



**FOOD
FIESTA
2025**

GUIDEBOOK



***Fantasy
Feasts***



**SAT JAN 25
at SCREC**



***Where will your
food adventure
take you?***



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources

FOOD FIESTA

Food Fiesta is both a food competition and a showmanship event. In many ways it is more of a mock interview than a food judging competition. Youth present their creations before a pair of evaluators where they are asked to describe the process of how they made their dish and how they dealt with the problems that may have arisen. This one-on-one interaction with adult leaders provides a unique opportunity for youth to practice career readiness skills like what it's like to perform at an interview. Entrants in all categories including Cupcake Wars will be required to complete this interaction with the evaluators. This document should help prepare 4-H members, parents, adult leaders, and evaluators for Food Fiesta.

ABOUT THE THEME

Fantasy Feasts

Have you ever been reading a book and they were eating a food that sounded so delicious you wanted to try it? Or have you watched a show or a movie and thought the same thing. This is the year to try out those tasty treats. Here are some examples:

- Blue Chocolate Chip Cookies from The Percy Jackson Official Cookbook
- Aunt Beru's Harvest Bake from Star Wars Everyday
- Choji's Chips from the Naruto Unofficial Cookbook
- Prairie Christmas Gingerbread from My Prairie Cookbook (Little House)
- Gagh from the Star Trek Cookbook
- Whomping Willow Soup from the Official Harry Potter Cookbook

There are so many fun and fantastical feasty dishes to choose from. Let your imagination soar while creating your dish.

Who is eligible?

All 4-H members are welcome, especially those enrolled in Foods/Nutrition, Cake Decorating, Breads and Food Preservation projects.

Primary members (ages 5-8) are welcome to participate but will only receive feedback. They will not be evaluated with scores.

Age Divisions

- Primary (5-8)
- Junior (9-10)
- Intermediate (11-13)
- Senior (14 and up)

Cost

All entries are \$5.25 each.

Entrants may have up to 3 entries as long as Table Setting is one of them.

Class Descriptions

1. Favorite Foods

Prepare a favorite food from any source and bring one complete recipe of the food already cooked or prepared. Preparing something the member has prepared many times at home is a good idea. No food preparation will be allowed at the event. The container the food is served in will not be evaluated. The members will be evaluated on favorite food (quality, texture, eye appeal, and flavor), level of difficulty for age and experience, food safety knowledge, serving skills, knowledge and skills talking to the evaluator, and a clean and tidy appearance. Members should bring serving utensils and potholders (if serving a hot dish). It is helpful to have your prepared dish and serving equipment on a sturdy tray or box, so it can be easily and safely carried.

2. Food Preservation

The directions for Food Preservation are the same as for favorite food, except the member will prepare a dish using preserved food and will bring one sealed jar of the preserved food. Products normally served along with other foods, such as jams, jellies, relishes and pickles, are to be opened and placed on a second serving dish. Members should then bring an additional sealed jar for judging purposes. The jar or container should be labeled with 1) Name of the Recipe, 2) Date Prepared, 3) Type of preservation method used (i.e., water bath, pressure, etc.), and 4) Processing time. See page 12 for more information.

3. Informal/Formal Table Setting/Theme Setting

Select an occasion or use the Food Fiesta Theme. Prepare a complete table setting entry, including appropriate balanced menu card, using centerpiece and table settings for two. Entries will be evaluated on creativity, use of color, table setting etiquette, knowledge in talking to the evaluators, and a neat well groomed appearance. Formal or informal table setting can be used. Theme table setting entry will be evaluated on the appropriateness toward the Food Fiesta Theme. **Members MUST bring their own card table to set up.** Members must also set up their table themselves, parents or friends are not allowed to assist. See page 11 for more information.

4. Fantasy Feasts

Please follow the directions for Favorite Food as listed in item number 1. However, in this category you will be creating a dish from your favorite themed cookbook. In addition to creating your dish when submitting your recipe online, you **MUST** also upload a cover picture and table of contents of the themed cookbook you are referencing.

5. Cupcake Wars

Come prepared to decorate 2 to 4 different themed cupcakes, depending on member age. Each member must bring **ALL** their own decorating supplies. Cupcakes will be provided. **All decorations must be edible, no plastic sticks or store-bought figures allowed.** The four themes are:

1. 4-H
2. 4th of July
3. Fantasy Feasts
4. Dragons and/or Mermaids

A time limit of 20 minutes will be given for the decorating time. Primary/junior applicants must decorate 2 cupcakes, each in a different theme of their choice from the list above; Intermediates must pick 3 themes, and Seniors must decorate 4 cupcakes representing all 4 themes. Once the timed event is over, entrants will speak with the evaluators and give their personal presentation of themselves and their cupcakes.

Rules and Guidelines

General Guidelines

- Members will need to submit their recipe with online registration. A google form is used for entry. The field for recipes is a required field. Those entrants only entering cupcake wars can upload a crazy picture of themselves or their favorite recipe that they like to make.
- ***Members entering into the Fantasy Feasts category must also upload pictures from the cover and table of contents of the themed cookbook they are using their recipe from.***
- The prepared item must be made entirely by the 4-H member. In general, no help should be given except for safety issues, such as oven handling or cutting with knives for primary members (age 5-8 years old).
- The participant must carry their own prepared food or items for table setting into the venue.
- On the day of Food Fiesta, participants will bring their prepared dish to the Food Fiesta site. They will be assigned an appointment time via email within the week

before the Food Fiesta event. Each participant (including those only participating in Cupcake Wars) will meet individually with two evaluators who will ask them about how the participant prepared their dish, what ingredients were used, the type of dish (such as was it a main dish, dessert, side dish, etc.), and other general questions about their entry.

Food Safety and Handling

- Members should follow the Food Safety guidelines in this packet to prevent bacteria and food poisoning.
- Potholders and table protectors should be used when handling a hot dish.
- Appropriate serving utensils (such as a tongs, fork, spoon and/or knife) should be used. Highly recommend food safety gloves for those that may need or want them.
- All utensils, potholders and towels should be clean.
- It is recommended to use a travel/carrying container to transport dishes.
- Members should not touch their mouth or face during their interview process.

Member Appearance/Attire

- Members should wear a clean 4-H uniform or any other appropriate interview attire clothing.
- ***Members entering in the Fantasy Feasts theme are encouraged to cosplay to go along with their themed cookbook. Cosplay however, should not hinder their vision or ability to present their food.***
- Hair should be pulled back and away from the face.
- Nail Polish should be removed, and hands/nails should be clean.

Preparation Tips & Food Fiesta Day of Event Guidelines

- Practice your presentation at least the night before.
- Pack everything up the night before and have it all ready to go.
- Follow Food Safety guidelines to prevent food poisoning. Perishable or food needing refrigerating should stay in the refrigerator until you are ready to leave your home to go to Food Fiesta.
- Please mark your items for identification so you can easily keep track of your items.

Before you leave home, ensure you:

- Prepare and bring your dish and any serving items you will need, such as serving spoons, tongs, ladles, knives to cut your food, etc.
- Pack a box containing all the things you need so you can keep all your things together and for ease in carrying your items to the event. A sturdy serving tray or shallow basket with a low edge large enough to carry all your items also works well.
- Bring potholders and a table protector, if you have a hot dish.
- Make sure your utensils, towels, potholders, etc., are clean.
- Check your uniform or interview attire and make sure it is clean and neat.
- Ensure your hair is clean and tidy (if you have long hair pull it back and secure it neatly).
- No Nail Polish. If you wear polish you will lose points.
- Wash your hands to ensure they are clean before starting the interview presentation.
- Optional: you can pack two attractive paper plates, forks/spoons and napkins to serve your item to the judges. Make sure the plates are big enough to accommodate serving size.

Food Safety

Staphylococcus and Salmonella are the two most common types of bacteria which cause food poisoning.

How Food Poisoning Develops

1. Bacteria enter food. Staphylococcus and Salmonella lurk everywhere in the nose, throat, skin, utensils, clothes and occasionally food products.
2. Bacteria grows and multiplies with:
 - FOOD – Bacteria will grow in almost any food except ones that are very acidic (pickles). Moist proteins are particularly vulnerable (meats, fish, eggs, poultry, milk, cream, cream sauce, salad dressings, mayonnaise).
 - MOISTURE – Bacteria won't grow in dried foods, but may grow if moisture is added.
 - TEMPERATURE – Lukewarm or room temperatures are ideal for bacterial growth. Food poisoning bacteria does not grow readily at temperatures above 140 degrees and below 40 degrees.
 - TIME – In less than 2 hours, food may be unsafe if the right conditions prevail.

How you can prevent Food Poisoning

Your only protection against this unseen enemy is proper food handling:

1. Avoid contamination. Use strictly fresh ingredients, clean equipment and clean hands. Avoid sneezing or coughing into food and keep pets, sick persons, insects, and dust out of the food preparation area.
2. KEEP HOT FOODS HOT – above 140 degrees.
3. KEEP COLD FOODS COLD – below 40 degrees.
Take special precautions with foods when they are refrigerated and reheated. If a hot food is prepared the day before, refrigerate immediately when removed from the range or oven. Then, just before leaving home, reheat the food thoroughly.
4. To carry hot or cold foods, use well-insulated containers. Cardboard cartons thickly lined with newspapers work well.

THE PRESENTATION INTERVIEW

The event is officiated by teams of two evaluators. Members should arrive early to check in, get settled and wait in the waiting area to be called. Evaluators will be sitting at a table and will call the member up from the waiting area when they are ready for them. Members will then approach the table and put their food item in front of the evaluators along with the utensils you will need to serve. At this time members should introduce themselves. Members should share their:

- Name
- Age
- Name of club
- Number of years in 4-H
- Number of times they have participated in Food Fiesta

Once introductions are complete members should share with the evaluators what they made, the ingredients and how they made it. Note: members should know their recipe, ingredients, measurements and cooking procedures, times and temperatures from memory.

Following this the evaluators will ask questions that relate directly to the entry or the project. The responses to the initial questions will give judges leads for follow-up questions. Included in this packet are some sample questions evaluators may ask. Evaluators will select the questions that will give them the kind of information necessary to best evaluate the entry.

- What food groups are represented by your food entry?

- What type of food is it (for example: dessert, main dish, side dish)
- Why did you choose this recipe?
- Have you made it before?
- Do you plan to make it again?
- What temperature is it safe to store your food item at?
- What kind of meal would you serve this with? When?
- Did you have trouble making it?
- What was the hardest part about making it?
- Is your dish representative of a certain time or place?
- Describe any unusual tools used to make the entry.

Members will next demonstrate their serving skills by serving the evaluators a portion of their entry. Members should be able to comfortably serve the evaluators their prepared food. Members should avoid using their fingers to push the food. It is appropriate for members to use a fork or knife if needed to help slide the serving size portion off of the serving utensil onto the evaluator's plates. Additionally, throughout the presentation interview, members should remember to avoid touching their mouth, face or hair. Members will be marked down for "licking" fingers, playing with their hair, etc.

Once the interview is complete, members will return to the waiting area while the evaluators confer. Once the evaluators have a chance to confer, members will be asked to return to the table and the evaluators will provide the 4-H member with feedback. The Presentation Interview will take approximately 15 minutes. Those members who have entered into a Food Presentation or Preservation category can then take their dish to a table in the breezeway where the remainder of their dish can be shared with others.

EVALUATIONS

Food Fiesta is a competition, however it is not a competition where participants are evaluated against each other, instead participants are individually evaluated against a standard. This means that everyone could receive a blue ribbon if everyone did an outstanding job and received high points from the evaluators. Feedback is given to the participants about how they can do better next time. While evaluating, remember emotions are high and members may be nervous. As a Food Fiesta evaluator, we ask that you work to:

- Be a good listener.
- Use words members will understand.
- Focus on a friendly tone of voice and smile.

- Ask open-ended questions. Try to avoid questions that can be answered with just a yes or no. Ask...How? Why? When? Where?
- Keep the members' age and experience in mind while evaluating the standards for them.
- Help 4-H'ers recognize their accomplishments (both their efforts and successes). • Provide positive feedback.
- Help the members develop standards for self-evaluation in the future and guide them to consider what they might learn next.
- Score according to the quality and description of the food rather than comparing one product or participant with another.
- Be objective. Fair judging rules out personal preference. You may be called upon to evaluate a food you dislike, or a food prepared differently from your favorite way.
- To help the members improve, always explain why an entry has been given a certain rating. This can be stated verbally when giving feedback, but should also be reflected in the notes on their evaluation sheets.

Common Terms used for judging food products.

- **Appearance** of food determines the acceptance or rejection of the food before it is tasted. First impressions are important! The color, the crust or outer covering, the apparent dryness or moistness of the product, the shape or volume, or the size of the piece affects the general appearance of the food. When a garnish is used, it should enhance the appearance of the food.
- **Texture** is the way food feels to the touch and mouth. The fineness or coarseness of the grain or fiber of a food influences the texture. Grain refers to the cell structure. How big is the cell, how thick are the walls of the cell, how evenly are the cells distributed throughout the mass? Answers to these questions help to describe texture. Fiber is thread-like structure of the cells of the food. For example, you can readily see the fibers in such foods as meat, asparagus and celery.
- **Crumb** is a very small piece of bread, cake, cookie, or other food. By examining the crumb of a food carefully, you can describe the "feel" of a food.
- **Consistency** of a food is important to texture and to appearance. Consistency is the degree of firmness, density, or viscosity (the flow) of the food.
- **Tenderness** of food can be measured by the force needed to break, bite, or chew it. Foods that can crumble easily may be too dry or too tender.
- **Flavor** of a food is a combination of its taste and aroma. There are four basic taste sensations: sour or acidic, salty, bitter, or sweet. Certain odors are associated with certain tastes. For example, the odor of milk may tell us that it is sweet or sour without ever tasting it. Another flavor classification might be spicy, flowery,

fruity, resinous, foul or burnt.

- **Temperature** of a food is in general the temperature at which the food is normally served.

Descriptive terms used in judging food products.

- **Appearance:** aspect, or contour. Words that may help you describe the appearance include: broken * lustrous * cloud * muddy * opaque * plump * curdled * rough * dull * scum * frothy * sediment * shiny.
- **Odor:** volatile substances affecting the sense of smell. Words that may help you describe the odor include: acid * fragrant * strong * burnt * delicate.
- **Color:** normal for substance, pleasing to the eye. Words that may help you describe the color include: bright * creamy * discolored * dull * faded * gray * greenish * golden * brown * normal * off-color * shriveled * shrunken * smooth * sparkling * stringy * translucent * greasy * acrid * weak * pale * rich * snowy * white * yellow.
- **Consistency:** degree of firmness. Words that may help you describe the consistency include: density * viscosity * fluidity * plasticity * resistant to movement * brittle * gummy * soft * crisp * liquid * soggy * crumbly * rubbery * hard * curdled * runny * thin * firm * syrupy * frothy * solid * full-bodied * stiff.
- **Flavor:** quality which affects the relish, zest or savor, and is a combination of the taste, odor, and texture experience. Words that may help you describe the flavor include: astringent * flat * stale * bland * mellow * starch * blended * pungent * stimulating * brisk * raw * strong * burned * rich * tasteless * delicate * scorched.
- **Grain:** structural quality of the food product, such as crystals in candies and ice creams, size of pores in cake and bread, and thickness of cell walls in breads or cakes.
- **Moistness:** degree of moisture. In fruit and meats, this is referred to as juiciness. Words that may help you describe the degree of moisture in the product include: amorphous * fine * granular * coarse * foamy * heavy * crystalline * grainy * porous.
- **Lightness:** well leavened, not dense, having low specific gravity. Words that may help you describe the lightness of food product include: fluffy * light in weight for size * porous * dry * watery * moist.
- **Shape:** proportionate dimensions. Words that may help you describe the shape include: broken * irregular * even * oval * flat * round.
- **Size:** Words that may help you describe the size include irregular * small * medium * large * uniform.
- **Taste:** sensations produced by substances listed. Words that may help you describe the shape include: bitter * salty * sour * sweet.
- **Tenderness:** ease with which can be cut, broken, pulled apart, or chewed. Words that may help you describe the tenderness include tender * tough.

- **Texture:** feel of substance between fingers or mouth. The differences are caused by grain, content, moisture, tenderness, etc. Words that may help you describe the texture include: brittle * chewy * fibrous * firm * grainy * granular * limp * lumpy * mealy * mushy * oily * pasty * rubbery * slimy * smooth * soggy * sugary * stringy.

AWARDS

The following point breakdown will be used to award medals and ribbons at Food Fiesta. Members will be eligible to receive a medal or a ribbon, but not both for the same entry.

Medals will be awarded to participants who receive points in the following ranges.

- Gold Medal: 96-100

Ribbons will be awarded according to the following point breakdown:

- Blue ribbon: 90-95 points
- Red ribbon: 80-89 points
- White ribbon: 79 points or lower

TABLE SETTING

The following guide is a basic set of rules for setting the table. It can be used in formal as well as informal situations. An attractive table adds to the enjoyment of a meal. To set the table, the 4- H'er needs a "place setting" for each person. ***Reminder: Members Must bring their own card table to set up.***

A table setting should include the following items:

- Dinnerware (plates, cups, saucers, and bowls)
- Glassware (glasses of all shapes and sizes)
- Flatware (forks, spoons, and knives)
- Napkins
- Centerpiece (group setting)
- Placemats
- Place cards

The following rules for setting a table correspond to the numbers seen in the table setting illustration.

- The flatware, plates, and napkins should be one inch from the edge of the table.
- The plate is always in the center of the place setting.

- The dinner fork is placed at the left of the plate.
- If a salad fork is used, it is placed to the left of the dinner fork.
- The napkin is placed to the left of the fork, with the fold on the left. It can also go under a fork, or on top of the plate.
- The knife is placed to the right of the plate with the sharp blade facing in towards the plate.
- The teaspoon is placed to the right of the knife.
- If a soup spoon is needed, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon.
- The soup bowl may be placed to the right of the teaspoon.
- The drinking glass is placed at the tip of the knife.
- If a salad plate is used, place it just above the tip of the fork.
- The cup or mug is placed to the top right of the spoons.

CA 4-H Table Setting and Etiquette Project guide

<http://4h.ucanr.edu/files/190863.pdf>

Please read through this link to help in planning out each piece of your table setting.

<https://www.atchison.k-state.edu/4-h/projects/placesetting.html>

Food Preservation Safety

Entries must use USDA guidelines.

<https://nchfp.uga.edu/resources/category/usda-guide>

OR

University of California Kitchen Food Safety

<https://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/consumers/food-safety-home/kitchen-food-safety>

Products that have been water bathed or pressure canned must be in a clear, Mason type threaded home-canning jar sealed with a new vacuum lid consisting of 2 pieces (metal screw ring band and metal lid). All other types of jars will be disqualified. (This does not apply to non-heat processed fermented foods like sauerkraut).

The recipe used must be a current “tested recipe”. Current “tested recipes” are those that have been scientifically tested by a laboratory and found safe for home preserving. As technology and our understanding of science progresses, the food preservation safety guidelines continue to evolve as well. This is why it is important to use a recipe that is currently published from a reputable source. Sources of tested recipes can be found at:

<https://www.ballmasonjars.com/recipes?fdid=recipes>

<https://www.kraftheinz.com/sure-jell>

<http://nchfp.uga.edu/>

NOTE: Just because a recipe is published in a book, a magazine, or on the web does NOT mean it has been tested. Using and following “tested recipes” is the only way to ensure your preserved product is safe.

Any alteration or deviation from the tested recipe must fall within the USDA or University of California Food preservation guidelines or be listed as an alternative option within the tested recipe itself. Examples of acceptable alterations would be swapping hot peppers for mild peppers in the same quantity or adding a small amount of dried herbs. If you have a question about an acceptable alteration, please email the UCCE Master Food Preservers of Orange County at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/MFPOC/>