



2026 STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL COOK-OFF RULES & REGULATIONS

May 14 – May 17, 2026

The Pasadena Strawberry Festival's mission is to produce a large event to help support other non-profits, to help give an opportunity to students to further their education through our scholarship program, and to preserve and celebrate the history of Pasadena, Texas.

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Important Dates:

January 5th - Registration Opens at 9:00 am

April 1st - Full Payment Deadline

April 30th - Cooks Meeting 6:30pm

May 11th – May 14th - Tent Setup

May 12th - Move In Starts

May 14th - Cooks Meeting 9:00am, Sponsor Night

May 14th – 16th - PSF Cook Off

May 17th - Tear Down & Move Out

Rules & Regulations

1. The BBQ Cook-off will be held during the Pasadena Strawberry Festival (PSF) at the Pasadena Fairgrounds located at 7902 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, Texas 77507.
2. NO FIREARMS ARE ALLOWED ON THE STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL GROUNDS.
3. The PSF reserves the right to deny rental of cook-off space(s) to any team, and/or the head cook, for 1 or more years if they have previously violated state law, city ordinances, festival rules, or any other conduct deemed inappropriate by the festival board. This decision is final. Additionally, if a cook team reappears under a different name but has the same head cook or two or more assistant cooks from the year of violation, it will be considered the same team.
4. Any person associated with the PSF as a committee member, in any capacity, may be apart of a cook team with the following exceptions:
 - a. May not be listed as the head cook.
 - b. May not be on the Judging & Scoring or Team Reps sub committees.
 - c. May not be a judge for Cook's Choice or Margaritas.
5. Each team must comply with all TABC laws pertaining to the serving and consumption of alcoholic beverages. Nobody under 21 years of age shall be served or allowed to consume alcoholic beverages while anywhere on the premises.
6. **ONLY** registered Service Animals are allowed on the fairgrounds per the rules of the Pasadena Convention Center. Service animals must be contained either by being crated, or on a leash at all times. **No Animals will be allowed to run loose.**
7. No animals of any kind will be permitted in designated food preparation areas or in the Judging & Scoring area. NO EXCEPTIONS.
8. Violation of any of the Rules or Regulations in this document are grounds for expulsion.
9. The PSF will not be responsible for theft or damage.
10. The PSF reserves the right to make any additional changes to the rules and regulations.

REGISTRATION

1. Applications will be available online at strawberryfest.org
NOTE: Any application for a year other than 2026 are invalid and will not be accepted.
2. One-half (1/2) of the non-refundable entry fee must be paid upon registration. Full Payment must be received by April 1, 2026. Any team signing up after the April 1st deadline must pay in full. Deadline to submit an application and additional categories is May 1.
3. Competition spaces are NOT transferable without prior consent and approval from the BBQ Committee Director and/or Chairman.
4. The entry fee is \$300 per 40' x 40' SELF-CONTAINED space. This entry fee includes competition entries for brisket, beef fajitas, chicken and pork spareribs. Hospitality is a FREE category. All entries are to be cooked on a grill.
5. Teams may purchase up to (5) spaces, but only three (3) can be used as competition spaces. The additional competition spaces will be The Team name followed by #2 and #3.
6. Each space will be given five (5) cooker wristbands. You may purchase unlimited festival tickets for \$12 each, prior to 5:00 pm on May 1, 2026. All General Admission tickets will be \$20 at the gate.

SPACES

1. The cook-off will be held in the parking lot in front of the Strawberry Festival Office.
2. Exterior and Interior decor and interaction with the public must be appropriate for viewing by public audiences of all ages and may not consist of material having a political, religious, discriminatory or lewd nature.
3. Excessively loud music, horns, etc. are strictly prohibited.
4. All bands/performers/music must stop playing at 11:00 pm each night. This requirement is in accordance with the City of Pasadena Ordinance. Failure to comply will result in disqualification.
5. No hay, straw, shavings or similar combustible material are allowed on the grounds.
6. Teams must provide their own generators and water sources. Water is not to be drained or emptied onto the grounds.
7. Inappropriate entertainment, contests, sales, raffles, etc. are not allowed.
8. Teams can NOT charge any additional fee of any kind during the festival to enter spaces.
9. Any Damages to the concrete surfaces resulting from a team negligence shall be the responsibility of that team. The team will assume all financial costs for any necessary repairs.
10. Fire extinguishers must be inspected and tagged within the year, or the team must have a new purchase receipt for the extinguisher.
 - a. One (1) portable 10# Type "K" or 10# ABC fire extinguisher is required per space and must always be in view.
 - b. Each team that uses any gas or diesel generator, electrical hook-up or propane tank shall have a 5# multipurpose ABC or BC fire extinguisher readily available. Any use of a fryer will require a Type "K" extinguisher in addition to the ABC extinguisher.
11. If there are more than 100 people in a tent at any given time, the cook team must hire a Pasadena Police officer, **no private security** is allowed.

MOVE IN DATES

1. Tues. May 12, 2026, at 8:00am - All equipment 26' and over may start moving in (cooking trailer, RV's etc.)
2. Tues. May 12, 2026, at 3:00pm - All other equipment may start moving in.
3. All vehicles must be out of the cook-off area by 1:00pm on Thursday. May 14, 2026.
4. All cook teams, band, & DJ's must enter Cunningham and exit Red Bluff.

TENTS

1. Tent Companies may be scheduled to set up on Monday, May 11, 2026, through Wednesday, May 13, 2026, from 8 am - 8pm daily, and Thursday May 14, 2026, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm.
2. Tent teardown can begin on Sunday, May 19, 2026, at 6:00 am. All tents must be down and removed from grounds by Monday, May 20, 2026, at 4 pm. **Teams are NOT allowed to move out till Sunday Morning May 19, 2026, after 6:00 am.**
3. No stakes will be allowed. ALL TENTS MUST BE WATER BARRELED INSIDE YOUR SPACE.
4. Personal "pop up tents" will be allowed. These type tents must be secured by sandbags or concrete stanchions of at least 40 lbs.
5. Tent stakes or other devices that damage the blacktop or concrete surface in any way are prohibited.
6. It is the responsibility of the cook-off team to abide by all tent requirements as noted on the attached City of Pasadena Fire Marshal's Office document

PITS

1. One (1) competition pit per space (1 firebox). Competition spaces must be given to the BBQ Committee if you have more than 3 spaces.
2. Fires must be wood or wood substances. Pellet grills ARE allowed, but NO electric pits or gas propane smokers will be allowed.
3. Metal pans must be placed under the opening of the firebox to prevent damage to the blacktop or concrete surface.
4. NO pits are allowed to be set up on any of the grassy areas.
5. Drip pans must be placed under all grease drains to prevent damage to the blacktop or concrete surface. NO grease is to be dumped in any of the grassy areas of the cook-off area or grounds.

VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

1. Gates to thru traffic will be closed and/or locked at 1:00pm on Thursday, May 14, 2026. NO VEHICLE will be allowed to enter or leave the contest after 1:00pm without being escorted by a BBQ Committee Member.
2. Under no circumstances will contestants block any aisle after the set-up period ends.
3. Vehicles not removed from the cook-off area by 1:00pm on Thursday May 14, 2026, will be subject to removal by wrecker at the contestant's expense. Team vehicles may remain within a team's space but may not be driven during the festival.
4. No contestant or member of the public will be allowed to bring any of the following onto the grounds: Golf carts, motor vehicles, utility carts, bicycles, roller skates, hover boards, skateboards, scooters, segways, remote controlled toys, drones, motorized coolers or any other type of transportation, except for wheelchairs for handicapped individuals. Use of any of the items listed above would justify a team's disqualification.

COOKS MEETINGS

1. THURSDAY, April 30, 2026, at 6:30 pm, location to be determined. This meeting will include:
 - a. New location and services provided this year.
 - b. Explanation of the new rules.
 - c. Q&A session for clarification of rules, judging etc.
 - d. Teams will receive a printed copy of the rules, a map with assigned spaces, and team wristbands.
 - e. Teams may purchase additional tickets also.
 - f. BBQ Committee will verify competition spaces, specialties signed up for and Teams will be able to purchase additional spaces that are available only.
2. THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026, at 9:00am, location to be determined. This meeting will include:
 - a. Last minute Q&A session for any additional clarification of rules, judging etc.
 - b. BBQ Turn-in information, etc.
 - c. Distribution of containers.
 - d. Assignment of Cook's Choice & Margarita judging times.
 - e. Beverage Pre-Sale Orders & Payment are Due.

TEAM RULES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Head Cook is responsible for the conduct of their team and guests.
2. Each team with air conditioning must furnish their own drain line and water overflow must be drained into the city drain system or concealed container. Under no circumstances will water be allowed to drain into adjoining cook spaces or onto the ground.
3. The PSF can provide assistance with unloading or loading AC units if equipment is available. However, PSF is NOT liable for any damages that may occur.
4. Teams must supply their own equipment and supplies. Contestants are not allowed to share cooking equipment.
5. All teams are responsible for providing their own gas or diesel generator and water. Diesel and gas may be purchased through Strawberry Festival. Water refill stations will be posted.
6. A cook-off team may consist of One (1) Head cook and Four (4) assistant cooks.
7. Teams with multiple spaces may have sub-teams with their own space and pit. Sub-teams must use team name followed by #2 and #3. Sub-teams must inform the BBQ Committee of the space numbers being used for the sub-teams.
8. Each sub-team must have a different Head cook. Using the same Head cook is grounds for disqualification.
9. Team names must not be offensive and are subject to approval by the PSF Cook-off Director and Chairman.
10. Team wristbands must be worn properly on the wrist. Wristbands that are removable, on lanyards, chains, keys, clothing, etc. will **NOT** be allowed entry.
11. Props, trailers, motorhomes, tents, coverings or any other part of the team's equipment must not exceed the boundaries of the assigned space. One (1) cooking pit and One (1) self-contained motorhome or camper will be allowed per space. RVs inside your cook space will not be charged a daily fee.
12. Teams may not set up into any walkway or driveways created between, behind, or beside team spaces. These areas are to be left clear and open at all times, including move-in.
13. Each team is responsible for correctly placing their tent, and a team representative must be present during set-up. If the tent is placed outside the assigned area, the team is fully responsible for making the necessary adjustments. Team spots are designated at the time of registration and cannot be moved or transferred without approval from the BBQ Director or Chairman.
14. Teams wishing to utilize perimeter fencing within their allocated spaces will be allowed to do so if it is secure.
15. Teams are NOT allowed to sell any item in their assigned spaces during cook-off.
16. All spaces must be left clean of all debris and trash. PSF is not responsible for cleaning up. If the spaces are not clean at the end of the BBQ Cook-off, the team will not be invited to participate in the 2027 BBQ Cook-off.
17. Teams with an enclosed area to which the public is not allowed must hire a Pasadena Police Officer. PSF Directors and Chairman are allowed to enter ALL AREAS on the PSF Grounds.
18. Trash receptacles will be placed throughout the contest area; receptacles are NOT to be moved. Full bags must be tied closed for pickup.
19. Contestants are responsible for ensuring their trash is ready to be emptied into the trash trailer upon its arrival at their location. Heavy-duty plastic trash liners will be provided after check-in.

20. No free liquids, glass, hot coals or heavy trash should be put into trash bags, barrels, or boxes.
21. The following guidelines are recommended by the **City of Pasadena Health Department**. All teams are required to follow these guidelines:
 - a. A cover is required over all open food preparation areas.
 - b. Three (3) containers of water must be utilized, one gallon minimum each, for washing:
 - i. 1st container - soap and water for washing unless sink and running water are available and usable.
 - ii. 2nd container - clean water for rinsing unless a sink and running water are available and usable.
 - iii. 3rd container - 1 cup of bleach per gallon of water for sanitizing.
 - c. Keep cold food stored on ice or refrigerated at all times. Food must be maintained at 40 degrees.
 - d. Heated food should be maintained at 140 degrees.
 - e. Smoking tobacco is not permitted in food serving areas.

BANDS/DJ/PERFORMERS

1. Bands/DJ/Performers must be pre-registered with PSF.
2. Any team having a band/DJ/Performer (or musical equipment) that requires entry into the cooking area after 1 pm on Thursday, May 14, 2026, must submit a Band Registration Form to the PSF office by 9am on Thursday, May 14, 2026.
3. All bands & DJs must enter from the gates at Cunningham & Fairmont Parkway.
4. Bands and DJ must keep levels under 110 decibels. Please be respectful of your neighbors.
5. Bands/DJ/Performers/Music must stop playing at 11:00pm each night. This requirement is in accordance with the City of Pasadena Ordinance. Failure to comply will result in disqualification.

BEVERAGE & ICE

1. ALL ice, soft drinks, water and beer must be purchased from the PSF once you arrive on-site.
2. EACH TEAM IS REQUIRED to make a minimum PRESALE PURCHASE of \$200, which may be applied toward **soft drinks, water, and beer**. Presale orders and payments are due by Thursday, May 14th at 9:00am.
3. Order forms will be provided in your packet.
4. No outside beverages or ice will be allowed after move-in.

PORT-A-CAN & RV SERVICE

1. Service will be provided by TEXAS JOHNS.
2. Contact: ROBERT MILLER AT 281-924-7964 by April 30, 2026
3. It is the responsibility of the team and/or RV owner to contact ROBERT MILLER to reserve and pay for service prior to the contest.
4. The Port-a-can will be placed in the cook-off area and will be placed in an area inside the cooking space that will be easily accessible for cleaning, and it is the team's responsibility to arrange for their port-a-can to be cleaned. Port-a-cans are NOT to be moved once placed by TEXAS JOHNS.

SAFETY

1. In the case of an EMERGENCY, weather or other emergency, all team members are to evacuate to the PSF Office, Campbell Hall or the Convention Center whichever safe zone you are closest to at the time.
2. Justin Cox, our PSF Safety Committee VP, will be the ONLY person to give the ALL CLEAR after an emergency situation. Justin will send out the ALL CLEAR to all VP, Directors and Chairman.

JUDGING & SCORING RULES

1. A team's entry fee entitles contestants to enter the beef fajitas, pork spareribs, chicken, brisket and hospitality contest. You are allowed one (1) entry per category, per space, for a maximum total of three (3) turn-ins. Teams may purchase the following specialty category, Cooks Choice, Margaritas and/or Strawberry Desserts, for \$25 per category, per space for a total of three (3) turn-ins until the 1st Cooks meeting, April 30, 2026.
2. There will be Cash Awards for the 1st Place winners along with a Trophy as follows:
 - a. Brisket - \$750
 - b. Pork Ribs - \$500
 - c. Chicken - \$250
 - d. Fajitas - \$250
 - e. Margaritas - \$100
 - f. Cook's Choice - \$100
 - g. Desserts - \$50
3. Judging will be held in the convention center. Teams will drop off all turn-ins at the east side door near the front of the convention center marked Judging & Scoring (J&S).
4. Strawberry desserts, beef fajitas, pork spareribs, and chicken turn-ins will begin **fifteen (15) minutes prior** to the scheduled judging time. It is the team's responsibility to ensure the entries are delivered to the judging area before judging begins.
5. PSF utilizes a blind judging system that is based on a duplicate numbered ticket on all turn-ins except Cook's Choice and Margaritas which are judged in the Team's space.
 - a. Blind judging will consist of 1/2 of a double number ticket being enclosed in a small envelope secured to the bottom of the turn-in container with tape.
 - b. The other 1/2 of the ticket will be taped to the inside top of the turn-in container. This ticket should be retained by the contestant.
6. Any container with any kind of markings or altered in anyway will be referred to the General Chairman of J&S, who will rule on either exchanging the container or disqualification of the container/entry.
7. If the container is damaged, tell your TR or bring it to J&S area so that it can be replaced.
8. No sauces, garnishes or foil are allowed in the judging container and will be grounds for disqualification of the entry at the J&S General Chair's discretion.
9. All entries are scored on a scale of 1 to 10 in each of the categories with 10 being the highest score possible and 1 being the lowest. In the case of a tie, we will utilize the totals of the individual categories.

10. A Hospitality trophy is also awarded. PSF will have secret Judges out on the grounds starting Friday and ending at 3 pm on Saturday.

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026 EVENTS

STRAWBERRY DESSERTS

1. Judging will begin at 7 pm on Thursday, May 14, 2026.
2. Desserts **MUST INCLUDE STRAWBERRIES** and cooked on site.
3. Desserts should be enough for 6 Judges. Lids do not have to close on this entry.
4. A Cash award of \$50 will be awarded to the 1st place dessert. Trophies will be awarded to 1st through 3rd places. Placement #1 through #25 will be posted.

FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026 EVENTS

HOSPITALITY

1. Judging will occur in the team's space.
2. Judges must be able to enter each participating team space to judge the space. Judges are anonymous and will be judging Friday and Saturday.
3. The winner of the Hospitality Award will be announced at the Awards Ceremony on Saturday, May 16, 2026

BEEF FAJITAS

1. Judging will begin at 4 pm on Friday, May 15, 2026.
2. One (1) beef fajita entry. Beef fajitas must be cooked on-site and cooked on a grill.
3. The container should be filled with meat for 6 judges.
4. A cash award of \$250 will be awarded for the 1st place fajitas. Trophies will be awarded for 1st through 3rd places. Placement #1 through #25 will be posted.

COOK'S CHOICE

1. Judging will begin at 5 pm on Friday, May 15, 2026.
2. Judging will be done in the team spaces with 15 mins allowed for sample and score.
3. In the event of inclement weather, judging will be moved to an appropriate location.
4. Participants should prepare enough for 4 judges.
5. All entries must be prepared and cooked on-site.
6. **NO GIFTS ARE TO BE GIVEN TO JUDGES.** Any violation of this rule will result in disqualification.
7. A cash award of \$100 will be awarded to the 1st placed Cooks Choice. Trophies will be awarded for 1st through 3rd places. Placement #1 through #25 will be posted.

PORK SPARERIBS

1. Judging will begin at 6 pm on Friday, May 15, 2026.

2. Turn-ins will consist of pork spareribs with only knuckles removed.
3. Pork Spareribs must be cooked on-site and cooked on a grill.
4. The container should be filled with meat for 6 judges.
5. A cash award of \$500 will be awarded for the 1st place ribs. Trophies will be awarded for 1st through 3rd places. Placement #1 through #25 will be posted.

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2026 EVENTS

MARGARITAS

1. Judging will begin at 10 am on Saturday, May 16, 2026.
2. Judging will be done in team spaces with 15 mins allowed to sample and score.
3. A 4 oz cup will be provided for margarita judging. Teams must serve margaritas only in the cup provided.
4. In the event of inclement weather, judging will be moved to an appropriate location.
5. Participants should prepare enough for 4 judges.
6. Fire is not allowed as a special effect.
7. Margaritas must be prepared on-site.
8. Margaritas must include tequila as an ingredient.
9. **NO GIFTS ARE TO BE GIVEN TO JUDGES.** Any violation of this rule will result in disqualification.
10. A cash award of \$100 to the 1st place Margaritas. Trophies will be awarded for 1st through 3rd places. Placement #1 through #25 will be posted.

CHICKEN

1. Judging will begin at 11 am on Saturday, May 16, 2026.
2. NO CORNISH GAME HENS will be allowed and are grounds for disqualification.
3. All Chicken entries must be cooked on-site.
4. Judging container must contain 1/2 chicken, fully jointed which includes breast, wing, thigh and drumstick. Additional cut up pieces of both white and dark meat for 6 Judges must be in the container.
5. A cash award of \$250 for the 1st place chicken. Trophies will be awarded for 1st through 3rd places. Placement #1 through #25 will be posted.

BRISKET VERIFICATION AND JUDGING

1. Brisket inspection will be done by a Team Representative (TR), there will be NO TAGGING OF BRISKETS. Briskets must be in their original vacuum-sealed packaging for inspection.
 - a. No contest brisket will be allowed on pits before being inspected on Friday, May 15, 2026.
2. Each team will be allowed to tag two (2) briskets per cook space. Only one brisket per space will be allowed for competition entry.
3. Precooked, salted, seasoned or marinated meat is not allowed prior to being inspected.
4. Brisket verification will begin at 12:30 pm on Saturday, May 16, 2026. Judging will begin at 2 pm.

5. Competition brisket must be inspected by a TR **PRIOR** to cutting. A TR will observe the cutting and packing of the brisket in the container provided by PSF J&S.
6. Contestants will have fifteen (15) minutes in which to provide their TR with their brisket entry for verification and to slice the brisket in the presence of the TR for judging entry.
7. Only the cut from one (1) brisket will be allowed for competition entry. There are no exceptions to this rule.
8. The turn-in container should contain enough for 6 judges.
9. All brisket entries **MUST** be cooked on site on a grill.
10. A team member will be responsible for walking their brisket turn-in to the J&S area.
11. A cash award of \$750 for the 1st place brisket. Trophies will be awarded for 1st through 3rd places. Placement #1 through #25 will be posted.

AWARDS

1. Awards will be held at 5 pm on Saturday, May 16, 2026, at the Bud Light stage.
2. Only one (1) person from the winning team should report to the verification table with the winning ticket.
3. Group photos will be taken by a photographer with PSF backdrop. Please have your team together and ready to take a photo immediately after each award presentation.

We are looking forward to another fun and successful Pasadena Strawberry Festival BBQ Cook-off. As always, we greatly appreciate your support and thank you for your participation. From PSF Cook-off Directors, Chairmen and Volunteers

For any questions, comments or concerns, please contact:

Oscar Garza
Director of Cookoff
832-607-4465

Pam Farish
General Chair of BBQ
281-884-2340

Veronica Rivera
General Chair of Judging & Scoring
281-619-4630

Courtney Wright
General Chair of Team Rep
832-425-4632

Dora Turner
Director of Distribution & RV'S, General Chair BBQ Gate
832-654-3533

