

Official ICS Contestant Rules



1. GETTING STARTED

QUALIFICATION

Adult Cooks: Must be active ICS Members and at least 18 years old.

Youth Cooks: Must be active ICS Members 6 to 17 years of age and must prepare and cook their chili with parental supervision, but not parental participation.

Any adult and youth cook must be a member in good standing prior to the commencement of the cook-off, and must register for each cook-off through the ICS website to be recognized as an official contestant.

PARTICIPATION

A contestant may compete in one or more cooking categories at each cook-off. If a contestant wins first place in a WCCC qualifying category, he/she may not compete in that category again during the same cooking season.

A cooking season runs from the day after the WCCC of the previous season to the day before the WCCC of the current season. *For example – If the WCCC is on October 1, 2050, the cooking season would begin the day after the 2049 WCCC to September 30, 2050.*

ENTRY FEES & PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Entry fees for any adult or youth category are separately collected by and at the discretion of the cook-off. ICS is the sanctioning body for cook-offs, which are organized entirely by individuals not directly affiliated with ICS (unless otherwise noted).

ICS Suggested Contestant Entry Fees:

Adult: \$35 Traditional Red / \$30 Homestyle / \$25 Chili Verde / \$25 Veggie / \$15 Salsa

Youth: \$20 Traditional Red / \$20 Homestyle

People's Choice Chili (PC): ICS requires PC per adult and youth contestant, not per category. The amount required will be determined by the individual cook-off. ICS recommends the requirement of 2 gallons with entry fee(s), OR 4 gallons without entry fee(s).

2. TYPES OF SANCTIONED COOK-OFFS

WCCC QUALIFIER - The event organizer must offer at least one ICS cooking category and meet the minimum cook requirements for that category (and each additional category if applicable). A minimum of 15 cooks per category are required for Traditional Red and Homestyle categories. A minimum of 7 cooks per category are required for Chili Verde, Veggie and Salsa categories. Any youth category must have a minimum of 5 youth cooks.

Winners: All will qualify for the WCCC.

LOCAL COOK-OFF - The event organizer must offer at least one ICS cooking category and meet the minimum cook requirements for that category (and each additional category if applicable). A minimum of 7 cooks per category are required for Traditional Red, Homestyle, Chili Verde, Veggie and Salsa categories. Any youth category must have a minimum of 5 youth cooks.

Winners- Traditional Red and Homestyle: Two Local Cook-off wins are needed to qualify for the WCCC. One Local Cook-off win will waive the winners' entry fee for the Last Chance cook-off in that category. If a Local Cook-off ends up with 15 or more cooks in Red and/or 15 or more cooks in Homestyle, the winner(s) will qualify for the WCCC of the current cooking season.

Winners- Verde, Veggie and Salsa: All will qualify for the WCCC.

3. COOKING CATEGORIES

CATEGORIES IN WHICH WINNERS ARE DETERMINED BY JUDGES

Traditional Red Chili is any kind of meat or combination of meats cooked with red chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients. Beans and pasta are not allowed. This category is also offered for Youth cooks.

Homestyle Chili is any kind of meat or combination of meats and/or vegetables cooked with beans, chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients. Beans are required. This category is also offered for Youth cooks.

Chili Verde is any kind of meat or combination of meats cooked with green chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients. Beans and pasta are not allowed.

Veggie Chili is any kind of vegetable or combination of vegetables cooked with chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients. The use of meat and meat byproduct is not allowed.

Salsa is any combination of chili peppers, spices and other ingredients. It must be entirely homemade.

Note: Garnishes must not be used for any category. Rule of thumb- if an ingredient found on the top layer of an entry bowl cannot also be found mixed throughout the entire bowl, it is a garnish and is not permitted. If a bowl is delivered for judging with a garnish, the garnish must be removed by the Chief Judge. If for some reason the garnish cannot be removed, the bowl will be disqualified

CATEGORIES IN WHICH WINNERS ARE DETERMINED BY THE PUBLIC

People's Choice Chili (PC) follows the same ingredient rules as Homestyle. The use of beans is required. PC is required by all adult and youth contestants. See #5 for rules and exceptions.

4. COOK-OFF PREPARATION

- A. The hosting organization will provide an area for each contestant to cook, however each contestant is responsible for supplying all of their own cooking ingredients, supplies and utensils. Contestants will receive specific requirements from each individual cook-off organizer upon successful registration.
- B. The ICS strongly encourages preparedness with a fire extinguisher and washing station, as these may be required by local laws.

5. FOOD PREPARATION

Traditional Red, Homestyle, Chili Verde, Veggie:

- A. No ingredient may be pre-cooked in any way prior to the commencement of the official cook-off. The only exceptions are canned or bottled tomatoes, tomato sauce, peppers, pepper sauce, beverages, broth and grinding and/or mixing of spices.
- B. Meat may be pre-cut or ground but MAY NOT be pre-cooked, treated, seasoned or marinated in any manner.
- C. All other ingredients must be prepared and/or chopped on-site during the preparation period.

People's Choice, Salsa:

- A. Per ICS rules these categories may be prepared and cooked prior to the cook-off, however it is the responsibility of the cook to check with the cook-off organizer for each event as local laws may forbid advanced food preparation.
- B. The cook may also choose to prepare and cook these categories on-site during the preparation period.

6. PEOPLE'S CHOICE CHILI (PC)

Where an event allows [as is the case with most ICS events], event attendees may purchase tickets in order to taste chili prepared by the competing cooks – this chili is known as People's Choice chili (PC). Every ICS cook-off raises money for at least one charity or non-profit organization, partially due to the preparation and sales of PC.

- A. Every contestant (other than *salsa only* contestants) must prepare and serve People's Choice chili (PC), unless prohibited by the local law where the event takes place.
- B. Event organizers will decide the required quantity of PC per contestant. ICS suggests two (2) gallons when requiring an entry fee, or four (4) gallons without entry fee.
- C. If multiple cooks share one booth, each contestant must be prepared to show their own PC. The event organizer or Chief Judge has the right to disqualify any contestant who does not prepare the required quantity of PC. This is expected and supported by ICS.

7. IT'S TIME TO COOK!

- A. A representative of the cook-off will conduct a contestant's meeting no later than 1 hour prior to the start of the competition cooking period. At this meeting instructions will be given and questions answered.
- B. The cooking period for each category will depend on the number of categories offered at each event. The typical cooking period is 3 hours. The exact starting and ending of each cooking period will be announced by the hosting organization.
- C. Cooking during the entire cooking period is at the sole discretion of the contestant.
- D. For each category a contestant competes in, they must cook a minimum of 32 oz. to be submitted for judging.

8. DETERMINING THE WINNERS

People's Choice:

The chili that receives the highest number of votes by the public will win. The manner of voting as well as prize structure will be determined by the event organizer.

All other categories:

- A. Each cook will be assigned a contestant number and given one 32 oz. ICS competition cup per category prior to the start of the cooking period. (Smaller cups are permitted for salsa competitions.)
Each cook will receive as many cups as categories they are competing in. For example- if competing in four categories a contestant will receive four cups. Each cup will have their contestant number marked on the bottom.
- B. It is the contestant's responsibility to verify that the number on the bottom of their cup(s) is the same as their assigned contestant number.
- C. Each cook is responsible for delivering their cup(s) to the judging area at the end of each cooking period. Each cup must be filled to the bottom of the rim. Sharing or splitting chili for judging with another contestant will result in suspension of ICS membership for a minimum of one year.
- D. Cook-off judges will choose their top three, per category, using the judging criteria below. Place levels and prizes are determined by each cook-off, but ICS requires a minimum of 1st, 2nd and 3rd places.

ICS JUDGING & SCOREKEEPING PROCEDURES

The selection of winners at any ICS chili cook-off is extremely important. ICS sanctioned events must follow all rules and procedures outlined below. Failure to do so will result in sanction revocation.

1. VITAL VOLUNTEERS

- A. The cook-off organizer is responsible for designating a Chief Judge (CJ). The CJ is responsible for everything associated with judging and shall have the final decision on all judging matters.
- B. The organizer must also appoint a qualified person to be the Chief Scorekeeper (SK) and must ensure this person understands and follows all rules and procedures. The SK should recruit at least two additional helpers to assist with scorekeeping.
- C. No one may judge, score-keep or break ties at any event where a relative or significant other is competing.
- D. The organizer and CJ will select the remaining judges needed for the event. ICS recommends there be at least one judge for every two chili bowls or a minimum of five judges for each judging table, with the exception of when there are more than 20 bowls (see #8).
- E. The judging area will also need “wranglers” (aka, people who will help with anything!). Three to five wranglers are suggested and must be completely different people from those recruited to judge or score-keep.

2. PAPERWORK

- A. ICS will send to the organizer by EMAIL all ICS paperwork files including contestant list, judge roster, judge ballots, tally sheets, and winners’ list. ICS will send to the organizer by MAIL competition cups and lids needed for the event.
- B. It is the responsibility of the organizer to use the digital files to print the adequate paperwork needed for the event, and to distribute it to the appropriate person(s) on the day of the event (usually the SK).

3. JUDGING AREA PREPARATION

The organizer is responsible for the proper set-up of the judging area, which should be large enough to accommodate all tables needed while also positioned close to the cooking area for convenience in transporting competition cups.

Tables

- Every event should have a minimum of four tables for the following purposes: 1) Cup collection/Final Table; 2) Judging, 3) Holding of inactive cups [cups that have already been judged]; and 4) Scorekeeping.
- Any additional tables needed is determined by the largest number of contestants confirmed in any category. For categories with more than 21 contestants, ONE additional table is needed per 20 additional contestants.
- Judging tables must have enough space to place the competition cups 12 - 18 inches apart around the table

Additional Supplies:

- PALATE CLEANSERS are necessary to promote fair judging between tastings. The organizer must ensure there are palate cleansers at every judging table. We recommend flour tortillas (cut into bite-size pieces), sour cream, green grapes, light beer and bottled water.
- DISPOSABLE SPOONS
- EMPTY CONTAINERS to collect dirty spoons.
- PENCILS

- For a Salsa event, use unsalted TORTILLA CHIPS rather than flour tortilla pieces and place a spoon in each salsa bowl entry for judges to spoon salsa onto a chip for tasting.

Competition Cup Preparation

- Contestants must use the official ICS competition [judging] cups provided by ICS. It is acceptable to use smaller, non-ICS cups for salsa only.
- Prior to the start of the cooking period, the SK must assign each contestant one contestant number and make sure his/her cooking area is clearly identified with that number.
- A contestant may be registered for multiple categories and must receive one cup per category. The SK is responsible for writing the contestant’s number on the bottom of as many competition cups as they will need. Their assigned contestant number will remain the same for every category/cup.
- The SK must also record the contestant’s name and their contestant number on the ICS Contestant List, which must be returned to ICS after the event.
- The SK must ensure each contestant receives their cup(s) at least 30 minutes prior to the end of any cooking period.

4. COOKING SCHEDULE SAMPLE

4 CATEGORIES – It is strongly encouraged that Homestyle be turned in prior to Red. Homestyle can then be used for People’s Choice tasting.

8:00am-8:15am	ALL cooks meeting	15 min
9:00am-11:30am	Homestyle	2.5-hour cooking period, turn in at 11:30am
10:00am	Salsa Turn-in	
10:15am-1:15pm	Chili Verde	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 1:15pm
12:00pm-3:00pm	Traditional Red	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 3:00pm
12:30pm-3:30pm	People’s Choice Tasting	3 hours

3 CATEGORIES – You may choose to swap Red/Homestyle and Chili Verde timing. Since Red/Homestyle generally have more cook contestants, the timing below allows more time to focus on cooking before serving People’s Choice.

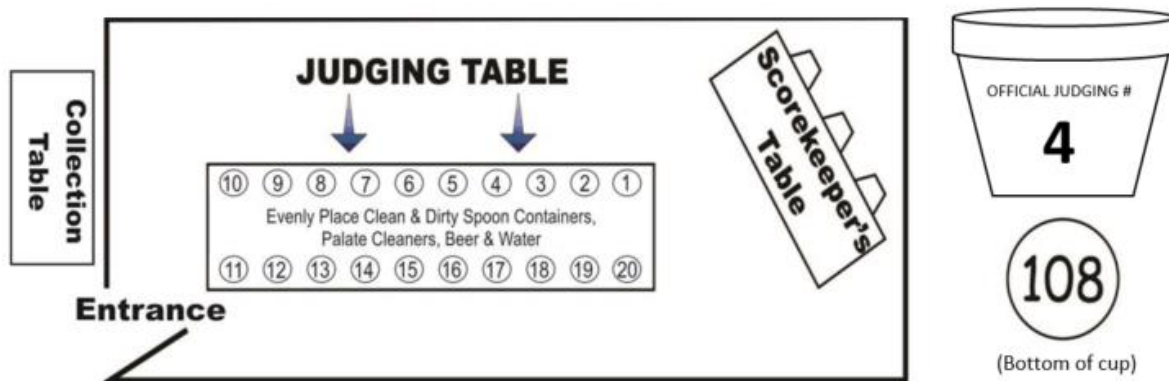
8:15am-8:30am	ALL cooks meeting	15 min
9:00am-12:00pm	Red or Homestyle	3 hours cooking period, turn in at 12:00pm
10:00am	Salsa Turn-in	
12:00pm-3:00pm	Chili Verde	3 hours cooking period, turn in at 3:00pm
12:30pm-3:30pm	People’s Choice Tasting	3 hours

5. RECEIVING THE COMPETITION CUPS

At the end of the cooking period, each contestant must fill their competition cup to the bottom of the rim [with their competition chili or salsa] and deliver it to the collection table in the judging area.

- After all cups are turned in, the SK [and helpers] must randomly place each cup on the judging table(s) and then number the outside of the cups in counter-clockwise order, beginning with the number 1.

*Use of a BLACK felt permanent marker (chisel point, to prevent piercing the cup)



6. JUDGING

Judges' Meeting

At least 30 minutes prior to the end of the cooking period, the CJ is required to hold a meeting with all judges. This meeting serves to educate judges on procedures, technique and etiquette. No matter how many times someone has been a judge, they **MUST** attend this meeting. The following criteria and instructions must be discussed:

Judging Criteria:

Flavoring – Chili should have good flavor with distinct chili pepper taste that is neither too hot nor too mild. The chili pepper taste should be obvious as well as balanced.

Texture – The texture of any meat, bean or veggie should not be too tough or too mushy. If they are, they have most likely been undercooked, overcooked, cooked too quickly or possibly over-marinated. Cut, size or shape of the ingredients should not be a consideration.

Consistency – The consistency of chili “gravy” should not be too thick nor too thin. Its texture should be a smooth mixture of ingredients and gravy, and never overly lumpy or overly dry.

Spices – Spices and herbs make an important contribution to the chili’s final flavor. They should permeate and accentuate the ingredients but should not overpower the overall flavor.

Aroma – The smell should be pleasing. A pleasing smell usually indicates the ingredients are properly cooked, well-combined and balanced.

Color – A reddish-brown hue is typically most desirable for any category using red chili peppers. A true-green hue is typically most desirable for Chili Verde. Color can vary considerably.

Judging Instructions:

- A. Print your name on the bottom right corner of your judging ballot, and make a mark on your ballot next to the bowl number you begin tasting with.
- B. Do not talk or make any expressions/gestures as to avoid influencing the decision of another judge.
- C. Cleanse your palate between tastings with the SAME palate cleanser you initially start with.
- D. Taste each chili or salsa with a CLEAN spoon (or chip for salsa). Do not double-dip. Re-taste as necessary.
- E. Record constructive comments next to the number that matches the black number on the outside of the cup. The entire ballot will be disqualified if any disrespectful comments are made.
- F. Pick top three and record at bottom of ballot.
- G. Leave judging area after submitting completed ballot so the scorekeepers can work undisturbed.

7. JUDGING & SCOREKEEPING TIMELINE SAMPLE

Based on #4, ICS recommends the following timeline to maintain a smooth and efficient flow of your event. Remember the scorekeepers, judges and wranglers must all be different people, so it is okay that scorekeeping and judging times may overlap.

4 CATEGORIES

	Judging	Scorekeeping
SALSA	10:00am – 11:00am	11:00am – 11:45am
HOMESTYLE	11:30am – 12:30pm	12:30pm – 1:15pm
CHILI VERDE	1:15pm – 2:15pm	2:15pm – 3:00pm
TRADITIONAL RED	3:00pm – 4:00pm	4:00pm – 4:45pm

3 CATEGORIES

	Judging	Scorekeeping
SALSA	10:00am – 11:00am	11:00am – 11:45am
RED/HOMESTYLE	12:00PM – 1:00pm	1:00pm – 2:00pm
CHILI VERDE	3:00pm – 4:00pm	4:00pm – 4:45pm

7. SCOREKEEPING – 20 cups or less

- A. As the ballots are received the Chief Scorekeeper (SK) and assistants must use the ICS Master Tally Sheet to award points to each 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place vote. They will write the awarded points next to the relative number on the tally sheet:
- 3 points awarded to each 1st place vote
 - 2 points awarded to each 2nd place vote
 - 1 point awarded to each 3rd place vote
- a) A written mark (such as a dot, plus sign, etc.) must be placed between all awarded points to prevent reading a first and second place vote as *32 points* rather than *3•2* (3 points and 2 points).
- b) Commas must not be used as they can be mistaken for the number 1.
- B. After all ballots have been recorded on the Master Tally Sheet, the SK must add the vote points and enter the total in the space provided. He/she will advise the CJ once all winners have been determined.
- o **IN THE EVENT OF A TIE**, the CJ shall appoint three judges as “Tie-Breakers” who will taste only the cups involved in the tie. The cup receiving the most votes is declared the winner of that particular place, and the other cup is moved down one place. Ties are broken only for those places for which there are prizes and/or trophies
- C. The WINNING cup numbers must be double-checked and verified. The SK will then refer to the Official Contestant List to determine the winner names/team name. Record the winners on the Official Winners’ List, along with the cup number and prizes and/or trophies to be awarded.
- D. If there are more categories to be judged, all cups of the completed judging round should be carefully moved to the inactive table. It is helpful to place them in numbered order so that when it is time for the contestants to retrieve their cups, they can be easily located. The judging table must also be reset, cleaned and prepared for the next category to be judged.

8. SCOREKEEPING – 21 cups or more

In the event there are more than 20 cups to be judged, there must be Preliminary table(s) and a Final Table. Judges must also be split into groups: Preliminary Table groups (see below) and a Final Table group.

A. The minimum number of Preliminary tables is determined as follows:

21 to 40 cups: Two tables- tables “A” and “B.” Each table must have a clearly visible identifier of “A” or “B.” Half of all cups must be placed on table “A” and numbered counter- clockwise beginning with the number 1. The remaining half should be placed on table “B” and begin numbering with the number 21.

41 to 60 cups: Three tables “A”, “B” and “C.” Each table must have a clearly visible identifier of “A,” “B” or “C.” One third of all cups must be placed on each table. The cups on table “A” must be numbered counter-clockwise beginning with the number 1; Table “B” the same beginning with the number 21; and Table “C” the same beginning with number 41.

61 or more cups: One additional Preliminary table for each 20 cups, and continue using the next letter of the alphabet to designate each additional table. DO NOT use the letter “F” for a Preliminary table as that letter is always used to designate the “Final Table”. Follow same steps as above with dispersing and numbering.

B. Once all cups are turned in following the cooking period, the SK shall designate individuals to transfer the cups - one cup at a time and using both hands - from the collection table to all Preliminary Tables, at random, until requirements above are met.

C. Now that the collection table is empty, it may be repositioned and used as the Final Table if desired.

D. After the judges at each Preliminary Table have made their top selections, the SK must record those votes on the Master Tally Sheet. The top five scores from each Preliminary table will move to the next round, the “Final Table.”

- Ties are not broken at Preliminary tables. In the case of a tie or ties, advance all cups in a tie situation to the Final Table.

E. **All cups transferred to the Final Table shall be stacked within a new ICS competition cup and re-numbered counter-clockwise starting with the number 1.**

- This Final Table number should be marked on the side of the new cup AND marked on the lip of the inside cup so that the contestant number, preliminary table number AND Final Table number are all on the original (inside) competition cup.



F. Proceed with steps #2 and #3 of “Scorekeeping 20 cups or less” to determine the winners!