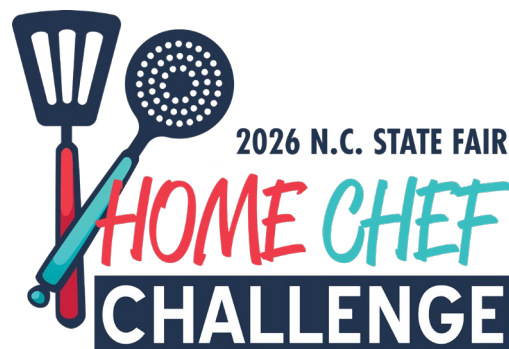




The NC State Fair Home Chef Challenges encourage the continued advancement of and love for cooking. The Home Chef Challenges are meant to be fun, family-friendly competitions, and while cash prizes are awarded, the contests are not intended to be profitable ventures for anyone.

Registration Deadline: Tuesday, September 15, 2026 at 11:59 PM

**Mailed entry forms must be postmarked by September 1st.*

Entry Take-In and Judging - Dorton Arena - North Lobby. Dates and times are specified for each Division in the following pages.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE RULES AND REGULATIONS

- 🔍 The General Rules and Regulations of the Fair will govern this department, except in cases of conflict, where the following Rules and Regulations will prevail. Please read all rules & regulations carefully before submitting your entries.
- 🔍 Pre-registration is required, either [online](#) or by mail.
- 🔍 Exhibitors are limited to one entry per Class, per Division.
- 🔍 Open to residents of North Carolina.
- 🔍 Participants will prepare their entry at home and bring it to the Fair on the day of the challenge to be assessed by a panel of judges.
- 🔍 A different challenge category will be held each day of the Fair. Please enter the Division(s) that correspond with the day and challenge you intend to enter.
- 🔍 Check-In windows and Judging times are listed under each Division. Any entry not received during the Check-In window is at risk of refusal for acceptance and judging.
- 🔍 Participants will enter either the Amateur Home Cook or Professional Class per Division. Entry in both Classes is not allowed. The Classes are defined as:
 - 🔍 Amateur Home Cook: Someone who is an ordinary home cook and has no formal culinary training, does not earn income from any culinary-related pursuits (including working at or owning a food-related business), and does not teach culinary arts.
 - 🔍 Professional: Someone who has formal culinary training, earns income from any culinary-related pursuits (including working at or owning a food-related business), or teaches culinary arts.
- 🔍 Anyone found to intentionally enter the incorrect Class may be subject to disqualification.
- 🔍 Exhibitors **must be present to win** on the day of competition.
- 🔍 Sponsor reserves the right to make modifications to any part of the contest as necessary. Decisions of the coordinators and sponsors are final.
- 🔍 Any containers, equipment, or other items used to carry, prepare, or present entries must be retrieved at the conclusion of judging each day. The Fair is not responsible for any items left behind.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE

- Exhibitors must bring **two printed copies** of the recipe with their entry.
 - Recipes must be typed on a 8½" x 11" sheet of paper.
 - DO NOT include your name, address, or other personal information on the front of your recipe.
 - Mailed or emailed recipes will not be accepted.
- All recipes submitted become the property of the North Carolina State Fair and the sponsor of the contest. By participating, contestants agree that we may edit, adapt, copyright, publish and use any or all of them including for publicity, promotion, or advertising in any form of media, including websites, without compensation to you. This includes publishing winner names, images and city/state of residence, in any form of media, including websites,
- While the live-action nature of these contests may include spectators and supporters, all Home Chef Challenge participants and their family members are expected to conduct themselves with honesty, good sportsmanship, and show respect for fellow competitors and judges at all times. Any overtly displeased participants who display out-of-line or rude behavior towards other participants, coordinators, or judges will be excluded from further competition.
- The following rubric outlines how entries will be judged:

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE JUDGING CRITERIA

	POINTS
Flavor <i>Dish includes appropriate balance of flavors and textures.</i>	15
Creativity <i>Dish offers a unique take on the theme.</i>	10
Presentation <i>Dish is presented in a visually appealing way.</i>	5

TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE: 30

ENTRY TAKE-IN INFORMATION

- Each exhibitor will be mailed their entry tag and a parking pass around the end of September.
- Contest Site:** The Home Chef Challenge is held in the North Dorton Lobby. Exhibitors will check-in their entries at the contest site. Please review each Division for entry check-in window and judging times.
- Parking:** Registered exhibitors will be mailed a parking pass for Lot C off of Trinity Road at Carter Finley Stadium along with their entry tag. There is a free shuttle service to the fairgrounds, where you will get off at the second stop at Gate 3, which is the closest stop to the competition. You will have to carry your entry to the contest. Please **PLAN AHEAD** and give yourself plenty of time to get to the contest site since you will have to shuttle over.
- Fairgrounds Entry:** **You must enter Gate 3.** Your competition entry tag and entry/dish will serve as admission into the fairgrounds for you and one other person present with you at the time of gate entry to help you carry your dish, if needed. If you do not enter Gate 3, you will be denied entry into the fairgrounds unless you have an admission ticket.

WRITING YOUR HOME CHEF CHALLENGE RECIPE

🔍 Recipes for Home Chef Challenges **must be typed.**

🔍 **Do not put your name on the recipe.**

🔍 Do not include photos or drawings with the text.

🔍 You must include:

1. Title (give your dish a creative name)

- If the recipe is adapted from another recipe, a credit is due

2. Servings and Serving Size

3. Ingredient List

- List all ingredients in order of use.
- Any ingredients used at the same time, list them in descending order according to volume.
- Include measurements such as cups, tablespoons, ounces, etc.
- If the recipe has different elements, make a different ingredient list for each element.
- Don't use two numerals together, list second number in parenthesis. Ex: "1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese."
- Capitalize the first letter of any ingredient that begins a sentence.
- If preparation of an ingredient is simple, include technique in the ingredient list. Ex: "1 stick butter, softened."
- If ingredient is used more than once, list the total amount where it is first used, then add "divided." Indicate the amount used at each step.
- Use generic names of ingredients except when mentioning sponsored ingredients

4. Preparation Method

- Indicate the size of bowls and cookware - "large mixing bowl."
- Be as concise as possible.
- With instructions for the stove-top, indicate level of heat - "Simmer over low heat."
- State exact or approximate cooking times.
- Separate each step into a different paragraph.
- Include serving instructions - how to plate, how to garnish.
- The last instruction should be regarding storage, if applicable.

Test your recipes to make sure they work, the amounts and serving sizes are correct, and that they taste as great as you think they do!



HOME CHEF CHALLENGE

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE JUDGING SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 15th, 2026 at 4 PM
BLUE RIBBON BRUNCH BOARD CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Friday, October 16th, 2026 at 11 AM
HOLY GUACAMOLE! CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Saturday, October 17th, 2026 at 11 AM
BOO-ZY SWEET TREAT CHALLENGE

Presented By: The Distillers Association Of North Carolina



Sunday, October 18th, 2026 at 11 AM
DELIGHTFUL DIPS CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Monday, October 19th, 2026 at 11 AM
SWEETPOTATO SHOWDOWN CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Tuesday, October 20th, 2026 at 11 AM
"CHEEZ-Y DOES IT" CHEEZ-IT CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair



Wednesday, October 21st, 2026 at 11 AM
BLESS YOUR TART! CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Thursday, October 22nd, 2026 at 11 AM
"EAST TO WEST" PORK BBQ CHALLENGE

Presented By: Smithfield Foods

Friday, October 23rd, 2026 at 11 AM
"NUTTY BY NATURE" PEANUT CANDY CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Saturday, October 24th, 2026 at 11 AM
"STEW-PENDOUS" BRUNSWICK STEW CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Sunday, October 25th, 2026 at 11 AM
"LAYER IT UP" LASAGNA CHALLENGE

Presented By: N.C. State Fair

Smithfield.
Good food. Responsibly.®

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15TH, 2026 BLUE RIBBON BRUNCH BOARD CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

JUDGING: 4 PM

DIVISION 101: THURSDAY, OCT 15 - BLUE RIBBON BRUNCH BOARD CLASS

PREMIUMS

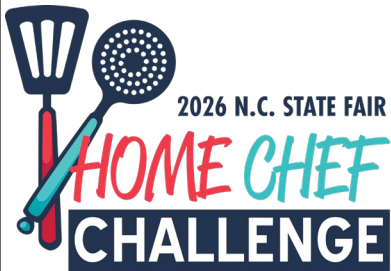
- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

Bring us your most artistic brunch-themed charcuterie board design, with at least 50% of your board being comprised of homemade treats. Let the judges decide whose brunch board is deserving of the blue ribbon.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16TH, 2026

HOLY GUACAMOLE! CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 102: FRIDAY, OCT 16 - HOLY GUACAMOLE!

PREMIUMS

CLASS

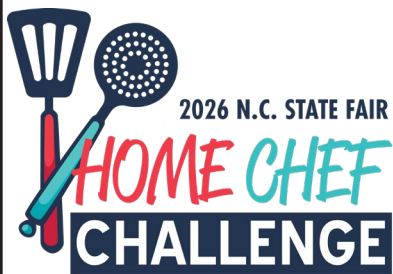
- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

Holy Guacamole! It's time to bring us your best guacamole recipe that will bring the fiesta to the judges' taste buds. Be sure to bring your best dipping tool to dish it out with.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17TH, 2026 BOO-ZY SWEET TREAT CHALLENGE



PRESENTED BY:



**DISTILLERS ASSOCIATION OF
NORTH CAROLINA**

ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 103: SATURDAY, OCT 17- BOO-ZY SWEET TREAT

CLASS

- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

PREMIUMS

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

Everyone loves a good sweet treat during the spooky Halloween season. Bring us your boo-ziest Halloween-themed dessert that features one of North Carolina's best spirits.

All entries & recipes must include a product from an eligible distillery listed on the next page.
Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17TH, 2026 BOO-ZY SWEET TREAT CHALLENGE



PRESENTED BY:

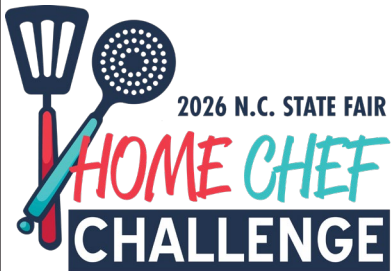


**DISTILLERS ASSOCIATION OF
NORTH CAROLINA**

ONLY PRODUCTS FROM THE FOLLOWING DISTILLERIES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE BOO-ZY SWEET TREAT CHALLENGE:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 - 712 Vodka | 17 - Hidden Ships Distillery |
| 2 - Biltmore Estate Wine Co. | 18 - Liberty & Plenty Distillery |
| 3 - Bogue Sound Distillery, Inc. | 19 - Muddy River Distillery |
| 4 - BHAWK | 20 - Murto Made Distillery |
| 5 - Broad Branch Distillery | 21 - Mystic Farm and Distillery |
| 6 - Buffalo City Distillery | 22 - Old Nick Williams Company |
| 7 - Call Family Distillers | 23 - Olde Raleigh Distillery |
| 8 - Cape Fear Winery and Distillery | 24 - Outer Banks Distilling |
| 9 - Cedar Mountain Moonshine | 25 - Pulse Vodka |
| 10 - City Walk Brewing & Distilling | 26 - Seven Jars Distillery |
| 11 - Crush Vodka | 27 - Southern Distilling Company |
| 12 - Defiant Whisky | 28 - Southern Grace Distilleries |
| 13 - Durham Distillery | 29 - Vetus Distillery |
| 14 - Eda Rhyne Distilling Company | 30 - Walton's Distillery |
| 15 - End of Days Distillery | 31 - Warehouse Distillery |
| 16 - Fair Game Beverage Company | |

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18TH, 2026

DELIGHTFUL DIPS CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 104: SUNDAY, OCT 18- DELIGHTFUL DIPS CLASS

PREMIUMS

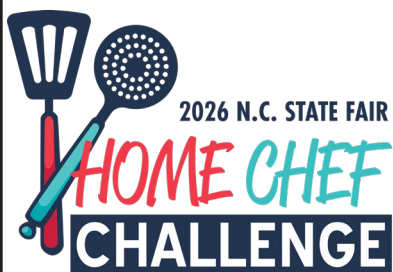
- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

Whether savory or sweet, bring your most Delightful Dip recipe, and something to dish it out with.

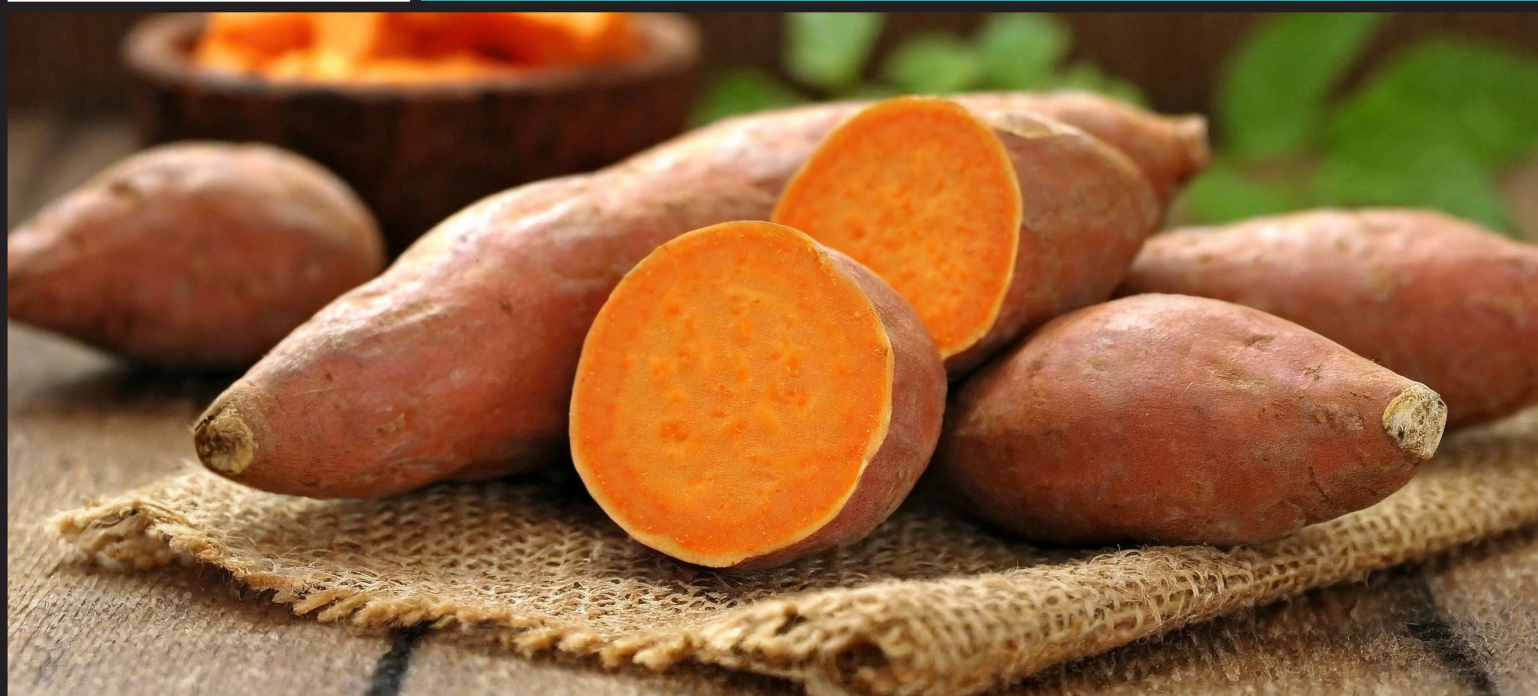
Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



MONDAY, OCTOBER 19TH, 2026

SWEETPOTATO SHOWDOWN CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 105: MONDAY, OCT 19 - SWEETPOTATO SHOWDOWN CLASS

PREMIUMS

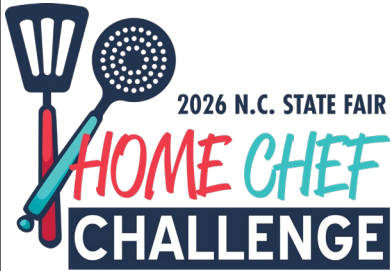
- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

Whether it's a favorite Thanksgiving sweetpotato dish or one that's delicious any time of the year, we challenge you to bring us your best sweetpotato side dish.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20TH, 2026 "CHEEZ-Y DOES IT" CHEEZ-IT CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 106: TUESDAY, OCT 20 - CHEEZ-Y DOES IT

PREMIUMS

CLASS

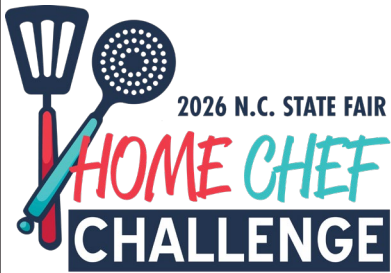
- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

Cheez-y Does It! Made right down the road in Cary, we challenge you to get creative with this favorite cheez-y snack. Bring us your best recipe that includes at least 1/2 cup of Cheez-Its.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21ST, 2026

BLESS YOUR TART! CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 107: WEDNESDAY, OCT 21- BLESS YOUR TART!

PREMIUMS

CLASS

- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

A sweet take on the southern saying, Bless Your Tart! challenges competitors to bring their best tart recipe to sweeten the judges' taste buds.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22ND, 2026

"EAST TO WEST" PORK BBQ CHALLENGE



PRESENTED BY:

Smithfield.
Good food. Responsibly.®

SMITHFIELD FOODS

ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 108: THURSDAY, OCT 22 - EAST TO WEST PORK BBQ CLASS

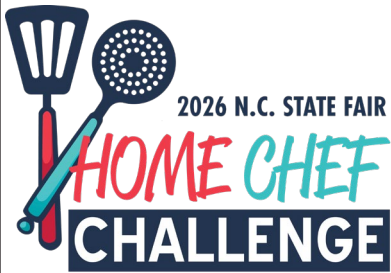
PREMIUMS

	1st	2nd	3rd
01 - Amateur Home Cook	\$250	\$150	\$100
02 - Professional	\$250	\$150	\$100

From the East to the West, pork barbeque is an iconic staple food in North Carolina. Whether you prefer the vinegar-style of the East or the tomato based-style of the West, we challenge you to bring your best pork barbeque recipe to settle the debate. May the best style win!

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23RD, 2026 “NUTTY BY NATURE” PEANUT CANDY CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 109: FRIDAY, OCT 23 - NUTTY BY NATURE CLASS

PREMIUMS

	1st	2nd	3rd
01 - Amateur Home Cook	\$250	\$150	\$100
02 - Professional	\$250	\$150	\$100

Many favorite sweet treats are “Nutty By Nature.” We challenge you to bring us your most delicious candy recipe that includes peanuts. Recipes must include at least 1/2 cup of peanuts or peanut butter.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24TH, 2026 "STEW-PENDOUS" BRUNSWICK STEW CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 110: SAT, OCT 24- STEW-PENDOUS BRUNSWICK STEW

PREMIUMS

CLASS

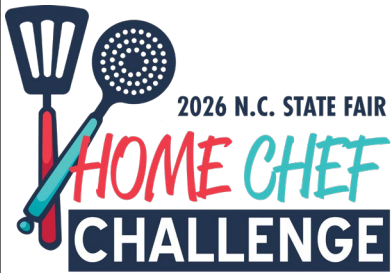
- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

A classic Southern comfort food, bring your best Brunswick Stew recipe for the judges to decide whose version is the most Stew-pendous.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.

HOME CHEF CHALLENGE



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25TH, 2026

“LAYER IT UP” LASAGNA CHALLENGE



ENTRY TAKE-IN: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

JUDGING: 11 AM

DIVISION 111: SUNDAY, OCT 25 - LAYER IT UP LASAGNA

PREMIUMS

CLASS

- 01 - Amateur Home Cook
- 02 - Professional

1st	2nd	3rd
\$250	\$150	\$100
\$250	\$150	\$100

Whether your lasagna features hearty meats, flavorful veggies, or melty cheeses, we challenge you to Layer It Up and bring us your best mouth-watering lasagna recipe.

Please read through the Rules & Regulations and the Entry Take-In instructions prior to entry.