

2026 North Carolina ProStart Invitational



Procedures and Rules for Individual Competitions

Competitors are responsible for understanding and following all the procedures and rules contained in this document; they will not be reviewed at the North Carolina ProStart Invitational. Please read this document carefully to maximize your opportunity for success and to avoid receiving penalties during the Competition. Refer all questions to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org, prior to arrival at the North Carolina ProStart Invitational.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| General Competition Overview..... | 5 |
| Purpose..... | 5 |
| Eligibility | 5 |
| Event Personnel..... | 5 |
| Proposal Submissions | 5 |
| Schedules | 6 |
| General Disqualifications..... | 6 |
| General Provisions | 6 |
| Amuse-Bouche Competition..... | 7 |
| Preparation for Amuse-Bouche Competition..... | 7 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 7 |
| Scoring: Amuse-Bouche (Total: 75 Points)..... | 8 |
| Amuse-Bouche Competition Rules | 8 |
| Competition Overview | 10 |
| Judge Critiques | 10 |
| Amuse-Bouche Competition Penalties | 11 |
| Amuse-Bouche Competition Disqualifications | 11 |
| Amuse-Bouche Sample Competition Score Sheet..... | 11 |
| Between Bread Competition..... | 14 |
| Preparation for Between Bread Competition..... | 14 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 14 |
| Scoring: Between Bread (Total: 75 Points)..... | 15 |
| Between Bread Competition Rules | 15 |
| Competition Overview | 17 |
| Judge Critiques | 17 |
| Between Bread Competition Penalties | 18 |
| Between Bread Competition Disqualifications | 18 |
| Between Bread Sample Competition Score Sheet..... | 18 |
| Build a Better Burger Competition | 21 |
| Preparation for Build a Better Burger Competition..... | 21 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 21 |
| Scoring: Build a Better Burger (Total: 75 Points)..... | 22 |
| Build a Better Burger Rules | 22 |
| Competition Overview | 24 |
| Judge Critiques | 24 |
| Build a Better Burger Competition Penalties..... | 25 |
| Build a Better Burger Competition Disqualifications..... | 25 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Build a Better Burger Sample Competition Score Sheet | 25 |
| Cake Decorating Competition | 28 |
| Preparation for Cake Decorating Competition: | 28 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 28 |
| Scoring: Cake Decorating (Total: 75 Points)..... | 29 |
| Cake Decorating Rules | 29 |
| Competition Overview | 31 |
| Judge Critiques | 32 |
| Cake Decorating Competition Penalties | 32 |
| Cake Decorating Competition Disqualifications | 32 |
| Cake Decorating Sample Competition Score Sheet | 33 |
| Chicken Fabrication Competition: Airline Cut Edition..... | 35 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 35 |
| Scoring: Chicken Fabrication (Total: 60 Points) | 35 |
| Chicken Fabrication Rules..... | 36 |
| Competition Overview | 36 |
| Judge Critiques | 37 |
| Chicken Fabrication Competition Penalties | 37 |
| Chicken Fabrication Competition Disqualifications | 37 |
| Chicken Fabrication Sample Competition Score Sheet | 37 |
| Knife Skills Competition | 39 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 39 |
| Scoring: Knife Cutting (Total: 75 Points)..... | 39 |
| Knife Cutting Competition Rules..... | 39 |
| Competition Overview | 40 |
| Judge Critiques | 41 |
| Knife Skills Competition Penalties | 41 |
| Knife Skills Competition Disqualifications | 42 |
| Knife Skills Sample Competition Score Sheet | 42 |
| Mocktail Mixology Competition | 44 |
| Preparation for Mocktail Mixology Competition..... | 44 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 44 |
| Scoring: Mocktail Mixology (Total: 75 Points) | 45 |
| Mocktail Mixology Competition Rules | 45 |
| Competition Overview | 47 |
| Judge Critiques | 47 |
| Mocktail Mixology Competition Penalties..... | 48 |
| Mocktail Mixology Competition Disqualifications..... | 48 |
| Mocktail Mixology Sample Competition Score Sheet..... | 48 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Napkin Folding Competition | 51 |
| Preparation for Napkin Folding Competition | 51 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 51 |
| Scoring: Napkin Folding (Total: 50 Points) | 51 |
| Napkin Folding Competition Rules | 52 |
| Competition Overview | 52 |
| Judge Critiques | 53 |
| Napkin Folding Competition Penalties | 53 |
| Napkin Folding Competition Disqualifications | 53 |
| Napkin Folding Sample Competition Score Sheet | 53 |
| Wrap Battle Competition | 56 |
| Preparation for Wrap Battle Competition: | 56 |
| Workspace and Equipment | 56 |
| Scoring: Wrap Battle (Total: 75 Points)..... | 57 |
| Wrap Battle Competition Rules..... | 57 |
| Competition Overview | 59 |
| Judge Critiques | 59 |
| Wrap Battle Competition Disqualifications | 60 |
| Wrap Battle Sample Competition Score Sheet | 60 |
| Exhibit A – Culinary Product Check-In Inventory List..... | 63 |

General Competition Overview

Purpose

The North Carolina ProStart Invitational (NCPI) provides competitors with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skill, and creativity within the restaurant and foodservice industry. Through Culinary, Management, and Individual Competitions, participants apply the techniques and concepts learned in their ProStart programs and the Foundations of Restaurant Management and Culinary Arts curriculum.

Eligibility

1. To be eligible, competitors must be currently enrolled in a high school ProStart program recognized by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) and certified by the NRAEF-recognized North Carolina ProStart Coordinator.
2. Competitors in either the 2026 Culinary or Management Competition may not compete in an individual competition in 2026. Participation in an individual Competition **does not** count toward the competitor's two-year eligibility limit for Culinary and Management team Competitions.
3. Individual competitors may register for more than one individual competition in the same year. An additional registration fee will be required for each competition.
4. Individual competitions must be completed individually, and only one competitor will be allowed per competition space.

Event Personnel

1. **Event Organizers:** Staff members from the North Carolina Restaurant & Lodging Association (NCRLA)
2. **Volunteers:** Trained individuals assigned by NCRLA to assist with event operations
3. **Competitor Ambassadors:** Trained NCRLA personnel who serve as official timekeepers for assigned competitors during all competition segments
4. **Judges:** Industry professionals and post-secondary culinary educators selected for their expertise and trained by NCRLA in advance of the event. All judges will be consistent from competitor (i.e., Individual knife cut judges will be responsible for that competition across all competitors).
 - a. All judges participate in a structured orientation and are expected to apply scoring standards fairly and consistently. By participating in the competition, each competitor acknowledges that while every effort will be made to ensure objective and impartial evaluation, a degree of professional discretion is inherent in any judged event. All judges' decisions are **final**. All judges will receive standardized instructions and a rubric to ensure consistency in scoring across all competitors.
 - b. **Scoring inquiries** should be directed to Courtney Hamm at chamm@ncrla.org
 - c. **Tie-Breaking Procedure:** *In the event of a tie, the tying competitors will each participate in a short interview with the judging panel. Competitors will answer questions about their techniques, decision-making process, and responses to real-world culinary scenarios. Judges will then deliberate and determine the final rankings based on the depth, clarity, and quality of the responses.*

Proposal Submissions

Some individual competitions require the submission of a PDF file proposal in advance of the competition. These competitions include the Amuse-Bouche Competition, Between Bread Competition, Build a Better Burger Competition, Cake Decorating Competition, Mocktail Mixology Competition, Napkin Folding Competition, and Wrap Battle Competition. These documents are due via email to chamm@ncrla.org by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**. Submissions received after February 6,

2026 will incur late penalties. Submissions not received by February 13, 2026 will result in disqualification. Disqualified competitors and their educators will still be responsible for all event registration fees. Competitions that do not require the submission of a PDF file proposal are the Chicken Fabrication Competition and Knife Skills Competition.

Schedules

Competition schedules will be released in advance once all competitors are confirmed. These will include assigned start and end times for each event segment. Schedules are subject to change and will be updated with as much notice as possible.

General Disqualifications

1. All competitors must meet eligibility requirements as outlined above. Ineligible competitors will be disqualified.
2. Attendance at the **Opening Ceremony** on Sunday, March 8, 2026 is mandatory unless a verified travel delay prevents timely arrival.
3. Competitors in competitions requiring advance Product Check-In (Amuse-Bouche Competition, Between Bread Competition, Build a Better Burger Competition, Cake Decorating Competition, Mocktail Mixology, Wrap Battle Competition) must do so on Sunday, March 8, 2026 between 3-4 PM. Travel delays must be communicated to NCRLA staff immediately. Competitors in the Chicken Fabrication Competition, Knife Skills Competition, and Napkin Folding Competition are not required to participate in Product Check-In.
4. All competitors must be accompanied by a ProStart educator from their school. The same educator may also accompany additional individual competitors and culinary and/or management teams from their school.
5. All competitors and ProStart educators must stay overnight at the host hotel on Sunday, March 8, 2026.
6. Competitors must **check in** and report to their designated location at the scheduled time or risk disqualification.
7. **Coaching or communication** from spectators, educators, mentors, or anyone else is strictly prohibited from check-in through the conclusion of Judge feedback. This includes verbal or non-verbal communication. **No warnings will be issued.** Violations result in **immediate disqualification** at the discretion of NCRLA staff and Judges.
8. **Misconduct**, including the use of alcohol by anyone under the age of 21, use of non-prescription drugs, unsportsmanlike behavior, or any illegal activity (federal, state, or local), will not be tolerated. This applies during competition, at social events, during free time, and in any setting affiliated with the event. Reported incidents will be investigated, and disciplinary action, including disqualification, is at the sole discretion of the NCRLA. By participating, each competitor and accompanying educator agree to comply with all competition rules, procedures, and expectations.

General Provisions

Participants will be working with tools that, if used improperly, may cause injury. All competitors are expected to adhere to proper safety protocols at all times. **Horseplay and hazardous behavior are strictly prohibited.**

Teachers, mentors, chaperones, and families are expected to help ensure that competitors comply with all laws, event rules, and instructions. Competitors must follow all written and verbal directives provided by event organizers and competition staff.

Amuse-Bouche Competition

The Amuse-Bouche Competition challenges individual competitors to prepare three servings of a single bite-sized hors d'oeuvre that demonstrates creativity, refined flavor balance, and elegant presentation. The amuse-bouche should reflect a competitor's ability to design a complete, flavorful experience in one bite—showcasing both technical precision and aesthetic appeal.

Competitors must incorporate an Unexpected Texture Element to surprise and delight the Judges. For purposes of this competition, an “Unexpected Texture Element” refers to ingredients such as crispy quinoa, edible flowers, puffed grains, or other creative components.

This competition tests advanced culinary creativity, attention to detail, and the ability to craft complex flavors in a minimalist format.

This Competition Emphasizes:

- Creativity and originality in flavor pairing
- Balanced taste and textural contrast
- Precision and artistry in presentation
- Clean, efficient, and safe workstation practices
- Time management and professional execution

Preparation for Amuse-Bouche Competition

Each competitor must submit a one-page item description via email to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.

This submission must:

- Be submitted by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**
- Be in PDF format
- Be no more than one single-sided 8.5x11-inch page of paper
- Clearly include the school and competitor's name
- Include a menu name for the bite-sized item
- Contain a description of the menu item as provided to customers, including:
 - Unexpected texture element
 - A listing of any major allergens contained in the recipe (milk, eggs, fish, crustacean, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, sesame).
- May contain one optional photo of the finished amuse-bouche. Published images, graphics, and stock photos are not allowed.

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to ice
- Access to running water (available prior to and after the competition only)
- Acrylic frames containing the competitor's submitted one-page item description
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition
- One butane burner and fuel
- Standardized dishware for presentation

Competitors must provide:

- One full-size sheet pan to be used for refrigerated storage
- All necessary ingredients and supplies to prepare their amuse-bouche
 - Ingredients may be pre-chopped or prepped, and pre-cooked
- All required tools, smallwares, and utensils
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Amuse-Bouche (Total: 75 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|----------------------------|--------|--|
| Product Check-In | 5 | Judged on safe product storage and transportation |
| Creativity & Composition | 15 | Original concept, innovative use of ingredients, and visual impact. |
| Flavor & Balance | 20 | Quality and harmony of flavors; balance of seasoning and texture. |
| Presentation & Technique | 20 | Professional appearance, plating precision, and use of Unexpected Texture Element. |
| Cleanliness & Organization | 10 | Efficiency, neatness, and sanitation of workspace during and after Competition. |
| Time Efficiency | 5 | 15 minutes or less |

Amuse-Bouche Competition Rules

Uniform

1. Competitors must present a uniform appearance from Product Check-In through dismissal.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - i. Long-sleeve, white chef coats
 - Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - Accent colors are permitted, provided the chef coat remains white
 - ii. Checkered or black pants
 - iii. Non-porous, closed-toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard-sole black shoes
 - iv. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - v. Facial piercings must be taped over; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - vi. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the competition floor.
3. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Product Check-In through dismissal will result in a penalty.

Product Check-In

Competitors' teacher(s) and mentor(s) (for a maximum of two people) are allowed to be present in a designated space adjacent to the check-in tables to observe only during the Product Check-In process, including feedback.

1. It is the responsibility of each competitor to store all product prior to Product Check-In.
2. Product Check-In must be completed between 3-4 PM on Sunday, March 8, 2026.
3. Product Check-In is the first segment of the evaluation process. Competitor is judged according to:
 - a. Proper shipping and receiving procedures
 - b. Complete printed product inventory list of every item contained in each cooler or other container holding food items must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. One copy must be attached in a plastic sleeve to the outside of the container, and one copy placed inside the container. Inventory lists must be submitted on the official Inventory template. See Exhibit A for Inventory List example.
 - c. All ingredients must be turned in at Product Check-In.
 - d. Proper temperature of ingredients must be maintained.
 - e. If an item has been found to be in the temperature danger zone, the item will not be available for use in the competition. See #5 below.
4. Proper packaging
 - a. Items should be packaged properly i.e., no liquid pooling or seeping.
 - b. Items should be in their original packaging, professionally/commercially labeled and packaged properly. Label should include date it was packaged, weight, item type, and where it was packaged i.e., butcher shop or grocery store.
5. Any competitor that has a product disallowed during Product Check-In has until their assigned competition report time to present to the Judges a replacement product for approval. Replacement product submission must be coordinated through Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.
 - a. Any item that does not meet the established criteria will result in a penalty.
 - b. Replacement product that does not meet requirements at competition report time will also be discarded. The competitor will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission.
6. All refrigerated product is placed on a competitor-provided sheet pan during check-in. Competitors are limited to the product that can fit on the sheet pan due to limited walk-in cooler space. Freezer storage is not provided at any point.
7. Competitors should have all dry storage product collected in a single container ready to be checked in.
8. Each competitor's food is placed in an appropriate and secure location at the competition site until the competitor's designated report time.
9. Should travel delays arise that are beyond the competitor's control, and as a result a competitor is unable to check-in their ingredients during the times allotted, the competitor must maintain proper storage of the items until check in. A new time must be coordinated with Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org, before the end of the established Product Check-In period.
10. Product Check-In feedback will occur immediately following each competitor's check-in.

Allowed Equipment and Ingredients

- All ingredients must be fully edible and comply with Product Check-In rules, including labeling and temperature requirements.
- Creative texture elements such as puffed grains, crispy seeds, candied nuts, edible flowers, dehydrated garnishes, or microgreens
- Flavoring agents, condiments, sauces, and seasonings
- All garnishes must be fully edible

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the competition:

- Non-edible garnishes, decorations, or props

- Electric appliances or powered tools
- Additional helpers or assistants
- Multi-bite portions (item must be able to be eaten in one bite)

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a ¼ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will be allowed to organize their equipment and ingredients during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
5. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment and products onto the competition floor.
6. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
7. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each competitor will have 15 minutes to:

1. Set up their station
2. Prepare and plate three (3) servings of their amuse-bouche for the Judges
3. Clean and sanitize their station, returning it to the original condition.

Judges will each have a single serving for tasting and evaluation.

Stations must be cleared and cleaned of all items with the exception of the finished plated items and the acrylic-framed item description before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed.

Judges will evaluate competitors on their ability to create a refined, balanced, and visually appealing amuse-bouche that highlights creativity and technique.

Assessment areas include:

- Creativity and originality of concept
- Balance of flavor, seasoning, and texture
- Professional presentation and plating precision
- Integration of an Unexpected Texture Element
- Workstation cleanliness and organization

- Completion within the 15-minute time frame

Amuse-Bouche Competition Penalties

1. Competitor fails to submit item description by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**. One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the item description is late.
2. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
3. Competitor presented amuse-bouche that did not match submitted item description—3 pts
4. Competitor presented an amuse-bouche in a multi-bite portion instead of a single-bite—3 pts
5. Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts
6. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, competitor is disqualified
7. Use of prohibited equipment—3 pts
8. Use of prohibited ingredients—3 pts
9. Finished amuse-bouche does not include Unexpected Texture Element—5 pts
10. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
11. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned competition start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes late, competitor is disqualified

Amuse-Bouche Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor did not submit item description by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026
2. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late
3. Competitor used raw or unsafe food handling practices
4. Competitor presentation contained non-edible elements

Amuse-Bouche Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|---|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Product Check-In | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper temperature • Proper packaging • Complete product inventory list(s) • Uniform and hygiene | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Creativity & Composition | | | | | | |
| Originality of Concept Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originality, uniqueness • Clearly student-driven • Creative elements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Innovative Use of Ingredients Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingredients used in unexpected, clever, or technically sophisticated ways • Creative choices • Ingredient Synergy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Visual Composition & Impact Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visually Stunning • Strong Composition • Color Story and Balance • Well-composed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| Flavor and Balance | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Flavor Quality Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepness of flavor • Well-developed flavors • Memorable flavors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Seasoning Accuracy Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriateness of seasonings • Enhancement of ingredients without overpowering | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Balance of Flavors Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony between sweet, salty, acidic, bitter, and umami elements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Texture & Mouthfeel Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal textures • Contrasts that enhance the dish | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Presentation & Technique | | | | | | |
| Plating Precision Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Plating • Clean lines • Intention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Use of Color & Contrast Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color choices • Contrast • Visual Clarity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Technical Skill Execution Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of Techniques • Techniques executed flawlessly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Use of Unexpected texture element Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity • Enhancement of Dish • Execution | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Cleanliness & Organization | | | | | | |
| Station Cleanliness Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitation • Cleanliness • Consistency | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Workflow & Organization Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency • Organization • Calm workflow | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| ____ Item Description not submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13 | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| ____ Use of raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges. | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor did not produce three (3) complete items. | | | | | | |
| ____ Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |

| PENALTY |
|--|
| Reason for Penalty: |
| _____ Item description does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 6, 2026 to Chamm@ncrla.org – 1 pt for each 24 hour period late |
| _____ Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts |
| _____ Competitor presented amuse-bouche that did not match submitted item description—3 pts |
| _____ Competitor presented an amuse-bouche in a multi-bite portion instead of a single-bite—3 pts |
| _____ Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts |
| _____ Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time—¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified |
| _____ Use of prohibited equipment – 3 pts |
| _____ Use of prohibited ingredients – 3 pts |
| _____ Finished amuse-bouche does not include Unexpected Texture Element—5 pts |
| _____ Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts |
| _____ Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified |

Between Bread Competition

The *Between Bread Competition* challenges individual competitors to create a gourmet sandwich using any **non-white or non-wheat bread** as the foundation. Each sandwich must include a balanced combination of **protein(s), vegetables, and condiments**, demonstrating both creativity and culinary harmony. Competitors are required to feature **homemade spread or infused butter**, showcasing their ability to craft unique flavor pairings that enhance the overall composition of the sandwich.

This event emphasizes both artistry and execution—highlighting skill, taste, texture, and presentation within a fast-paced culinary environment.

This Competition Emphasizes:

1. Creative use of nontraditional bread varieties
2. Balance of flavor and texture in sandwich composition
3. Professional execution and assembly techniques
4. Flavor innovation in homemade spread or infused butter
5. Time management and food safety practices under pressure

Preparation for Between Bread Competition

Each competitor must submit a one-page item description via email to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org. This submission must

- Be submitted by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**.
- Be in PDF format
- Be no more than one single-sided 8.5x11 page of paper
- Clearly include the school and competitor name
- Include a menu name for the sandwich
- Contain a description of the sandwich that could be provided to customers, including:
 - Brief description of sandwich ingredients, including the non-white/non-wheat bread used, protein(s), vegetables, and homemade spread or infused butter
 - A listing of any major allergens contained in the recipe (milk, eggs, fish, crustacean, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, sesame).
- May contain one optional photo of the item. Published images, graphics, and stock photos are not allowed.

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to ice
- Access to running water (available prior to and after the competition only)
- Acrylic frames containing the competitor's submitted one-page item description
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition
- One butane burner and fuel
- Standardized dishware for presentation

Competitors must provide:

- One full-size sheet pan to be used for refrigerated storage
- All necessary ingredients and supplies to prepare and assemble their sandwich
 - Ingredients may be pre-chopped or prepped, and some may be pre-cooked to allow the competitor to finish within the allotted time.
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Between Bread (Total: 75 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|----------------------------|--------|---|
| Product Check-In | 5 | Judged on safe product storage and transportation |
| Creativity & Bread Choice | 20 | Innovative use of non-white/non-wheat bread and unique ingredient pairings. |
| Execution & Technique | 20 | Professional preparation, assembly precision, and knife skills. |
| Flavor & Balance | 15 | Quality of homemade spread/infused butter, overall harmony, and taste balance. |
| Cleanliness & Organization | 10 | Efficiency, neatness, and sanitation of workspace during and after Competition. |
| Time Efficiency | 5 | 15 minutes or less |

Between Bread Competition Rules

Uniform

1. Competitors must present a uniform appearance from Product Check-In through dismissal.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - i. Long-sleeve, white chef coats
 - Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - Accent colors are permitted, provided the chef coat remains white
 - ii. Checkered or black pants
 - iii. Non-porous, closed-toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard-sole black shoes
 - iv. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - v. Facial piercings must be taped over; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - vi. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the competition floor.
3. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Product Check-In through dismissal will result in a penalty.

Product Check-In

Competitors' teacher(s) and mentor(s) (for a maximum of two people) are allowed to be present in a designated space adjacent to the check-in tables to observe only during the Product Check-In process,

including feedback.

1. It is the responsibility of each competitor to store all product prior to Product Check-In.
2. Product Check-In must be completed between 3-4 PM on Sunday, March 8, 2026.
3. Product Check-In is the first segment of the evaluation process. Competitor is judged according to:
 - a. Proper shipping and receiving procedures
 - b. Complete printed product inventory list of every item contained in each cooler or other container holding food items must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. One copy must be attached in a plastic sleeve to the outside of the container, and one copy placed inside the container. Inventory lists must be submitted on the official Inventory template. See Exhibit A for Inventory List example.
 - c. All ingredients must be turned in at Product Check-In.
 - d. Proper temperature of ingredients must be maintained.
 - e. If an item has been found to be in the temperature danger zone, the item will not be available for use in the competition. See #5 below.
4. Proper packaging
 - a. Items should be packaged properly i.e., no liquid pooling or seeping.
 - b. Items should be in their original packaging, professionally/commercially labeled and packaged properly. Label should include date it was packaged, weight, item type, and where it was packaged i.e., butcher shop or grocery store.
5. Any competitor that has a product disallowed during Product Check-In has until their assigned Competition report time to present to the Judges a replacement product for approval. Replacement product submission must be coordinated through Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.
 - a. Competitors will lose points if their entire product list does not meet the established criteria at the original check-in.
 - b. Replacement product that does not meet requirements at competition report time will also be discarded. The competitor will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission.
6. All refrigerated product is placed on a competitor-provided sheet pan during check-in. Competitors are limited to the product that can fit on the sheet pan due to limited walk-in cooler space. Freezer storage is not provided at any point.
7. Competitors should have all dry storage product collected in a single container ready to be checked in.
8. Each competitor's food is placed in an appropriate and secure location at the competition site until the competitor's designated report time.
9. Should travel delays arise that are beyond the competitor's control, and as a result a competitor is unable to check-in their ingredients during the times allotted, the Competitor must maintain proper storage of the items until check in. A new time must be coordinated with Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org, before the end of the established Product Check-In period.
10. Product Check-In feedback will occur immediately following each competitor's check-in.

Allowed Equipment and Ingredients

- Any non-white or non-wheat bread variety (examples: rye, sourdough, pumpernickel, brioche, ciabatta, focaccia, multigrain, gluten-free, naan, pita, etc.)
- Protein(s) of choice (meat, seafood, eggs, plant-based, etc.)
- Vegetables (fresh, grilled, or pickled)
- Homemade spread or infused butter
- Condiments or sauces (may be pre-prepared)
- Optional garnish for presentation

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the competition:

- White or wheat sandwich bread
- Pre-assembled sandwiches or fully finished spreads
- Non-edible garnishes or props
- Electric devices or powered appliances
- Outside assistance during the event

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a $\frac{1}{4}$ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will be allowed to organize their equipment and ingredients during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
5. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment and products onto the competition floor.
6. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
7. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table, and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each Competitor will have 15 minutes to:

1. Set up their station
2. Prepare their sandwich components and assemble the final product
3. Assemble and present **one (1)** finished sandwich for the Judges. Competitors should slice the sandwich as part of their intended presentation.
4. Clean and sanitize their station.

Judges will cut the single sandwich for tasting and evaluation.

Stations must be cleared and cleaned of all items with the exception of the finished sandwich and the acrylic-framed item description before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed.

Judges will evaluate competitors on their ability to design and execute a creative, well-balanced sandwich that demonstrates professional technique, culinary insight, and refined taste.

Assessment areas include:

- Creative use of bread and homemade spread or infused butter
- Proper ingredient balance and proportion
- Technical skill in assembly and presentation
- Flavor harmony and seasoning
- Food safety and cleanliness of workstation
- Completion within the time limit

Between Bread Competition Penalties

1. Failure to submit item description by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**. One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the item description is late.
2. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
3. Competitor presented a sandwich that did not match submitted item description—3 pts
4. Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts
5. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
6. Use of prohibited equipment—3 pts
7. Use of prohibited ingredients—3 pts
8. Finished sandwich does not include required elements—3 pts each (non-white or non-wheat bread, protein, vegetable(s), homemade spread or infused butter)
9. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
10. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified

Between Bread Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitors did not submit their item description by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026
2. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late.
3. Competitor used white or wheat bread.
4. Competitor used raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges
5. Competitor’s presentation contains non-edible element

Between Bread Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|---|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Product Check-In | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper temperature • Proper packaging • Complete product inventory list(s) • Uniform and hygiene | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| Creativity & Bread Choice | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Innovation in Bread Choice Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of non-white/non-wheat breads • Cultural, regional, or specialty breads • Bread choice supports or enhances flavor concept • Creativity in preparation (toasted, grilled, infused, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Creative Ingredient Pairings Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexpected or clever flavor combinations • Smart contrasts (sweet/acidic/spicy/umami) • Thoughtful layering of textures and ingredients • Pairings that highlight the chosen bread | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Overall Flavor Concept Originality Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear theme or story behind the sandwich • Unique concept or surprising direction • Cohesive flavor strategy from bread to fillings • Creativity that aligns with technique and execution | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Visual Composition & Impact Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye-catching plating and overall appearance • Balanced color, height, and arrangement • Sandwich structure that looks intentional • Visual appeal that reflects creativity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Execution & Technique | | | | | | |
| Knife Skills Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformity of cuts • Safe and controlled knife handling • Proper slicing techniques for bread and fillings • Cuts that support the sandwich's structure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Preparation & Cooking Technique Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper cooking methods applied to proteins or vegetables • Even heating, searing, or toasting • Accurate execution of technical steps • Appropriate textures achieved through technique | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Assembly Precision Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent layering that supports clean bites • Even distribution of ingredients • Structural stability (doesn't fall apart) • Neatness and precision in final build | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Bread Handling & Preparation Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal toasting, grilling, or warming • Attention to moisture control (preventing sogginess) • Correct slicing and handling techniques • Bread texture maintained or improved through prep | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Flavor & Balance | | | | | | |
| Homemade Spread / Infused Butter Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flavor development and depth • Smoothness, consistency, and proper texture • Creative or complementary seasoning • Spread applied appropriately to balance the sandwich | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Overall Flavor Harmony Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingredients working cohesively together • Balance among salty, sweet, acidic, spicy, and rich elements • Thoughtful contrast without overwhelming components • Bread flavor integrated well with fillings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Seasoning & Taste Balance Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper seasoning levels throughout • No overpowering or missing elements • Proper use of herbs, spices, or aromatics • Consistency of seasoning from bite to bite | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| Cleanliness & Organization | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Station Cleanliness Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitary workspace throughout production Proper cleaning and wiping of surfaces Safe handling and storage of tools and ingredients Minimal mess or food waste around station | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Workflow & Organization Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical sequence of tasks Efficient use of tools and space Clear mise en place and ingredient readiness Calm, focused, and safe movements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Time Efficiency | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion within 15 minutes Steady pacing throughout production No unnecessary delays or repeated steps Ability to manage multiple tasks efficiently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| _____ Item Description not submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13 | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| _____ Use of raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges. | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor used white or wheat bread | | | | | | |
| _____ Presentation containing non-edible element | | | | | | |
| _____ Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |
| PENALTY | | | | | | |
| Reason for Penalty: | | | | | | |
| _____ Item description does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 6, 2026 to Chamm@ncrla.org – 1 pt for each 24 hour period late | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor presented a sandwich that did not match submitted item description—3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |
| _____ Use of prohibited equipment – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Use of prohibited ingredients – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Finished sandwich does not include required elements—3 pts deducted per missing element Non-white or wheat bread protein vegetable(s) homemade spread or infused butter | | | | | | |
| _____ Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time – ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |

Build a Better Burger Competition

The *Build a Better Burger Competition* challenges individual competitors to showcase their creativity, technical precision, and culinary instincts by crafting a gourmet burger that highlights both flavor and innovation. Competitors must prepare a single burger featuring a protein of their choice and at least one condiment, incorporating an unexpected ingredient within the patty itself—such as finely chopped dried fruits, nuts, or other creative mix-ins—to enhance flavor, texture, and originality.

This competition tests each participant’s ability to balance flavor, cook to proper temperature, and present a visually appealing, cohesive dish under timed conditions.

This Competition Emphasizes:

1. Proper cooking technique and accurate doneness of the burger protein
2. Creativity in flavor combinations and use of unexpected ingredient(s)
3. Visual presentation and plating appeal
4. Clean, efficient, and safe workspace practices
5. Time management under pressure

Preparation for Build a Better Burger Competition

Each competitor must submit a one-page item description via email to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org. This submission must

- Be submitted by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**
- Be in PDF format
- Be no more than one single-sided 8.5x11 page of paper
- Clearly include the school and competitor name
- Include a menu name for the burger
- Contain a description of the burger that could be provided to customers, including:
 - Protein used
 - Unexpected ingredient
 - Condiments
 - Presentation elements
 - A listing of any major allergens contained in the recipe (milk, eggs, fish, crustacean, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, sesame).
- May contain one optional photo of the finished burger. Published images, graphics, and stock photos are not allowed.

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to ice
- Access to running water (available prior to and after the competition only)
- Acrylic frames containing the competitor’s submitted one-page item description
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition
- One butane burner and fuel
- Standardized dishware for presentation

Competitors must provide:

- One full-size sheet pan to be used for refrigerated storage
- All necessary ingredients and supplies to prepare their burger build
 - Ingredients may be pre-chopped, prepped, and some may be pre-cooked; however, the burger patty must arrive completely raw and must be cooked entirely on-site.
- All required tools, smallwares, and utensils
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Build a Better Burger (Total: 75 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|----------------------------|--------|---|
| Product Check-In | 5 | Judged on safe product storage and transportation |
| Creativity & Composition | 20 | Originality of burger concept, incorporation of unexpected ingredient, and overall flavor cohesion. |
| Execution & Technique | 20 | Proper cooking of protein, consistency, doneness, and assembly precision. |
| Flavor & Texture | 15 | Balance of seasonings, quality of patty, complementing condiment(s), and mouthfeel. |
| Cleanliness & Organization | 10 | Efficiency, neatness, and sanitation of workspace during and after Competition. |
| Time Efficiency | 5 | 30 minutes or less |

Build a Better Burger Rules

Uniform

1. Competitors must present a uniform appearance from Product Check-In through dismissal.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - i. Long-sleeve, white chef coats
 - Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - Accent colors are permitted, provided the chef coat remains white
 - ii. Checkered or black pants
 - iii. Non-porous, closed-toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard-sole black shoes
 - iv. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - v. Facial piercings must be taped over; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - vi. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the competition floor.
3. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Product Check-In through dismissal will result in a penalty.

Product Check-In

Competitors' teacher(s) and mentor(s) (for a maximum of two people) are allowed to be present in a designated space adjacent to the check-in tables to observe only during the Product Check-In process, including feedback.

1. It is the responsibility of each competitor to store all product prior to Product Check-In.
2. Product Check-In must be completed between 3-4 PM on Sunday, March 8, 2026.
3. Product Check-In is the first segment of the evaluation process. Competitor is judged according to:
 - a. Proper shipping and receiving procedures
 - b. Complete printed product inventory list of every item contained in each cooler or other container holding food items must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. One copy must be attached in a plastic sleeve to the outside of the container, and one copy placed inside the container. Inventory lists must be submitted on the official Inventory template. See Exhibit A for Inventory List example.
 - c. All ingredients must be turned in at Product Check-In.
 - d. Proper temperature of ingredients must be maintained.
 - e. If an item has been found to be in the temperature danger zone, the item will not be available for use in the competition. See #5 below.
4. Proper packaging
 - a. Items should be packaged properly i.e., no liquid pooling or seeping.
 - b. Items should be in their original packaging, professionally/commercially labeled and packaged properly. Label should include date it was packaged, weight, item type, and where it was packaged i.e., butcher shop or grocery store.
5. Any competitor that has a product disallowed during Product Check-In has until their assigned competition report time to present to the judges a replacement product for approval. Replacement product submission must be coordinated through Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.
 - a. Any item that does not meet the established criteria will result in a penalty.
 - b. Replacement product that does not meet requirements at competition report time will also be discarded. The competitor will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission.
6. All refrigerated product is placed on a competitor-provided sheet pan during check-in. Competitors are limited to the product that can fit on the sheet pan due to limited walk-in cooler space. Freezer storage is not provided at any point.
7. Competitors should have all dry storage product collected in a single container ready to be checked in.
8. Each competitor's food is placed in an appropriate and secure location at the competition site until the competitor's designated report time.
9. Should travel delays arise that are beyond the competitor's control, and as a result a competitor is unable to check-in their ingredients during the times allotted, the competitor must maintain proper storage of the items until check in. A new time must be coordinated with Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org, before the end of the established Product Check-In period.
10. Product Check-In feedback will occur immediately following each competitor's check-in.

Allowed Equipment and Ingredients

- Any protein of choice (beef, chicken, pork, seafood, plant-based, etc.)
- Unexpected ingredient(s) in the burger patty (e.g., dried fruit, nuts, herbs, or cheese inclusions)
- Homemade or prepared condiment (sauce, aioli, relish, etc.)
- Bread or bun of choice
- Optional toppings and garnish

- Any item that is part of the final burger may be pre-cooked unless otherwise noted; however, reheating or finishing techniques must occur during the competition.

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the competition:

- Pre-cooked or partially cooked burger meat
- Non-edible decorations or props on plate
- Electric appliances or powered equipment
- Outside assistance during competition

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a ¼ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will be allowed to organize their equipment and ingredients during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
5. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment and products onto the competition floor.
6. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
7. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each competitor will have 30 minutes to:

1. Set up their station
2. Cook the burger protein to proper temperature
3. Assemble and present one (1) finished burger for the Judges. Competitors should present one whole, uncut burger unless slicing is part of their intended presentation.
4. Clean and sanitize their station.

Judges will cut the single burger for tasting and evaluation.

Stations must be cleared and cleaned of all items with the exception of the finished burger and the acrylic-framed item description before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Judges will evaluate each competitor's ability to deliver a flavorful, visually appealing, and technically sound gourmet burger.

Assessment areas include:

- Creativity and balance of flavors
- Proper cooking and handling of protein
- Integration of unexpected ingredient in patty
- Professional appearance and plating
- Adherence to food safety and time limits
- Clean and organized workstation

Build a Better Burger Competition Penalties

1. Competitor fails to submit item description by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6**. One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the item description is late.
2. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
3. Competitor presented a burger that did not match submitted item description—3 pts
4. Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts
5. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
6. Use of prohibited equipment—3 pts
7. Use of prohibited ingredients—3 pts
8. Finished burger does not include required elements—3 pts each (protein, condiment, unexpected ingredient, bun or similar)
9. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
10. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified

Build a Better Burger Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor did not submit their item description by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13
2. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late.
3. Competitor used raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges
4. Competitor’s presentation contained non-edible elements.

Build a Better Burger Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|--|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Product Check-In | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe temperature control during transport • Proper storage of raw and prepared ingredients • Clear and accurate labeling of all items • Protection from cross-contamination • Use of approved containers and sanitary handling methods | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Creativity & Composition | | | | | | |
| Originality of Burger Concept Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique or unexpected burger theme or inspiration • Creative approach to flavors, textures, or global influences • Clear concept tying components together | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Incorporation of Unexpected Ingredient Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative use of a surprising or unconventional ingredient Ingredient enhances—not distracts from—the burger’s cohesion Balanced integration into the build (not a gimmick) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Overall Flavor Cohesion Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Components complement one another (bun, patty, toppings, sauces) Harmonious balance of flavors (sweet, savory, acidic, umami) Strategic layering that supports consistent bites | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Visual Appeal & Composition Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attractive overall structure and plating Balanced height, color, and arrangement Finished burger looks intentional and well-conceived | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Execution & Technique | | | | | | |
| Cooking of Protein Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct doneness based on Competitor’s stated target Even cooking with no raw or burnt sections Proper texture and moisture retention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Preparation & Technical Skill Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knife skills and uniform cuts Proper cooking techniques for toppings or additions Effective use of heat, searing, or toasting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Assembly Precision Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even distribution of ingredients Stable, well-structured burger that holds together Clean, neat layering with attention to bite consistency | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Bun Handling & Preparation Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct toasting or preparation to prevent sogginess Appropriate density and texture to support the build Proper slicing and structural integrity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Flavor & Texture | | | | | | |
| Seasoning Balance Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper seasoning throughout the burger No overpowering or underseasoned elements Cohesive use of herbs, spices, or aromatics | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Patty Quality & Flavor Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-developed flavor, juiciness, and texture Proper fat ratio and mixing technique (not overworked) Complementary flavor profile with toppings and condiments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Condiment(s) Effectiveness Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sauces or spreads enhance rather than mask flavors Proper consistency and application (not drowning or dry) Condiments tying multiple flavors together | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Texture & Mouthfeel Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrast between crispy, soft, juicy, crunchy, etc. Balanced textures in each bite Pleasant mouthfeel with no unpleasant elements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Cleanliness & Organization | | | | | | |
| Station Cleanliness Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitary surfaces maintained throughout Proper handling and storage of raw vs. ready-to-eat items Minimal mess; tools cleaned or stored appropriately | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Workflow & Organization Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical order of tasks and prep methods • Efficient time management and use of space • Calm, safe movement and clear mise en place | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Time Efficiency | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of burger within 30 minutes • Smooth pacing with no unnecessary delays • Ability to multitask effectively • Finished product delivered on time and fully assembled | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Item Description not submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13 | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges. | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation containing non-edible element | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |
| PENALTY | | | | | | |
| Reason for Penalty: | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Item description does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 6, 2026 to Chamm@ncrla.org – 1 pt for each 24 hour period late | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor presented a burger that did not match submitted item description—3 pts | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of prohibited equipment – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of prohibited ingredients – 5 pts | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finished burger does not include required elements—3 pts each protein condiment unexpected ingredient bun or similar | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time – 1/4 pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |

Cake Decorating Competition

The Cake Decorating Competition challenges individual Competitors to demonstrate their **technical precision, artistic skill, and time management** by transforming a basic crumb-coated cake into a professionally finished, retail-ready product that is both visually appealing and flavorful. Competitors will be evaluated not only on decoration but also on the **quality and consistency of the cake itself**, including a **filled middle layer** that complements the design and enhances taste.

This Competition emphasizes:

1. Clean execution of **core decorating techniques**
2. **Visual appeal** and creative composition
3. **Flavor and texture** of cake and filling
4. **Time management** under pressure
5. Adherence to food safety and sanitation protocols

Preparation for Cake Decorating Competition:

Each Competitor must submit a one-page item description via email to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.

This submission must

- Be submitted by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**
- Be in PDF format
- Be no more than one single-sided 8.5x11 page of paper
- Clearly include the school and Competitor name
- Contain a description of the cake that could be provided to customers, including:
 - Cake type
 - Filling type
 - General description of decoration
 - The script lettering phrase (18-25 characters including spaces and punctuation) that will be placed on the cake
 - The type of food coloring being used
 - A listing of any major allergens contained in the recipe (milk, eggs, fish, crustacean, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, sesame).
- Should not contain any photos or images.

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to ice
- Access to running water (available prior to and after the competition only)
- Acrylic frames containing the competitor's one-page item description
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition

Competitors must provide:

- One full-size sheet pan to be used for refrigerated storage
- All necessary ingredients and supplies to prepare their cake design
- Two edible, crumb-coated cakes baked in advance of the competition. Commercially prepared cakes

- 8 inches in base diameter
- 4–6 inches in height
- A maximum of 3lbs of commercially prepared white buttercream icing
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Cake Decorating (Total: 75 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--|
| Product Check-In | 5 | Judged on safe product storage and transportation |
| Design & Creativity | 20 | Judged on originality, visual composition, and retail appeal. Designs should be eye-catching, cohesive, and professionally appropriate. |
| Execution & Technique | 20 | Clean and accurate application of required techniques, including smooth buttercream coating, consistent piping, and legible lettering. |
| Flavor & Filling | 15 | Evaluated for flavor, texture, and proper execution of the filled middle layer. Points may be deducted for imbalance, inconsistency, or messiness. |
| Adherence to Standards & Sanitation | 10 | Compliance with Competition guidelines, tool usage, cake dimensions, required design elements, and safe, sanitary practices. |
| Time Efficiency | 5 | 30 minutes or less |

Cake Decorating Rules

Uniform

1. Competitors must present a uniform appearance from Product Check-In through dismissal.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - i. Long-sleeve, white chef coats
 - Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - Accent colors are permitted, provided the chef coat remains white
 - ii. Checkered or black pants
 - iii. Non-porous, closed-toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard-sole black shoes
 - iv. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - v. Facial piercings must be taped over; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - vi. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the Competition floor.
3. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Product Check-In through dismissal will result in a penalty.

Product Check-In

Competitors' teacher(s) and mentor(s) (for a maximum of two people) are allowed to be present in a designated space adjacent to the check-in tables to observe only during the Product Check-In process, including feedback.

1. It is the responsibility of each competitor to store all product prior to Product Check-In.
2. Product Check-In must be completed between 3-4 PM on Sunday, March 8, 2026.
3. Product Check-In is the first segment of the evaluation process. Competitor is judged according to:
 - a. Proper shipping and receiving procedures
 - b. Complete printed product inventory list of every item contained in each cooler or other container holding food items must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. One copy must be attached in a plastic sleeve to the outside of the container, and one copy placed inside the container. Inventory lists must be submitted on the official Inventory template. See Exhibit A for Inventory List example.
 - c. All ingredients must be turned in at Product Check-In.
 - d. Proper temperature of ingredients must be maintained.
 - e. If an item has been found to be in the temperature danger zone, the item will not be available for use in the competition. See #5 below.
4. Proper packaging
 - a. Items should be packaged properly i.e., no liquid pooling or seeping.
 - b. Items should be in their original packaging, professionally/commercially labeled and packaged properly. Label should include date it was packaged, weight, item type, and where it was packaged i.e., butcher shop or grocery store.
5. Any competitor that has a product disallowed during Product Check-In has until their assigned competition report time to present to the Judges a replacement product for approval. Replacement product submission must be coordinated through Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.
 - a. Any item that does not meet the established criteria will result in a penalty.
 - b. Replacement product that does not meet requirements at competition report time will also be discarded. The competitor will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission.
6. All refrigerated product is placed on a competitor-provided sheet pan during check-in. Competitors are limited to the product that can fit on the sheet pan due to limited walk-in cooler space. Freezer storage is not provided at any point.
7. Competitors should have all dry storage product collected in a single container ready to be checked in.
8. Each competitor's food is placed in an appropriate and secure location at the competition site until the competitor's designated report time.
9. Should travel delays arise that are beyond the competitor's control, and as a result a competitor is unable to check-in their ingredients during the times allotted, the competitor must maintain proper storage of the items until check in. A new time must be coordinated with Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org, before the end of the established Product Check-In period.
10. Product Check-In Feedback will occur immediately following each competitor's check-in.

Allowed Equipment and Ingredients

Competitors may use the following tools and ingredients only:

- **Piping bags and up to 5 tips**, including: round, star, petal, and leaf styles
- **Primary food colors**: red, yellow, blue, and black for custom mixing. Powdered, liquid, natural, and gel food colorings are allowed, but must be clearly labeled as one of the four allowed colors.
- Decorating comb, bench scraper, and/or offset spatula
- **Flower nail** for buttercream flower construction
- **Measuring spoons or small cups/bowls** (for portioning icing or color)
- **Basic cake board or stand** for support during decoration. Cake turntables, decorating wheels, and Lazy Susans are not allowed.

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the competition:

- **Food coloring** beyond the four primary colors of red, yellow, blue, and black
- **Pre-mixed colored icing**, including pre-made icings and gels
- **Commercially prepared decorations** such as sprinkles and sugar toppings; fondant and gum paste shapes; hard, pre-piped royal icing decorations; chocolate shavings and cups; candy beads and shapes; icing eyes; and edible printed decorations
- **Non-edible decorations** including figurine toppers, acrylic or wooden toppers, banners and pennants, candles, or ball picks.
- **Cake turntables, decorating wheels, and Lazy Susans** are not allowed.
- Any items that are **not fully edible and safe for tasting**
- **Any items** that are operated via battery, electricity, or fuels such as butane or propane.

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a $\frac{1}{4}$ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will be allowed to organize their equipment and ingredients during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
5. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment and products onto the competition floor.
6. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
7. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each competitor will have 30 minutes to complete the decorating process. Cakes must begin in a crumb-coated state, and all decorative elements must be applied during the competition.

Cakes must include:

- A smooth, white buttercream base coat
- A top shell border using white buttercream
- Embellishments using at least two additional buttercream colors (e.g., flowers, leaves, etc.)
- Script lettering of between 18-25 characters
- A filled middle layer (e.g., fruit, jam, ganache, flavored buttercream) that enhances the overall flavor and presentation
 - *Note: The filling must be fully contained and appropriate for a professional retail setting.*

Stations must be cleared and cleaned of all items with the exception of the finished cake and the acrylic-framed item description before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed.

Competitors will be evaluated on their ability to create a cake that demonstrates both **technical proficiency** and **retail appeal**, with the added challenge of delivering **excellent flavor and texture**. Judges will assess:

- **Clean execution** of required decorating techniques
- **Creative design** and aesthetic cohesion
- **Flavor, texture, and quality** of the cake and filled layer
- **Adherence to competition guidelines**, including cake size, tool limitations, and required design elements
- **Workstation cleanliness, food safety, and knife/tool handling**
- **Completion within the 30-minute time limit**, including clearing and cleaning of the assigned station.

All cakes must reflect professional industry standards for appearance, execution, and taste.

Cake Decorating Competition Penalties

1. Competitor fails to submit item description by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**. One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the item description is late.
2. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
3. Competitor presented a cake that did not match submitted item description—3 pts
4. Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts
5. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
6. Use of prohibited equipment—3 pts
7. Use of prohibited ingredients—3 pts
8. Cake does not match measurement requirements—3 pts for each dimension (diameter and height)
9. Finished cake does not include required elements—3 pts each (white buttercream base coat, top shell border, embellishments, script lettering, filled middle layer)
10. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
11. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified

Cake Decorating Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor did not submit their item description by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026
2. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late.
3. Competitor used raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges
4. Competitor presentation contained non-edible element

Cake Decorating Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|--|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Product Check-In | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper temperature and storage of cake, fillings, and buttercream • Safe and sanitary transportation • Ingredients protected from contamination • Clear labeling of components when applicable • Use of approved and safe containers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Design & Creativity | | | | | | |
| Originality of Design Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique concept or theme • Creative interpretation of required design elements • Incorporation of personal or signature style | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Visual Composition & Aesthetic Appeal Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced use of color, shape, and spacing • Clear focal point and cohesive overall layout • Visually pleasing and intentional arrangement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Professional Retail Appeal Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design appropriate for bakery display or special-order work • Marketable, attractive, and commercially viable final product • Style consistent with industry expectations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Overall Cohesion & Impact Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decorative elements working together toward a unified design • Strong first visual impression • Design that is eye-catching and memorable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Execution & Technique | | | | | | |
| Buttercream Coating Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, even finish across all surfaces • Clean top edge and sharp corners when required • No crumbs, air bubbles, or streaks visible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Piping Skills Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent shapes, sizes, and spacing • Clean edges without breaks or smudging • Controlled pressure and smooth technique | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Lettering & Detail Work Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legible, evenly spaced lettering • Consistent thickness and clean curves • Precision in small, intricate decorative elements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Overall Technical Accuracy Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neat execution of required techniques • Clean transitions between decorative components • Stable and structurally sound final cake | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Flavor & Filling | | | | | | |
| Cake Flavor & Texture Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasant, well-developed flavor profile • Proper crumb structure with appropriate moisture • Fresh and high-quality ingredients | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Filling Execution Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evenly applied and properly textured filling layer Filling that complements the cake and buttercream Stable filling without leaking or sinking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Balance & Consistency Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All components working harmoniously No overpowering or muted flavors Consistent taste and texture across the entire slice | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Neatness of Filling Layer Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean and tidy layering No excessive bulging, leaking, or mess Firm structure when cut | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Adherence To Standards & Sanitation | | | | | | |
| Compliance With Guidelines Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct cake dimensions, structure, and required elements Proper use of approved tools and materials All mandatory components included | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Sanitation & Professionalism Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean and sanitary handling of tools and ingredients Proper food safety practices throughout preparation Professional conduct and organized work habits | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Time Efficiency | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cake completed within 30 minutes Effective pacing across decorating stages Good time management without rushing or compromising safety | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| ___ Item Description not submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13 | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| ___ Use of raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges. | | | | | | |
| ___ Presentation containing non-edible element | | | | | | |
| ___ Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |
| PENALTY | | | | | | |
| Reason for Penalty: | | | | | | |
| ___ Item description does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 6, 2026 to Chamm@ncrla.org – 1 pt for each 24 hour period late | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor presented a cake that did not match submitted item description—3 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |
| ___ Use of prohibited equipment – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Use of prohibited ingredients – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Cake does not match measurement requirements – 3 pts for each dimension Diameter height | | | | | | |
| ___ Finished cake does not include required elements—3 pts each White buttercream base coat top shell border embellishments script lettering filled middle layer | | | | | | |
| ___ Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time – 1/4 pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |

Chicken Fabrication Competition: Airline Cut Edition

The Chicken Fabrication Competition challenges individual competitors to showcase their culinary knowledge, technical precision, and time management by expertly fabricating a whole chicken into precise industry-standard portions.

Each competitor will have **15 minutes** to fabricate one whole chicken into the required portions: **airline breasts with drumette attached, bone-in thighs with the oyster intact, drumsticks, and wings.**

This competition emphasizes industry-level butchery standards and requires participants to demonstrate:

1. Advanced knife skills
2. Portioning accuracy and consistency
3. Waste minimization and yield awareness
4. Strict adherence to food safety and sanitation protocols
5. Time efficiency under pressure

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition
- Chicken to be fabricated

Competitors must provide:

- Sanitized cutting boards
- Sharp, appropriate knives
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Chicken Fabrication (Total: 60 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|-----------------------------|--------|--|
| Accuracy of Cuts | 15 | Clean separation at joints, proper technique, and correct fabrication of required parts (airline breasts, drumsticks, bone-in thighs, and wings). |
| Oyster Intact on Each Thigh | 5 | Both thighs must include the oyster muscle, fully intact and properly trimmed. Missing or damaged oysters result in point deductions. |
| Uniformity of Portions | 10 | Consistency in size and shape of both sides: breasts should match, as should thighs, drumsticks, and wings. Cuts should reflect industry standards. |
| Cleanliness & Yield | 10 | Cuts should be clean and well-trimmed with minimal waste. Excessive fat, cartilage, or lost meat will reduce score. Efficient use of the whole bird is expected. |

| | | |
|--|----|---|
| Station Sanitation & Knife Safety | 10 | Maintains a clean, organized workstation; demonstrates proper knife handling and safe work habits throughout the fabrication process. |
| Completion Within 15-Minute Time Limit | 5 | Fabrication must be completed within the allotted time. Points deducted for exceeding 10 minutes. |

Chicken Fabrication Rules

Uniform

1. Competitors must present a uniform appearance from Check-In through dismissal.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - i. Long-sleeve, white chef coats
 - Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - Accent colors are permitted, provided the chef coat remains white
 - ii. Checkered or black pants
 - iii. Non-porous, closed-toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard-sole black shoes
 - iv. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - v. Facial piercings must be taped over; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - vi. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the competition floor.
3. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Check-In through dismissal will result in a penalty.

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the competition:

- **Electric, battery, or fuel-powered** knives or cutting devices

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time. (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a ¼ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment onto the competition floor.
5. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
6. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each competitor will have 15 minutes to fabricate one whole chicken into the following standard portions:

- Two **airline breasts** (skin-on, boneless, with drumette attached), uniform in size and free of visible fat or cartilage
- Two **bone-in thighs** (with oyster intact; skin-on or skin-off, competitor's choice)
- Two **drumsticks** (cleanly separated, with skin intact)
- Two **whole wings** (flat and wingtip, separated from drumette)

Note: Judging will focus on precision, portioning, waste reduction, sanitation, and timing.

Stations must be cleared and cleaned of all items with the exception of the fabricated chicken and one cutting board before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed.

Competitors will be evaluated on their ability to fabricate a chicken with technical skill, consistency, and professionalism. Judges will assess:

- Advanced knife technique
- Portioning accuracy and uniformity
- Waste management and yield optimization
- Adherence to safety and sanitation protocols
- Timely efficiency under pressure
- Completion within the 15-minute time limit, including clearing and cleaning of the assigned station.

All cuts must reflect professional industry standards for appearance, accuracy, and yield.

Chicken Fabrication Competition Penalties

1. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
2. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
3. Use of prohibited equipment—3 pts
4. Fabricated chicken does not match requirements—3 pts for each requirement (two airline breasts, two bone-in thighs, two drumsticks, two whole wings)
5. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
6. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 5 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified

Chicken Fabrication Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late.
2. Competitor uses prohibited equipment
3. Competitor uses unsafe practices

Chicken Fabrication Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|--|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Accuracy Of Cuts | | | | | | |
| Joint Separation Joints separated cleanly along natural seams with no splintering, tearing, or excessive force | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Proper Fabrication of Required Parts Airline breasts, thighs, drumsticks, and wings removed accurately and trimmed according to industry standards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Controlled, Professional Knife Technique Blade angle, pressure, and motion demonstrate precision, confidence, and minimal loss of usable meat | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| Oyster Intact On Each Thigh | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Oyster muscle fully intact on both thighs, properly removed without tearing, damage, or excessive trimming | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Uniformity Of Portions | | | | | | |
| Matching Sizes Breasts, thighs, drumsticks, and wings are consistent in size, shape, weight, and trim quality across both sides | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Professional Portion Appearance Final cuts show uniform thickness, clean edges, and appropriate portioning reflective of industry expectations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Cleanliness & Yield | | | | | | |
| Quality of Trim Work Excess fat, cartilage, skin, and bone fragments removed cleanly while maintaining tidy, professional cuts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Efficient Yield Minimal waste generated; carcass and trimmings indicate proper use of the whole bird with minimal lost meat | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Station Sanitation & Knife Safety | | | | | | |
| Safe Knife Handling Proper grip, safe hand placement, stable cutting board, and controlled cutting motions maintained consistently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Sanitary Work Habits Workstation kept clean and organized; raw chicken handled safely with strict prevention of cross-contamination | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Completion Within 15-Minute Time Limit | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fabrication fully completed within 10 minutes Pacing efficient and steady without compromising safety, accuracy, or sanitation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor uses prohibited equipment | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor uses unsafe practices | | | | | | |
| ___ Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |
| PENALTY | | | | | | |
| Reason for Penalty: | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |
| ___ Use of prohibited equipment – 3p | | | | | | |
| ___ Fabricated chicken does not match requirements—3 pts for each requirement two airline breasts two bone-in thighs two drumsticks two whole wings | | | | | | |
| ___ Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner – 2 pts | | | | | | |
| ___ Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time – 1/4 pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |



Knife Skills Competition

The Knife Skills Competition challenges individual competitors to demonstrate precision, consistency, and professionalism in executing the foundational knife cuts used throughout the culinary industry. This event tests fine motor control, safety, and speed — essential skills for any culinary professional. Competitors must produce a complete set of classical cuts within a strict time limit, with each cut evaluated for accuracy, uniformity, and presentation.

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition
- Labels and ramekins for each knife cut sample
- A standardized selection of vegetables

Competitors must provide:

- Sanitized cutting boards
- Sharp, appropriate knives
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Knife Cutting (Total: 75 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Accuracy & Uniformity | 40 | Each set of six pieces must meet classical dimensions and demonstrate uniformity of size and shape. |
| Safety & Sanitation | 15 | Competitor maintains safe knife technique, proper grip, and sanitation throughout the event. |
| Efficiency & Time Management | 10 | All required cuts are completed and displayed within the 20-minute limit. |
| Presentation & Organization | 5 | Cuts are neatly arranged and clearly labeled; workstation is orderly and clean. |
| Waste Management | 5 | Minimal waste generated; trimmings handled appropriately. |

Knife Cutting Competition Rules

Uniform

1. Competitors must present a uniform appearance from Check-In through

- dismissal.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - i. Long-sleeve, white chef coats
 - Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - Accent colors are permitted, provided the chef coat remains white
 - ii. Checkered or black pants
 - iii. Non-porous, closed-toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard-sole black shoes
 - iv. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - v. Facial piercings must be taped over; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - vi. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the competition floor.
 3. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Check-In through dismissal will result in a penalty.

Allowed Equipment

- Commercial or Professional grade knives
- Cutting boards with no visible measurement marks

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the Competition:

- Mechanical knives of any sort
- Cutting boards or other items with measurements or knife cut descriptions
- Mandolins and other cutting tools

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a $\frac{1}{4}$ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCCLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will be allowed to organize their equipment during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
5. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment onto the competition floor.
6. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
7. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each competitor will receive a standardized selection of vegetables (e.g., carrot, celery, onion, potato, and leafy greens). Competitors will have **30 minutes** to complete all required cuts and prepare their station for judging. Competitors must demonstrate safe knife handling, sanitation, and professional organization throughout the event. Competitors may be disqualified for unsafe practices, use of unapproved equipment, or exceeding the time limit.

Competitors must produce **six identical pieces** of each of the following cuts:

- Rondelle: Round, disc-shaped slices, $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick
- Diagonal: Oval-shaped slices cut on a bias, $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick
- Batonnet: Rectangular sticks, $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 2"
- Julienne: Thin rectangular sticks, $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times 2"
- Large Dice: Cube-shaped pieces, $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times $\frac{3}{4}$ "
- Medium Dice: Cube-shaped pieces, $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times $\frac{1}{2}$ "
- Small Dice: Cube-shaped pieces, $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times $\frac{1}{4}$ "
- Brunoise: Very small dice, $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times $\frac{1}{8}$ "
- Paysanne: Thin square pieces. $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times $\frac{1}{8}$ "
- Chiffonade: Thin ribbons of leafy greens or herbs, \sim $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide
- Tourne: Football-shaped, seven-sided cut with flat ends, $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter \times 2" long

At the conclusion of the 30-minute time limit, all knife cuts must be in individual ramekins (one for each type of cut). Each ramekin must be labeled with the provided labels. Stations must be cleared and cleaned before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed. Judges will evaluate competitors on the **accuracy, consistency, safety, and professionalism** of their knife cuts. Criteria include:

- **Accuracy & Uniformity** Each set of six pieces must meet classical dimensions and demonstrate uniformity of size and shape.
- **Safety & Sanitation** Competitor maintains safe knife technique, proper grip, and sanitation throughout the event.
- **Efficiency & Time Management** All required cuts are completed and displayed within the 30-minute limit.
- **Presentation & Organization** Cuts are neatly arranged and clearly labeled; workstation is orderly and clean.
- **Waste Management** Minimal waste generated; trimmings handled appropriately.

Knife Skills Competition Penalties

1. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
2. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
3. Use of ingredients not provided by Competition organizers—3 pts
4. Competitor did not complete 6 items of each cut—3 pts each (rondelle, diagonal, batonnet, julienne, large dice, medium dice, small dice, brunoise)
5. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
6. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified
7. Competitors who fail to complete more than half of the required cuts within the time limit may receive a

score of zero for the Efficiency & Time Management category.

Knife Skills Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late.
2. Competitor used prohibited equipment.
3. Competitor used unsafe practices.

Knife Skills Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|--|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Accuracy & Uniformity | | | | | | |
| Precision to Classical Dimensions Cuts match required classical measurements for each cut type | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Consistent Length All pieces in each set maintain uniform length and width/thickness appropriate to the cut type | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Consistent Shape Pieces maintain the correct geometric form | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Clean, Smooth Cut Surfaces Surfaces show no tearing, crushing, bruising, or jagged edges | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Straight Edges & Accurate Angles Edges remain straight and angles sharp, demonstrating precise blade alignment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Minimal Knife Marks Knife strokes are clean, controlled, and consistent without excessive scoring | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Accurate Proportion & Ratio Each piece demonstrates correct proportion (height-to-width-to-length) based on classical standards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Technical Accuracy by Cut Type Required cuts display proper classical characteristics | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Safety & Sanitation | | | | | | |
| Safe Knife Handling Practices Proper grip, safe hand positioning, controlled knife motion, and secure cutting board setup maintained throughout | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Food Safety & Ingredient Handling Ingredients handled hygienically with clear separation of raw and ready-to-eat items and consistent avoidance of cross-contamination | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Work Surface Cleanliness Cutting board and workstation kept clean and sanitary, with tools placed responsibly and debris removed consistently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Efficiency & Time Management | | | | | | |
| Completion Within Time Limit All required cuts completed and displayed within the 20-minute limit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Effective Workflow Logical sequence of cuts with minimal wasted movement and efficient transitions between tasks | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Presentation & Organization | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finished cuts arranged neatly and grouped clearly by type • Cuts displayed professionally and labeled correctly • Workstation remains orderly, clean, and free of excess clutter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| Waste Management | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trimmings kept to a minimal level appropriate for classical cuts • Scraps handled properly and placed in correct containers without excessive waste | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor uses prohibited equipment | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor uses unsafe practices | | | | | | |
| ____ Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |
| PENALTY | | | | | | |
| Reason for Penalty: | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor uses ingredients not provided by Competition organizers – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor did not complete 6 items of each cut—3 pts each Rondelle diagonal batonnet julienne large dice medium dice small dice brunoise | | | | | | |
| ____ Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner – 2 pts | | | | | | |
| ____ Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time – 1/4 pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |

Mocktail Mixology Competition

The Mocktail Mixology Competition challenges individual competitors to prepare **two servings** of an original alcohol-free beverage that demonstrates creativity, balanced flavor structure, and refined presentation. The mocktail should reflect a competitor’s ability to design a complete sensory experience through layered flavors, aroma, mouthfeel, and visual appeal—showcasing both technical precision and beverage artistry.

Competitors must incorporate a **Signature Sensory Element** to surprise and delight the Judges. For purposes of this competition, a “Signature Sensory Element” refers to techniques or components such as infused syrups, clarified juices, foams, flavored air, smoked glassware, carbonated elements, or other creative enhancements that elevate aroma, mouthfeel, or taste.

This competition tests advanced beverage creativity, attention to detail, and the ability to craft complex flavors in a nonalcoholic format.

This Competition Emphasizes:

- Creativity and originality in flavor development
- Balanced flavor: sweetness, acidity, bitterness, aromatics, and mouthfeel
- Precision and artistry in glassware, garnish, and final presentation
- Clean, efficient, and safe workstation practices
- Time management and professional execution

Preparation for Mocktail Mixology Competition

Each competitor must submit a one-page item description via email to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.

This submission must:

- Be submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026
- Be in PDF format
- Be no more than one single-sided 8.5×11-inch page
- Clearly include the school and Competitor’s name
- Include a menu name for the mocktail
- Contain a description of the mocktail as provided to customers, including:
 - The Signature Sensory Element
 - A listing of any major allergens contained in the recipe (milk, eggs, fish, crustacean, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, sesame)
- May contain one optional photo of the finished mocktail. Published images, graphics, and stock photos are not allowed

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to ice
- Access to running water (available prior to and after the competition only)
- Acrylic frames containing the competitor’s submitted one-page item description
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition

Competitors must provide:

- One sheet pan to be used for refrigerated storage
- All necessary ingredients and supplies to prepare their Mocktail Mixology
 - Ingredients may be pre-chopped, juiced, infused, or pre-prepared
- Glassware for beverage presentation
- All required tools (including jiggers, shakers, and strainer), smallwares, and utensils
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Mocktail Mixology (Total: 75 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|----------------------------|--------|--|
| Product Check-In | 5 | Safe product storage, accurate inventory, proper temperatures |
| Creativity & Composition | 15 | Original concept, innovation, beverage artistry |
| Flavor & Balance | 20 | Harmony among sweetness, acidity, bitterness, aromatics, and mouthfeel |
| Presentation & Technique | 20 | Glassware selection, garnish precision, clarity, visual impact, execution of Signature Sensory Element |
| Cleanliness & Organization | 10 | Efficiency, sanitation, and station organization |
| Time Efficiency | 5 | 15 minutes or less |

Mocktail Mixology Competition Rules

Uniform

Uniform

1. The uniform should consist of:
 - a. Solid color, ¾ sleeve or long-sleeve, collared dress shirts. Neckwear of any sort (e.g. necktie, bowtie, bolo tie, bandana, etc.) should not be worn.
 - b. Dress pants or skirts
 - c. Professional footwear suitable for a restaurant front-of-house position, with heel height no more than 3 inches.
2. Competitors will have the option of using a NCRLA-provided pin if they choose not to have the ProStart logo embroidered on their shirts. The ProStart logo must be displayed on the participants’ right or left chest if embroidered or placed in this location if using a pin. The choice of embroidery or pin has no impact on scoring. Only ProStart or sponsor logos are allowed on uniform shirts. No other logos are permitted.

Product Check-In

Competitors’ teacher(s) and mentor(s) (for a maximum of two people) are allowed to be present in a designated space adjacent to the check-in tables to observe only during the Product Check-In process, including feedback.

1. It is the responsibility of each competitor to store all product prior to Product Check-In.
2. Product Check-In must be completed between 3-4 PM on Sunday, March 8, 2026.
3. Product Check-In is the first segment of the evaluation process. Competitor is judged according to:
 - a. Proper shipping and receiving procedures
 - b. Complete printed product inventory list of every item contained in each cooler or other container holding food items must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. One copy must be attached in a plastic sleeve to the outside of the container, and one copy placed inside the container. Inventory lists must be submitted on the official Inventory template. See Exhibit A for Inventory List example.
 - c. All ingredients must be turned in at Product Check-In.
 - d. Proper temperature of ingredients must be maintained.
 - e. If an item has been found to be in the temperature danger zone, the item will not be available for use in the competition. See #5 below.
4. Proper packaging
 - a. Items should be packaged properly i.e., no liquid pooling or seeping.
 - b. Items should be in their original packaging, professionally/commercially labeled and packaged properly. Label should include date it was packaged, weight, item type, and where it was packaged i.e., butcher shop or grocery store.
5. Any competitor that has a product disallowed during Product Check-In has until their assigned competition report time to present to the Judges a replacement product for approval. Replacement product submission must be coordinated through Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.
 - a. Any item that does not meet the established criteria will result in a penalty.
 - b. Replacement product that does not meet requirements at competition report time will also be discarded. The competitor will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission.
6. All refrigerated product is placed on a competitor-provided sheet pan during check-in. Competitors are limited to the product that can fit on the sheet pan due to limited walk-in cooler space. Freezer storage is not provided at any point.
7. Competitors should have all dry storage product collected in a single container ready to be checked in.
8. Each competitor's food is placed in an appropriate and secure location at the competition site until the competitor's designated report time.
9. Should travel delays arise that are beyond the competitor's control, and as a result a competitor is unable to check-in their ingredients during the times allotted, the competitor must maintain proper storage of the items until check in. A new time must be coordinated with Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org, before the end of the established Product Check-In period.
10. Product Check-In Feedback will occur immediately following each competitor's check-in.

Allowed Equipment and Ingredients

- All ingredients must be fully edible and comply with Product Check-In rules, including labeling and temperature requirements.
- House-made syrups, shrubs, infusions, reductions, foams, gels
- Fresh juices, produce, herbs, spices
- Carbonated or still nonalcoholic beverages
- Edible garnishes including citrus, herbs, edible garnishes including citrus, herbs, edible flowers, dehydrated fruit, aromatics
- Signature Sensory Elements such as:
 - Clarified juices

- Carbonation (pre-carbonated components only)
- Smoked glassware
- Flavored foams
- Infused ice

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the competition:

- Alcohol or any ingredient containing alcohol
- Non-edible garnishes, decorations, or props
- Electric appliances or powered tools (e.g. immersion blenders, smoking guns, carbonation machines)
- Additional helpers or assistants
- Batch-prepared beverages that cannot be fully assembled during the 15-minute competition period

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a ¼ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will be allowed to organize their equipment and ingredients during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
5. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment and products onto the competition floor.
6. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
7. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each competitor will have 15 minutes to:

1. Set up their station
2. Prepare and serve **two (2) servings** of their Mocktail for the Judges
3. Clean and sanitize their station, returning it to the original condition.

Judges will each have a single serving for tasting and evaluation.

Stations must be cleared and cleaned of all items with the exception of two completed mocktails and the acrylic-framed item description before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed.

Judges will evaluate competitors on their ability to create a refined, balanced, and visually appealing mocktail that highlights creativity and technique.

Assessment areas include:

- Creativity and originality
- Balance of sweetness, acidity, bitterness, aromatics, and mouthfeel
- Precision of garnish and glassware presentation
- Execution of the Signature Sensory Element
- Station cleanliness and workflow
- Completion within the time limit

Mocktail Mixology Competition Penalties

1. Competitor fails to submit item description by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**. One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the item description is late.
2. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
3. Competitor presented mocktail that did not match submitted item description—3 pts
4. Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts
5. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
6. Use of prohibited equipment—3 pts
7. Use of prohibited ingredients—3 pts
8. Finished mocktail does not include Signature Sensory Element—5 pts
9. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
10. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified

Mocktail Mixology Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor did not submit their item description by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026
2. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late
3. Competitor used any alcohol-containing ingredient
4. Competitor used unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges
5. Competitor’s presentation contained non-edible elements
6. Competitor did not produce two complete servings

Mocktail Mixology Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|---|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Product Check-In | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper temperature • Proper packaging • Complete product inventory list(s) • Uniform and hygiene | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| Creativity & Composition | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Originality of Concept Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originality, uniqueness • Clearly student-driven • Creative beverage concept | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Innovative Use of Ingredients Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingredients used in unexpected, clever, or technically sophisticated ways • Creative choices • Ingredient synergy and cohesion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Visual Composition & Impact Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visually stunning beverage • Strong color story and layering • Well-composed garnishes • Professional appearance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Flavor and Balance | | | | | | |
| Flavor Quality Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depth and complexity • Well-developed flavors • Memorable sensory impact | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Balance of Sweetness, Acidity, Bitterness, Aromatics Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony between major flavor components • Smooth, cohesive profile | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Seasoning & Aromatic Accuracy Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of aromatics • Enhances ingredients without overpowering | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Texture & Mouthfeel Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal viscosity • Pleasant carbonation or stillness, as intended • Complimentary texture elements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Presentation & Technique | | | | | | |
| Glassware Selection & Precision Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional presentation • Appropriate glassware choice • Clean lines and intentional technique | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Use of Color, Garnish, & Contrast Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color clarity • Contrast and visibility • Symmetry between the two servings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Technical Skill Execution Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate technique selection • Techniques executed flawlessly • Proper shaking/stirring/straining methods | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Execution of Signature Sensory Element Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity of element • Enhances overall beverage • Clean, effective execution | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Cleanliness & Organization | | | | | | |
| Station Cleanliness Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitation • Cleanliness • Consistency | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Workflow & Organization Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency • Organization • Calm workflow | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| _____ Item Description not submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13 | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| _____ Use of alcohol or alcohol-containing ingredients | | | | | | |
| _____ Use of raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges. | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor did not produce two (2) complete servings. | | | | | | |
| _____ Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |
| PENALTY | | | | | | |
| Reason for Penalty: | | | | | | |
| _____ Item description does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 6, 2026 to Chamm@ncrla.org – 1 pt for each 24 hour period late | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor presented mocktail that did not match submitted item description—3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time—¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |
| _____ Use of prohibited equipment – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Use of prohibited ingredients – 3 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Finished mocktail does not include Signature Sensory Element—5 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified | | | | | | |

Napkin Folding Competition

The Napkin Folding Competition challenges individual Competitors to demonstrate their **creativity, precision, and consistency** by executing a refined napkin fold suitable for professional table settings. This fast-paced event highlights the importance of **fine motor skills and visual detail**, critical elements in enhancing the guest experience in both casual and fine dining environments.

Competitors will have **10 minutes** to complete three identical folds of their chosen design. Judging will focus on execution, accuracy, presentation, and stability.

Preparation for Napkin Folding Competition

Each competitor must submit a one-page proposal via email to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org. This submission must:

- Be submitted by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6**
- Be in PDF format
- Be no more than one single-sided 8.5x11 page of paper
- Clearly include the school and competitor name
- Include a photo of the finished fold. Published images, graphics, and stock photos are not allowed.
- Contain a description and brief folding guide (written or visual)
 - Judges will be provided with each Competitor’s submitted photo and folding instructions during scoring to evaluate design accuracy.

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Acrylic frames containing the competitor’s submitted one-page proposal
- Three 20”x20” square fabric napkins
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition

Prohibited Equipment

- No materials or equipment other than those provided by the Event Organizers may be used during this competition.

Scoring: Napkin Folding (Total: 50 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Accuracy to Submitted Design | 15 | Folds will be evaluated for fidelity to the Competitor’s pre-submitted photo and instructions. Points are awarded for matching shape, structure, and fine details. |
| Precision & Neatness | 10 | Clean, symmetrical folds with crisp lines and minimal wrinkling or sloppiness. |

| | | |
|-------------|----|---|
| Consistency | 10 | All three folds must be uniform in size, symmetry, and execution. |
| Creativity | 10 | Judged on originality, aesthetic appeal, and professionalism of the design. |
| Stability | 5 | Folds must remain upright or hold their shape independently without collapsing. |

Napkin Folding Competition Rules

Uniform

3. The uniform should consist of:
 - a. Solid color, ¾ sleeve or long-sleeve, collared dress shirts. Neckwear of any sort (e.g. necktie, bowtie, bolo tie, bandana, etc.) should not be worn.
 - b. Dress pants or skirts
 - c. Professional footwear suitable for a restaurant front-of-house position, with heel height no more than 3 inches.
4. Competitors will have the option of using a NCRLA-provided pin if they choose not to have the ProStart logo embroidered on their shirts. The ProStart logo must be displayed on the participants' right or left chest if embroidered or placed in this location if using a pin. The choice of embroidery or pin has no impact on scoring. Only ProStart or sponsor logos are allowed on uniform shirts. No other logos are permitted.

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a ¼ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will receive their materials at their competition station.

Task Description

Each competitor will receive **three standard 20'X20' square napkins** and will have **10 minutes** to complete the same fold **three times**

- Competitors may use **any design of their choosing**, but it must be **achievable within the 3-minute time limit**
- Designs must be completed **by hand only**, with no tools or supports used
- Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
- No additional materials or tools may be used

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited. Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed.

Judges will evaluate competitors on the **accuracy, creativity, and craftsmanship** of their napkin folds. Criteria include:

- **Speed and Time Management:** Completion of all three folds within the 3-minute time limit
- **Precision and Neatness:** Clean lines, crisp folds, and overall tidiness
- **Consistency:** All three folds should match in shape, size, and structure
- **Creativity:** Design should be visually appealing and unique while still practical for table service
- **Stability:** Each fold must **stand or hold its shape unassisted**

*All folds should reflect **professional dining standards** and elevate the guest’s visual experience.*

Napkin Folding Competition Penalties

1. Competitor fails to submit proposal by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**. One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the item description is late.
2. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
3. Competitor presented a fold that did not match submitted item description—5 pts
4. Competitor presented less than 3 complete folds—5 pts each
5. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
6. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - 10 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified

Napkin Folding Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor did not submit their item description by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026
2. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late.

Napkin Folding Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|--|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Accuracy To Submitted Design | | | | | | |
| Match to Shape & Structure Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall form closely matches the pre-submitted photo • Major structural elements accurately replicated • Proportions consistent with reference design | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Match to Fine Details Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small folds and accents executed as shown in instructions • Angles, edges, and decorative elements aligned with submission • Fidelity to competitor’s stated technique or method | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Interpretation of Instructions Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steps followed correctly according to submitted process No missing or altered components of the original design Clear adherence to intended sequence and fold logic | | | | | | |
| Precision & Neatness | | | | | | |
| Crispness & Clean Execution Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Straight, sharp edges without sagging or softness Smooth surfaces with minimal visible wrinkles Tidy presentation free of tearing or fraying | | | | | | |
| Symmetry & Alignment Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Left and right sides matching in size and shape Even angles and mirrored folds Balanced proportions without distortion | | | | | | |
| Consistency | | | | | | |
| Uniformity Across All Three Folds Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All three napkins identical in size and structure Repeating elements executed with the same precision Consistent thickness, angles, and spacing | | | | | | |
| Replicated Technique Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitor demonstrates repeatable folding skill No fold noticeably stronger or weaker than the others Stable execution sustained across all attempts | | | | | | |
| Creativity | | | | | | |
| Originality of Design Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique or thoughtful concept Creative form or aesthetic choices Design that stands out from standard folds | | | | | | |
| Aesthetic Appeal & Professionalism Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visually pleasing proportions and shape Cohesive appearance from top to base Suitable for professional service or special events | | | | | | |
| Stability | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fold remains upright or holds intended shape No collapsing, falling, or slumping after completion Design maintains form when lightly moved or repositioned | | | | | | |
| DISQUALIFICATION | | | | | | |
| Reason for Disqualification: | | | | | | |
| _____ Item Description not submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026 | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. | | | | | | |
| _____ Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) | | | | | | |
| PENALTY | | | | | | |
| Reason for Penalty: | | | | | | |
| _____ Item description does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 6, 2026 to Chamm@ncrla.org – 1 pt for each 24 hour period late | | | | | | |
| _____ Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts | | | | | | |

| |
|---|
| _____ Competitor presented a fold that did not match submitted item description—3 pts |
| _____ Competitor presented less than 3 complete folds – 5 pts each |
| _____ Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified |
| _____ Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time – 1/4 pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified |

Wrap Battle Competition

The *Wrap Battle Competition* challenges individual competitors to reimagine the classic wrap using an alternative to traditional tortillas. Competitors must craft a fresh, flavorful wrap inspired by a **global cuisine theme**—such as Mediterranean, Asian, Latin American, or another regional influence—showcasing creativity in both the choice of wrapping material and the balance of fillings.

This competition highlights the competitor’s ability to think globally, balance texture and flavor, and demonstrate strong technical and plating skills within a limited time frame.

This Competition Emphasizes:

1. Creative use of **non-tortilla wrapping materials**
2. Balanced and flavorful filling combinations inspired by world cuisines
3. Technical execution and visual presentation
4. Food safety and cleanliness
5. Time management and organization

Preparation for Wrap Battle Competition:

Each Competitor must submit a one-page item description via email to Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.

This submission must

- Be submitted by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**
- Be in PDF format
- Be no more than one single-sided 8.5x11 page of paper
- Clearly include the school and Competitor name
- Include a menu name for the wrap
- Contain a description of the wrap that could be provided to customers, including:
 - Global cuisine inspiration
 - Chosen wrap base
 - Brief description of wrap ingredients
 - A listing of any major allergens contained in the recipe (milk, eggs, fish, crustacean, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, sesame).
- May contain a photo of the finished wrap. Published images, graphics, and stock photos are not allowed.

Workspace and Equipment

Event Organizers provide:

- Access to handwashing stations
- Access to ice
- Access to running water (available prior to and after the competition only)
- Acrylic frames containing the competitor’s one-page item description
- Access to sanitizing solution (competitors must provide their own buckets and towels)
- Individual competition stations, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their competition
- Standardized dishware for presentation

Competitors must provide:

- One full-size sheet pan to be used for refrigerated storage
- All necessary ingredients and supplies to prepare and assemble their wrap

- Ingredients may be pre-chopped or prepped, and some may be pre-cooked
- Sanitizer buckets
- Cleaning towels, etc.

Scoring: Wrap Battle (Total: 75 Points)

| Category | Points | Description |
|----------------------------|--------|---|
| Product Check-In | 5 | Judged on safe product storage and transportation |
| Creativity & Global Theme | 20 | Originality of concept, alignment with selected cuisine, and innovative use of wrap base. |
| Execution & Technique | 20 | Proper preparation of fillings, assembly precision, and visual presentation. |
| Flavor & Balance | 15 | Cohesiveness of flavors, texture contrast, and seasoning. |
| Cleanliness & Organization | 10 | Efficiency, neatness, and sanitation of workspace during and after Competition. |
| Time Efficiency | 5 | 15 minutes or less |

Wrap Battle Competition Rules

Uniform

1. Competitors must present a uniform appearance from Product Check-In through dismissal.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - i. Long-sleeve, white chef coats
 - Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - Accent colors are permitted, provided the chef coat remains white
 - ii. Checkered or black pants
 - iii. Non-porous, closed-toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard-sole black shoes
 - iv. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - v. Facial piercings must be taped over; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - vi. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the competition floor.
3. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Product Check-In through dismissal will result in a penalty.

Product Check-In

Competitors' teacher(s) and mentor(s) (for a maximum of two people) are allowed to be present in a designated space adjacent to the check-in tables to observe only during the Product Check-In process, including feedback.

1. It is the responsibility of each competitor to store all product prior to Product Check-In.
2. Product Check-In must be completed between 3-4 PM on Sunday, March 8, 2026.
3. Product Check-In is the first segment of the evaluation process. competitor is judged according to:

- a. Proper shipping and receiving procedures
 - b. Complete printed product inventory list of every item contained in each cooler or other container holding food items must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. One copy must be attached in a plastic sleeve to the outside of the container, and one copy placed inside the container. Inventory lists must be submitted on the official Inventory template. See Exhibit A for Inventory List example.
 - c. All ingredients must be turned in at Product Check-In.
 - d. Proper temperature of ingredients must be maintained.
 - e. If an item has been found to be in the temperature danger zone, the item will not be available for use in the Competition. See #5 below.
4. Proper packaging
 - a. Items should be packaged properly i.e., no liquid pooling or seeping.
 - b. Items should be in their original packaging, professionally/commercially labeled and packaged properly. Label should include date it was packaged, weight, item type, and where it was packaged i.e., butcher shop or grocery store.
 5. Any competitor that has a product disallowed during Product Check-In has until their assigned Competition report time to present to the Judges a replacement product for approval. Replacement product submission must be coordinated through Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org.
 - a. Competitors will lose points if their entire product list does not meet the established criteria at the original check-in.
 - b. Replacement product that does not meet requirements at competition report time will also be discarded. The competitor will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission.
 6. All refrigerated product is placed on a competitor-provided sheet pan during check-in. Competitors are limited to the product that can fit on the sheet pan due to limited walk-in cooler space. Freezer storage is not provided at any point.
 7. Competitors should have all dry storage product collected in a single container ready to be checked in.
 8. Each competitor's food is placed in an appropriate and secure location at the competition site until the competitor's designated report time.
 9. Should travel delays arise that are beyond the competitor's control, and as a result a competitor is unable to check-in their ingredients during the times allotted, the competitor must maintain proper storage of the items until check in. A new time must be coordinated with Courtney Hamm, chamm@ncrla.org, before the end of the established Product Check-In period.
 10. Product Check-In Feedback will occur immediately following each competitor's check-in.

Allowed Equipment and Ingredients

- **Wrap base:** Any alternative to tortillas such as lettuce leaves, rice paper, pita, lavash, naan, cabbage leaves, seaweed sheets, or specialty flatbreads
- **Fillings:** Proteins, vegetables, grains, and condiments reflecting the chosen world cuisine
- **Sauces or spreads:** May be pre-prepared
- **Garnishes:** Optional, must be edible and appropriate to the cuisine theme

Prohibited Items

The following items are prohibited from the competition:

- Tortillas of any kind (flour, corn, whole wheat, etc.)
- Non-edible decorations or props on plate
- Electric appliances or devices

- Assistance from teachers or others during the competition

Competition Overview

Report to Competition

1. Competitor should arrive promptly at the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a. Should a competitor arrive late, a ¼ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a competitor is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a competitor is late.
2. Educators, mentors, family members, and others may no longer communicate with the competitor once at the Report to Competition area.
3. Competitors will be introduced to their NCRLA-assigned Ambassadors who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
4. Competitors will be allowed to organize their equipment and ingredients during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
5. Competitors must carry and/or roll all their equipment and products onto the competition floor.
6. Tables may not be moved, rotated, or repositioned for any reason.
7. All items must either fit under or on top of the competitor's 6' table and may not be placed on the floor around the table or in the walkways.

Task Description

Each competitor will have 15 minutes to:

1. Set up their station
2. Prepare their wrap components and assemble the final product
3. Assemble and present **one (1)** finished wrap for the Judges
4. Clean and sanitize their station.

*Judges will **cut the single wrap** for tasting and evaluation.*

Stations must be cleared and cleaned of all items with the exception of the finished wrap and the acrylic-framed item description before Judges begin scoring.

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the critique sessions. Communication with the competitor is still prohibited.

Competitors, teachers, or mentors may record critiques via voice recorder only—no video is allowed.

Judges will evaluate competitors based on their ability to create a globally inspired, flavorful wrap that demonstrates culinary creativity, technical precision, and presentation skills.

Assessment areas include:

- Alignment with selected global cuisine
- Effective use of a non-tortilla wrap base
- Balance of flavor, texture, and seasoning
- Technical skill in preparation and assembly
- Food safety and cleanliness of workstation
- Timely completion of task

Wrap Battle Competition Penalties

1. Competitor fails to submit item description by **11:59 PM on Friday, February 6, 2026**. One point will be deducted for each 24-hour period that the item description is late.
2. Competitor is not dressed in uniform—3 pts
3. Competitor presented a wrap that did not match submitted item description—3 pts
4. Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts
5. Competitor begins the task before the assigned start time:
 - o ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - o 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified
6. Use of prohibited equipment—3 pts
7. Use of prohibited ingredients—3 pts
8. Wrap is not global inspired or does not match selected cuisine—5 pts
9. Finished wrap does not include required elements—3 pts each (wrap base, fillings, sauce or spread)
10. Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts
11. Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time:
 - o ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds
 - o 10 or more minutes late, Competitor is disqualified

Wrap Battle Competition Disqualifications

1. Competitor did not submit their item description by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026
2. Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or arrived more than 10 minutes late
3. Competitor used a tortilla
4. Competitor used raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges
5. Competitor’s presentation contained non-edible elements

Wrap Battle Sample Competition Score Sheet

| EVALUATION CRITERIA | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | VERY GOOD | EXCELLENT | SCORE |
|---|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Product Check-In | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper temperature and safe storage of proteins, produce, and sauces • Sanitary and secure transportation of all ingredients • Protection from cross-contamination during transport • Clear labeling of components when applicable • Use of safe, food-appropriate containers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Creativity & Global Theme | | | | | | |
| Originality of Concept Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique or unexpected wrap idea • Creative interpretation of global cuisine • Clear design or flavor direction that stands out | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Alignment With Selected Cuisine Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flavors, ingredients, and techniques appropriate to chosen region • Cultural or regional authenticity demonstrated thoughtfully • Concept consistent with global inspiration throughout all components | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Innovative Use of Wrap Base Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative choice of flatbread, leaf, or alternative wrap • Technique enhances structure, texture, or global concept • Use of wrap base adds uniqueness without compromising functionality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Overall Visual & Conceptual Cohesion Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation reflects chosen cuisine • Colors, textures, and arrangement complement theme • Wrap looks intentional, appealing, and culturally aligned | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Execution & Technique | | | | | | |
| Preparation of Fillings Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper cooking or marinating of proteins • Fresh, evenly cut vegetables and components • Correct technique applied to sauces, grains, or spreads | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Assembly Precision Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even distribution of fillings • Tight, stable wrap that holds together cleanly • Consistent structural integrity throughout | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Knife Skills & Handling Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform slicing and safe technique • Clean cuts for presentation and portion consistency • Proper handling of delicate ingredients | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Visual Presentation & Finishing Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean exterior with no tears, leaks, or sogginess • Attractive cross-section if sliced • Neat, professional final appearance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Flavor & Balance | | | | | | |
| Cohesiveness of Flavors Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingredients working harmoniously • Flavors that match regional inspiration • Complementary sauces, spices, and fillings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Texture Contrast Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of textures (crunchy, soft, crisp, tender) • Proper execution of elements requiring contrast • Pleasant mouthfeel in each bite | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Seasoning Accuracy Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper seasoning throughout • Balanced use of herbs, spices, aromatics • Nothing overpowering or underseasoned | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Overall Taste Experience Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent, enjoyable flavor from start to finish • No dry, dull, or overwhelming bites • Successful integration of wrap base with fillings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Cleanliness & Organization | | | | | | |
| Station Cleanliness Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitary workspace throughout production • Clean tools, surfaces, and ingredient handling • Food safety maintained consistently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Workflow & Organization Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical preparation order and task flow • Efficient, calm use of space and time • Clear mise en place and safe movement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Time Efficiency | | | | | | |
| Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap fully completed within 15 minutes • Steady, intentional pacing • Effective multitasking and time management • No delays caused by lack of organization | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

| DISQUALIFICATION |
|---|
| Reason for Disqualification: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Item Description not submitted by 11:59 PM on Friday, February 13, 2026 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor started task more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor used a tortilla |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of raw or unsafe food handling practices observed by Judges. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation containing non-edible element |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Violation of the General Disqualifications (see general disqualifications section) |
| PENALTY |
| Reason for Penalty: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Item description does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 6, 2026 to Chamm@ncrla.org – 1 pt for each 24 hour period late |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor not dressed in uniform—3 pts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor presented a wrap that did not match submitted item description—3 pts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded—3 pts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor begins any Competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, Competitor is disqualified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of prohibited equipment – 3 pts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of prohibited ingredients – 5 pts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wrap is not global inspired or does not match selected cuisine – 5 pts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finished wrap does not include required elements—3 pts each Wrap base fillings sauce or spread |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Station not cleared and clean, or left in an unsanitary manner—2 pts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor arrives at Report to Competition late/after their assigned Competition start time – ¼ pt is deducted per 15 seconds After 10 minutes, Competitor is disqualified |

Exhibit A – Culinary Product Check-In Inventory List

Product Check-In Inventory Lists must be completed and contain the inventory list of every item, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER contained in each cooler or other container holding food items. Inventory forms must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. The list must be attached in a plastic sleeve.

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| School Name | Awesome School |
| Year | 2024 |
| Educator Name | Chef Jane Doe |

| | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| Container Purpose | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refrigerator | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Storage |
| Number of Items in Container/Cooler | 11 | |

| Inventory List | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Item | Confirmed <i>(This column for Judge use only)</i> |
| Basil | |
| Eggplant | |
| Garlic | |
| Green Bell Pepper | |
| Parsley | |
| Red Bell Pepper | |
| Thyme | |
| Tomatoes | |
| Yellow Onion | |
| Yellow Squash | |
| Zucchini | |
| | |
| | |
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| | |