

2026 HLPUSD NUTRITION SERVICES  
HEALTHY CHOICE, HEALTHY FUTURE  
STUDENT CHEF RECIPE AND COOKING COMPETITION

**THE COMPETITION:**

HLPUSD Nutrition Services Department is excited to announce the SY 2025-2026 Healthy Choice, Healthy Future Student Chef Competition. Students (Grades 4- 12) will compete to develop nutritious, student-friendly recipes featuring local ingredients that can be incorporated into the school nutrition service program. Students will gain hands-on cooking experience that will give them the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare healthy meals. The competition consists of a Recipe Contest and Cooking Competition.

**COMPETITION REQUIREMENTS:**

**RECIPE CONTEST**

Teams will submit a completed application and recipe (including ingredients and step-by-step instructions), and a detailed description of the dish (breakfast or lunch). Recipe descriptions should include the taste, texture, and appearance of the dish. It is recommended that students use descriptive words such as “colorful,” “crisp,” “hearty”, “spicy,” etc. **HLPUSD’s students will judge recipes through an online poll according to the description of the dish.** The top three winning recipes will be included in the Nutrition Services Recipe Book and may be submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for inclusion recipe database.

**Team Formation**

- The team must consist of two to four students in **grades four through twelve**.
- The team must have a cafeteria manager (CM) who will be the adult supervisor during the testing of the recipe from **March 30 – April 3**, through the After School Program.
- The Cafeteria Manager must be present at the Cooking Competition and will assist and provide guidance on cooking techniques and food safety at the Cooking Competition.

**Application Process**

- All team members are encouraged to view the [Food Groups & My Plate](#) videos before developing their recipes.
- The team must submit an **original** recipe. Use the attached sample recipe [handout](#) as a template for developing the recipe entry.
- The team should consider the Cooking Competition criteria as they develop their recipe.
- All 3 winning teams will have the opportunity to have a virtual meeting with a K-12 Chef from our K-12 partners in nutrition for tips on how to improve their recipe.
- **The team will test the final recipe in their school kitchen in preparation for the**

**contest in an afterschool program.** The Nutrition Services Department will supply the ingredients for developing the Recipe Contest.

- The nutrition services department will assist in the nutrition analysis of the recipes
- The completed recipe, application, and photograph (optional) of the dish must be submitted to the Nutrition Services Department at [NSDCookingcontest@hpusd.org](mailto:NSDCookingcontest@hpusd.org) by **February 20, 2026 (timeline table)**.

### **Recipe Requirements**

- The recipe must include at least one of the following California agricultural products as the main ingredient in the recipe: almonds, grapes, berries and strawberries, walnuts, almonds, lettuce, tomatoes, broccoli, rice, oranges, carrots, celery, peppers, poultry, cattle, calves. A main ingredient is defined as one of the top four ingredients in the recipe (by weight or volume).
- The recipe must serve 25 people.
- The recipe must include at least one cooking step.
- The recipe must be a breakfast or lunch entrée.
- The recipe should NOT be a smoothie or dessert.

### **Voting Process**

- The week of **February 23-27, 2026**, students will vote digitally for their top 3 favorite recipes via google forms.

### **Timeline**

January 6 – February 13	Team Formation and recipe creation
February 20	Recipe submission DEADLINE by 3 pm
February 23-27	Voting (top 3 breakfast or lunch recipes)
March 2-27	Recipe Analysis & Creation
March 30- April 3	Meeting with K-12 Chef and practice recipe preparation with coach
April 17	Final cooking competition

### **After voting is complete, selected recipes will need to follow these additional considerations:**

- The recipe must contain:
  - Less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat
  - Zero trans-fat,
  - Sodium content:
    - Lunch less than 1110 mg per serving
    - Breakfast less than 550 mg per serving
  - Calories: Lunch 550-850
- If the recipe contains grains (e.g., flour, pasta, rice) all grains must be whole grain-rich. The use of non-whole grain-rich ingredients is permissible when used in small amounts (e.g. flour as a thickening agent, and breadcrumbs as a garnish).

- Students may include fresh, frozen, or pre-cooked meat, fish, and poultry products in their dishes. Students using these products are expected to follow appropriate food safety procedures. Raw meat **may not** be served for consumption.
- Students may include fresh, frozen, or pre-cooked meat, fish, and poultry products in their dishes. Student Resources
- Food safety information related to safe minimum cooking temperatures and preventing cross-contamination is available at [FoodSafety.gov](https://FoodSafety.gov).
- The Georgia Department of Education has developed a [Food Safety Video](#) for use with the Georgia Student Chef Competition. The video contains relevant information for the HLPUSD competition regarding personal hygiene, cross-contamination, temperature control, and common mistakes.
- Proper knife skills are important for student safety. The [Knife Safety Demonstration](#) video, developed by the Edible School Yard, is a resource for students unfamiliar with knife handling.

## **COOKING COMPETITION**

The finalists from the Recipe Contest, 3 lunch recipes, will be invited to prepare their recipes at a Cooking Competition at Willow Adult School on **Friday, April 17th 2026**. The finalists will receive special prizes, certificates to display at the school, and recognition on the HLPUSD Nutrition Services website.

### **Students: (Gift Cards)**

- 1<sup>st</sup> - \$ 150 worth of prizes
- 2<sup>nd</sup> - \$ 100 worth of prizes
- 3<sup>rd</sup> - \$ 75 worth of prizes

**Finalists will be responsible for their transportation to the competition venue.** All ingredients will be purchased by the Nutrition Services department and will be set up in the venue together with the utensils and tools needed to prepare and cook the recipes. The teams will cook one recipe, a yield of 25 servings, during the contest. A blind taste test with the student judges, comprised of the school board student representatives from each HS, will determine the placing of the three finalists.

### **Cooking Competition Requirements**

- Ingredients will be provided, and no food preparation may be done in advance.
- The team must prepare, cook, and plate one recipe (yield 25 servings) in less than two hours.
- The team must plate five completed servings of their dish.
- The team must prepare a description of the dish, and an explanation of the dish creation, for the judges to read.

### **Equipment**

The Cooking Competition will take place at a cooking lab facility to be announced later. At the Cooking Competition, teams will be responsible for cleaning their station, including equipment, and returning items to their proper place. Teams may not bring their utensils or equipment to the competition. Each team will be provided with:

- Aprons and hairnets
- Baking pans/sheets
- Cutting boards
- Disposable gloves
- Knives
- Food processor
- Strainers
- Spatulas
- Frying pans
- Thermometers
- Saucepans
- Tongs
- Measuring cups
- Scales
- Vegetable peelers
- Measuring spoons
- Slotted spoons
- Whisks
- Mixing bowls
- Electric hand mixer
- Rolling pin

***Additional equipment may be available upon request.***

### **Cooking Competition Judging Criteria**

Overall Appeal (30%) – Creativity, student appeal or acceptability, use of local ingredients and school cafeteria reproducibility or ease of preparation, nutritionally well-balanced

Appearance and Execution (30%) – Color, plate appeal/appetizing to the eyes, aroma and cooking quality

Taste (40%) – Flavors, variety of textures, and serving temperature

### **Contact**

Please contact the Nutrition Services Department at [NSDCookingcontest@hpusd.org](mailto:NSDCookingcontest@hpusd.org) with questions regarding the competition.

## Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the state or local agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

**1. mail:**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

**2. fax:**

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

**3. email:**

[Program.Intake@usda.gov](mailto:Program.Intake@usda.gov)

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## HACIENDA LA PUENTE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENT CHEF COMPETITION APPLICATION AND RECIPE

### RECIPE NAME:

### School:

Students Names:			
Number of Portions:			
Portion Size:			
Serving Utensil:			

### HACCP Process:

- #1 No Cook
- #2 Cook & Serve Same Day
- #3 Includes Cooling Step

Ingredients:	Weight:	Measure:	Procedure:
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			1.  <b>If cooling:</b>  1. Transfer 2. Cool down to 70 degrees within 2 hours 3. Cool down to 40 degrees within an additional 4 hours
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Total Yield		Number of Pans: 1	Equipment (if not specified in procedures above):	
Weight:	Measure (volume):	Pan Size: Full 400		

Meal Component Contribution Based on Portion Size (For Nutrition Services Staff ONLY)						Nutrient Analysis Based on Portion Size	
Meat/Meat Alternate					Calories:		
Vegetable Subgroups		DG	B/P	R/O	S	O	Saturated Fat (g):
							Sodium (g):
Fruits							
Grains		1G per #8 scoop					

DG= Dark Green B/P= Beans/Peas (Legumes) R/O=Red/Orange S=Starchy O=Other

Updated 3/8/2024