



## 1. GETTING STARTED

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

Cooks must register for their ICS memberships and sign-up for every cook-off through the ICS website, [chilicookoff.com](http://chilicookoff.com).

**Youth Cooks:** Must be active ICS members 6 to 17 years of age. Cooks (or parents/ supervisors of) must register for Youth ICS memberships and sign-up for each cook-off by contacting [youthcook@icschili.com](mailto:youthcook@icschili.com).

**Every adult and youth cook must be a member in good standing prior to the commencement of the cook-off.**

## PARTICIPATION

A contestant may compete in one or more cooking categories at each ICS sanctioned cook-off.

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 by individuals not directly affiliated with ICS (unless noted).

ICS Suggested Contestant Entry Fees:

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

**Youth:** \$10 Traditional Red / \$10 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. YOUTH COOKS

- A. Youth cooks must prepare their chili with adult supervision, but not adult participation.
- B. Adult may help with knifework and prep, during the preparation period ONLY.
- C. Adult assistance MUST STOP once the 3-hour cooking time starts. At that time adults are there to supervise only and assist with any safety concerns (i.e. moving heavy or hot items, etc.)
- D. Adults cannot taste the youth's chili, this is the youths' time to shine and make their own cooking decisions. Youth cooks may have other youth ages 17 and under taste their chili.

## 3. ICS-SANCTIONED COOKING CATEGORIES FOR ADULTS AND YOUTH

**Traditional Red Chili** is any kind of meat, or combination of meats, cooked with red chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients. Beans and non-vegetable fillers such as rice and pasta are not allowed. Preference is not given to either cut meat, ground meat, shredded meat or cubed meat.

**Homestyle Chili** is any kind of meat, or combination of meats, and/or vegetables cooked with beans, chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients. Homestyle chili may be any color. Beans are required. Preference is not given to either cut meat, ground meat, shredded meat or cubed meat. Seafood is allowed.

**Chili Verde** is any kind of meat, or combination of meats, cooked with green chili peppers, various spices and other ingredients. Non-vegetable fillers such as rice and pasta are not allowed. Preference is not given to either cut meat, ground meat, shredded meat or cubed meat.

**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/or any meat by-product is not allowed. The use of soy and meatless “meat” substitutes is allowed. Veggie Chili can be any color.

**Note: The above category winners are all chosen by judges. 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 bowl will be disqualified**

**People’s Choice Chili (PC)** winners are determined by the public. PC is required by all adult and youth contestants. Any type of chili may be served as PC chili. [See #6 for rules and exceptions]

#### 4. COOK-OFF PREPARATION

- A. The hosting organization will provide an area for each contestant to cook - usually a 10x10 space
- B. 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.
- C. 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 cooking time. The only exceptions are canned vegetables, sauces, peppers, liquids, seasoning pastes and meat substitutes.
- B. Cooking times may vary by cook-off, as determined by the Chief Judge.
- C. Meat may be pre-cut or ground but MAY NOT be pre-cooked, treated, seasoned or marinated in any manner.
- D. Grinding and/or mixing of spices is allowed.
- E. All other ingredients must be prepared and/or chopped on-site during the preparation period. The preparation period is the designated time between set-up and the start of the cooking period for each category. Preparation times may vary by cook-off, as determined by the Chief Judge.
- F. All ingredients must be sourced to a licensed food manufacturer, wholesale supplier or retail store. Purchase receipts are recommended and may be required at some cook-offs. No ingredients are allowed that have originated from unlicensed growers or suppliers. No home grown or home canned/bottled ingredients are allowed. No wild game meat is permitted, even if processed by a licensed facility. All ingredients are subject to inspection at any time, by ICS representatives or local and state officials.
- G. All food - whether stored, resting or cooking - must always be maintained at food-safe temperatures. Food temperatures are subject to inspection at any time by ICS representatives or local/state officials.
- H. All food handling, preparation and serving must comply with all local and state guidelines, policies and rules.
- I. Failure to abide by any of the above, in the unilateral and unfettered opinion of the Chief Judge, will result in immediate disqualification from the cook-off.

**People’s Choice Chili:**

It is the responsibility of the cook to check with the cook-off organizer for each event regarding PC preparation. Some local Health Departments allow PC to be prepared off-site and some do not as local laws may forbid advanced food preparation.

## 6. PEOPLE'S CHOICE CHILI (PC)

Where an event allows [as is the case with most ICS events], event attendees will 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 sales of PC to public attendees.

- A. Every contestant must prepare and serve People's Choice chili (PC), unless prohibited by the local law where the event takes place.
- B. Each cook-off has its own rules regarding the preparation of PC either on-site or before the event.
- C. 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.
- D. PC can be any type or color of chili as long as it is homemade. ICS does NOT support the use of canned chili.
- E. 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 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 typical cooking period is 3 hours. ICS recommends allowing 2-3 hours for the cooking time of Veggie Chili. 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. Contestants must cook and turn in their own entries. The Chief Judge has the right to disqualify any cook or team of cooks found turning in an entry(s) not prepared by them.

## 8. DETERMINING THE WINNERS

### People's Choice (PC):

The PC 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 ICS 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.  
*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. Turning in a bowl not cooked by you will also 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 set forth by ICS. Place levels and prizes are determined by each cook-off organizer, but ICS requires a minimum of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place prizes.

## 9. ICS COOK-OFF WINNERS

There must be at least one of the ICS sanctioned categories described in #3 at any ICS cook-off.

**WCCC QUALIFIERS:** If the following minimum contestant requirements are met for any sanctioned category, the winner of that category will qualify for the WCCC.

**Minimum Contestant Requirements to Qualify for the WCCC:**

**Traditional Red:** 15 cooks

**Homestyle:** 10 cooks

**Chili Verde:** 7 cooks

**Veggie:** 5 cooks

**Youth Categories:** All youth cooks cooking in any sanctioned ICS cook-off prior to the WCCC will be invited to compete in the WCCC.

**LOCAL WINNERS** – If the following numbers are met at any ICS sanctioned cook-off, the winners of that cook-off will earn a LOCAL winner title. One Local win will waive that winners' entry fee for the Last Chance Cook-off in that category. Two Local wins will qualify that winner for the WCCC.

**Minimum Contestant Requirements to earn a LOCAL Win:**

**Traditional Red:** 7-14 cooks

**Homestyle:** 5-9 cooks

## 10. CONTINUED COOKING

If a contestant wins 1<sup>st</sup> place as a WCCC Qualifier [see #9 for rules], they may continue competing in that category at any ICS sanctioned cook-off throughout that chili season. There is no limit to how many times someone can win an ICS sanctioned category during a cooking season.

If a contestant wins 1<sup>st</sup> place as a WCCC Qualifier more than once in the same category, the 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner of that category at that cook-off will qualify for the WCCC. If the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place cooks have already both qualified for the WCCC, the 3<sup>rd</sup> place cook will advance to the WCCC. No places beyond 3<sup>rd</sup> place will advance to the WCCC from cook-offs with repeat winners.

*EXAMPLE:* If you win 1<sup>st</sup> place in Homestyle as a WCCC Qualifier, you may continue competing in Homestyle at any cook-off throughout that chili season. If you win Homestyle *again* as a WCCC Qualifier, you will win the posted 1<sup>st</sup> place prize, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner of Homestyle at that event will qualify for the WCCC. If the 2<sup>nd</sup> place Homestyle winner has already qualified for the WCCC in Homestyle, the 3<sup>rd</sup> place Homestyle winner at that cook-off will qualify for the WCCC. If the 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner has already qualified for the WCCC in Homestyle, no further places will advance.



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 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 #9).
- 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 and bottled water.
- DISPOSABLE SPOONS
- EMPTY CONTAINERS to collect dirty spoons

## Competition Cup Preparation

- Contestants must use the official ICS competition/judging cups provided by ICS.
- The SK must assign each contestant one contestant number. Their assigned contestant number will remain the same for every cooking category they compete in.
- Each contestant must receive one cup per category at least 30 minutes prior to the end of any cooking period. Their contestant numbers must be written on the bottom of as many competition cups as they receive.
- Each contestant's name and contestant number must be recorded on the ICS Contestant List, which must be returned to ICS after the event.

## 4. COOKING SCHEDULE SAMPLE

**4 CATEGORIES** – It is strongly encouraged that Homestyle be turned in prior to Red.

8:00am-8:15am	ALL cooks meeting	15 min
9:00am-12:00pm	Homestyle	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 12:00pm
10:00am-1:00pm	Chili Verde	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 1:00pm
12:00pm-2:00pm	Veggie	2-hour cooking period, turn in at 2:00pm
12:30pm-3:30pm	Traditional Red	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 3:30pm
1:00pm-4:00pm	People's Choice Tasting	3 hours

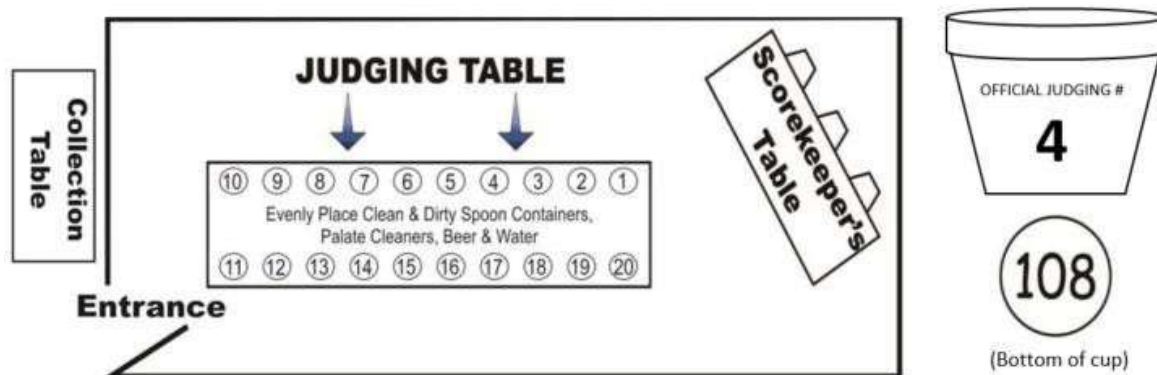
## 3 CATEGORIES

8:00am-8:15am	ALL cooks meeting	15 min
9:00am-12:00pm	Homestyle	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 12:00pm
10:30am-1:30pm	Chili Verde or Veggie	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 1:30pm
12:00pm-3:00pm	Traditional Red	3-hour cooking period, turn in at 3:00pm
1:00pm-4:00pm	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 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 (using black sharpie) in counter-clockwise order, beginning with the number



## 6. JUDGING

### Selection of Judges

The Chief Judge at each ICS sanctioned event will determine the final selection and participation of all Judges.

### 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 Chief Judge instructs all Judges as to the following PROCEDURES:

- A. When the Chief Judge signals the start of judging, Judges may start tasting at any bowl location on the table, then proceeding counter-clockwise. They may re-taste at their own discretion. Judging is a process of elimination and re-tasting is permitted until each Judge has chosen their top three (3) chilis.
- B. Judges taste each bowl and note any comments on their official ballots.
- C. Judges must use a clean spoon for each taste.
- D. Judges should clear their palates after each taste using the condiments supplied on the judging table, such as water, flour tortillas, sour cream, etc.
- E. Talking, face gestures or influential body language is not permitted. Judges must not make any comments or gestures about any of the chilis that may influence the decision of another Judge.
- F. Each judge must write their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winning chili choices within the designated spaces on their ballot before giving it to the Chief Scorekeeper. It is requested that all Judges sign their ballots.
- G. Judges should stay in the general judging area but must stay away from Scorekeepers and judging tables until the Chief Judge and the Chief Scorekeeper have declared that there is a verified winner.
- H. In the event of a tie score for any of the places, the Chief Judge shall appoint three (3) Judges as "tie-breakers." Each of the three tie-breaker judges must re-taste only the bowls involved in the tie, and give their decisions to the Chief Scorekeeper. The bowl receiving the most points from the tie-breaking judges will be declared the winner of the tie and the other bowl (or bowls) should be moved down one place. Ties are broken only for those places which there are to be given prizes and/or awards (typically first [1<sup>st</sup>] through third [3<sup>rd</sup>] places).
- I. The Chief Judge and all Scorekeepers must not divulge or discuss the winners until after the Cook-off Organizer or designated person has announced the winners to the general public.

### The Chief Judge instructs all Judges as to the following JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS:

- A. Each Judge's opinion weighs on the final outcome. Each cook is counting on the Judge's serious consideration of their bowl of chili. Judges must understand that they are determining the winners of the competition and must be respectful of the judging process and system.
- B. Judges must follow all direction and instruction from the Chief Judge. The Chief Judge may unilaterally dismiss a Judge or disqualify a Judge's ballot for actions deemed detrimental to the judging.
- C. When Judging, the chili you select to win that category should be the one you individually like best, with no other influence affecting your decision. Select 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places the same way.
- D. Chili that looks appealing with a pleasing aroma and that tastes good – and that meets the requirements of each category's rules – is typically scored well.
- E. Meat should be tender; not too mushy or too firm. Meat should have distinct chili flavor. No preference is given to cut (diced) meat, to ground meat, to shredded meat, or to cubed meat.
- F. Sauce should be not too thin or too thick. There should be a balanced ratio of sauce to meat. Sauce should have distinct chili flavor.
- G. Heat from spices should not be bland and not too hot.
- H. Bowls of chili to be judged may not include any garnish or topping to distinguish it from the other bowls at first appearance. No additional ingredient that is added to the bowl, that is not found throughout the entire bowl, is allowed.
- I. Decisions of the Chief Judge are final.



## 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
HOMESTYLE	12:00pm – 1:00pm	1:00pm – 1:30pm
CHILI VERDE	1:00pm – 2:00pm	2:00pm – 2:30pm
VEGGIE	2:00pm – 3:00pm	3:00pm – 4:30pm
TRADITIONAL RED	3:30pm – 4:30pm	4:30pm – 5:00pm

### 3 CATEGORIES

	Judging	Scorekeeping
HOMESTYLE		
CHILI VERDE / VEGGIE	12:00pm – 1:00pm	1:00pm – 1:30pm
TRADITIONAL RED	1:30pm – 2:30pm	2:30pm – 3:00pm
	3:00pm – 4:00pm	4:00pm – 4:30pm

## 8. 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place vote. They will write the awarded points next to the relative number on the tally sheet:
- 3 points awarded to each 1<sup>st</sup> place vote
  - 2 points awarded to each 2<sup>nd</sup> place vote
  - 1 point awarded to each 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. **In the event of a tie**, see page 7; PROCEDURE H.
- 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.



## 9. SCOREKEEPING – 21 cups or more

In the event there are more than 20 cups to be judged in a single category, the Chief Judge will determine if and how preliminary tables will be set up, and how many cups will advance to the Final Table group. Examples of Preliminary Table groups and a Final Table group are outlined below:

A. The minimum number of Preliminary tables may be 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!



**ICS Chili, Inc. reserves the right to modify or change any rules, at any time, without advance notice.**