

AHF National Culinary Competition

Frequently Asked Questions

Market Baskets

Are there limits on how many items you can use from each Market Basket?

No, there is no maximum. However, you must use at least 1 item from Basket A and 2 items from Basket B. You may use more, but be intentional in your choices keeping in mind that items selected from Basket A must be center of plate and you must be able to meet the financial and nutritional requirements of the competition.

Other Recipe Components

Can the mystery ingredient be free of common allergens?

Common allergens will be considered when selecting the mystery ingredient. If you have specific concerns, please notify us at culinary@healthcarefoodservice.org.

Competition Rules

Can competitors heat water before the competition starts?

Yes, competitors may begin heating water during their one-hour prep period.

Can competitors bring their own stock?

Yes, provided it meets the nutritional guidelines and is included in your original recipe. You must ship it to the hotel and store it safely.

Can competitors use sous vide equipment?

No, sous vide cooking and other plug-in heat sources are not permitted.

What cooking methods is AHF looking for?

Teams are required to showcase a minimum of two cooking methods, selecting from the following:

- **Moist heat:** boil, simmer, steam, braise, stew, poach
- **Dry heat:** grill, sauté, roast, fry

No ovens or fryers will be available during the competition. Each team will be provided with two induction burners for all cooking applications.

Can teams bring their own plates or bowls?

No. All teams must use the standard dinner plates or entrée bowls provided by AHF and the venue. Please indicate whether your dish requires a plate or bowl in your application.

Competition Logistics

How many teams will be selected to compete?

Five teams of two, for a total of 10 competitors.

How many portions are you expected to prepare?

Six portions: five for the judges and one for display and photographs.

When will applicants know if their team is selected?

We plan to notify all applicants at the beginning of May.

Is refrigeration and freezer storage available?

Yes, refrigeration and freezer storage will be available the day before the competition. Finalists will receive detailed instructions.

How much time is given for setup before the competition?

- *Night before:* One hour to gather market basket ingredients and organize speed racks.
- *Competition day:* One hour to wash produce, arrange cooking spaces, and boil water if needed. Cutting produce or prepping ingredients is not allowed.

Do competitors need to shop for their own ingredients?

Market basket ingredients will be provided. Any additional ingredients must be sourced before the event. Local grocery store information will be shared.

Do competitors need to bring their own wash and sanitation station?

No, AHF will provide sanitation materials and access.

Will there be storage space at the stations?

Yes, each team will have a speed rack with sheet trays for organizing materials.

Team Composition

Can a team include members from different facilities within the same system?

No, both team members must be from the same site unless one is a system-level director based at a corporate office. In this case, the director may apply with an employee from a regional site they manage. Two teams from the same system may also apply separately.

Can one team submit multiple recipes?

Yes, but only one recipe will be selected, and only one team per site will be chosen.

Nutrition & Costing Requirements

Is there a required software for nutrition analysis?

Please use the nutrition analysis software your organization uses. Avoid open-source programs from the internet.

When will the market basket cost be provided?

Applicants should use their own pricing estimates for market basket ingredients based on their organization's vendor contracts.

Have Addition Questions? Contact Us!

AHF staff and dedicated members of the AHF Culinary Competition Committee are here to help! Our Culinary Competition Committee Chair and Vice-Chair are available to answer questions, offer advice, and provide guidance throughout the application process. AHF is a community of self-operated professionals committed to improving healthcare foodservice, senior dining, and hospitality. Together, we are leading the way...

For additional questions, contact us at culinary@healthcarefoodservice.org.