

DEPARTMENT 35 – CULINARY

To be shown in the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building
Superintendent: Terri Branham (217-899-0484)
Premiums Offered: \$4,232.00

INFORMATION

Entries

Required fees include \$2.00 per exhibit Entry Fee and \$3.00 per exhibitor Office Fee. Entries in all classes shall be made through the online fair entry system at the Illinois State Fair website. Payment must be made via credit card at the time of entry. No other type of entry will be accepted. Assistance with entries is available at the Competitive Events Office, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. All entries must be submitted online on or before July 15, 2026. Fees will not be refunded. Exhibitors are highly encouraged to bring a copy of their entry receipt to check-in.

Deadlines and Check-in

Entry Deadline	Wednesday, July 15
Entry check-in	Sunday, August 9, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday, August 10, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Exhibit Pick-up	Sunday, August 23, 12:30 to 5:00 p.m. Monday, August 24, 3:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

General Requirements & Criteria for Competition

1. General rules apply to all divisions in this department. Please read carefully.
2. Entrants must be a resident of Illinois.
3. This department is limited to amateurs/non-professionals. An amateur creates items as a hobby or pastime and does not offer items for sale, except for bake sale or similar type fundraising.
4. Except for where otherwise noted, no mixes are permitted.
5. Exhibitors awarded first place in any class from the previous year are not eligible to exhibit in that class for the current Fair.
6. Exhibitors are limited to one entry per class.
7. Each article may only be entered under one class number. A recipe may only be used once within the Culinary departments. Members of the same family may not use identical recipes.
8. All exhibitors must observe state and federal food safety rules and restrictions. For example, no raw egg or unbaked cream cheese products in frostings, toppings or individual products. With the exception of certain daily special contests, exhibits needing refrigeration will not be judged. It will be the judge's decision if an entry is deemed safe for tasting/judging.
9. Entry tags are prepared for each class entered and will be available at the time of check-in.
10. All entries must be accompanied with the complete typed recipe. The exact measurements, proper ingredients and detailed method must be typed on an 8.5" x 11" piece of paper. Recipes must be presented to Department staff at the time of check-in. Do not put your name on the recipe. See individual contest rules for other specific requirements. **Entries will not be accepted without a typed recipe.**
11. Rules for displaying culinary products:

Breads and Quick Breads – Use an 8" x 4" loaf pan for loaves containing no more than 3 cups of flour and a 9" x 5" loaf pan for loaves containing more than 3 cups of flour. No friendship bread. Place on heavy

cardboard covered with aluminum foil or other oil-resistant paper. No doilies. The display board must not exceed 1" larger than the product. Entire item must be in a plastic bag or plastic wrap.

Muffins – Show 4 on a white round 8" disposable heavy paper plate with no paper or foil liners. No jumbo muffins. Must be placed in a plastic bag or covered in plastic wrap.

Cakes – Show on covered heavy cardboard, the same shape as the cake, that does not exceed 1" larger than the cake. No added ingredient or coloring unless specified. No doilies. Cakes are to be in plastic wrap, plastic bag, box or another disposable container. Cakes should not exceed 9" in diameter.

Decorated Cakes – Cakes should be placed on material strong enough for adequate support if moved (Masonite, plywood or heavy cardboard), covered with foil or other oil-resistant paper and not exceeding 1/2" beyond product. A cake form, dummy cake or cake pan must be used. No real cake is allowed. The decoration theme must follow category entered. Decorated cakes will be judged on use and presentation of different tubes/tips.

Cookies – Show exactly 4 on a sturdy white round 5-6" disposable heavy paper plate in a plastic bag or plastic wrap. No doilies. Cookies may be stacked between waxed paper for judging. All cookies must be plain with no added frostings, sugar toppings, glazes or added ingredients (nuts, chips, dried fruits, etc.) unless otherwise listed in the class description.

Definition of Cookies:

- a. Drop – dough is dropped from a spoon onto a baking sheet (ex. Oatmeal, chocolate chip)
- b. Refrigerated (roll and slice) – dough is shaped into a roll/log and chilled to be sliced thinly and baked (ex. Pinwheels, slice and bake)
- c. Bar – dough is baked in square or oblong pan and cut into bars or squares after baking (ex. Brownies)
- d. Rolled – dough is rolled to desired thickness and cut with cookie cutters (ex. Sugar cut-out cookies)
- e. Molded – dough is shaped by hand; shape is retained after baking (ex. Peanut butter, Russian tea cakes, snicker doodles, thumbprint)
- f. Pressed – dough is soft enough to be forced through a cookie press, yet stiff enough to hold its shape (ex. Spritz)

Misc. Decorative Products – Show exactly 4 on a sturdy white round disposable heavy paper plate in a plastic bag.

Pies – To be exhibited in 9-10" disposable pie pans and wrapped in plastic wrap or a display box. Crust must be homemade.

Coffee Cake – May be left in a square or round disposable pan (8" – 10") and wrapped in plastic or in a display box. If the cake is removed from the pan, it should be displayed on heavy cardboard covered in aluminum foil or other oil-resistant paper. The display board must not exceed 1" larger than the product.

Candy – Show exactly 4 large pieces on sturdy white round 5-6" disposable heavy paper plate in plastic bag or plastic wrap. No doilies.

Diabetic Cooking – Must follow above rules for display. Label from sugar substitute must be attached to recipe. Include nutritional information per serving.

Gluten Free – Must follow above rules for display. Manufacturer's name must be included in the recipe for all ingredients. Any size of bread is acceptable. Bread must be displayed on white covered cardboard 1" larger than loaf. Snack display can be either 1 cup of dry mix or crackers in a sealable clear plastic bag or 4 bars, balls or servings on a sturdy white round disposable paper plate.

12. Exhibitors are not permitted to enter the display area at any time to help place or remove any of the exhibits but only as they are waited upon by the Department assistants.
13. Each canning jar shall have gummed labels on the outside of the jar with the exhibitor's number, class number, date of preservation and contents. All canning entries will be opened. Canning exhibits must be labeled true to name. Those who do not conform to this rule will not be judged. For canned products, the

entry tag should be attached around the jar below the lid with the string or a rubber band. Use on tested recipes that comply with the new USDA canning guidelines for pickling, jams, jellies, barbecue sauce, tomato products, salsa, vegetables and fruit. Canned products should be prepared and processed according to current USDA/Extension information. Check the USDA website www.homefoodpreservations.com for tested recipes. The County Cooperative Extension Service is an excellent source to make sure you have the most up-to-date USDA information. All entries will be judged on appearance, selection of products and food safety. Canning must have been done since the last Illinois State Fair.

14. Butters, jams, jellies, marmalades, and preserves must be in colorless one-half pint jars, regular or wide-mouthed. No quart jars. Fruits, vegetables, sauces, pickles, and relishes must be in colorless standard pint jars, regular or wide-mouthed. Clean lids and rings must be used. All jellies, jams, preserves, marmalades, pickles, and sauces shall be processed using the hot water bath method as prescribed in the newest canning guidance available. No paraffin sealing is allowed.
15. Any exhibitor wishing photographs to be taken of their exhibits, must do so from outside the cabinet in the building. The cabinets will not be opened for photos.
16. Closed judging will be held Tuesday, August 11, 2026, and Wednesday, August 12, 2026. The building will not be open to the public.
17. If molding occurs prior to the end of the Fair, exhibits will be destroyed at the Superintendent's discretion.
18. No culinary exhibits will be returned by the Illinois State Fair. Exhibitors may pick up non-food related items during listed pick-up hours.
19. Entered recipes cannot be acknowledged or returned. The Illinois State Fair reserves the right to publish entered recipes without recourse to the originator or any sponsor.

Judging

1. Judging will be closed.
2. Judges are instructed that if they have reason to believe that an exhibitor, by false entry or otherwise, has attempted to deceive and obtain an award by misrepresentation, said exhibitor shall not be awarded any premiums and/or awards.
3. A portion of the entry will be used for judging. The amount used is no indication of the judge's opinion.
4. Judges consider appearance and taste in addition to the listed rules.
5. All judge decisions are final.

Division 3501 – Baked Items - Miscellaneous

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Beer bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Cake Mix Mix-Up	Made with any box cake mix as a base. Must make additions to the cake mix to enhance the taste and appeal. Box top of cake mix must be attached to recipe. \$12-\$8-\$4
03	Cookie Jar – Route 66 Theme	Jars must be a wide open-mouthed quart-sized fruit jar and should be decorated as attractively as possible. Jar must be filled and cookies visible. At least three different kinds of cookies must be included (rolled, cut, pressed, sliced, drop, etc.) This contest is for a decorated cookie jar, not a jar of cookies in a display. All decorations must be securely attached to the jar. No recipes are needed for this entry. 40% of judging will be based on cookies, and the other 60% will be based on jar decorations. \$12-\$8-\$4
04	Cookie Jar – America 250 Theme	Jars must be a wide open-mouthed quart-sized fruit jar and should be decorated as attractively as possible. Jar must be filled and cookies visible. At least three different kinds of cookies must be included (rolled, cut, pressed, sliced, drop, etc.) This contest is for a decorated cookie jar, not a jar of cookies in a display. All decorations must be securely attached to the jar. No recipes are needed for this entry. 40% of judging will be based on cookies, and the other 60% will be based on jar decorations. \$12-\$8-\$4
05	French macarons	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Jelly Roll Cake	\$12-\$8-\$4

Division 3502 – Bread – Quick Breads

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Banana quick bread	No nuts, chips, etc. \$12-\$8-\$4
02	Nut quick bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Pumpkin quick bread	No nuts, chips, etc. \$12-\$8-\$4
04	Zucchini quick bread	No nuts, chips, etc. \$12-\$8-\$4
05	Miscellaneous quick bread - all others	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Miscellaneous quick bread - fruit	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Miscellaneous quick bread - savory	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Biscuits	\$12-\$8-\$4
09	Coffee cake with added ingredients	Ex: nuts, fruit, icing, etc. \$12-\$8-\$4
10	Coffee cake with only cinnamon/sugar filling	No nuts or icing \$12-\$8-\$4
11	Muffins - blueberry	\$12-\$8-\$4
12	Muffins - bran	\$12-\$8-\$4

13	Muffins - miscellaneous	\$12-\$8-\$4
14	Scones	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Quick Bread will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3503 – Bread – Yeast Breads

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Cinnamon raisin bread Un-iced	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Cinnamon rolls with add-ins and/ or icing No cream cheese icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Cinnamon rolls No nuts, raisins or icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Clover leaf rolls	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	French bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Italian bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Rolls, four different shapes	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Seeded yeast bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
09	Sourdough bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
10	Tea ring	\$12-\$8-\$4
11	White bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
12	Whole wheat bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
13	Miscellaneous foreign bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
14	Miscellaneous yeast bread Loaf or four rolls	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Yeast Bread will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3504 – Cakes

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Angel Food cake	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Angel Food cake - chocolate	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Apple cake	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Carrot, Spice or Applesauce cake 2-layer, with icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Chocolate cake 2-layer, with chocolate icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	German Chocolate cake 3-layer, with pecan/coconut icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Pineapple Upside-Down cake	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Pound cake	\$12-\$8-\$4
09	Sponge cake	\$12-\$8-\$4
10	White cake 2-layer, with icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
11	Yellow cake 2-layer, with icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
12	Miscellaneous cake 9" x 13" or 2-layer, with icing	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Cake will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3505 – Candy

2" maximum size per piece

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Caramels - plain	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Divinity - drop, no nuts	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	English Toffee	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Fudge - all others	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Fudge - peanut butter	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Fudge - plain	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Mints	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Nut brittle	\$12-\$8-\$4
09	Any other kind	\$12-\$8-\$4

*Champion Candy will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.***MRS. WAGES® BLUE RIBBON CANNING AWARDS****Presented by: Kent Precision Foods Group, Inc.**

Kent Precision Foods, Inc., makers of Mrs. Wages® Home Canning Mixes, is proud to recognize food preservationists who, like Mrs. Wages®, hold a high standard of quality ingredients and a belief that food preservation should be celebrated and shared. A panel of Illinois State Fair judges will select the best of each division from the following categories. A gift from Mrs. Wages® Canning Mixes will be awarded to the top three eligible entries, as determined by the judges, from qualifying divisions.

Canning with Mrs. Wages® Competition

A panel of judges will select three best entries that feature pickles or tomatoes using Mrs. Wages® Tomato Sauce or Pickling Canning Mixes, with winners receiving a gift from Mrs. Wages® Home Canning Mixes.

Rules:

1. Each entry must use a Mrs. Wages® product.
2. Entries will be judged on taste and appearance.
3. Include proof of purchase of Mrs. Wages® seasoning with your entry. At product drop off, you will be given stickers for your entry tag.
4. All entries must include recipes.
5. All recipes will become property of Mrs. Wages® and the Illinois State Fair. Entered recipes cannot be acknowledged or returned. The Illinois State Fair reserves the right to publish entered recipes without recourse to the originator or any sponsor.

Division 3506 – Canning – Butters

Butters should mound up when dropped from a spoon and should not cut like jelly, neither should there be any free liquid. Do not add any congealing substances.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Apple butter	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Apricot butter	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Peach butter	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Pear butter	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Any other kind on butter	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Butter will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3507 – Canning – Fruits

Butters should mound up when dropped from a spoon and should not cut like jelly, neither should there be any free liquid. Do not add any congealing substances.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Applesauce	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Blackberries	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Cherries	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Peaches	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Pears	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Any other kind of fruit	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Canned Fruit will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3508 – Canning – Jams

Jams are made of crushed fruits, mixed with sugar and cooked until thick. The ideal jam has a soft, even consistency without distinct pieces of fruit, bright color, and semi-jellied texture that is spreadable, without fruit liquids. With the exception of the “any other kind of jam” class, no added ingredients or flavorings are allowed.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Blackberry jam	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Peach jam	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Pepper jam	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Raspberry jam	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Strawberry jam	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Any other kind of jam	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Jam will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3509 – Canning – Jellies

Fruit jellies are made from extracted juices of various kinds of fruits cooked with granulated sugar. Good jelly is clear and sparkling and has a fresh flavor of the fruit from which it is made. It is tender enough to quiver when moved but holds angles when cut. This classification includes jellies made from their own pectin. With the exception of the “any other kind of jelly” class, no added ingredients or flavorings are allowed. Note on recipe if commercial thickening agents are used in recipe.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Apple jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Blackberry jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Grape jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Peach jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Pepper jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Plum jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Raspberry jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Any other kind of jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Jelly will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3510 – Canning – Marmalades

Marmalades are made from fruits which have jelly making properties. They have a clear jelly appearance in which thin slices or small pieces of fruit are suspended. They must not contain nuts. The fruit from which the marmalade is named must be the predominant flavor. With the exception of the “any other kind of marmalade” class, no added ingredients or flavorings are allowed.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Orange marmalade	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Peach marmalade	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Pineapple marmalade	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Any other kind of marmalade	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Marmalade will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3511 – Canning – Pickles

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Beets - whole	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Cauliflower	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Cucumber - chips, bread and butter	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Cucumber - dill	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Cucumber - sweet	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Green beans	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Any other kind of pickles	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Pickles will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3512 – Canning – Preserves

Preserves are whole fruits or pieces of fruit cooked in a heavy sugar syrup. Fruit should be as well shaped as possible. Good preserves are plump and tender with natural color and flavor. With the exception of the “any other kind of preserves” class, no added ingredients or flavorings are allowed.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Apricot preserves	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Cherry preserves	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Peach preserves	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Strawberry preserves	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Any other kind of preserves	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Preserves will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3513 – Canning – Sauces and Relish

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Barbeque sauce	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Chili sauce	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Ketchup	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Relish - any kind	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Salsa - fruit	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Salsa - tomato	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Salsa - Verde	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Any other salsa	\$12-\$8-\$4
09	Any other sauce	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Sauce or Relish will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3514 – Canning – Vegetables

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Green beans	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Tomatoes	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Any other kind of vegetables	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Vegetables will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3515 – Cookies - Bar

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Chocolate brownies - plain	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Chocolate brownies - with nuts and/or icing	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Biscotti - plain	\$12-\$8-\$4

04	Biscotti - with added ingredients	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Bar cookies - with nuts	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Bar cookies - with fruit	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Bar cookies - miscellaneous	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Bar Cookie will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3516 – Cookies - Drop

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Chocolate chip cookies - plain, no nuts	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Chocolate chip cookies - all others	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Oatmeal cookies - plain	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Oatmeal cookies - with raisins	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Oatmeal cookies - with added ingredients	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Peanut butter cookies - plain	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Drop Cookie will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3517 – Cookies - Shaped

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Coconut Macaroons	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Decorated cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Fancy shaped cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
04	Filled cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Gingerbread cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Gingersnap cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	No bake cookies - with oatmeal	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Pinwheel cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
09	Refrigerated cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
10	Shortbread cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
11	Snickerdoodle cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
12	Sugar cookies - drop, plain	\$12-\$8-\$4
13	Sugar cookies - rolled and cut, un-iced, plain	\$12-\$8-\$4
14	Any other kind of cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Shaped Cookie will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3518 – Decorated Products

Cakes cannot exceed 18" in height including any decorations, unless specified below.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Cake – birthday or holiday	\$21-\$15-\$10
02	Cake – Route 66 or America 250 theme	\$21-\$15-\$10
03	Cake - novelty	\$21-\$15-\$10
04	Cake - special, using rolled fondant	Birthday, novelty, bridal shower, baby shower, holiday, wedding or anniversary
05	Cake - wedding or anniversary	Not to exceed 30" in height; base not to exceed 18" in diameter
06	Cookie - one	Not to exceed 14" in diameter
07	Cookies - twelve with one theme	America 250 theme
08	Cookies – twelve with one theme	Route 66 theme

Champion Decorated Product will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Superintendent's Special Contest

Make any single serving decorated item in either an America 250 or Route 66 theme. Let's see your creativity!

Plate two (2) items, one for tasting/ judging and one for display during the fair.

09	America 250	\$25-\$20-\$15
10	Route 66	\$25-\$20-\$15

Premiums will be paid directly by the Superintendent.

Division 3519 – Pastries

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Pie shell	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Apple pie	2 crusts
03	Berry pie	2 crusts
04	Dutch Apple pie	1 crust with crumble top
05	Peach pie	2 crusts
06	Any other fruit pie - 2 crust	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Any other fruit pie - 1 crust, crumble top	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Any other pie not listed - no refrigeration	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Pastry will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3520 – Special Dietary

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Diabetic cake	\$12-\$8-\$4
02	Diabetic cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
03	Diabetic quick bread	\$12-\$8-\$4

04	Diabetic jam	\$12-\$8-\$4
05	Diabetic jelly	\$12-\$8-\$4
06	Diabetic pie or cobbler	\$12-\$8-\$4
07	Gluten Free cake	\$12-\$8-\$4
08	Gluten Free cookies	\$12-\$8-\$4
09	Gluten Free pie or cobbler	\$12-\$8-\$4
10	Gluten Free quick bread	\$12-\$8-\$4
11	Gluten Free snack	\$12-\$8-\$4
12	Gluten Free yeast bread	\$12-\$8-\$4

Champion Special Dietary will be awarded \$15.00 and a Rosette.

END OF DEPARTMENT 35 – CULINARY

DEPARTMENT 36 – CULINARY – BLUE RIBBON CULINARY CONTEST

To take place on the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building stage

Superintendent: Terri Branham (217-899-0484)

Premiums Offered: \$1,435.00

INFORMATION

Entries

Recipes must be submitted by email to AGR.CompEvents@Illinois.gov on or before **June 1, 2026**. Exhibitors will be notified by email of selections chosen to compete on stage. Upon notification by the Competitive Events Department, the exhibitors must enter the appropriate Blue Ribbon Culinary Department class(es) through the online fair entry system at the Illinois State Fair website. Do not make online entry until you have been notified to do so by the Competitive Events office.

Required fees include \$2.00 per exhibit Entry Fee and \$3.00 per exhibitor Office Fee. Payment must be made via credit card at the time of entry. No other type of entry will be accepted. Assistance with entries is available at the Competitive Events Office, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. All entries must be submitted online on or before July 15, 2026. Fees will not be refunded.

CONTEST SCHEDULE

There will be two rounds each day, one at 9:00 a.m. and the other at 12:30 p.m. Awards will be presented at 5:30 p.m. daily.

Thursday, August 13	Main Dish Using Pork
Friday, August 14	Bake-a-Cake
Monday, August 17	Baked Desserts Using Dairy Products
Tuesday, August 18	Main Dish Using Beef
Wednesday, August 19	Yeast Bread
Thursday, August 20	Main Dish Using Chicken
Friday, August 21	Pie
Saturday, August 22	Grand Champion Contest

General Requirements & Criteria for Competition

1. General rules apply to all divisions in this department. Please read carefully.
2. This department is limited to amateurs/non-professionals. An amateur creates items as a hobby or pastime and does not offer items for sale, except for bake sale or similar type fundraising. Contestants may submit no more than two (2) recipes for each daily contest.
3. Recipes must be typed and submitted as an attachment in an email to AGR.CompEvents@Illinois.gov. Please include "Blue Ribbon Culinary Contest" in the subject line. All recipes must have the contest identified at the top of the sheet and name and email address of exhibitor at the bottom. Exhibitors whose recipes are selected as finalists in the Illinois Blue Ribbon Contest will be notified by email as soon as the recipes are evaluated by a selection panel. When an exhibitor receives notification of eligibility for the contest, the exhibitor must then make entry through the online fair system.
4. Every ingredient must be listed in exact measurement (no rounded teaspoons, etc.). Type of ingredient (example: self-rising flour, buttered vanilla) must be specified. Follow general proper recipe procedure, listing all steps of preparation, pan sizes, temperatures, and baking times.
5. Yeast Bread includes bread, coffee cake and rolls.

6. Baked Desserts Using Dairy Products must include at least two (2) dairy products (i.e. milk, cheese, sour cream, etc.) in quantities of more than three tablespoons for each product.
7. In the Main Dish with Chicken, Beef, and Pork categories, the meat must be the main ingredient with at least five (5) other ingredients added to make the dish.
8. No recipe that a contestant has entered and made in a previous Blue Ribbon Culinary Contest can be entered again.
9. A past Grand Champion winner may enter the contest in a category other than the one that they received the Grand Champion award at the previous Fair. For example, the 2025 Grand Champion may enter again in 2027. If you are selected as a finalist and cannot compete, please notify the Illinois State Fair Competitive Events Department or the Culinary Superintendent as soon as possible so an alternative exhibitor can compete.
10. Demonstration areas and tables will be assigned. Judging of the live contest will be done by a team of qualified judges on the basis of flavor, texture and appearance. The names of the contestants will be removed to ensure an unbiased evaluation. Since the contestant is presenting him/herself before an audience, the presentation will be taken into consideration when judging but will not outweigh the product made. Emphasis should be taken on sanitation and cross contamination. You are not cooking for your family but for others to partake.
11. All finalists are to prepare recipes within a three-hour period. The recipe should be timed to be completed in three hours. Mix time, rise time, bake time, etc. must equal no more than three hours.
12. Contestants will be allowed on stage 15 minutes prior to start buzzer and will have 15 minutes after the final buzzer to vacate the stage.
13. All work must be completed on stage. All work must stop when the buzzer sounds at the end of three hours. The product will be handed to a Culinary Department worker. To allow time for cakes, pies, baked desserts using dairy, and yeast breads to stabilize, they will be judged one hour following completion on stage. Chicken, pork and beef will be judged immediately.
14. All ingredients are to be measured on stage. No pre-measuring or preparing of any ingredients should be done before the contest. No bread machines may be used in the Yeast Bread contest.
15. A range, refrigerator, microwave, sink facilities and a demonstration table will be provided for each contestant, but contestants must furnish their own ingredients, oven thermometer, small appliances, extension cords and utensils.
16. Each contestant is required to display his/her finished product in a provided display case (23" x 23"). Products should be displayed simply, but attractively, with the use of props such as place mat, napkins, glassware, flowers, etc.
17. Winners are selected on each preliminary contest day. The first-place winner of each contest will return on Saturday, August 16, to compete in the Grand Champion Contest. The winner, or runner-up, will compete in the Grand Champion Contest with the first contest in which they qualify. Grand Champion judges will not have judged a daily contest from the current Fair.
18. Entered recipes cannot be acknowledged or returned. The Illinois State Fair reserves the right to publish entered recipes without recourse to the originator or any sponsor.
19. Any questions should be directed to the Culinary Superintendent.

Division 3601 – Blue Ribbon Culinary Contests

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Bake-a-Cake	\$45-\$30-\$20
	Awarded by (TBD)	\$50-\$35-\$25
02	Baked Desserts Using Dairy Products	\$45-\$30-\$20
	Awarded by Midwest Dairy Association	\$50-\$35-\$25
03	Main Dish Using Beef	\$45-\$30-\$20
	Awarded by Illinois Beef Association	\$50-\$35-\$25
04	Main Dish Using Chicken	\$45-\$30-\$20
	Awarded by (TBD)	\$50-\$35-\$25
05	Main Dish Using Pork	\$45-\$30-\$20
	Awarded by Illinois Pork Producers	\$50-\$35-\$25
06	Pies	\$45-\$30-\$20
	Awarded by Bunn Company	\$50-\$35-\$25
07	Yeast Bread	\$45-\$30-\$20
	Awarded by Oxley Farms	\$50-\$35-\$25

Grand Champion will receive \$100.00 from Steve Todd & Dave Blanchette, in honor of 2026 Miss Illinois County Fair Queen. In addition, \$50.00 and an award from the Illinois State Fair will be given.

Reserve Grand Champion will receive \$50.00 from Steve Todd & Dave Blanchette, in honor of 2026 Miss Illinois County Fair Queen. In addition, \$25.00 and an award from the Illinois State Fair will be given.

END OF DEPARTMENT 36 – CULINARY - BLUE RIBBON CULINARY CONTEST

DEPARTMENT 37 – CULINARY - YOUTH

To be shown in the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building

Superintendent: Terri Branham (217-899-0484)

Premiums Offered: \$687.00

INFORMATION

Entries

Required fees include \$1.00 per exhibit Entry Fee and a \$3.00 per exhibitor Office Fee. Entries in all classes shall be made through the online fair entry system at the Illinois State Fair website. Payment must be made via credit card at the time of entry. No other type of entry will be accepted. Assistance with entries is available at the Competitive Events Office, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. All entries must be submitted online on or before July 15, 2026. Fees will not be refunded. Exhibitors are highly encouraged to bring a copy of their entry receipt to check-in.

General Requirements & Criteria for Competition

1. General rules apply to all divisions in this department. Please read carefully.
2. All rules for Department 35 – Culinary, will apply to the Youth Department, however only exhibitors 18 years of age and under as of August 13, 2026, are eligible for entry in this Department.
3. Entered recipes cannot be acknowledged or returned. The Illinois State Fair reserves the right to publish entered recipes without recourse to the originator or any sponsor.

Special Awards

Youth Homemaker Award: An award and \$15.00 will be given to the 2026 Youth Homemaker. Winner will be selected according to a point system. The value of the ribbons an exhibitor receives in this department will be added, and the highest point total will determine the winner. The value of each placing is as follows: Champion – 4, First – 3, Second – 2, Third – 1. An exhibitor or their family member cannot win this award for two years in succession.

Division 3701 - Cakes

Class No.	Class Description		Premiums
01	Angel food	Un-iced	\$6-\$4-\$2
02	Chocolate	At least two 8" layers, with chocolate icing	\$6-\$4-\$2
03	White	At least two 8" layers, with icing	\$6-\$4-\$2
04	Any other cake	At least two 8" layers, with icing	\$6-\$4-\$2
05	Cupcakes	With icing, show four standard sizes on an 8" round white disposable plate	\$6-\$4-\$2

Champion Cake will be awarded \$10.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3702 - Candy

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Caramels	\$6-\$4-\$2

02	Fudge	\$6-\$4-\$2
04	Any other kind of candy	\$6-\$4-\$2

Champion Candy will be awarded \$10.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3703 - Cookies

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Brownies	\$6-\$4-\$2
02	Chocolate chip cookies	\$6-\$4-\$2
03	No bake cookies	\$6-\$4-\$2
04	Oatmeal cookies, plain	No nuts, raisins or chips \$6-\$4-\$2
05	Peanut butter cookies	\$6-\$4-\$2
06	Refrigerator cookies	\$6-\$4-\$2
07	Sugar cookies	\$6-\$4-\$2
08	Any other kind of cookies	\$6-\$4-\$2

Champion Cookie will be awarded \$10.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3704 – Daily Contests

GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING

Saturday, August 15, 2026

All participants must be entered into a class to be eligible to participate. Each participant will have 15 minutes to prepare and set up before competition begins. Each participant may have one (1) assistant sit with them during competition. Note: Start times may be adjusted after check-in.

Class No.	Class Description		Premiums
01	Gingerbread House Decorating	Ages 8-10	Arrive at 10:15 a.m. Begin at 10:30 a.m. Turn in at 11:30 a.m. \$10-\$6-\$4
02	Gingerbread House Decorating	Ages 11-13	Arrive at 12:00 p.m. Begin at 12:15 p.m. Turn in at 1:15 p.m. \$10-\$6-\$4
03	Gingerbread House Decorating	Ages 14-18	Arrive at 1:45 p.m. Begin at 2:00 p.m. Turn in at 3:00 p.m. \$10-\$6-\$4

Awards will also be provided for Best Overall and Most Creative.

Judging Criteria: 50 points – Creativity and Originality, 20 points – Use of Materials, 30 – Overall Presentation

Requirements:

1. Gingerbread kits will be provided. A picture of each exhibitor's kit can be sent to the exhibitor after registration ends. Contact the Competitive Events Office at AGR.CompEvents@illinois.gov.
2. Exhibitors may bring extra icing, candy and/or other edible decorations.

3. Exhibitors should bring additional supplies like spatulas and piping bags. The Culinary Department will not provide any decorating equipment.
4. Gingerbread structure will be pre-assembled and ready to decorate at the start of the competition. Care must be used when decorating and replacements will not be available.
5. Exhibitors will have up to one hour for decorating. Refrigerators and freezers will be available if needed.
6. Judging will take place immediately after all competitions are completed. Top placing exhibits may be kept for display during the duration of the Fair.
7. Awards will be presented at 5:15 p.m.

HONEY

Friday, August 21, 2026

Sponsored by: Lincoln Land Bee Keepers Association

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.

Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m. See page 38-1 for additional information

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
04	Honey – Youth (Ages 8-17)	\$75-\$50-\$25

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsor.

Judging Criteria: 30% - Flavor, 25% - Use of Honey, 20% - Ease of Preparation

Requirements:

1. Create a snack or dessert using at least one-half cup of honey as an ingredient.
2. Honey must be used as the main sweetening ingredient, not just in the icing or topping.
3. Honey flavor must dominate throughout the product.
4. Recipe is to be typed on an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper and attached to the entry.
5. All recipes will become the property of Lincoln Land Bee Keepers Association.

Division 3705 – Decorated Products

Decorated products will be judged for decorating ability using decorating tubes and icing. No tasting. Candies, cookies, etc. must be secondary. Please see adult decorated product rules in Department 35 – Culinary.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Cake (ages 8-10)	\$6-\$4-\$2
02	Cake (ages 11-13)	\$6-\$4-\$2
03	Cake (ages 14-17)	\$6-\$4-\$2
04	Cupcakes	Show four standard sizes on an 8" round white disposable plate \$6-\$4-\$2

Champion Decorated Product will be awarded \$10.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3706 – Quick Breads

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Banana bread	\$6-\$4-\$2
02	Coffee cake	8" square or round \$6-\$4-\$2
03	Muffins, plain	Show four standard sizes on 8-9" sturdy white disposable plate, no foil or paper cups \$6-\$4-\$2
04	Pumpkin bread	\$6-\$4-\$2
05	Any other quick bread	\$6-\$4-\$2

Champion Quick Bread will be awarded \$10.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3707 – Special Dietary

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Any Diabetic baked item	\$6-\$4-\$2
02	Any Gluten Free baked item	\$6-\$4-\$2

Champion Special Dietary will be awarded \$10.00 and a Rosette.

Division 3708 – Specialty Items

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	2026 Cookie Jar – Route 66 or America 250 Theme	Jars must be a wide open-mouthed quart-sized fruit jar and should be decorated as attractively as possible. Jar must be filled and cookies visible. At least three different kinds of cookies must be included (rolled, cut, pressed, sliced, drop, etc.) This contest is for a decorated cookie jar, not a jar of cookies in a display. All decorations must be securely attached to the jar. No recipes are needed for this entry. 40% of judging will be based on cookies, and the other 60% will be based on jar decorations. \$15-\$10-\$5
02	Cut up Cakes	Create a fun cake design by taking any shape or size cake, cutting it into pieces and using those pieces to make a different shape. Cake mixes and packaged frosting may be used. No recipe is required. Decorate cake with candy or other edible food products appropriate. Display must not exceed 14" x 14". Cakes will be judged on originality (30%), creativity (30%), and overall appearance (40%) \$15-\$10-\$5
03	Healthy Snack	Create a healthy snack that does not require refrigeration. Consider the fat and sugar content of the entry. Include your recipe and a statement of why you feel this is a healthy snack. Display cannot exceed 14" x 14". \$15-\$10-\$5

Division 3709 – Yeast Products

Class No.	Class Description		Premiums
01	Dinner rolls	Show four on an 8-9" sturdy white disposable plate	\$6-\$4-\$2
02	Cinnamon Rolls	Show four on an 8-9" sturdy white disposable plate	\$6-\$4-\$2
03	White bread	1-lb. loaf	\$6-\$4-\$2
04	Any other yeast product		\$6-\$4-\$2

Champion Yeast Product will be awarded \$10.00 and a Rosette.

END OF DEPARTMENT 37 - CULINARY – YOUTH

DEPARTMENT 38 – CULINARY – SPECIAL CONTESTS

To be shown in the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building

Superintendent: Terri Branham (217-899-0484)

Premiums Offered: \$4,785.00

INFORMATION

Entries

Required fees include \$2.00 per exhibit Entry Fee and a \$3.00 per exhibit Office Fee. Entries in all classes shall be made through the online fair entry system at the Illinois State Fair website. Payment must be made via credit card at the time of entry. No other type of entry will be accepted. Assistance with entries is available at the Competitive Events Office, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. All entries must be submitted online on or before July 15, 2026. Fees will not be refunded. Exhibitors are highly encouraged to bring a copy of their entry receipt to check-in.

General Requirements & Criteria for Competition

1. All rules for Department 35 – Culinary apply to this Department.
2. All entries in the daily special contests must be prepared at home and brought ready to display.
3. Entries will only be accepted at the times listed.
4. All food items to be judged must be covered. Items that are to be judged warm should be brought in a non-electric warming bag. A microwave will be available for judges to heat the product for judging. Items requiring refrigeration will be provided refrigeration space.
5. Exhibitors may display as much or as many pieces as they wish (following the individual contest rules), in the container of their choice, to make an attractive display. Displays are limited to 16" x 16". Ribbon winners will remain on display for the remaining length of the fair. All other entries may be picked up after the awards presentation.
6. Recipes must be included with entry and must be typed on 8.5" x 11" white paper. They should include only your exhibitor number and contest name/class number in the right-hand corner. Do not put your name, address or phone number on the recipe unless otherwise stated in the individual contest rules. **Entries will not be accepted without a typed recipe.**
7. Entered recipes cannot be acknowledged or returned. The Illinois State Fair reserves the right to publish entered recipes without recourse to the originator or any sponsor.

BOOZY BAKE-OFF: OOZO

Thursday, August 13, 2026

Sponsored by: Helen Fesser & Joanna Gunderson

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.

Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
01	Boozy Bake-Off	\$150-\$100-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsors.

Judging Criteria: 60% - Taste, 20% - Creativity, 20% - Appearance and Presentation

This is an annual category with a different alcohol/liquor featured at each Fair. The 2026 Illinois State Fair features Oozo. Select any brand, flavor or variety. Being able to taste the featured alcohol without it overpowering the dish is key.

Requirements:

1. Recipes may be sweet or savory.
2. Entries must have a baked component.
3. Recipes do not have to be original, but they must showcase the features "booze" as a perceptible flavor without being overpowering. The booze should not just be a topping/garnish.
4. Recipes should include specific ingredients including variety of booze (brand/type), measurements, and preparation instructions.
5. Bonus points for creativity of display and including a nod to the booze. No full-size bottles still containing spirits.
6. Portions of three winning entries will be displayed for the remainder of the Fair. The remainder of the entry can be taken home and enjoyed by the exhibitor. All other entries may be picked up immediately after the awards ceremony.

APPETIZER CONTEST

Thursday, August 13, 2026

Sponsored by: Diane Hays

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.

Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
02	Appetizer Contest	\$100-\$75-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsor.

Judging Criteria: 60% - Taste, 20% - Plating, 20% - Creativity and Originality

Requirements:

1. Prepare your absolute best and favorite appetizer.
2. Your recipe must include the number of servings or quantity.
3. All recipes will become the property of Diane Hays.

FAMILY HEIRLOOM RECIPES

Friday, August 14, 2026

Sponsored by: Greater Midwest Foodways Alliance



Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.

Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
03	Family Heirloom Recipes	\$150-\$100-\$50

Judging Criteria: 50% - History, 40% - Prepared Dish and Written Recipe, 10% - Presentation

Great Midwest Foodways Alliance is dedicated to exploring, celebrating and preserving unique food traditions and their cultural contexts in the American Midwest. By hosting public events, developing archival resources and generating publications, the Alliance celebrates the distinctiveness of a region that is as varied in tastes and traditions as it is in its geography from the Great Lakes to the Great Plains. Exploring indigenous foods like Wisconsin cranberries and Minnesota walleye, celebrating iconic flavors like the wheat and corn from across the prairies, chronicling cuisines from Native American to early European immigrants to 21st-century newcomers, or highlighting fish boils in small towns and fine dining in big cities, the Alliance promotes and chronicles the diversity of the region's culinary character.

Requirements:

1. Enter your best-made-from-scratch family heirloom recipe suitable for a celebratory dinner or an everyday family favorite that perhaps has never been written down. These recipes should be 50 years or older (early 1970s or before).
2. Recipes should be submitted in duplicate. The dish must be replicable from the recipe submitted. If an ingredient itself requires a recipe (for example, Jerry's famous sausage) include that recipe as well.
3. On a separate page(s) present the recipe's history. You may include who passed the recipe down to you, ethnicity (if relevant), number of years the recipe has been in your family and any interesting information about its place in your family's traditions. Note that the history accounts for 50% of the score, so be sure to do justice to your recipe's story. Please consult www.GreaterMidwestFoodways.com, and click on the "State Fair" tab for examples of recipes and their histories.
4. On the back of each recipe and history page submitted, please state contestant's name, age at time of contest, address, phone number and email address.
5. Each winning recipe will be shown in a display. Your dish should be displayed simply though attractively, with the use of props, such as a copy of the original recipe, photographs, placemat, napkins, glassware or flowers. If you frame your recipe or history, please have an extra unframed copy available for photographing.
6. By submitting your entry, you accept official rules and agree to be bound by the judges' decisions, which will be final. You also agree that your recipe and history will become the property of Greater Midwest Foodways Alliance, which reserves the right to edit, adapt, copyright, publish and use without compensation to you. By participating, contestants also understand and accept the right of Great Midwest Foodways Alliance to use exhibitor names, photos, histories and recipes for publicity without compensation.
7. Great Midwest Foodways Alliance is not responsible for any loss or damage to entries.
8. Taxes on prizes are the responsibility of the winner.
9. Contestants must be at least 18 years of age by August 13, 2026; one entry per person. Contestants or their family members who participated earlier may not resubmit previously entered recipes. Great Midwest Foodways Alliance board and advisory council members cannot compete.
10. Recipes from the Great Midwest Foodways Alliance website (www.GreatMidwestFoodways.com) are not eligible for entry in this contest.

SCRATCH, SCRATCH BABY – HOMEMADE ROLLS

Friday, August 14, 2026

Sponsored by: Pam Sage and Dianna Wara

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
04	Homemade Rolls Contest	\$125-\$75-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsors.

Judging Criteria: 10% - Uniform Shape, 25% - Taste/Flavor/Aroma, 25% - Texture/Tenderness/Crumb, 25% - Browning/Volume, 10% - Practicality of Recipe, 5% - Displayed Nicely

So many people believe that making bread from scratch is too hard or too time-consuming. We believe that baking bread from scratch is soothing and fun! Not to mention the aroma these little nuggets of dough give off as they bake. So, throw away those bread machines, boxed mixes and frozen dough. This contest brings bakers back to the joy of baking bread from scratch. Any type of roll is welcome. Make your favorite and see if your rolls rise to the competition.

Requirements:

1. Prepare **one dozen** of your favorite rolls from scratch, sweet, savory or anything in between. All twelve rolls must be the same flavor and shape.
2. Your recipe does not have to be original.
3. Your recipe must include a yeast product, any variety (i.e. Active Dry, Quick Rise, Instant, Cake or Pizza Yeast), as a leavening agent.
4. Sufficiently detailed instructions must be included.
5. List ingredients in the order of use; mixing and kneading methods (hand or mixer); shaping instructions (dimensions); baking times; and yield.

CHARCUTERIE BOARD

Saturday, August 15, 2026

Sponsored by: Culinary Arts Program at Lincoln Land Community College

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
05	Charcuterie Board	\$100-\$50-\$25

Judging Criteria: 40% - Overall Appearance, 20% - Ratio of meats, cheeses, accompaniments, 20% - Creativity, Creative use of flavors, and Creative presentation

Requirements:

1. A charcuterie board is an appetizer typically served on a wooden board or stone slab, either eaten straight from the board itself or portioned onto flatware. It features a selection of preserved foods, especially cured meats or pates as well as cheese, crackers and breads.
2. The board must contain at least three homemade elements.
3. All recipes will become the property of Lincoln Land Community College.

YOUR BEST THANKSGIVING DISH

Saturday, August 15, 2026

Sponsored by: Leslie Sgro

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
06	Your Best Thanksgiving Dish	\$150-\$75-\$50

Judging Criteria: 50% - Taste, 30% - Creativity, 20% - Presentation

Requirements:

1. Prepare a recipe with your best Thanksgiving Dish.
2. Entries should show creativity and originality.
3. Prepare a minimum of six servings.

DECORATED GINGERBREAD HOUSES

Saturday, August 15, 2026

Sponsored by: Mark & Suzi Pettyjohn

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 2:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
07	Gingerbread House	\$100-\$50-\$35

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsors.

Judging Criteria: 20% - Overall Design & Appearance, 25% - Originality and Creativity, 15% - Use of Color, 25% - Precision & Neatness, 15% - Consistency of Theme.

1. Overall Design & Appearance, 20%: The overall appearance score includes scale and proportion, as well as the amount of exposed gingerbread. To respect the core spirit of the competition, the more gingerbread that is used and exposed (not fully covered in icing, candy, or another decorative element) the higher the score. Judges will look for areas of exposed gingerbread in multiple elements of the entry. Recipes should show creativity and originality.
2. Originality and Creativity, 25%: Judges will consider how differently an entry is designed and presented compared to work seen in other competitions, online, or in print.
3. Use of Color, 15%: Use of color refers not only to the choice of color palette, but to the balance & consistency of the color throughout the entry.
4. Precision & Neatness, 25%: A high level of importance is placed on how neatly every detail of each component of your entry is demonstrated. Piping should be even and consistently sized with no smudging, air bubbles or gaps between contiguous design elements. Seams should be camouflaged.
5. Color, 15%: When viewing the entry as a whole, there should be continuity of the theme throughout the entire piece.

Size Limitations:

Entry must be placed on a board base. Entries combined with a base must not be larger than 18 inches high, 18 inches wide, and 18 inches long. $\frac{1}{2}$ " or $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood is recommended as a base, but corrugated cardboard may be used for your entry. No element of the entry should extend beyond or hang over the edge of the base. Decorations

must not cause the entry to exceed the required size limitations. Non-edible materials such as paint and/or ribbon are approved and encouraged to decorate the outer edge of your plywood base only.

Materials and Construction:

Everything above the base of your entry must be composed completely of edible materials; the judges may sample a portion of the house. The main structure of your entry must be constructed of 100% gingerbread (no salt dough). Edible materials are not limited to candies and icings. Use of gum paste, fondant, pastillage, chocolate, modeling chocolate, royal icing, isomalt, cast sugar, gelatin and pressed sugar is encouraged. Use of "Disco Dust", "Rainbow Dust" or "Hologram Powder" is allowed. Any entry with non-edible components will be automatically disqualified from placing in the competition. No artificial display or structural materials, such as Styrofoam, interior or exterior lighting or other electronic components are to be used in the construction or decoration of the entry. Candies must be unwrapped and free of any non-edible materials, for example: lollipop sticks. Entries must be solely constructed by the individual entering the competition.

Exhibitors must prepare three servings of gingerbread for the judges to taste.

More than 3 exhibits may be displayed for the remainder of the Illinois State Fair and may need to be picked up during pick-up times at the end of the fair as described in the general instructions.

LEMON DESSERTS

Sunday, August 16, 2026

Sponsored by: David Robson

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.

Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
08	Lemon Desserts	\$150-\$100-\$75

Judging Criteria: 30% - Taste, 20% - Appearance, 20% - Ease of Preparation, 30% Creativity

Requirements:

1. Celebrate lemons by creating a dessert using fresh lemons.
2. Recipes should show creativity and originality.
3. Lemon flavor must dominate.

THE ANTON AND HELEN HOLAS MEAT LOAF CONTEST

Sunday, August 16, 2026

Sponsored by: The Holas Family

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
09	Meat Loaf	\$125-\$75-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsors.

Judging Criteria: 50% - Flavor/Taste, 20% - Presentation, 20% - Creativity, 10% - Ease of Preparation

Requirements:

1. Prepare your favorite meat loaf recipe (no mixes).
2. Be specific with recipe directions, measurements and preparation steps.

CHEESE

Monday, August 17, 2026

Sponsored by: Prairie Farms



Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
10	Cheese	\$75-\$50-\$25

Judging Criteria: 50% - Taste, 30% - Appearance, 20% - Creativity

Requirements:

1. Exhibitors must use a minimum of 1 cup, or 8 ounces, of Prairie Farms cheese in their recipe.
2. Entries must include wrapper or carton lid from the packaging attached to the recipe.
3. No mixes are allowed.

PIZZA

Monday, August 17, 2026

Sponsored by: Carrie Becker, in memory of Bill Becker

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
11	Pizza	\$100-\$75-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsors.

Judging Criteria: 30% - Crust, flavor and texture; 30% - Creativity of ingredients; 40% - Taste, quality and flavor of all ingredients (including how well the ingredients blend)

Requirements:

1. Prepare your best and favorite pizza to enter this contest (appetizer, main dish, breakfast or dessert are all acceptable).
2. Pizza is a homemade crust and toppings. Entry must include crust and toppings.
3. No mixes are allowed, although sauce can be store bought.
4. Minimum pan size must be 10 inches.

CHOCOLATE INDULGENCE

Tuesday, August 18, 2026

Sponsored by: Cocoa Blue Chocolates

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
12	Chocolate Indulgence	\$125-\$75-\$50

Judging Criteria: 60% - Taste, 20% - Appearance, 20% - Creativity

Requirements:

1. Prepare your favorite chocolate recipe using couverture or other chocolate.
2. Recipes do not have to be original.

BEST OF WURST

Tuesday, August 18, 2026

Sponsored by: David Carter

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
13	Best of Wurst	\$150-\$100-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsor.

Judging Criteria: 50% - Taste, 30% - Creativity, 20% - Appearance

As a nod to Illinois' German American Heritage, create a hot or cold dish using your favorite German sausage, either traditional or with your own spin.

HERB OF THE YEAR CHALLENGE #1

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Sponsored by: Wertheim's Gardens – Atlanta, IL

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
14	Herb of the Year Challenge #1	\$150-\$100-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsor.

Judging Criteria: 50% - Taste, 30% - Creativity, 20% - Appearance

Each year, the International Herb Association selects an herb to highlight as the "Herb of the Year". This special throw-back contest will feature a past Herb of the Year that will be drawn prior to the awards ceremony at the Illinois State Fair the year prior. To celebrate the selected herb, this contest will require the entrants to create their best cooked entry, sweet or savory, using the selected herb.

The selected throwback herb from 1998 is **MINT**.

Requirements:

1. Since each Herb of the Year Challenge uses a different herb, creating its own unique challenges, exhibitors are allowed to compete in both Herb of the Year Challenges regardless of any previous wins in other Herb of the Year contests.
2. Recipes do not have to be original, but they must feature the Herb of the Year as a primary ingredient/flavor, not just as a topping.
3. Bonus points are available if the Herb of the Year is used in the display.
4. Exhibitor's name and city should be included on the back of the recipe. The recipe should include specific ingredients, measurements and preparation instructions.
5. All recipes will become the property of Wertheim Enterprises, which reserves the right to edit, adapt, copyright, publish and use without compensation to the contestant.
6. By participating, contestants understand and accept the right of Wertheim Enterprises, parent company of Wertheim's Gardens, to use contestants' names, photos, and recipes for publication without compensation.

HERB OF THE YEAR CHALLENGE #2

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Sponsored by: Wertheim's Gardens – Atlanta, IL

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
15	Herb of the Year Challenge #2	\$150-\$100-\$50

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsor.

Judging Criteria: 50% - Taste, 30% - Creativity, 20% - Appearance

Each year, the International Herb Association selects an herb to highlight as the "Herb of the Year". To celebrate the selected herb, this contest will require the entrants to create their best cooked entry, sweet or savory, using the selected herb.

The herb of the year for 2026 is **TUMERIC**.

Requirements:

1. Since each Herb of the Year Challenge uses a different herb, creating its own unique challenges, exhibitors are allowed to compete in both Herb of the Year Challenges regardless of any previous wins in other Herb of the Year contests.
2. Recipes do not have to be original, but they must feature the Herb of the Year as a primary ingredient/flavor, not just as a topping.
3. Bonus points are available if the Herb of the Year is used in the display.
4. Exhibitor's name and city should be included on the back of the recipe. The recipe should include specific ingredients, measurements and preparation instructions.
5. All recipes will become the property of Wertheim Enterprises, which reserves the right to edit, adapt, copyright, publish and use without compensation to the contestant.
6. By participating, contestants understand and accept the right of Wertheim Enterprises, parent company of Wertheim's Gardens, to use contestants' names, photos, and recipes for publication without compensation.

SOUR CREAM

Thursday, August 20, 2026

Sponsored by: Prairie Farms



Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
16	Sour Cream	\$75-\$50-\$25

Judging Criteria: 40% - Taste, 30% - Appearance, 20% - Creativity, 10% - Use of Prairie Farms Sour Cream

Requirements:

1. Create an appetizer, main dish or dessert using at least 1 cup of Prairie Farms Sour Cream.
2. All recipes must have the Prairie Farms Sour Cream original product lid used in the entry attached.
3. Recipe should include specific recipe ingredients and amounts followed by clear directions.
4. All recipes will become the property of Prairie Farms.

PUMPKIN

Thursday, August 20, 2026

Sponsored by: John and Susan Farrell

Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
17	Pumpkin	\$100-\$50-\$25

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsors.

Judging Criteria: 50% - Taste, 30% - Creativity, 20% - Appearance

Requirements:

1. Celebrate Illinois as the Pumpkin Capital of the World by entering a sweet or savory pumpkin recipe, using a minimum of 1 cup of canned, fresh or frozen Illinois Grown pumpkin.
2. No mixes are allowed, and no purchased prepared foods may be added to the finished product. Pumpkin must be the predominant flavor.

HONEY

Friday, August 21, 2026

Sponsored by: Lincoln Land Bee Keepers Association

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.
Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
18	Honey – Adults (Ages 18 and over)	\$75-\$50-\$25

*Premiums will be paid directly by the sponsor.

Judging Criteria: 30% - Flavor, 25% - Use of Honey, 20% - Ease of Preparation

Requirements:

1. Create a snack or dessert using at least one-half cup of honey as an ingredient.
2. Honey must be used as the main sweetening ingredient, not just in the icing or topping.
3. Honey flavor must dominate throughout the product.
4. All recipes will become the property of Lincoln Land Bee Keepers Association.

BEEF CASSEROLE – IT’S WHAT’S FOR DINNER**Thursday, August 21, 2026**

Sponsored by: Illinois Beef Association



Pre-registered entries are accepted from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.

Judging will take place at 3:00 p.m. and awards presentation will take place at 5:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
19	Beef Casserole – It’s What’s for Dinner	\$100-\$65-\$35

Judging Criteria: 70% - Taste, 30% - Appearance and Plating

Requirements:

1. Prepare a casserole recipe that has beef protein as the main ingredient
 - a. For tips, tricks, ideas and recipes go to www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com.
2. Prepare the recipe exactly as directed.
3. Presentation must have great eye appeal.
4. One serving of the recipe should be plated for appearance judging and to be displayed for the duration of the Illinois State Fair if the recipe places. The remaining servings will be tasted by the judges and can then be taken home after the awards presentation. Judges will not touch the plated display.

BERRIES, BERRIES, BERRIES**Saturday, August 22, 2026**

Sponsored by: William and Anita Million

Pre-registered entries accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Hobbies, Arts & Crafts Building.

Judging will take place at 10:00 a.m. and awards presentation will take place at 12:15 p.m.

Class No.	Class Description	Premiums
20	Berries, Berries, Berries	\$150-\$100-\$50

Judging Criteria: 50% - Use of berries, 25% - Taste, 25% - Presentation

Requirements:

1. Recipes do not have to be original, but they must feature Midwest berries as a predominant ingredient. (Blueberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackberries, strawberries)
2. No mixes are allowed.
3. Recipe must include specific ingredients, measurements, and preparation instructions.

END OF DEPARTMENT 38 – CULINARY – SPECIAL CONTESTS