooking utensil. When wearing gloves, they must be changed between handling raw meats/seafood; handling cooked items; and ready to eat items or raw vegetables to prevent cross contamination.

   Hair Restraint: Each team member must wear a hat, hair net and/or other type of hair restraint during the food preparation part of the competition. Examples of acceptable hair restraints include hairnets, bandana with hair completed pulled back, Chef hat with hair restrained inside, or cap with hair completely tucked inside.

9. **Electricity**. Teams should be prepared to only plug in one piece of equipment at a time to reduce the risk of electrical malfunction. Contest officials will announce if this is necessary during participant orientation. If electricity goes out during the preparation phase of the contest, teams are asked to immediately notify their Group Leader or other contest official. Teams will be asked to turn away from the table immediately. Contest officials will stop the clock so that no preparation time is lost.
10. **Nutrition**. Each station will have a variety of nutrition resources/references. Each team should name key nutrients in their dish and their functions.
11. **Clean-up**. Teams must clean up their preparation areas. Clean-up time is included in the 40-minute preparation allotment. Teams should plan to not have access to a kitchen facility; therefore, dirty dishes should be placed in a plastic container, bag, or box to be cleaned at home. Left-over food should be disposed of properly.
12. **Hot equipment**. If you have a hot plate or other items cooling, it may be the only thing out on the table other than the food you are presenting to the judges.
13. **No talking or writing after preparation**. After time is called for the 40-minute preparation period, no talking and no writing is allowed among any team members. Team members caught talking and/or writing will receive a warning. The second time the team will be disqualified and asked to leave the contest facility. Team members should not have pens or pencils in their possession while waiting to give their presentation.
14. **Presentation**. When time is called, each team will present their dish to the judges. Team presentations should include the criteria outlined on the scorecard. The following also pertains to team presentations:
    a. All team members, or at least a majority, should participate in the presentation.
    b. Judging time will include:

       5 minutes for the presentation
       At the end of 5 minutes, time will be called – additional time will not be allowed
       3 minutes for judges' questions
       4 minutes between team presentations for judges to score and write comments

    c. Teams are allowed the use of note cards during the presentation, but should not read from them, as this minimizes the effectiveness of their communication.
    d. To earn maximum points, teams must use the 5-minute presentation to address the following areas of the presentation scorecard: Knowledge of Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Nutrition Knowledge, Food Preparation, Safety Concerns, and Serving Size.
    e. Judges will not ask questions related to what teams should have covered during the presentation. Judges questions will be related to general nutrition, health, chronic disease prevention or others relevant to food and nutrition.
15. **No tasting of food**. Judges are not allowed to taste the foods prepared. No left-over food should be shared with any participant or the audience and must be disposed of before exiting the contest area. Pictures will be taken of each team prior to disposal and exit.
16. **Finished Dishes**. Finished dishes MAY NOT leave the preparation/judging areas. Dishes must be discarded after teams complete the judging process to ensure teams in following heats do not see what ingredients are available to gain an advantage.
17. **Rankings**. Placing will be based on the scores provided to each team by the presentation judges and added to the scores provided by the preparation judges. Judges' results are final.
16. **Awards Program**. Awards will be held in Barn C at the conclusion of Food Challenge judging.