



## Food Challenge Contest Memo

**Date:** Friday, November 14, 2025

**Schedule:** Will be released after registration closes.  
Heat 1 will begin at 9:00 a.m.

**Location:** Hopkins County Regional Civic Center  
1200 Houston Street, Sulphur Springs, TX 75482

***Due to space limitations, parents will not be allowed in the building.  
We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.***

**Schedule.** A final schedule will be distributed/posted following the registration deadline. The Awards Program for each heat will be conducted as soon as judging and tabulation are complete. More specific times will be sent to the Agents and 4-H Contestants after entries are received.

**Registration.** Each participating member is required to register on 4-HOnline and pay the \$20.00 registration fee. Registration will open on **October 8, 2025 and close at midnight October 22, 2025.**

Please make sure each team member uses the **exact same team name** when registering. County offices, please double-check and correct any team naming issues at your level before certifying.

**Participation.** Contestants must be active 4-H members enrolled in a Texas 4-H and Youth Development county program in District IV. Contestants must also be academically eligible (according to UIL rules) to compete on the day of the contest

**Academic Eligibility.** According to the Texas Education Code, a 4-H member must be deemed "eligible" to compete in an event that takes place on a weekday or weekend. All 4-H youth, including public, private, and/or home school must adhere to the following guidelines regarding extracurricular activities and academic eligibility:

- Complete a "Declaration of Eligibility Form"  
OR
- Name of 4-H member must appear on a list of eligible students to participate in a specific extracurricular activity signed by the school principal or designee.
- Contact your local County Extension Office for the process used by **YOUR** county.
- Eligibility Forms will be returned to and remain in the County Extension Office.

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating."

## District IV 4-H Youth Development Program

**Age.** Age divisions are determined by a participant's grade as of September 1st of the current 4-H year. Age divisions for this contest are: *(Note: the MIXED age division was eliminated in 2016-2017.)*

- Junior (3rd, 4th, & 5th grades)
- Intermediate (6th, 7th, & 8th grades)
- Senior (9th, 10th, 11th, & 12th grades)

**Teams Per County.** Each county may enter up to 4 teams in each age division. The 1st place senior team from each food category will advance to state. Teams advancing to state will not automatically be assigned to the same food category as they were in at district.

**Members per team.** Teams must have at least three members but no more than four. Teams **MAY NOT** include members in different age divisions. Each county may enter a maximum of four Junior, four Intermediate, and four Senior teams.

**Food Categories.** There will be four food categories in each age division: Appetizer, Main Dish, Side Dish, and Healthy Dessert. Teams will be randomly assigned to a category and heat. Heat assignment information will be distributed to Agents and emailed to 4-H contestants through 4HOnline.

**Attire.** Each team will have the option of wearing coordinated clothing or aprons. They must also wear closed toe shoes. No electronic devices or jewelry (except for medically required) is allowed in contest. This includes cell phones, smart watches, or other communication devices.

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

**Contest References & Forms.** Please refer to the Texas 4-H website Food & Nutrition Project page for contest reference materials, forms, additional rules, and scorecard  
<https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/projects/food-nutrition/>

**Resource Materials Provided at Contest.** Resource materials will be provided for each team at the contest. These include MyPlate Mini-Poster, Fight Bac - Fight Food Borne Bacteria Brochure, Know Your Nutrients, Food Safety Fact Sheet, and Function of Ingredient Fact Sheet. Optional resources will include the Food Challenge Worksheet, and copies of grocery receipts/purchase prices for age groups calculating costs. No other resource materials will be allowed. Teams may not use their personal copies of the resources during the contest.

**Supply Box.** Each team must supply their own equipment for the challenge. Teams may bring only the supplies listed in the supply box section. Supply boxes may be checked by contest officials as teams check in for the contest using a standard or randomized process. Any extra equipment will be removed from the team's supply box.

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating."

Boxes must be completely closed, and all equipment should remain inside the box until the start of the contest. Supply boxes are limited to the following dimensions: 40" x 24" X 40". If the box is on wheels, the height of the wheels is not included in the dimensions. The contest committee may measure boxes to determine compliance. **Teams with non-compliant boxes may be disqualified.**

Please make sure all knives are properly and safely packed in the box so that contestants and officials are not injured.

There will be no dish cleaning/washing facilities available. Plan your supply boxes for each team accordingly. Restrooms are off limits for dish/utensil washing. After each heat, burners will be moved to a central table to allow for cooling. Please make sure all burners are clearly labeled with a county, club, or individual's name.

**Pantry Ingredients.** Each team may include in their equipment box the following "pantry" ingredients which they may use when preparing their dish if desired. There is no requirement to use these items, nor is it mandatory that teams include these in their supply box.

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating."

### SUPPLY BOX:

Supply boxes are limited to the following dimensions: 40" x 24" x 40". Each team will bring an equipment box containing only one of each of the following items unless a different quantity is noted.

- Bench Scraper
  - Bowls (up to 4- any size)
  - Calculator
  - Colander
  - Cookie Cutters (up to 2- team choice)
  - Cutting Boards (up to 4)
  - Disposable Tasting Spoons (no limit)
  - Dry Measuring Cups (1 set)
  - Electric Skillet
    - \*Teams should be certain the cord is compatible with (2 prong/3 prong) with the plugs on their electrical supplies*
  - First Aid Kit
  - Food Thermometer
  - Fork
  - Gloves
  - Grater
  - Hand Sanitizer
  - Hot pads (up to 5)
  - Kitchen shears (1 pair)
  - Kitchen Timer
  - Knives (up to 6)
  - Liquid Measuring Cup
  - Manual Pencil Sharpener
  - Measuring Spoons (1 set)
  - Meat tenderizer
  - Non-stick cooking spray
  - Note Cards (1 pkg- no larger than 5x7)
  - Paper towels (1 roll)
  - Pancake Turner (up to 2)
  - Pencils (no limit)
  - Plastic box & trash bags for dirty equipment
    - \*an empty tub for dirty dishes may be placed top of equipment box*
  - Pot with Lid
  - Potato Masher
  - Potato Peeler
  - Rolling Pin
  - Sanitizing Wipes (1 container)
  - Serving Dishes/Utensils (1 plate/platter; 1 bowl; 1 utensil)
  - Skewers (1 set)
  - Skillet with Lid
  - Spatulas (up to 2)
  - Stirring Spoon
  - Storage Bags (1 box)
  - Tongs (up to 2)
  - Toothpicks (no limit)
  - TWO single burner or ONE double-burner hot plate *\*Electric Only!*
  - Whisk
- ### OPTIONAL PANTRY ITEMS
- Oil (Up to 17 oz)
  - 1 jar chicken bouillon
  - 1 medium onion
  - 2 cans (up to 16 oz) vegetables or fruit- team choice)
  - Rice OR Pasta (up to 16 oz) (white or brown, must be uncooked)
  - Cornstarch OR Flour (up to 1lb)
  - **\*\*NEW\*\* 3 dried herbs and/or spices (up to 3 oz each)**

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating."

## District IV 4-H Youth Development Program

---

### Texas 4-H Food Challenge Rules of Play

1. General guidelines, resources and instructions will be provided prior to the start of the contest to assist teams.
2. No electronic devices or jewelry (except for medically required) is allowed in contest. This includes cell phones, smart watches, or other communication devices.
3. Each team will be directed to a cooking/preparation station. Contest categories will be revealed at the preparation station.
4. Each team will receive an information sheet with their contest category and "key" ingredient for that category (no ingredient amounts, recipe, or instructions will be provided at the station). The "key" ingredient will be representative of one of the following categories: Appetizer, Main Dish, Side Dish, Healthy Dessert.

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

Teams must "purchase" & use at least two additional items from the "grocery store". Teams will receive a pricing sheet for "grocery store" items at their station.

#### **\*\*NEW in D4 for 2025!\*\***

In each heat, one category per age group will be a **NO COOK** category. For this category, no heat sources will be used and key ingredient will be appropriate for a no cook dish. Adequate grocery store items will be available for both cook and no cook categories.

5. **Preparation.** Each team will create an entire dish/recipe (not a full meal) using the provided key ingredient and grocery store items. Dishes/recipes created should include two or more servings. Teams should present the entire dish/recipe to the judges and communicate during their presentation what an individual serving size should be. Teams will be responsible for determining the number of servings their dish provides. Teams should not create side or multiple dishes with their ingredients/grocery store items.
  - a. Teams are challenged to be creative and develop an original recipe with the ingredients provided.
  - b. Teams will determine the exact amount of each ingredient used based on their original recipe.
  - c. The key ingredient and/or grocery store ingredients selected should be used to garnish the dish.
  - d. Note cards may be used to write down the recipe that the team creates, along with notes related to nutrition, food safety, and cost analysis. Teams should be exact on ingredients used, preparation steps, cooking time, temperature, etc.

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating."

## District IV 4-H Youth Development Program

---

- e. Each team will have 40 minutes to prepare the dish, plan a presentation, and clean up the preparation area. A 20-minute warning, 10-minute warning, 5-minute warning, and 1-minute warning will be given. **NO** talking is allowed after the 40 minutes is up.
- f. After the 40-minute preparation time is up:
  - The team's area **MUST** be clean, and all the supplies and extra food items must be in their supply box (except *hot burners*, see *Supply Box*).
  - No talking and no writing will be allowed among any team members. Team members caught talking and/or writing will receive a warning. The second time, the team will be disqualified and asked to leave the contest facility.
  - Team members should not have pens or pencils in their possession while waiting to give their presentation.

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

6. **Food and Equipment Safety.** A safe and sanitary working environment must be maintained during the contest. Each station will have food and kitchen safety resources. Teams should follow the steps listed to ensure proper food and equipment safety is followed. Judges will be scoring teams on food and equipment safety during the preparation phase of the contest. Teams should also discuss safety steps used during the presentation phase of the contest.
7. **Nutrition.** Each station will have a variety of nutrition resources/references. Each team should highlight key nutrients in their dish and their functions during their presentation.
8. **Presentation.** Following the preparation phase of the contest, each team will give a 5-minute presentation to a panel of judges. A majority of team members should participate in the presentation.
  - To earn maximum points, teams must use these 5 minutes to address the following areas of the presentation scorecard: Knowledge of MyPlate, Nutrition Knowledge, Food Preparation, Safety Concerns, and Serving Size.
  - At the end of 5 minutes, time will be called – additional time will not be allowed.
  - Judges will be allowed 3 minutes to ask questions; however, judges will not ask questions related to what teams should have covered during the presentation. Judge's questions will be related to general nutrition, health, chronic disease prevention or others relevant to food and nutrition.

**Cost Analysis:** Team will not be required to analyze the cost of the recipe, nor will this be included in the presentation or scoring of the contest.

**Awards.** Will be presented at the conclusion of each Heat, outside in front of the Civic Center, so parents may watch.

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider."

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating."

## District IV 4-H Youth Development Program

---

The top two high scoring food challenge teams in each age division from each heat will be recognized with awards during the awards program. In the senior age division, the 1st place team from each food category will qualify for state.

**Team Spirit Awards.** Team Spirit awards be awarded in each heat in each age division. The Team Spirit award will be given based on teamwork, enthusiasm, and professional appearance. Team Spirit judges will be different than presentation judges. Team Spirit will be evaluated during preparation.

**Participants with Disabilities.** If you need any type of accommodation to participate in this program or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact [Denita Young](mailto:atdjyoung@ag.tamu.edu) [atdjyoung@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:atdjyoung@ag.tamu.edu) at least 2 weeks prior to the program or note such needs when registering on 4-HOnline.

**Food Allergies.** Contestants with food allergies must note their specific allergy at the time of registering on 4-HOnline.

"Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating."



# 4-H FOOD CHALLENGE WORKSHEET

This worksheet is designed to be used to prepare for Food Challenge contests. This worksheet may be utilized as a resource at county, district, or contests; however, will not be used at the state 4-H contest.

Knowledge Of MyPlate		
Ingredient	MyPlate Group	Number of Servings Needed Each Day

Knowledge Of Dietary Guidelines	
Key Message of Dietary Guidelines	How Does This Message Align with Your Dish?

Nutrition Knowledge		
Ingredient & Healthy Substitution	Key Nutrient(s)	Nutrient Function, Benefit, & Deficiency Risks

Food Preparation	
Steps In Preparation	What was Performed in This Step and Why is This Step Important?
Main Ingredient in Dish	What Is the Role of This Main Ingredient?

Food Safety (List Any Food Safety Concerns Associated with The Dish and/or Specific Ingredients)	

Serving Size Information	
How Many Total Servings Are in Dish?	What Is the Serving Size for One Person?

Additional Information (List Any Additional Information You Think is Important)



# 4-H FOOD CHALLENGE SCORECARD - PRESENTATION

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Team #: \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Category:    \_\_\_Appetizer            \_\_\_Main Dish            \_\_\_Side Dish            \_\_\_Healthy Dessert

Team Presentation	Comments	Points	Score
<b><i>Knowledge of MyPlate and Dietary Guidelines:</i></b>			
Knowledge of MyPlate		5	
Knowledge of Dietary Guidelines for Americans		5	
<b><i>Nutrition Knowledge:</i></b>			
Knows key nutrition in prepared dish		6	
Knowledge of nutrient functions, effects, and deficiency risks		6	
Healthy substitutions and modifications		3	
<b><i>Food Preparation:</i></b>			
Explained key steps in how dish was prepared		4	
Role of main ingredients in dish		2	
<b><i>Safety Concerns and Practices:</i></b>			
Explained food safety according to Fight BAC		8	
<b><i>Serving Size Information:</i></b>			
Demonstrated knowledge of serving size for prepared dish		4	
<b><i>Food Appearance/Quality:</i></b>			
Food is appealing and appetizing		3	
Appeared to be cooked properly		3	
Attractive and appropriate garnish		2	
<b><i>Creativity:</i></b>			
Used ingredients in a creative way		5	
Incorporated grocery store items into dish or garnish		3	
<b><i>Effectiveness of Communication:</i></b>			
Displayed effective communication skills		6	
Poise and personal appearance		4	
<b><i>Questions:</i></b>			
Accurately and appropriately answered questions		6	
<b><i>Additional Comments:</i></b>		Total Points (75)	

# 4-H FOOD CHALLENGE SCORECARD - PREPARATION

TeamName:\_\_\_\_\_

Team #:\_\_\_\_\_

Entry Category:    \_\_\_Appetizer           \_\_\_Main Dish           \_\_\_Side Dish           \_\_\_Healthy Dessert

Effective use of communication among team members		2	
Each team member played a key role in the preparation phase, whether cooking or preparing presentation		3	
<b>Safety concerns and practices:</b>			
Exhibited knowledge of how to use equipment safely (heat, utensils, sharps, etc.)		3	
Handled ingredients appropriately to avoid cross contamination		3	
Personal Hygiene (hair, nails, jewelry, etc.)		3	
<b>Preparation:</b>			
Practiced correct cooking procedures based upon ingredients provided		3	
Completed tasks efficiently and in a logical order		2	
<b>Management:</b>			
Used workspace efficiently		2	
Effective use of time		2	
Preparation table was clean at the conclusion of the preparation period		2	
<b>Additional Comments: (based on observation)</b>		Total Points (25)	

Updated June 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Judges Initials

Updated June 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Judges Initials