



2026 Entry Timeline

Entry deadlineMonday, June 8, by 6 p.m.

Entry deliveryMonday, June 22, 9 - 11 a.m. (note new time)

Fair datesJuly 17 - Aug. 16 (closed Mondays and Tuesdays)

BY ENTERING YOU ARE AGREEING TO THE TERMS AND RULES PRESENTED IN THIS GUIDEBOOK.

Entry fees.....\$10 adult • Fees are non-refundable.

Entry limit.....Adults: one (1) entry per class

Contact.....Culinary Arts Department • Kylie Gilliam, Program Coordinator

culinary@ocfair.com

Office 714-708-1553 • 714-708-1621 (during Fair)

OC Fair & Event Center • 88 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rules & Guidelines.....	1
Eligibility / Entry Limit.....	2
Entry Fees / OC Fair Exhibitor Ticket.....	2
How to Enter / Help Entering.....	3
Entry Delivery.....	4
Judging.....	5
Awards / Awards Ceremony.....	6
How to Prepare.....	7
How to Label Your Entry.....	8
Adult Divisions.....	9-11
•Division 1001 Dried Fruits, Vegetables, Meat Jerky & Herb Blends	
•Division 1002 Canned Vegetables, Fruits & Tomatoes	
•Division 1003 Fruit Jam	
•Division 1004 Specialty Jam	
•Division 1005 Jelly	
•Division 1006 Canned Fruit Spreads & Other Products	
•Division 1007 Marmalade, Preserve & Conserve	
•Division 1008 Pickles & Relish	
•Division 1009 Salsa & Chutney	
•Division 1010 Hot Sauce, Small Batch	
•Division 1011 Sauces & Condiments	
•Division 1012 Liqueur	



RULES & GUIDELINES

1. [Local](#) and [state rules](#) govern this competition.
2. Exhibitors are responsible for reading and abiding by the guidelines stated herein.
3. Exhibitors are responsible for entering their items in the correct class.
4. If assistance is needed to determine the division and/or class, please contact the Culinary Arts Department at 714-708-1621 or email culinary@ocfair.com.
5. **Entry fees are non-refundable.**
There will be no refunds for any reason. By entering the competition, the exhibitor is accepting the no-refund policy.
6. Entries previously exhibited at OC Fair are not eligible.
7. **Home canning jars:**
 - Use jar size specified for each division and class.
 - Use a new 2-piece vacuum-sealed lid (clear of rust).
 - Use clear jars only; colored jars are not acceptable.
 - Do not use colored lids or rings.
 - Do not use Ball® Elite Jars.
 - Use the label on page 8.
8. **Exhibitors must follow USDA Preservation Guidelines available at nchfp.uga.edu.**
 - No freezer-preserved foods will be allowed.
 - No open kettle or inversion canned items will be accepted (these techniques do not process the jar after it is filled and therefore do not destroy pathogens in the food).
 - Steam canning is USDA-approved and is allowed in the competition.
9. **Canned entries containing the following are ineligible:**
 - Protein items such as meat or eggs (except for lemon curd)
 - Pumpkin, mashed squash or potatoes
 - Pesto-based products
 - Dairy, chocolate or caramel
 - Flour, cornstarch or thickeners other than pectin or Clear-Jel
 - Avocado
 - White peaches
10. Preserved food entries must have been prepared within the past year (after June 2025).
11. All entries must be home-prepared and not commercially canned. Entries do not need to be from an original recipe. Items produced for sale are eligible as long as these criteria are met.
12. No duplicates. Exhibitors cannot enter the same recipe in multiple categories. Members of the same household should refrain from entering the same product in different classes in order to maintain the integrity of the competition.
13. Canned items will not be returned to exhibitors.
14. **Hold harmless.** Although reasonable efforts will be taken to safeguard exhibitors' property against loss, damage or theft, neither the State of California nor OC Fair & Event Center will be responsible for any loss, damage or theft of exhibitors' property brought on the premises during the period of OC Fair.



ELIGIBILITY

Adult divisions:

Open to Southern California residents ages 18 or older..

ENTRY LIMIT

Adult divisions **One (1) entry per class**

- Adult exhibitors may enter in several divisions and classes but may enter only one item in each class.
- If two (2) or more entries are made in the same class, only the first entry will be accepted.
- Other entries in the class will be deleted by the entry office and refunds will not be issued.

ENTRY FEES

Adult divisions **\$10 per entry**

- Entry fees are payable online with a credit card (Visa, Mastercard or American Express).
- *No refunds will be issued.*

OC FAIR EXHIBITOR TICKET

Exhibitors will receive one (1) OC Fair admission ticket at the time of entry delivery.

- One (1) ticket per exhibitor, not per entry.
- Ticket is good any day during the OC Fair and does not require a reservation.
- Tickets are provided to participants to view the results of their efforts.
- Tickets must not be sold.



HOW TO ENTER

Online entry deadline: Monday, June 8, by 6 p.m.

Click on the link to go to the entry homepage ocfair.fairwire.com

Step 1. Register

- Last year's accounts are no longer valid. All exhibitors must create a new account.
- Entries must be submitted under the name of the individual who will be exhibiting.
- Do not use business or fictitious names.
- There are no team entries.
- Enter the information carefully and proofread the name to ensure accuracy on exhibit display labels.
- Email will be used to send important information. Check your spam folders and whitelist emails coming from @ocfair.com.

Step 2. Entries

- Input your entry (or entries) in the proper department, division and class along with other required information.

Step 3. Cart review

- Review your entries. You can add, edit, delete or save your entries.
- When satisfied, click the "CHECK OUT" button.

Step 4. Payment

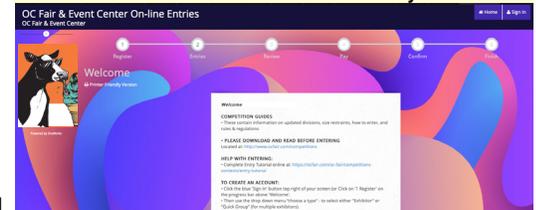
- Enter your credit card information (Mastercard, Visa or American Express).
- An email notification and confirmation will be sent immediately after the online payment is received.
- Check your spam folder if the email confirmation does not arrive shortly after submitting payment.

Step 5. Confirmation

- Sign by typing "YES" in the "Agreement to Terms" box.
- DO NOT click the "SUBMIT" button multiple times as you will be charged.
- On the resulting confirmation page you can print a receipt.

***You can log back into your account to see your entries.
For any changes, contact entries@ocfair.com; do not re-enter to make corrections as you will be charged.***

The numbered steps along top of page are clickable and show the current section you are on



fairwire.com welcome page

HELP ENTERING

For additional help, review this detailed step-by-step guide:

- [Entry tutorial](#)

Phone: 714-708-1553 (during office hours)

Email: entries@ocfair.com



ENTRY DELIVERY

Delivery date: Monday, June 22, 9- 11 a.m.

- One (1) participation ribbon will be given to each exhibitor on entry delivery day.
- Late deliveries will not be accepted.
- Entries may be delivered by someone other than the exhibitor.

Claim checks

- Claim checks will be provided when entries are delivered.
- Claim checks or photo ID are required to pick up judging comment sheets and potential ribbons during the OC Fair.

Entry delivery

Enter Gate 5 and follow the directional signs to the Anaheim Building (building 4 on the map). Note delivery location has changed from previous years.





JUDGING

Qualified judges are utilized to judge all culinary exhibits and special contests.

Adult divisions

Entries are placed using the American Judging System, where exhibits are ranked one against another.

- First, second, third place and honorable mention(s) may be awarded in each class if judges so determine.
- First place winners will compete for "Division Winner."
- Those chosen for Division Winner will compete for "Best of Show."

Judging criteria

Read the [Culinary Arts Judging Criteria](#) for each division.

Comment sheets

- Comment sheets for each entry will be made available at the information desk in Culinary Arts.
- Comment sheets are notes from the judges on the entry's performance in the competition.
- They are available for pick up, with claim check or photo ID, any day of the Fair. Final pick up day is Thursday, Aug. 20, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Reasons for disqualification of entry

- Late deliveries
- Commercially canned entries
- Incorrect lids or jars
- Labels that do not include correct information
- Incorrect processing method or processing time
- Opened, leaking, dirty jars or rusted lids
- Jars with added embellishment or decoration (not including embossed decoration from the manufacturer)
- Use of ineligible ingredients. If an entry is disqualified after judging is complete, the judge will not change the status of awards given for other entries.
- Judges reserve the right to remove or disqualify any entry in violation of the rules, in poor taste or not in accordance with the competition standards.

Conditions for ineligibility to receive awards

- **HAS INCORRECT HEADSPACE**
- Does not match division or class
- Contains mushy or soft pickles
- Contains bubbles or air pockets
- Contains foreign object (e.g., hair, insects)
- Is considered unsafe to taste by any judge

Reassignment of entry division or class

Judges and/or the program coordinator have the option of reassigning an entry to a more appropriate division or class or combining divisions or classes to create an adequate judging pool. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of exhibitors to enter work in the appropriate class. Failure to enter the appropriate class may result in disqualification.



AWARDS

Adult Divisions

Best of Show	\$100
Division Winner	\$50
First Place	\$25
Second Place	\$15
Third Place	\$10
Honorable Mention	Ribbon

- Ribbons and comment sheets may be picked up any day of the OC Fair during open hours with a claim check or photo ID.
- Final pick up day is Thursday, Aug. 20, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Award checks will be made payable to the exhibitor whose name is indicated on the entry form and mailed within 30 business days after the close of the 2026 OC Fair.
- Total premiums of \$600 or more to any individual will be paid only after a completed **Payee Data Record** form has been received.

Judging results

- Entries will be selected for display in the OC Promenade with any awards received.
- Results will be posted online around the second week of OC Fair at ocfair.com/results.
- ***Please do not call, email or message OC Fair via social media for competition results. We receive a high volume of inquiries daily.***

AWARDS CEREMONY

Sunday, Aug. 16, at noon.

- Hosted on the OC Promenade Main Stage.
- Best of Show award recipients will be invited, given two (2) tickets to attend and be recognized at the ceremony.
- Invitations will be sent to the email provided at entry registration.
- All exhibitors and the general public are welcome to attend the ceremony.
- Additional guests should purchase Fair admission tickets in advance.





HOW TO PREPARE

Preservation methods

See the National Center for Home Food Preservation for specifics at nchfp.uga.edu.

Canned entries must be processed using one of the following canning methods:

- Water bath method: high-acid foods
- Steam canning (now approved by the USDA): high-acid foods
- Pressure canner method: low-acid foods
- Dehydrator, oven or sun: dried foods

Jars

- Submit one (1) jar for each item entered for judging.
- Use a mason-type threaded canning jar sealed with a new vacuum lid consisting of two (2) pieces (metal screw ring and metal lid). Both the screw ring and lid must be on the jar. Other types of jars will be disqualified.
- Do not use rusted rings or colored glass jars, lids or rings.
- Do not use Ball® wide mouth Elite Collection Design.
- Do not use paraffin seals.
- Use jar size listed in each division.
- Note: jars will not be returned.
- Open jars will be donated to the Master Food Preserver program for training purposes.

Proper headspace

- ¼-inch headspace: jams, jellies, preserves, conserves, marmalades and fruit butters processed in a water bath or steam canner.
- ½-inch headspace: pickles, relishes, sauces, juices, fruit and tomatoes processed in a water bath or steam canner.
- 1-inch headspace: low-acid foods processed in a pressure canner.

Labels for jars

- All Preserved Food entry jars must be correctly labeled (*please use label provided on the next page*).
- Place label securely on the side of the jar (*clear adhesive packaging tape is recommended*).
- Personalized labels, decals and decorations are not allowed on the sides or tops of the jars. (*This does not apply to the design printed by the manufacturer on the top of the jar lids.*)
- Do not add your name to labels.

Display

- After judging, entries will be displayed in the OC Promenade.
- A placement sticker will be attached to the exhibitor's name card.
- Disqualified entries will not be displayed.
- Food items will be discarded when they deteriorate.
- There are no guarantees that the entry will be displayed.



HOW TO LABEL YOUR ENTRY

Food label forms

Complete and print form online or fill out the label below. Attach label to the side of canning jar with clear packaging tape. [Preserved food label fillable PDF](#)

Include the following information

- Date preserved: the day that the canned item was prepared and preserved.
- Processing time: time in canner, dehydrator.
- Product: name of the canned item (e.g., strawberry jam).
- Preservation method (if applicable): describe how the item was preserved (e.g., water bath canner, pressure canner, steam canner, dehydration method).
- Pounds of pressure (if applicable): identify the weight used in pressure canner (PSI).
- Elevation (if applicable): include the elevation at which the entry was processed. Note: processing times should reflect adjustments for elevation when appropriate. If unsure of the elevation at which the entry was preserved, use an online tool such as whatismyelevation.com.
- Ingredients: list ingredients in order from greatest to least weight or volume (e.g., sugar, strawberries, pectin, lemon juice). If more room is needed for the ingredients list, include an additional 3-by-5 inch card attached by rubber band to the entry.

Fill out one (1) label for each entry and tape it to the front of the jar.

Preserved Food & Liqueur Label	
Date Preserved: _____	Processing Time: _____
Product: _____	
Preservation Method: _____	
Pounds of Pressure: _____	Elevation: _____
Ingredients: _____	

[Download fillable PDF](#)



Adult Divisions

Eligibility Open to Southern California residents ages 18 or older.

Entry limit One (1) entry per class.

Entry fee \$10 per entry

- Rules & guidelines on page 1 apply.
- Duplication of items in more than one class is not allowed.

DIVISION 1001

Dried Fruit, Vegetables, Meat Jerky & Herb Blends

- Submit ½-pint, 1-pint or 1-quart jar as appropriate to product.
- Dried food products must be stored in labeled jars for entry.
- Entry does not need to be canned/sealed.
- Color characteristic and shape are important.
- Jar should contain little air.

Class 01: Dried fruit, fruit leather & dried vegetables

e.g., pineapple jerky, banana chips, strawberry mango twizzlers, apple, apricot, vegan bacon, sun-dried tomatoes, cauliflower popcorn

- Submit 2-4 ounces.

Class 02: Dry rubs, seasoning mix or blend

e.g., brisket rub, chimichurri, salad dressing, kimchi powder, bloody mary rimmer

- Submit 1-2 ounces, using at least 3 herbs.

Class 03: Meat jerky, spicy or sweet

e.g., beef, turkey, pork, cajun, chipotle, teriyaki, biltong

- Submit 2 ounces

DIVISION 1002

Canned Vegetables & Fruit

- Submit 1-pint or 1-quart jar.
- Tomatoes may be pressure or water-bath canned using a USDA approved processing method.
- To ensure safe acidity in whole, crushed or juiced tomatoes, bottled lemon juice or citric acid must be added. This also applies to Asian pears and figs.
- Low-acid vegetables must be pressure canned using a USDA-approved processing method.
- Specify method used, time and pressure (if applicable) on label.
- Note hot or cold pack, if applicable.
- Pressure canned items will be judged on appearance, color, pack and liquid. They will not be tasted.

Class 01: Tomatoes, with or without additions or marinara

- ½-inch headspace

Class 02: All other vegetables

- 1-inch headspace
- Must be processed in a pressure canner.

Class 03: Fruit, specify

e.g., peaches, apricots, plums

- ½-inch headspace
- May be packed with light or heavy syrup.

DIVISION 1003

Fruit Jam

- Submit ½-pint or 1-pint jar, with ¼-inch headspace.
- Jams contain crushed or chopped fruit cooked with sugar with or without added pectin.

Class 01: Single fruit, specify

e.g., strawberry, blackberry, loganberry, kiwi, pomegranate, boysenberry, apricot, plum, fig, mango, guava, etc.

Class 02: Mixed fruit, specify

DIVISION 1004

Specialty Jam

- Submit ½-pint or 1-pint jar, with ¼-inch headspace.
- Jams contain crushed or chopped fruit cooked with sugar with or without added pectin.

Class 01: Spiced or pepper jam

e.g., jalapeño

Class 02: Low or no-sugar jam

No honey allowed.

Class 03: Other, specify item

e.g., fruit cocktail, rose petal, tomato



Adult Divisions

Eligibility Open to Southern California residents ages 18 or older.

Entry limit One (1) entry per class.

Entry fee \$10 per entry

- Rules & guidelines on page 1 apply.
- Duplication of items in more than one (1) class is not allowed.

DIVISION 1005

Jelly

- Submit ½-pint or 1-pint jar, with ¼-inch headspace.
- Jellies are translucent spreads made from fruit juice.

Class 01: Single fruit, specify item

Class 02: Mixed fruit & berry, specify item

Class 03: Pepper

e.g., jalapeño, red pepper

- Jelly may contain small pieces of pepper.

Class 04: Other, specify item

e.g., wine, Champagne, honey, low sugar, mint, herb prickly pear, etc.

DIVISION 1006

Canned Fruit Spreads & Other Products

- Submit ½-pint or larger.
- No pumpkin butter allowed.
- See Division 1011 for dessert sauce.

Class 01: Citrus curd

e.g., lemon, Meyer lemon, orange, lime

- ½-inch headspace

Class 02: Apple butter

- ¼-inch headspace

Class 03: Other fruit butters

e.g., mango, peach, pear, cranapple, cherry

- ¼-inch headspace

Class 05: Other, specify item

e.g., apple sauce, cranberry, pie filling, etc.

DIVISION 1007

Marmalade, Preserve & Conserve

- Submit ½-pint or 1-pint jar, with ¼-inch headspace.
- Marmalades contain small pieces of soft fruit and peel that are evenly suspended in transparent jelly.
- Preserves contain whole or uniform-size pieces of fruit in clear, slightly jellied syrup.
- Conserves are jams with a mixture of fruits, including citrus, nuts, raisins, or coconut.

Class 01: Marmalade, any single citrus

e.g., orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, kumquat, tangerine, triple citrus

Class 02: Marmalade, all other

e.g., prickly pear, guava, fig, onion, gingered zucchini

Class 03: Preserve, any stone fruit, specify item

e.g., peach, cherry, plum, apricot, pluot

Class 04: Preserve, any berry, specify item

e.g., strawberry, blackberry, loganberry, blueberry, raspberry, mulberry

Class 05: Preserve, all other, specify item

e.g., fig, blueberry-raspberry

Class 06: Conserve, any

e.g., peach almond, cranberry, sour cherry walnut, lemon lime, rhubarb, kiwi, ginger pear

DIVISION 1008

Pickles & Relish

- Pickles: submit 1-quart jar as appropriate to the product, ½-inch headspace.
- Relish: submit ½-pint, 1-pint or 1-quart jar as appropriate to the product, ½-inch headspace.
- Brined and fresh-pack pickles must be processed using an approved method.
- Preserving vinegar, 5% acidity.
- To ensure safety, pH will be tested prior to tasting.

Class 01: Cucumber pickles

e.g., bread & butter, dill, sweet

Class 02: Other pickles

e.g., specified fruit, specified vegetable, peppers

Class 03: Relish, any

e.g., chow chow, antipasto, piccalilli, fruit



Adult Divisions

Eligibility..... Open to Southern California residents ages 18 or older.

Entry limit One (1) entry per class.

Entry fee \$10 per entry

- Rules & guidelines on page 1 apply.
- Duplication of items in more than one (1) class is not allowed.

DIVISION 1009

Salsa & Chutney

- Submit ½-pint, 1-pint or 1-quart jar as appropriate to product, ½-inch headspace.
- Items must be canned only, not fresh.

Class 01: Salsa, specify item

e.g., tomato, peach, mango, pineapple, papaya

Class 02: Chutney, specify item

e.g., cranberry, kiwi, plum, mango, peach

- Spicy, fruity, relish-type condiment with a texture similar to a conserve

DIVISION 1010

Hot Sauce, Small Batch

- Submit ½-pint, 1-pint jar, or commercial bottle as appropriate to product, ½-inch headspace if canned.
- Commercial products must be small batch and developed by the exhibitor.
- Entries must be bottled according to standard food and health safety guidelines.
- All entries must be ready-to-eat, condiment-style sauces.

Class 01: Single pepper

Class 02: Pepper blend

Class 03: Fruit based

Class 04: Other, specify item

DIVISION 1011

Sauces & Condiments

- Submit ½-pint or 1-pint jar as appropriate to the product, ½-inch headspace.
- Use approved canning jars.

Class 01: Barbecue, steak and burger sauce

Class 02: Ketchup

e.g., cranberry, tomato, fruit

Class 03: Mustard

e.g., cranberry, ginger-garlic, beer, whole grain

- ¼-inch headspace.

Class 04: Dessert sauce, specify item

Class 05: Other, specify item

e.g., chili sauce, green chili sauce, Thai hot and sweet dipping sauce, taco sauce, harissa, plum roasted red pepper sauce

- No hot sauce (See Division 1010)

DIVISION 1012

Liqueur

- Submit ½-pint or 1-pint-sized glass canning jar.
- Do not use quilted jars.
- Does not need to be processed and sealed.

Class 01: Shrub, specify item

Shrubs are a blend of fruit, sugar and vinegar popularized during the Colonial era.

Class 02: Fruit, specify item

e.g., limoncello, passion fruit, cherry, tropical fruit, Grand Marnier®

Class 03: Coffee & chocolate

e.g., Kahlúa®, Tia Maria®, sweet coffee, dark chocolate, chocolate cream

Class 04: Other, specify item

e.g., cherry bounce, candy, honey, almond, chile, absinthe, bitters, cinnamon, chartreuse, star anise, elder flower