

Jr Iron Chef VT

A RECIPE FOR EMPOWERING YOUTH

since 2008



JR IRON CHEF VT RULES & GUIDELINES

Updated October 2024

Jr Iron Chef VT is a career exploration program and competition that teaches communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills by empowering Vermont youth to create locally sourced meals that promote Vermont's Farm to School efforts.

I. RECIPE GUIDELINES

The goal of the competition is to promote recipes that use local and seasonal ingredients that could be replicated in a school kitchen. While making fancy dishes is fun and a great experience, our goal is to enable students to repeat their dishes for their home, schools, and groups. This means using simpler, replicable recipes with easy-to-find ingredients, however this should not dissuade you from dressing up the dish to bring it up to competition level.

Teams are encouraged to use original recipes. Students and coaches work together to research and create recipes, learn basic cooking skills, and discover the value of using local ingredients. Recipes should be easily followed and consist of affordable ingredients. If the recipe is inspired by a known source, you must credit that source.

Eligible recipes include savory entrées, soups, sandwiches, and salads. Breakfast dishes are also eligible for the competition. Dessert recipes and snacks are not allowed.

Only recipes that are one dish will be approved. Recipes with a side dish will not be approved. For example, a burrito with salsa is considered one dish but a veggie burger with a side salad is considered two dishes and will not be approved.

Recipes and Lively Local must be submitted by March 5, 2025. Teams must prepare the recipe exactly as submitted and approved by Jr Iron Chef VT. Judges will be on the floor during the competition and will reinforce this rule.

Nuts, meat, poultry, and fish are prohibited ingredients for food safety reasons.

Teams must bring ALL ingredients for their recipes, including local foods.

The dish must be made from start to finish during the assigned competition heat. All ingredients must arrive in their raw state with the exception of canned beans. No pre-cooked grains or boxed vegetable stock are allowed.

NOTE: Every recipe must include one local ingredient, defined by being a Vermont product. For a recipe to qualify for submission, the local ingredient box must be checked with the local ingredient listed.

Teams are not allowed to provide samples of their recipe to the crowd. Only youth participants and judges may eat the prepared dishes at the competition.

Recipe Quantity: On the day of the event, you will need a total of 48 ounces divided into the following portions (we will provide compostable display and serving plates or bowls):

- Two 8-oz. plated servings for display in the judging room and on the main floor
- Twelve 2-oz. servings for the 12 judges to sample

II. TEAM REQUIREMENTS

Teams are required to comply with all rules and guidelines. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.

Teams consist of 3–5 students in 6–8th grade or 9–12th grade. Due to some K–6 schools, middle schools may be pre-approved for some, but not all, 5th-grade team members. Middle and high school teams are judged separately.

Each team must have an adult coach who is a school representative or from an afterschool-related organization or parent/guardian of a team member. Coaches must be present during the entire competition.

Teams may also have an assistant coach to support the coach during practices and competition. Think local chef or cooking enthusiast.

To facilitate competition logistics, teams from the same school may be placed in the same heat. Schools are limited to two teams. In the case of a 7th–12th grade school, schools may send up to four teams: two middle schools and two high schools.

Teams MUST comply with all competition deadlines including registration and payment.

Team members are required to wear sturdy closed-toed shoes; clean, neat attire including aprons (optional chef jacket), and a hat or hairnet. The event will have extra aprons and hairnets available.

Students are required to wear gloves, which we will provide during cooking. It is helpful to practice your recipe once with gloves on.

If a student or coach is sick or experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms [as described by the CDC](#), they are not allowed to attend the event.

Only students may cook during the competition.

Coaches provide encouragement and only very LIMITED guidance and should not touch or taste the food during the event unless there is a safety issue. There will be a blue tapeline on the floor at each team's cooking station. Once the competition begins, coaches may not cross this line or lean over the outside barriers. This rule is strictly enforced, and judges will disqualify a team if there is excessive coaching instruction.

Teams are allowed to bring butane/propane-fueled tabletop burners (camping stove) with tanks that are no larger than one pound. Please check that your tanks are full before the competition.

For food preparation, the ONLY electric appliances allowed are food processors, blenders, and mixers.

Due to the limited wattage for 35 cooking stations, we prohibit the following electric cooking appliances: toaster ovens, air fryers, multi-cookers, pressure cookers, induction stoves, hot plates, crockpots, electric griddles, electric waffle irons, and microwaves.

Teams may not extend their workspace by adding a cart or portable grill to the end of their stations. Carts used to transport equipment must be stored under tables provided. If they do not fit under the table, they must be stored in your vehicle during the competition.

Bring all of the water you will need for cooking and food prep. NO WATER is available for cooking on-site and DISHWASHING IS PROHIBITED.

Winning teams MUST be present at the event to receive a prize package.

III. AWARDS

The following honors will be given in the Morning and Afternoon Award Ceremonies for each age category (high school and middle school):

CROWD-PLEASER — This award goes to the team that best incorporates color, texture, and taste for a true crowd-pleaser.

LIVELY LOCAL — This award goes to the team that best highlights Vermont foods.

MISE EN PLACE — "Everything in its place," this award goes to the team that shows exemplary teamwork, order, and professionalism.

LIVELY LOCAL AWARD — Recipes must include at least five local ingredients to be eligible for the Lively Local Award. **Teams must indicate Lively Local ingredients and the origins of their local ingredients (e.g., carrots from Lewis Creek Farm, Starksboro, VT) in recipe submission form submitted by March 5, 2025.** If a team does not submit a Lively Local Form by this deadline, they will not be eligible for the Lively Local Award.

To be eligible for the Lively Local Award, ingredients must be in quantities of ¼ cup or greater and be integral to the recipe. Garnishes and condiments will not qualify as Lively Local ingredients.

IV. JUDGING CRITERIA

This cooking competition is about school food and school food is for everyone. We have intentionally selected people as judges who have a wide range of culinary and food expertise. Judges will be briefed on the methods on how to give constructive feedback to teams. The following criteria will be used to evaluate teams:

EXECUTION — Clean and presentable team outfits, including hard-soled shoes, hats or hair nets, aprons or chef jackets, and safe food handling practices

TEAMWORK — Evenly distributed workload, team cohesiveness, and communication

TASTE — A subjective category based on judge's expertise

CREATIVITY — Ingenuity of the ingredients used, creative use of ingredients

LOCAL — Recipe is tasty and highlights at least one local, seasonal product (five+ local products for the Lively Local Award)

COMPLIANCE — Meets all Jr Iron Chef VT Guidelines and Rules

V. IMPORTANT DETAILS

We compost ALL food scraps, as well as serving plates, bowls, tasting cups and utensils produced/used at the event. We expect everyone to compost and recycle throughout the event.

Jr Iron Chef VT will provide:

- Aprons for team members, if needed
- Disposable gloves
- Hairnets, if needed
- A 6' x 4' workstation with table covers
- Compostable utensils and dishes for plating the dishes to be judged
- Community ovens set at 350°F

Teams must bring:

- Camp stove (if using) and heat resistant pad to be placed under camp stove ([Example](#))
- All recipe ingredients including local food items
- Cleaning supplies needed such as paper towels, non-toxic cleaning spray, or rags
- A large tote to carry out dirty dishes; dishwashing is prohibited on-site

- Heavy-duty 3-prong extension cord (12 gauge) if your recipe requires an electric hand tool such as a blender, food processor, or mixer
- Water for cooking: we recommend 2–3 gallons
- Stainless steel or aluminum baking dishes if using the shared ovens: **Glass and ceramic baking dishes are prohibited**

Examples of other supplies to bring:

- Camp stove (bring full fuel tank)
- Blender, food processor, pots, and pans
- Spatulas, whisks, veggie peelers, and tongs
- Cutting boards, knives, hot mitts or trivets, and mixing bowls
- Thermometers and timers
- Can opener and measuring cups/spoons
- Aluminum foil, food wrap, or containers for leftovers
- Uniforms, team signs for your 6' x 4' workstation, and copies of your recipe for the audience
- Noise-canceling headphones for students who may be sensitive to sound (there is a DJ and an MC for the event)

Community oven policies:

- Teams may use stainless steel and aluminum baking dishes only. No glass or ceramic.
- Teams sign-up for an oven rack during the recipe submission process. Multiple teams are assigned racks in each oven. Please allow extra time for your dish to cook as the door may be opened and closed several times.
- Jr Iron Chef VT volunteers oversee and operate the ovens.
- **Each team needs to assign an “Oven Captain” who keeps time on their dish and notifies the adult volunteer when to remove it from the oven. The Oven Captain leads the adult volunteer and hot dish back to their prep station.**

Teams will have a total of 90 minutes to create their dish. Jr Iron Chef VT is not a race against the clock as is the case with many cooking shows. 90 minutes should provide ample time for thoughtful and careful preparation and presentation of the dish. Teams should aim to not finish too early, and to have their dishes arrive to the judges' room hot.