



Compete in a live cooking challenge at the California State Fair. Individual professional chefs will use a mystery ingredient to prepare a 3-course meal live in front of fair guests and a panel of qualified Judges in the Cooking Theatre. Represent your restaurant or business.

**APPLICATIONS DUE:** Applications are accepted on a first-come-first-served basis

**DATE/TIMES: Qualifying Rounds: Friday, July 18, 2025**

Qualifying Round 1: 11am-1pm

Qualifying Round 2: 2pm-4pm

Qualifying Round 3: 6pm-8pm

**Final Round: Saturday, July 19: 6pm-8pm**

**LOCATION:** Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95815  
Cooking Theatre, Save Mart California's Kitchen, Building B

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Any currently or self-employed, professional, restaurant or catering chef

**AWARDS:**

**Final Round**

Champion ..... +\$200 cash & State Fair **Golden Bear Trophy**

2<sup>nd</sup> Place ..... +\$150 cash & State Fair Rosette

3<sup>rd</sup> Place ..... +\$100 cash & State Fair Rosette

**Qualifying Rounds**

1<sup>st</sup> Place ..... \$100 cash & State Fair Ribbon

2<sup>nd</sup> Place ..... \$75 cash & State Fair Ribbon

3<sup>rd</sup> Place ..... \$50 cash & State Fair Ribbon

**AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT:**

- Induction range & oven, microwave, sink and electrical outlet.
- Tools and small appliances typically found in a home kitchen are available.
- Teams are encouraged to bring their own knives or any specialty equipment needed.

**AVAILABLE INGREDIENTS:**

- A mystery ingredient will be provided and **MUST** be featured in 1 or more dishes.
- The pantry is stocked with a variety of common ingredients for cooking and baking.
- Teams may not bring any outside food or spices into the competition.

**CONTACT:** Michelle Johnson, Program Coordinator  
916.263.3189, mejohnson@calexpo.com

## JUDGING CRITERIA

- 30% **Taste:** Complimentary courses, seasoning, flavor, temperature/doneness
- 25% **Presentation:** Portion size, harmonious garnish, color, slicing/placement
- 20% **Skill Level:** Difficulty, cooking & knife skills, use of ingredients, creativity
- 15% **Use of Mystery Ingredient:** Prominence in meal, good use of ingredient
- 10% **Work Habits & Showmanship:** Food safety and sanitation, organization of work area, professional and courteous, communication with MC and Judges during competition

### Significant Points Deductions:

- Mystery ingredient not featured in any dish (-30 points)
- Food not safe to eat (undercooked) (-20 points per item)
- Less than 3 courses presented (-20 points per absent course)

## CHALLENGE FORMAT:

1. Arrive **30 minutes prior** to your start time to be fitted for a microphone and to sort out any last-minute details.
2. **Start Time:** The MC will introduce the challenge, competitors and Judges. The mystery ingredient will be revealed, then the MC will start the competition.
3. **5 minutes:** to "shop" for food from the kitchen pantry. Chefs may access pantry behind throughout the competition.
4. **5 minutes:** to prep and set up kitchens: preheat ovens, boil water, organize equipment, etc. No cooking or food prep is allowed at this time.
5. **50 minutes:** to cook and plate your meal, which is immediately presented to Judges upon completion.
6. **Judges Evaluate** the dishes behind the scenes while teams clear down kitchens and fair staff distribute any remaining food as samples (Fair staff will also help clean).
7. **Judges Announce the Winners** and ribbons will be presented.

## ADDITIONAL RULES & REGULATIONS:

- **Contestants may not be inebriated, and no alcoholic beverages may be consumed** onstage or backstage; however, it may be used as an ingredient. Failure to follow this rule may lead to disqualification and prizes will be forfeit.
- Kitchens will be assigned randomly before each round begins.
- No open flame is allowed, including torches and lighters (CA Fire Marshall Regulations).
- "3 Courses" consists of an appetizer, main dish and a dessert.
- Plate one of each course for judges to share. Please prepare enough food for roughly 4 standard servings so that food will be available for fair guests to sample.
- Only participating chef may be backstage (space limitations and food safety). For fairness, no "Sous Chefs" will be allowed.
- Chefs are encouraged to wear their logo chef jackets, hats, apparel, etc.
- Restaurants may send flyers, giveaways, gift certificates, etc. with their participating chefs for promotional purposes. No stickers are allowed.
- Each participant will receive 1 Admission Credential and 1 parking pass to enter the Fair the day of the Challenge. 2 additional admission credentials will be given to each participant for guests.

# California STATE★FAIR 2025 Professional Chef Cooking Challenge

APPLICATION DUE DATE: Accepted on a first-come, first-served basis

SUBMIT TO: Michelle Johnson  
1600 Exposition Blvd  
Sacramento, CA 95815

email: mejohnson@calexpo.com  
phone: 916.263.3189  
fax: 916.263.7903

Contact Name	
Professional Title	
Phone Number	Cell phone Number <i>(for day of challenge)</i>
Mailing Address	
City	State, Zip Code
Email Address	

Restaurant/Business Represented (and Chef name, if different than Contact Name)
Website

Preferred Preliminary Round on Friday, July 18, 2025:

11am-1pm       2pm-4pm       6pm-8pm

I hereby certify that all of the information submitted with my application to compete in the Professional Chef Cooking Challenge is true and correct.

I hereby certify that I have read the competition information and rules, and I will accept and comply with rules as written, and accept the decision of the Judges as final.

I hereby certify that if selected as the first place winner of my preliminary round that I will be available to compete in the final round on Saturday, July 19, 2025, from 6pm-8pm.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION AND STATE FAIR**  
**California's Kitchen**  
**2025 Letter of Understanding**

This Letter of Understanding is between CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION AND STATE FAIR, hereafter referred to as "Cal Expo" and \_\_\_\_\_ hereinafter referred to as "Demonstrator".  
(Demonstrator's full name)

Under this agreement, Demonstrator will participate as a competitor in the **Professional Chef Challenge Preliminaries** in the Cooking Theatre, Building B, Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95815 on the following Date(s) and Time(s):

- Friday, July 18, 2025,  
(Round Time)
- Demonstrator agrees to appear on Saturday, July 19, 2025 from 6:00pm-8:00pm, should they win their Qualifying Round.

Demonstrator will provide all of the following for the above stated demonstration:

1. Demonstrator agrees to arrive for check-in at the backstage area of the Cooking Theatre 30 minutes before the start of their competition round(s).
2. Demonstrator will adhere to all food safety standards, which are enforced by the Sacramento County Environmental Health Division.
3. Copies of any distributed materials to be handed out during the fair. Submit to the Program Coordinator.
4. A completed Megan's Law compliance form listing all individuals associated with the activities outlined in this agreement who will be backstage or interacting with fair guests.

Cal Expo will provide all of the following for the above stated demonstration:

- 1) Credentials for Fair entry, parking and any delivery appointments for above dates.
- 2) Mystery ingredient, basic pantry ingredients, tools, and demonstration kitchen.

Demonstrator and all participants agree to indemnify, defend and save harmless the State of California, California Exposition & State Fair, its officers, agents and employees from any and all claims and losses accruing or resulting to any and all contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, laborers, and any other person, firm or corporation furnishing or supplying work services, materials, or supplies in connection with the performance of this Agreement, and from any and all claims and losses accruing or resulting to any person, firm or corporation who may be injured or damaged by the Demonstrator and/or the Demonstrator's paid or volunteer assistants in the performance of this Agreement.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Demonstrator

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contracts Manager  
**California Exposition & State Fair**

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cal Expo Fairgrounds  
1600 Exposition Blvd.  
Sacramento, CA 95815

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT: Michelle Johnson  
[mejohanson@calexpo.com](mailto:mejohanson@calexpo.com)  
916-263-3189

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_



CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION & STATE FAIR  
**MEGAN'S LAW**  
 (MULTIPLE APPLICANT)

One of the fundamental responsibilities of the California Exposition & State Fair (Cal Expo) is to protect the public. In 1998, Cal Expo implemented a policy requiring that all persons conducting business with, employed by, or volunteering at Cal Expo shall provide the necessary personal information to enable their names to be searched through the Department of Justice's Megan's Law files. This file consists of records of individuals convicted of specific sex offenses who are required by Penal Code Section 290 to register as sex offenders.

Requesting Department Information		
NAME	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL
Michelle Johnson	916-263-3189	mejohanson@calexpo.com
DEPARTMENT REQUESTING INFORMATION		DATE OF REQUEST
Culinary Programs – Dept. 420		

MULTIPLE APPLICANT INFORMATION					
THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED LEGIBLY, WITH ALL INFORMATION REQUESTED, OR IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. SUBMIT TO THE CAL EXPO PERSONNEL OFFICE PRIOR TO THE EVENT					
COMPANY/ORGANIZATION/APPLICANTS NAME SUBMITTING:				PRODUCT/SERVICE PROVIDED:	
				Cooking Demonstration	
REPRESENTATIVE FULL NAME			PHONE NUMBER		
TYPE OF BUSINESS/GROUP/POSITION (CHECK ONE):					
CONTRACTOR    CONSULTANT    CONCESSIONAIRE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXHIBITOR    TENANT    VOLUNTEER    OTHER:					
PRINT CLEARLY. ALL ITEMS MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED OUT AND LEGIBLE.					
BY SIGNING BELOW, I CERTIFY THAT THIS IS AN ACCURATE LISTING OF ALL PERSONS SCHEDULED TO WORK/VOLUNTEER FOR LISTED ORGANIZATION WITH CAL EXPO. FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL BE CAUSE FOR REJECTION OF THE ENTIRE APPLICATION.					
REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE:				DATE:	
				___/___/___	
APPLICANT FULL NAME:				DATE:	
				___/___/___	
DATE OF BIRTH:	ZIP CODE:	DRIVER'S LICENSE/ID #:	ISSUING STATE:	PHONE NUMBER:	
___/___/___				( ) -	
APPLICANT FULL NAME:				DATE:	
				___/___/___	
DATE OF BIRTH:	ZIP CODE:	DRIVER'S LICENSE/ID #:	ISSUING STATE:	PHONE NUMBER:	
___/___/___				( ) -	
APPLICANT FULL NAME:				DATE:	
				___/___/___	
DATE OF BIRTH:	ZIP CODE:	DRIVER'S LICENSE/ID #:	ISSUING STATE:	PHONE NUMBER:	
___/___/___				( ) -	