
Food Show Essentials

The 4-H Food Show gives 4-H members the opportunity for educational and personal development and recognizes members who excel in the 4-H Food and Nutrition Project. The Food Show is an individual contest, not a team event.

In the food show, 4-H members prepare dishes in one of the contest categories and present them to a panel of judges. In the presentations and interviews with the judges, 4-H members exhibit the knowledge and skills gained through the 4-H Food and Nutrition Project—such as preparation steps, nutrients found in the dish, the functions of various ingredients, personal dietary needs, healthy substitutions, and a cost analysis.

Basics

To compete in the food show, a 4-H member prepares a dish in one of the four entry categories—dairy, fruits and vegetables, grains, and protein. Refer to the district 4-H Food Show guidelines, or ask the district specialist about other categories that may be available at the district contest.

After choosing a recipe, the 4-H member should practice preparing the dish several times to learn the preparation steps and the importance of each step. Project leaders can help the members select recipes and practice preparing them.

Entry paperwork is often required for the food show. Check with your district specialist about the entry and paperwork requirements for your district food show.

At the state level, completing the required paperwork is part of the total score. 4-H members must provide information on their project goals, leadership, community service, knowledge and skills gained, project activities, and a project summary—all related to their 4-H Food and Nutrition Project experiences.

To prepare for a food show, the 4-H member should be familiar with the judging process. Depending on the age division, contestants may be judged on their presentations and their answers to judges' questions.

Have the participants should review the scorecard for their age division to prepare for the question-and-answer segment of the judging process.

Conducting a food show

A food show requires much planning. A planning guide is available for your task force members to use.

Space and equipment needed

Rooms

- 1 large room for group assembly and the awards program
- Judging rooms for each category
- 1 room for tabulation
- 1 holding room for parents and leaders

Tables and chairs

- Table and chairs for registration
- Table and chairs for the judges to use during the interview process
- **Optional:** Tables in the assembly/awards room so that participants can display their entries at the awards program

Possible locations are churches, schools, community centers, county fair buildings, and the county Extension office.

Volunteers needed

- **Judges:** Evaluate 4-H members during the interview process; possible judges are professional chefs or cooks, registered dietitians, FCS teachers, former 4-H members, former 4-H food and nutrition project leaders or club managers, grocery store owners/managers, nutrition majors, elementary school teachers, county judges and commissioners, restaurant owners/managers, Texas Extension Education Association club members, and others with an interest in food and nutrition.

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- **Timekeeper:** Keeps time during judging and indicates when contestants have completed their interviews; if necessary, a judge can serve as the timekeeper
 - **Tabulators:** Tabulate scores from judges' scorecards
 - **Runners:** Take scorecards from the judging room to the tabulation room.
 - **Registration personnel:** Work at the registration table to greet and check in contestants, judges, parents, leaders, and guests

Resources

- *District 4-H Food Show Guidelines* (contact your district 4-H specialist)
- *State 4-H Food Show Guidelines, Rules and Regulations:* fcs.tamu.edu (updated and distributed annually)
- *Altering Recipes for Good Health*
- *Cooking Basics for Dummies*, 3rd edition
- *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*
- Fight Bac
- MyPlate
- *Nutrient Needs at a Glance*

Specialists

- Shawnte Clawson, Extension Program Specialist, sfclawson@ag.tamu.edu, 806-677-5600
- Sharon Robinson, Extension Nutrition Specialist, s-robinson@tamu.edu, 979-847-9227
- District 4-H specialist