

2026 Florida State Fair Creative Living Competitions

Preserved Foods Competition Handbook YOUTH

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT US!



BY PHONE AT
(813)621-7821

BY EMAIL AT
CREATIVELIVING@FLORIDASTATEFAIR.COM

IMPORTANT DATES

Entry Deadline: Friday, December 5, 2025

Late Entry Deadline: Friday, December 12, 2025

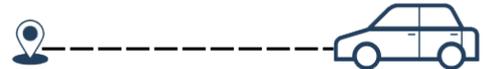
Item Delivery: Wednesday, January 7, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Thursday, January 8, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Friday, January 9, 2026 - 11:00am-6:00pm
Saturday, January 10, 2026 - 10:00am-4:00pm

Item Pickup: Wednesday, February 18, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Thursday, February 19, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Friday, February 20, 2026 - 11:00am-3:00pm
Saturday, February 21, 2026 - 10:00am-2:00pm

ENTRY DELIVERY & PICK-UP

Enter off of Orient Road through the Service Entrance on the west side of the fairgrounds.

A map with directions to the Florida Center is available on the Creative Living Website



ENTRY FEES

Adult Divisions (Ages 18+): \$2 Per Entry

Late Entry: \$4 Per Entry

ENTRY FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

GUIDELINES

- Exhibitors may enter as many divisions and classes as they like, but only two (2) per class.
- All entries must have been preserved within the last year (12 months). Preservation means foods are stable at room temperature, not needing additional refrigeration or cooling for safety.
NOTE: Refrigerator products are not preserved, and not eligible.
- All jars must be clear glass (standard) canning jars of half-pint (8 oz.), pint (16 oz.), or quart (32 oz.) size. However, 4 oz. canning jars are allowed for the Sweet Preserves and Honey Division ONLY. Jars must be clean. Rings and lids should be free from rust. No other jars will be accepted! All products must be sealed by a water bath or pressure canner; paraffin will not be accepted. See individual divisions for specific jar sizes. Unless specified, use the appropriate size container for the recommended canning process.
- **The exhibitor must submit two (2) jars for each entered item: one for exhibiting and one that can be opened for testing.**
- **Dehydrated food:** Use a glass jar with a rubber gasket in the lid to provide a better seal.
- Unsealed exhibits or products showing signs of spoilage will not be judged.
- Jars must be labeled on the front near the bottom with the name of product and the date canned. The exhibitor's name must be on the bottom of the jar.
- Each adult exhibitor will receive Two (2) admission ticket to the Fair.
- Exhibitor cannot use any previous years' product(s).
- Entries must have been prepared/made/processed by the exhibitor in whose name they are entered.
- All unopened entries will be returned to the exhibitor on entry pickup dates.
- Entered items must be accompanied by the attached recipe form and must be typed.
- All entries will be displayed at the Fair whether they receive an award or not.

JUDGING & AWARDS

- The Fair selects judges who are experienced and knowledgeable in the categories they are assigned. Judges are expected to be fair and unbiased. They may reassign an entry to a different division or class if they feel it's a better fit.
- All entries will be judged using a scorecard to help ensure fairness and consistency. Judges' decisions are final.
- If the judge feels that an entry does not meet the standards for an award, no ribbon or prize will be given, even if it is the only entry in the class.
- Winners and final displays will be announced during the Fair.
- The Florida State Fair judging of Preserved Foods Classes will be based on guidelines established by the USDA (Judging Home Preserved Foods.) The described criteria are based on canning procedures in the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning as well as food drying recommendations from recognized resources in the Cooperative Extension System. This information is available online at: <https://nchfp.uga.edu/>

JUDGING CRITERIA

Divisions and Classes in this handbook will be judged by a combination of the following criteria:

Pack, Texture, Flavor, Appearance, Odor/Scent

SWEET PRESERVES DEFINITIONS

Preserves: are fruits (or uniform pieces of fruit) preserved with sugar so that the fruit retains its shape, is clear and shiny, tender and plump. The syrup is clear and varies from the thickness of honey to that of soft jelly.

Chutney: A sweetened fruit preserve that also contains onion, nuts, or other savory, chunky ingredients.

Marmalades: A soft fruit jelly containing small pieces of fruit or peel evenly suspended in transparent jelly. Marmalades are a traditional way of preparing citrus-based jellies.

Jam: Made by cooking crushed or chopped fruits with sugar until the mixture will round up in a spoon. There should be no separation of fruit and juice.

Fruit Butters: Butters are made by cooking fruit pulp and sugar to a thick consistency that will spread easily. Spices may be added; the amount and variety depend upon personal taste. If a smooth texture is desired, the pulp can be put through a food mill and then strained through a fine-meshed sieve. Fruit curds would be included in this class.

Jelly: A semi-solid mixture of fruit juice and sugar that is clear and firm enough to hold its shape, yet it is soft enough to spread easily. A Jelly should not contain pieces of product. (Exception: pepper jelly may have pieces of pepper suspended in it).

PICKLES & PRESERVES DEFINITIONS

Pickles: Foods fermented or preserved in an acid brine or vinegar.

NOTE: Refrigerator products are not preserved, and not eligible.

Relish: Relishes are prepared from fruits and/or vegetables which are chopped and cooked to desired consistency in a spicy vinegar solution. Sometimes sugar is added if a sweet relish is desired and sometimes hot peppers or other spices are added for a hot relish.

Fermented Foods other than pickles.

CANNED FOODS DEFINITIONS

Tomato Products: These products include spaghetti, barbecue sauces, ketchups & salsas.

HONEY DEFINITIONS

Extracted Honey: Closures may be of metal or plastic. Must fill a minimum of 4oz jar.

Cut Comb: The chunk of comb must be in one piece, with a straight mid rib and of uniform thickness. The cuts should be clean and uniform. The chunk comb should be cut and sized to appropriately fit the container.

YOUTH PRESERVED FOODS DIVISIONS & CLASSES

Preserved Foods - Youth (Age 6-10) **Division 120.302**

Preserved Foods - Youth (Age 11-13) **Division 120.402**

Preserved Foods - Youth (Age 14-18) **Division 120.502**

Class 1 Sweet Preserves (any kind)

Class 2 Dehydrated Foods (any kind)

Class 3 Pickles & Relishes (any kind)

Class 4 Canned Foods (any kind)

Class 5 Extracted Honey (any Kind)



GENERAL RULES

DISCLAIMER

All entries are submitted at the exhibitor's own risk. The Florida State Fair is not responsible for any loss, damage, or theft of exhibits even if caused by staff, volunteers, contractors, or visitors. If you want insurance for your entry, you must arrange it through your personal insurance provider before the Fair. Reasonable care will be taken to protect exhibits. No unauthorized people are allowed in the building after closing hours.

DIVISION OR CLASS CANCELLATION

The Florida State Fair may cancel any division or class if there are not enough entries to ensure fair competition. Any affected entries will be returned.

ENTRY ERRORS

Exhibitors are responsible for making sure their entries are correct. This includes online forms and summary sheets. The Fair is not responsible for correcting mistakes, and no awards will be given for entries disqualified due to exhibitor error. If an award is later found to be ineligible, it will be withheld or recovered. You may appeal a disqualification in writing within 90 days of being notified. Include your name, address, full entry details, and your reason for requesting a review.

PREMIUM PAYMENTS

Prizes will be awarded based on the Judging Criteria Record Sheets. **Prize checks are void 6 months after the date on the check. No replacement checks will be issued after that, so please cash them promptly.**

SUBSTITUTIONS

If needed, substitutions must be made within the same department as the original entry. They must be completed by the last day of the entry delivery period. You may not transfer your entry to another person.

PREVIOUSLY ENTERED ITEMS

Entries that have been shown at past Florida State Fairs are not allowed, except for entries in Horticulture and Aquarium Beautiful.

VERIFICATION OF ENTRY

To confirm that your mailed entry form and fees were received, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. Online entries will receive a confirmation code after submitting.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR EXHIBITS

The Fair is not responsible for exhibits left behind after the scheduled pick-up time. **Anything left after that time will be treated as abandoned and discarded by April 1st of the same year.**

ENTRY REMOVAL

Once accepted, entries cannot be removed until the official release date listed in the Competition Handbook. Early removal is only allowed in cases like serious illness, emergencies, or at the Fair's discretion.

RETURNED OR BOUNCED CHECKS

A \$25 fee applies to any returned checks. This must be paid with cash, a certified check, or a money order.

MAILING PAPER ENTRY FORMS

Entry Forms must be postmarked by Friday, December 5, 2025. Failure to complete any portion of the entry form may result in disqualification. Late entries must be postmarked before December 12, 2025. If you're submitting a late entry form, you must include the extra \$5 per entry fee. **Make checks payable to:** Florida State Fair Authority

Mail Entry Form to:

Creative Living Competitions Youth Preserved Foods
Florida State Fair
P.O. Box 11766
Tampa, FL 33680

SHIPPING ENTRIES

Shipped entries must arrive no later than January 6, 2026. **Packages MUST include Shipping form and prepaid shipping label.** Entries will be shipped back to the exhibitors after the fair in the same container. Return shipping costs are the responsibility of the entrant.

Ship Entry Form to:

Florida State Fair Authority
Creative Living Competitions - Youth Preserved Foods
4800 US HWY 301 North
Tampa, FL 33680

RETRIEVING ENTRIES

All entries not claimed by April 1st of the same year will be recycled, disposed or donated through our program department. Entries not picked up on designated dates can be arranged for a special pick-up appointment by emailing CreativeLiving@floridastatefair.com.

EXHIBIT DESIGN & SET UP

The Florida State Fair controls how exhibits are displayed. If your entry is meant to be hung but isn't ready to hang, the Fair will display it as they see fit. No changes can be made once items are on display. Exhibitors cannot handle their entries after drop-off. Fair staff will handle final placement and assembly, using any instructions you provide. If your item needs assembly or disassembly, include clear instructions and diagrams. The Fair may use pins or other tools to secure your exhibit for display. Online entries will receive a confirmation code after submitting.

AWARD PREMIUMS

First Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$12**

Second Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$7**

Third Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$4**

Best of Show - State Fair Ribbon **\$15**

Best of Show awards will be chosen from the first place winners of all age divisions.

Director's Choice Award - State Fair Ribbon **\$35**

Honorable Mention Ribbons may be awarded at the discretion of the judge(s).

Preserved Foods Recipe Form Guidelines

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND BRING WITH ENTRY

ALL RECIPES BECOME THE PROPERTY OF THE FLORIDA STATE FAIR INCLUDING PUBLICATION RIGHTS.

If shipping, please include your recipe with entry.

Ship to:

Florida State Fair

Preserved Foods
Competition

4800 U.S. Hwy 301 N
Tampa, FL 33610

Preserved Foods Recipe Form Guidelines

Entered items must be accompanied by the attached recipe form.

- **Type or print legibly.** Winning recipes may be included in future Florida State Fair Cookbooks.
- Entries must include the name of the exhibitor, title of the recipe, labeled with the name of the food, the date preserved, and the method of food preservation.

Examples:

1. Peaches, hot pack, boiling water canner, 20 minutes. July 13, 2024.
Recipe: ...
2. Spaghetti sauce, hot pack, pressure canner, 11 pounds pressure, 45 minutes. July 14, 2024.
Recipe: ...
3. Dried peaches, electric dehydrator. June 6, 2017. Recipe: ...

- List the source of your recipe, if you did not create it totally by yourself
- If the food is canned, the recipe must state whether the food was hot or raw packed, boiling water or pressure canned, the process time, and the pounds of pressure if pressure-canned.
- List all ingredients in order of use.

Use standard abbreviations for measurements:

T. or tbsp. — tablespoon

tsp. — teaspoon

c. — cup

pt. — pint

qt. — quart

gal. — gallon

oz. — ounce

doz. — dozen

lb. — pound

pkg. — package

env. — envelope

opt. — optional

reg. — regular

lg. — large

med. — medium

sm. — small

ctn. — carton or container

- Include container sizes, for example, 8 oz. can or 1 lb. package.
- A judge needs to know if the proper amount of citric acid, lemon juice or vinegar has been added to canned tomatoes, for example. The judge also has to know whether certain foods have meat, low acid vegetables, starches, etc. added.
- **Canning:** Instructions should be in paragraph form, not in numbered steps. Use the name of the ingredients in the instructions versus using statements like stir the first 4 ingredients together.
- Include temperatures and times for preservation method used.
- Be consistent in the spelling of the title of your recipe.

Florida State Fair Preserved Foods Recipe Form

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Ship to:
Florida State Fair
Preserved Foods
Competition
4800 U.S. Hwy 301 N
Tampa, FL 33610

Please Print or type (Contact information is used for OFFICE USE ONLY, it is not published in the cookbook)

Preserved Food (ADULT) Preserved Food (YOUTH)

Exhibitors Name (First, Last):

Address:

Division Name:

Division #:

Class Name:

Class #:

Phone ()

Email:

OFFICE USE ONLY

Place

1st

2nd

3rd

Best of Show (Adult)

Best of Show (Youth)

Name of Recipe

Recipe guidelines:

On a separate sheet of paper type or legibly write out your recipe. Staple the recipe to this form. If you used a computer to type your recipe, please save it to your computer. In the event that you are asked to contribute your recipe in a future cookbook, you will be able to quickly send us your recipe in a document.

Sample of Recipe format

Guava Pepper Jelly

by Carol Barker

Date of Preservation: December 5, 2025

Method of Food Preservation: Hot pack, boiling water canner, 5 minutes

Ingredients:

3 ½ c. guava nectar

½ c. lemon juice

5 tbsp. powdered pectin

1 tsp. butter

7 c. sugar

1 c. jalapeno peppers, finely chopped with seeds

Directions:

Make sure jars are sterilized and ready to go. Keep jars hot until ready to use.

Combine fruit juice, jalapenos, lemon juice, butter and pectin into 6-8 quart saucepan. Place on heat and stir continuously while bringing to a full boil. Gradually add sugar, stirring well to dissolve.

Bring to a full rolling boil that cannot be stirred down, stir continuously and continue to boil and stir for 2 minutes. Remove pan from heat. Ladle into jars leaving ¼ inch space at the top.

Use a damp cloth to wipe the jars and threads clean, then immediately cover jars with lids and screw on firmly. Place in boiling water bath setting jars on rack in the canner, water should cover jars by 1-2".

Cover canner and return the water to a boil for 5 minutes, then remove jars from canner check seals and store in a cool dry place. Yield 9 half-pint jars.

*Source: Ball Complete
Book of Home
Preserving for Today*

