



CULINARY COMPETITION

Competitor Handbook

Welcome to the Inaugural Minneapolis Community Culinary Competition!

We have invited you to join us, Kelber Catering, because we are inspired by the creativity and passion that we see in our local farmers' markets, street vendors, and other home-based food businesses, and are excited to have you participate in this year's competition. This handbook contains everything you need to prepare, compete, and succeed.

Benefits to you, as a competitor:

- Personal development
 - Gain confidence in your skills
 - Receive professional and constructive criticism, focused on growth and improvement
- Professional growth
 - Network with other home-based and professional culinary professionals
 - Gain insights from other competitors and judges
- YOUR NAMED ITEM on a Minneapolis Convention Center Menu for a year!
 - The WINNER of the competition will have their item on the menu for an entire year
 - Kelber Catering will assist with naming the dish and creative marketing collateral to tell the winners food stories
 - \$5,000 to the Winners in Professional and Home Cook Categories

Event Date: December 10, 2026

Location: Minneapolis Convention Center

Check-in Time: 2:00pm

Competition Start Time: 4:00pm

1. Competition Overview

Mission & Purpose

Mission Statement

Our mission is to celebrate culinary creativity, foster community engagement, and elevate local talent by providing a dynamic platform where food creatives of all backgrounds can showcase their skills, share their stories, and inspire others through the art of food.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this community culinary competition is to bring people together through a shared passion for food while supporting local chefs, promoting cultural diversity, and encouraging mentorship between seasoned professionals and emerging talent. Through friendly competition, collaboration, and innovation, we aim to strengthen community connections, highlight regional flavors, and create memorable experiences that nourish both body and spirit. Please note that your dish should be a dish that event planners and events for up to 3000 guests will enjoy through all the senses.

Categories

- ☐ Home Cook
- ☐ Professional

Judging Criteria

Competitors will be evaluated based on:

- Dish Complexity
- Presentation
- Flavor Profile and Variety
- Representation of the individual cook

(Refer to official rubric provided separately.)

2. Eligibility

- Age requirements: must be 18 or over
 - Professional: Current or former Chef, Cook
 - Home Cook: Someone who has never cooked professionally
 - Required documentation with application on October 15, 2026: Resume or Bio along with professional headshot on each competitor. This information will be fact checked for accuracy. Any incorrect information may result in automatic disqualification.
 - Registration deadline **October 15, 2026**
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3. Competition Rules

General Rules

- All competitors must check in by designated time
- Late arrivals may result in point deductions or disqualification
- Professional conduct is always required

Food Safety

- Proper handwashing required
- Gloves required when handling ready-to-eat foods
- Time and temperature compliance mandatory (monitored by Kelber Catering Inc. Culinary team in conjunction with the Minneapolis Health Department)
- No cross-contamination
- Proper cooking techniques are to be strictly followed according to Minneapolis Health Department guidelines.
- No reduced oxygen packaging i.e. Cryovac packaging, or sous vide cooking is allowed.
- All proteins must be cooked to acceptable temperatures per Health Department regulations.

Failure to comply will result in disqualification.

4. Kitchen & Equipment

Provided by Organizers

- Tables
- Basic prep area
- Standard kitchen equipment; grill, stove top, ovens
- Power access
- Sink access
- Refrigeration access
- Cutting Boards
- Bar Towels

Competitors Must Bring

- Specialty tools
- Knives
- Small wares
- Plating materials
- 1 assistant or helper is permitted

All equipment must meet safety standards.

5. Professional Division Ingredient Policy

Competitors supply their recipe of ingredients prior to the competition entry deadline of October 15, 2026

If you are bringing ingredients:

- Must arrive properly labeled
- Your recipe Pre-prep guidelines must be strictly followed
- No pre-cooked proteins
- All items must be reviewed by Kelber Culinary Team and in Serve Safe guidelines

Professional Division Ingredient Policy continued:

Protein Choices:

All submissions must be for lunch or dinner entrees. All protein options should be affordable based on market price. If a more expensive protein is used a reasonable substitution should be available.

Protein Choices Recommended:

- Chicken
- Beef

- **Proteins choices to avoid:**

- Wagyu beef
- Beef filet
- Lobster
- Sea bass
- *Octopus/Squid*
- *Wild Game*
- Pork should be avoided for religious and cultural observances
- If seafood is being used it should be considered sustainably sourced.

Home Cook Ingredient Policy

The **Home Cook Division** of the City of 10,000 Flavors Culinary Competition celebrates the dishes that bring people together around the table. This division is designed for passionate home cooks who may not have professional culinary training but have a favorite recipe, family tradition, cultural specialty, or signature dish they are proud to share.

Dish Style

Home cooks are encouraged to prepare a **complete, composed dish similar in style to a hot dish, casserole, baked entrée, one-pot meal, or other hearty family-style creation.**

The intent is not to require contestants to make a traditional Minnesota hot dish or casserole. Rather, these examples provide guidance on the type of dish we are looking for: something that feels complete, satisfying, flavorful, and representative of the kind of food you might proudly serve to family, friends, or guests.

Dishes may reflect the contestant's **family heritage, cultural traditions, personal experiences, Minnesota influences, or their own creativity.** Traditional recipes are welcome, as are creative interpretations and completely original dishes.

Examples could include casseroles, hot dishes, baked pasta dishes, rice-based dishes, layered dishes, savory pies, braised dishes, one-pot meals, culturally inspired comfort foods, or another entrée-style creation that can be presented and served as a complete dish.

What We Are Looking For

Contestants should create a dish that:

- Can be presented as a **complete entrée or substantial main dish.**
- Demonstrates good flavor, proper seasoning, texture, and overall balance.
- Can be portioned into individual servings for judging and sampling.
- Represents the contestant's personality, background, family traditions, community, or culinary creativity.
- Is practical for a home cook to prepare without requiring professional restaurant equipment or advanced professional culinary techniques.
- Can maintain its quality during the competition's required holding, presentation, and judging period.

Creativity Is Encouraged

There is **no single required cuisine, flavor profile, protein, or cooking style** for the Home Cook Division. Contestants are encouraged to think beyond the traditional definition of a casserole or hot dish.

A contestant might prepare a treasured family recipe passed down through generations, reinterpret a traditional cultural dish, create a modern version of a Minnesota favorite, or develop something completely new.

The goal is to tell a story through food while creating something delicious that people would genuinely enjoy gathering around a table to share.

Recipe & Preparation

Contestants should submit a complete recipe for their competition dish, including ingredients, quantities, preparation instructions, and any sauces, toppings, garnishes, or accompaniments that are considered part of the finished entry.

Recipes should be the contestant's own creation or personal adaptation. Family recipes and culturally traditional recipes are welcome. If a recipe is inspired by another source, contestants should make the dish their own through their preparation, ingredients, presentation, or personal interpretation.

6. All Contestant Competition Timeline

Activity	Time
Check-In	2:00pm
Kitchen Orientation	2:15pm
Competition Start	4:00pm
15-Minute Warning	5:30pm
Competition End	6:00pm
Judging	6:00pm – 7:00pm
Awards Ceremony	7:15pm

Late plating and presentation to the stage will result in point deductions

7. Plating & Presentation

- Number of plates required: (2)
- Portion size requirements
- Garnish your plate and present for photo opportunity and marketing purposes
- No external props allowed

8. Judging Process

- Judging will be live by Kelber selected judges
- Judges may ask questions of the entrant live on stage
- Scores will be tallied by Kelber CFO and scores are final

9. Awards

- 1st Place \$5000 each category
- Joe Kelber People's Choice \$500.00 (1 per each division)— determined by tasting tickets redeemed for each individual contestant's station
- KCI Scholarship Winner - \$5000.00 to be awarded to a student who is enrolled or starting in a Minneapolis based culinary program

10. Code of Conduct

Competitors must:

- Always demonstrate professionalism
- Always respect fellow competitors
- Follow all MN Food Safety Rules
- Accept judge feedback respectfully

Unsportsmanlike conduct will result in disqualification.

11. Media & Photography Release

By participating in the City of 10,000 Flavors, competitors grant permission for photography and media usage for promotional purposes.

12. Contact Information

Competition Director: John Doody – Steering Committee Chair

Email: jrd31159@gmail.com

Phone: 612-759-4720
