SEPTEMBER 2025

Memorandum

TO:	District 7 County Extension Agents-FCH and 4-H AG; Burnet, Callahan, Fisher, Mills, Nolan, Shackelford
SUBJECT:	2026 District 7 Food Challenge
EVENT DATE:	Wednesday, January 21, 2026
LOCATION:	San Angelo Fair Grounds– San Angelo, Texas
ENTRY DEADLINE:	Entries completed on www.Judgingcard.com by **December 1, 2025**

JUDGES FORM DUE: January 3rd

County offices MUST make sure contestants have an active profile in 4-H ONLINE

Fee: $60 per team

Please find the rules and guidelines for this contest on the next few pages or the San Angelo Premium Book.
Please contact the District 7 Office if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Garry Branham
District Specialist – 4-H & Youth Development

Courtney Redman
Contest Chair

Missy Olofsson
4-H Program Assistant

4-H and Youth Development Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
7887 US Highway 87 North | San Angelo, Texas 76901

Tel. 325-653-4576 | Fax. 325-655-7791 | http://d74-h.tamu.edu

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The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

DISTRICT 7 4-H FOOD CHALLENGE GUIDELINES, RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. **Age:** Age divisions are determined by a participant's age as of August 31 of the current 4-H year.
   Junior Division: 3rd – 5th
   Intermediate Division: 6th – 8th
   Senior Division: Grades 9th – 12th

2. **Members per team/county:** Each team will consist of at least three no more than four members. Teams may not consist of individuals from various age divisions with the exception that junior members may compete on intermediate teams.

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

   Teams Per County: There is no limit on the number of teams entered. Senior teams that competed at the national level are NOT eligible to come back and compete in the state contest.

3. **Categories:** Teams will be randomly assigned to a division A, B, C, D, etc., within their age group that may represent one of the following categories: **Appetizer, Main Dish, Side Dish, or Healthy Dessert.** The number of divisions within an age group will be dependent upon the number of entries. Division assignments will not be announced until the day of the contest. A Final challenge is contingent upon entries. If there is no final challenge, the winner of each division will be champion per each age group.

4. **Resources:** Resource materials will be provided for each team at the contest. These include: My Plate Mini Poster, Fight Bac - Fight Foodborne Bacteria Brochure, Know Your Nutrients, and Food Safety Fact Sheet, Function of Ingredient Fact Sheet, and copies of grocery receipts. No other resource materials will be allowed. Teams may not use their personal copies of the resources during the contest.

NEW

5. **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 will be checked by contest officials as teams check in for the contest. Any extra equipment will be confiscated, and the team may be disqualified.

   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 box is on wheels, the height of the wheels is included in the dimensions. The contest committee may measure any and/or all boxes to determine compliance to size. If boxes are out of compliance, teams may be disqualified.

An EMPTY tub for dirty dishes may be placed on top of equipment box

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. However, the below items may or may not be available to purchase at the "grocery store" day of the contest.

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

NEW

6. Each team will receive an information sheet with their contest category and the "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: Main Dish, Side Dish, Appetizer or Healthy Dessert. Key ingredient examples: Main Dish (fish), Side Dish (broccoli), Appetizer (artichokes), Healthy Dessert (yogurt).

   Teams will have access to a "grocery store" of additional ingredients which can be combined with the team's "key" ingredient to create an original recipe/dish during the contest. Grocery store items will include items commonly found in grocery stores and/or home pantries, including items such as produce, canned goods, crackers, dairy products, etc. Teams will also have the option to use "pantry" items in supply box, in their dish. No free items will be available, with the exception of water.

   Teams must select & use at least two additional items from the grocery store. Teams will not be required to analyze the cost of recipe, nor will this be included in the presentation or scoring of the contest.

7. **Time:** Each team will have 40 minutes to prepare the dish, plan a presentation, and clean up the preparation area.

8. **Electrical:** Teams that may experience any equipment malfunction(s) may not replace the equipment with supplies from another team, leaders, volunteers, county Extension agents or contest officials. Instead, team members must work together and be creative in completing preparation without the malfunctioning equipment.

9. **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.

   - Teams are challenged to be creative and develop an original recipe with the ingredients provided.
   - Teams will determine the exact amount of each ingredient used based on their original recipe.
   - The key ingredient and/or grocery store ingredients selected should be used to garnish the dish.
   - Note cards may be used to write down the recipe that the team creates, along with notes related to nutrition and food safety. Teams should be exact on ingredients used, preparation steps, cooking time, temperature, etc.

10. **Food and Equipment Safety:** A safe and sanitary working environment must be maintained during the contest. Each station will have food and kitchen safety resources. Teams should follow the steps listed to ensure proper food and equipment safety is followed. Judges will be scoring teams on food and equipment safety during the preparation phase of the contest. Teams should also discuss safety steps used during the presentation phase of the contest.

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

11. **Attire:** Each team will have the option of wearing coordinated clothing or aprons. Each team member is required to wear closed-toed shoes and a hair restraint.

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.

12. **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.

13. **Cost analysis:** Teams will not be required to analyze the cost of their recipe, nor will this be included in the presentation and scoring of the contest.

14. **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 the 5-minute presentation 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. **Judges will not ask questions related to what teams should have covered during the presentation.** Judges questions will be related to general nutrition, health, chronic disease prevention or others relevant to food and nutrition.

    Please note: Once the 40 minutes of preparation time expires, team members may no longer communicate with each other. Team members may study their notes individually.

15. Teams must clean up their preparation areas. Clean-up time is included in the 40-minute preparation allotment. Teams should plan to not have access to a kitchen facility; therefore, dirty dishes should be placed in a plastic container, bag or box to be cleaned at home. Left-over food should be disposed of properly.

16. Judges are not allowed to taste the foods prepared. No left-over food should be shared with any participant or the audience.

17. **Participants with disabilities.** Any competitor who requires auxiliary aids or special accommodations must contact the Junior Food Challenge superintendent at least two weeks before the competition.

18. **Awards:** Determined by the contest officials

19. **State Qualifiers:** The top four senior teams will be eligible to compete at state pending state eligibility requirements. The top four senior teams will be determined by structure used at district contest, pending the number of teams entered.

Policy for accommodation requests for events:

- **Requests for accommodations must be submitted to the District Office from the County Office at least 2 weeks prior to the event.**
- **This request must be accompanied by official documentation in one of the following options for why the request is being submitted :**
  - **A) Official doctor's note from a licensed medical professional**
  - **B) School documentation and/or evaluation from a public institution**
  - **C) Official evaluation from a licensed professional therapist and/or diagnostician**
- **Note: The documentation and request are required within the appropriate timeline outlined for the event in order for the accommodation to be considered but does not guarantee that the requested accommodation can be made.**
- **The request will be reviewed by the district office (and when necessary, in consultation with the state office).**
- **Request and documentation will be kept confidential within the appropriate county/district staff and event administrators.**

JUDGES

Counties will be required to submit **three** judges for this contest by January 5th. If you happen to have more than three who want to judge, please list them under alternates.

No Adult/Parents without an assignment are allowed in the contest area.

No Pictures are allowed to be taken during the contest.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Please see the following pages for complete Contest Schedule. *Final schedule will be announced after all entries have been received!*

7:30 AM	Agents Arrive
8:00 AM	Registration
8:30 AM	Challenge Starts

ASSIGNMENTS

ALL FCH and 4-H agents will attend the contest.

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 each of the following items, unless a different quantity is noted: **Any extra equipment will be confiscated, and the team may be disqualified.**

Bench Scraper

Bowls (up to 4 - any size)

Calculator

Can Opener

Colander

Cookie Cutters (up to 2 - team choice)

Cutting Boards (up to 4)

Disposable tasting spoons (no limit) Dry measuring cups (1 set)

Electric Skillet

Extension cord (multiple outlet or strip style)
Teams should be certain the extension cord is compatible (2-prong/3-prong) with the plugs on their electrical supplies

First aid kit

Food thermometer Fork

Gloves Grater

Hand sanitizer

Hot pads (up to 5)

Kitchen shears (1 pair)

Kitchen timer

Knives (up to 6)

Liquid measuring cup

Manual pencil sharpener

Measuring spoons (1 set)

Meat Tenderizer

Non-stick cooking spray

Note cards (1 package - no larger than 5 X 7) Paper towels (1 roll)

Pancake turner (up to 2) Pencils (no limit)

Plastic box & trash bags for dirty equipment*

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

*An EMPTY tub for dirty dishes may be placed on top of equipment box

NEW

Pantry Items

Salt

Pepper

Oil (up to 17 oz)

1 jar chicken bouillon

1 medium onion

2 cans (up to 16 oz) vegetables and/or fruit – *(team choice)*

Rice* (white or brown) or pasta* (up to 16 oz) – *(team choice)*
**Must be uncooked/dried*

Cornstarch (up to 1 lb) or Flour (up to 1 lb) – *(team choice)*

3 dried herbs and/or spices (up to 3 oz. each) – (*team choice*)

Updated: September 2025