

2023-24 Tennessee State Junior Chef Competition Information Sheet

The 2023-24 Tennessee State Junior Chef Competition will be held Friday, March 8, from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. CT at Nashville State Community College – Southeast Campus. Team orientation will be on Thursday at 5 p.m. [Times subject to change].

The Tennessee State Junior Chef Competition is a statewide high school-level cooking competition. This program allows students to compete against other teams from across the state in a points-based competition. Scholarships will be awarded to the top three teams. The first-place team will receive a \$10,000 scholarship per student, up to four students; second place will receive a \$7,000- \$8,000 scholarship per student, up to four students; and third place will receive a \$5,000 scholarship per student for up to four students. The state winner will also be eligible to advance to the Southeast Region Junior Chef Competition, where the top state teams from the Southeast Region will compete against each other for additional scholarship funding.

The Junior Chef program introduces students to areas of interest and career paths that they may not have ever experienced without this opportunity. Through the program, students will perfect culinary skills; experience the value and benefit of competition; and learn about the importance of agriculture, local food systems, and nutrition. At a time when the average age of the American farmer is 58 and projected to continue increasing, it is vital that we expose our youth to the vast and varied field of agriculture. Similarly, nutrition education and training are crucial, as chronic disease rates are rapidly increasing.

Junior Chef is a multi-faceted program. Teams are required to include a minimum of two local ingredients in their recipe. During the competition, they will also be judged on their ability to articulate the importance of local purchasing and the agricultural industry. Junior Chef is an extension of the Farm to School program, and as school nutrition replicability and adherence to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) standards and requirements are a part of the judging criteria, districts are **highly** encouraged to incorporate their students' recipes into their cycle menus. This criterion also provides the opportunity for students to learn about the fundamental concepts and principles of school nutrition. The requirement that recipes follow NSLP standards and requirements allows students to become familiar with the program and the effort that goes into creating and preparing the menus that they enjoy every day in their schools. For more information, reach out to Lynsey.Paul@tn.gov.