

2026 Florida State Fair Creative Living Competitions

Best Of Florida Baking Competition Handbook

HOME COOK OR PRO

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: Saturday, February 14, 2026 - 9:00am-11:00am

Awards Ceremony: Saturday, February 14, 2026 - 5:00pm

ENTRY DELIVERY & PICK-UP

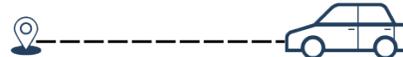
Enter off of the Martin Luther King Jr. BLVD
Entrance and park at gate 3.

A map with directions to the Special Events Center
available on the Creative Living webpage.

ENTRY FEES

Youth Divisions (Ages 6-18): \$2 Per Entry

Late Entry: \$4 Per Entry



ENTRY FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

ELIGIBILITY

- **The Best of Florida Baking Adult Home Cook Division is open to all Florida residents ages 18 and up, and must have won Grand Champion or Best of Division in the Adult Baking Competition from previous Fairs.** You can still compete in the Baking Competition in those Divisions that you have not won a Best of Division Award.
- The Best of Florida Baking Adult Professional Division is for those Florida residents ages 18 and up. You must compete in the Professional Division if you receive a major portion of your income from baking OR teach culinary art classes OR have ever done any of the above in the past.

GUIDELINES

- **Exhibitors may enter as many divisions and classes as they like, but only one (1) entry per class.**
- Entries should be "Home-Made" and "Made from scratch." Commercially made ingredients may be used if they are not the main ingredient in the final product. For example, using frozen cookie dough to make a cookie sandwich. Try to avoid using commercially made ingredients The judges will take this into consideration when awarding prizes.
- Entries made with bread machines are not allowed.
- All piecrusts must be made from scratch.
- All baked items must be sweet, not savory. (This does not include breads)
- **Entries requiring a freezer are not allowed. Entries are mostly stored at room temperature or positioned on ice packs to keep cool. For example, cheesecake or a crème pie.**
- Entered items must be accompanied by the attached recipe form and must be typed.
- **Entries must be on disposable trays, pans, platters, ect.**
- After the awards ceremony you will be able to retrieve your baked goods.
- Each adult exhibitor will receive one (1) admission tickets to the Fair.
- Exhibitors cannot use any previous years' recipes.
- Entries must have been prepared by the exhibitor whose name they are entered under.
- Entries may be disqualified by the judges for any reason if an entry is deemed unsafe to consume, does not meet quantity requirement or if they are not delivered on time.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- Due to high temperatures and food safety during Fair, all perishables must be kept in an insulated container such as a cooler or similar.
- Quantity Requirements:
 - **Cakes** — half or whole cake
 - **Cupcakes** — six cupcakes
 - **Coffee Cakes** — one whole coffee cake
 - **Pies** — one whole pie, 8-10 inches
 - **Pastries** — six items
 - **Tarts** — one whole Tart, 8 – 10 inches
 - **Tartlets** — three items, 4 – 5 inches
 - **Breads or Quick Breads** — one whole loaf
 - **Donuts, Scones** — six items
 - **Biscuits, Muffins and Rolls** — six items
 - **Cookies, Bars, and Confections** — six items

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.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Divisions and Classes in this handbook will be judged by a combination of the following criteria:
General Appearance, Texture, Lightness, Crust, Flavor, Crumb, Filling

BAKING DIVISIONS & CLASSES

Best of Florida Baking - Adult Home Cook **Division 16.101**

Best of Florida Baking - Adult Professional **Division 16.201**

Class 1 Bread (any kind)

Class 2 Cakes (any kind)

Class 3 Pies, Pastries & Specialty Desserts (any kind)

Class 4 Cookies (any kind)

Class 5 Confections (any kind)

Class 6 Gluten-Free Baking (any kind)

See Definitions on next page for clarifications.



BREAD DEFINITIONS

Leavened Breads: Any type of Bread using yeast or a culture as the leavening agent, including sourdough breads.

Non-Yeast Breads: Breads made without a leavening agent (flat breads).

Quick Breads: Any bread or bread-type product made using a leavening agent other than yeast or culture, such as baking soda.

Healthy Alternatives: Recipes that are lower in fat and sugar.

CAKE DEFINITIONS

Frosted Cakes: A frosted cake, that does not have any filling or any frosting that requires refrigeration.

Unfrosted Cakes: An unfrosted cake. Such as pound cakes, fruit cakes, ect. However may include a light glaze or powder sugar dusting.

Refrigerated Cakes: Any cake with a frosting or filling that requires refrigeration or other cake that requires refrigeration (i.e. Cheesecakes, creams, custards, etc.) **Please bring a cooler with ice to keep your cake cold.**

Cookie Crumb Crust: Using any type of cookies plus butter/oil/fruit to make a crust. Cookies for crust must be made from scratch – not using commercially prepared cookies like graham crackers, Oreos, etc.

Coffee Cake: A sweet, leavened, bread-like cake usually flavored with nuts, fruit, or spices and topped with frosting, glaze, or streusel.

Healthy Alternatives: Recipes that are lower in fat and sugar.

PIES, PASTRIES & SPECIALTY DESSERTS DEFINITIONS

Crème Pie: Pie shell and filling are cooked separately.

Custard Pie: Both filling and crust are baked together.

Refrigerated Pie: Any pie that requires refrigeration (creams, custards, pumpkin, pecan, meringue, etc.) **Please bring a cooler with ice to keep your pie cold.**

Single Crust Pie: Any non-refrigerated pie with only a bottom crust.

Double Crust Pie: Any non-refrigerated pie with a top and bottom crust.

Cookie Crumb Crust: Using any type of cookies plus butter/oil/fruit to make a crust. Cookies for crust must be made from scratch – not using commercially prepared cookies like graham crackers or Oreos.

Pastries: Includes Shortcrust, Pate a Choux, Puff, Danish, or Phyllo Made by exhibitor.

Tarts & Tartlets: A shallow, baked shortcrust pastry or crumb crust with a filling and no top crust. Must be removed from the pan. Tartlets are baked in mini tart pans.

Healthy Alternatives: Recipes that are lower in fat and sugar.

COOKIES DEFINITIONS

Bar Cookies: Any cookie that is baked flat, cut into “bars” usually done in a pan with sides. Brownies: Any type of Brownie

Drop Cookies: Any cookie that is formed by dropping dough from a spoon to the cookie sheet.

Macarons: A type of Drop Cookie. A light cookie made with egg white, sugar, and usually ground almonds or coconut.

Filled cookies are made from rolled cookie dough filled with a fruit or confectionery filling before baking. Shaped or Rolled cookies are made from stiff dough that is pressed or rolled and cut into shapes.

Refrigerator (icebox) cookies are made from stiff dough that is refrigerated to make the raw dough more stiff before cutting and baking. The dough is typically shaped into cylinders, which are sliced into round cookies before baking.

Healthy Alternatives: Recipes that are lower in fat and sugar.

CONFECTIONS DEFINITIONS

Confections: Any type of candy

Healthy Alternatives: Recipes that are lower in fat and sugar.

GLUTEN-FREE BAKING DEFINITIONS

Gluten-Free Baking: Any baked item made without using wheat, oats, barley, or rye flour.

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 – BoF Baking
Florida State Fair
P.O. Box 11766
Tampa, FL 33680

ENTRY DELIVERY

All entries must be hand delivered to the Special Events Center (SEC) Building at the Florida State Fairgrounds between 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 14, 2026.

Enter off of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. through the MLK Fairgrounds entrance. Park near Gate 3. Enter through Gate 3 to head towards the SEC Bldg.

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 **\$60**

Second Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$40**

Third Place - State Fair Ribbon **\$20**

Best of Show - State Fair Ribbon **\$100**

Style & Design (Adult) - State Fair Ribbon **\$50**

Style & Design will be chosen from any of the entries within each age group.

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

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

Florida State Fair 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

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

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.
- These recipes will become the property of the Florida State Fair with right to use them at a future date.

Recipes must include:

- Title of the recipe
- List the source of your recipe, if you did not create it totally by yourself
- Name of exhibitor
- List all ingredients in order of use
- Include container sizes, for example, 8 oz. can or 1 lb. package.
- Instructions 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.
- Temperatures and times for baking, chilling, etc.

Other things to consider:

- **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

- Be consistent in the spelling of the title of your recipe

Florida State Fair Recipe Form

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If shipping, please include
your recipe with entry.

Ship to:

Florida State Fair

Baking 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)

<input type="checkbox"/> Baking Adult <input type="checkbox"/> Baking Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Best of Florida Baking	
Exhibitors Name (First, Last):	
Address:	
Division Name:	Division #:
Class Name:	Class #:
Phone ()	Email:

OFFICE USE ONLY
Place
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd
<input type="checkbox"/> Best of Division (B)
<input type="checkbox"/> Grand Champion (B)
<input type="checkbox"/> Best of Show (Youth)
<input type="checkbox"/> Best of Show (BOF)

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 to a future Florida State Fair Cookbook, you will be able to quickly send us your recipe in a document.

Sample of Recipe format

<h3>Golden Lemon Bread</h3>	by Carol O'Donnell
Ingredients: ½ c. shortening ¾ c. sugar 2 eggs 1 ½ c. all-purpose flour 1 ½ tsp baking powder ½ tsp. salt ¾ c. milk 1 tsp. Lemon Extract 1 zest of one lemon	Glaze: ½ c. confectioner's sugar 2 tsp. grated lemon zest 2-3 tsp. lemon juice
Directions: Preheat oven to 350°. Cream shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time. Add lemon extract and zest. Combine flour, baking powder and salt, then add to creamed mixture alternately with milk. Pour into greased 9x5 loaf pan. Bake 40-45 minutes. Combine glaze ingredients and pour over warm bread. Cool before removing from pan. Enjoy...	Source: Family Recipe taught to me by my grandmother

Best of Florida Baking Competition Entry Form

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Exhibitor #	_____
Total Fee	_____
Paid	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> MO <input type="checkbox"/> Check
Check No.	_____

Entry Forms must be postmarked by Friday, December 5, 2025.

Late Entry Period: December 6-12, 2025 (Double Entry Fees)

Failure to complete any portion of entry form may result in disqualification.

Please print legibly

Exhibitors Name (First, Last)			
Mailing Address			County
City	State	Zip Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if you are a new exhibitor
Phone ()		Email	

Entry Fee: Adult Division \$5 per entry | Late entry \$10 per entry

Exhibitors may enter as many classes as they like, but only one entry per class.

#	DIVISION #	CLASS #	TITLE OF THE RECIPE	FEE
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
Total Amount Due				\$

I hereby certify that I have read the Florida State Fair General Rules for the Competitive Exhibits Program and the above item(s) is/are entered for exhibition strictly in accordance with these rules, by which I agree to be governed. I also agree that the Florida State Fair may use my name, likeness, photograph, or recipe (including, but not limited to photographs of my entry and publication of my recipe in the Fair's cookbook), in any manner relating to my participation in the Competitive Exhibits Program, free of charge and without further notice or consultation.

I understand that the 2026 Creative Living Competitions & Exhibits are held in conjunction with the 2026 Florida State Fair and agree that the Florida State Fair is not liable or responsible for any delay, change of dates, or cancellation of the 2026 Florida State Fair due to the following unforeseeable circumstances: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake; or (c) other potential disaster(s) or catastrophe(s), such as epidemics, pandemics, or explosions.

Signature

Date

Mail Entry Form to:

Creative Living Competitions – Best of Florida Baking
 Florida State Fair
 P.O. Box 11766
 Tampa, FL 33680

Make checks payable to: Florida State Fair Authority