

CONTESTANT INSTRUCTIONS

Cup Preparation

- Each cup will have two matching tickets taped to the outside.
 - Contestants remove only the visible ticket(s) and keep it secure.
 - The concealed ticket remains sealed until after final Top 10 scoring
- If a cup is damaged before turn-in, contestants must return it with both ticket halves to receive a replacement.
 - No replacements allowed after the cup has been turned in and numbered.

Turn-In Guidelines

- Turn in cups filled $\frac{3}{4}$ full during the 5-minute window after cooking ends.
- Turn-in takes place at the old fire station bay. Late or marked cups will not be accepted.
- VFD will randomly place and number cups (over the tape) with a black marker starting at #1.
- Cup count will be reconciled with the number of contestants per category.

NEW 2026 ROOM MONITOR PROGRAM

- One Judging Room Monitor per category will be randomly selected by a draw from cook teams. The team pulling the colored token(s) will have the option whether or not to send a monitor to the judging for that specific category. If the team pulling the token desires not to send a room monitor, the token cannot be passed to another team and that category will not have a monitor. NOTE: Judging takes approximately 1 hour per category.
 - The monitor must sit quietly and observe; any concerns should be brought to the Chief Judge.

JUDGE INSTRUCTIONS

Selection & Orientation

- Judges must be 18+ and attend a briefing by the Chief Judge before judging each category.
- Two Judges will be assigned to one of either two or three tables (based on number of entries) for the 1st round, with cups evenly divided.

Tasting & Etiquette

- Judges may start at any cup on their table and move clockwise.
- Use a clean spoon for each taste & use palate cleansers (tortillas, crackers, cheese) between samples
- Talking, gestures, or reactions that may influence fellow judges is not allowed during tasting.
- Judges write their name & table number on each scorecard. Judges should not discuss judging with anyone until after winners are announced.

Scoring Criteria (1–10 points each) | Total: 40 per cup (Aroma, Texture, Color, Taste/Aftertaste)

- Judges will be encouraged to start at number “5” and adjust up/down.
- No garnish or toppings allowed. Chili entries must not contain beans. Only pinto beans allowed in bean category

ADVANCING & FINAL ROUND

- 3 Judge Tables: Top 4 cups from each table (12 total) advance to finals. Any ties in 1st - 4th place also advance.
- 2 Judge Tables: Top 5 cups from each table advance to finals. Any ties in 1st – 5th place also advance
- In the final round, all judges score all finalist cups.
- Any ties for 1st–3rd are broken by rejudging:
 - In the event of a tie for 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place, the tied entries will be rejudged to determine a single winner for that placement. Once the tie is resolved, the remaining entries will be moved down accordingly. For example, if two entries tie for 1st, those two will be rejudged; the selected winner will receive 1st place, and the other will be 2nd place. The process continues until winners for the Top Three places have been determined. Ties will not be broken after 3rd place.
- Final scores determine Top Ten places. Once these are determined, ticket numbers for Top 10 will be revealed.

SCOREKEEPING & RESULTS

- All scorecards are tabulated and reviewed by the Chief Scorekeeper and two assistants. For the 1st round, all cup scores by each judge are recorded on a Master Tally Sheet.
- For the 2nd round, only the Top 10 cup scores will be recorded on a Master Tally Sheet.
- Only the top 10 cups will have tape removed to reveal matching ticket numbers.
- Results (Top 10 ticket numbers + any disqualified cups ticket numbers) are posted on the fire station door.
- All cups are discarded after Top 10 is determined, except disqualified entries, which may be reviewed if contested.
- Results remain sealed until all winners are announced. Top 10 ticket stubs are retained for one year.