



The San Diego County Fair's **Home Arts & Hobbies' Preserved Foods** Competition invites kitchen artisans to showcase their skills and creative talents in canning and food preserving, including jellies, jams, pickles, salsas and more. This competition provides kitchen enthusiasts with the chance to win cash prizes as well as the unique opportunity to show off their tasty creations to thousands of fair visitors.

2026 Preserved Foods Competition Timeline

Entry Deadline	Monday, May 4, 2026, by 7:59pm
Entry Delivery	Friday, May 15, 2026, 3pm-8pm and Saturday, May 16, 2026, 9am-2pm
Display Jar Pick Up	Tuesday, July 7, 2026, 10am-4pm
Culinary Awards Reception	Friday, July 3, 2026, at 2pm

Eligibility

- Open to all adults aged 18 years or older by the Entry Deadline listed.
- Entries must be original work of the exhibitor whose name appears on the registration.
- Culinary entries made by two or more individuals may be entered by one exhibitor only.
- Please see divisions for additional eligibility requirements.

Contact Us

Veronica Navarro, [Coordinator](#)

Trish Bresser, [Assistant Coordinator](#)

San Diego County Fair Entry Office

2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA 92014

Office (858) 792-4207 - Mon-Fri 10am-4pm

2026 Local Rules

1. Completion of online entry registration shall be deemed acceptance of all rules. Acceptance includes permission to use your name, photograph, and exhibit for the news media.
2. Online registration is required in all departments and for one-day contests. Online entries are accepted until 8:00pm (Pacific Time) on the deadline day for online entry registration, unless otherwise stated.
3. Once registered, the description, title, and price may not be changed. Substitutions will not be allowed. Fair Management is not responsible for errors on entry forms which may lead to elimination or disqualification of an entry.
4. Processing fees must be paid online at the time of registration. Processing fees are non-refundable.
5. Exhibitors must be living at the time the entry form and/or online entry is submitted.
6. All non-livestock entries must be the creative work of the exhibitor (whose name appears on the entry registration), be in good taste, and suitable for family viewing. Fair Management reserves the right to disqualify any entry/exhibit it deems objectionable or not in accordance with competition standards.
7. If an entry is disqualified after judging is complete, no changes will be made to the status of awards given for other entries.
8. Exhibitors are responsible for obtaining necessary permission from models and/or to use material in their entry that is considered copyrighted.
9. No entry will be accepted should the exhibitor describe the conditions under which he/she will exhibit, or the exhibit will be displayed.
10. Judges are qualified in the medium(s) they are judging. New judges may be chosen each year, and judges may be assigned to different divisions/classes from year to year.
11. If a coordinator or judge deems an entry to be in the incorrect category, division, class, etc., he or she may direct the Entry Office to move that entry as appropriate. The Entry Office may combine divisions or classes to create an adequate judging pool.
12. Fair Management reserves the right to limit entries, and display thereof, to facilities available and to cancel any division or class in which, in its judgment, the entries are insufficient to secure adequate competition.
13. Entries must be delivered on the date(s) and times specified. Entries will not be accepted before or after the stated entry delivery date. All accepted exhibits must remain on display and shall not be removed until the stated entry pick up date. Any exhibit not picked up on the specified date becomes the property of the San Diego County Fair and will be disposed of promptly.
14. All exhibits are entered and shown at the owner's risk. Reasonable care will be taken to prevent loss or damage to exhibits, but in no event will the 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) be responsible for any injury or loss which may occur or for the actions of third parties. Insurance, if desired, should be obtained by the exhibitor at his/her own expense.

15. Any person who violates any Local, State, or Department rule or displays unethical conduct will forfeit all privileges and premiums and be subject to such penalty as the 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) may order.
16. To ensure reliable award notification, exhibitors are responsible for submitting all address, phone number and email address updates promptly in writing to entry@sdfair.com or Entry Department, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA 92014.
17. Premium money will be paid per the recorded placings in the official judging books rather than the ribbon attached to the exhibit.
18. Donated Award recipients will be selected per the instructions given on the Donated Award Confirmation Form submitted by the donor.
19. Premium, donated cash award, and auction checks will be made payable to the exhibitor as listed on the online entry registration. Checks will be mailed within 30 days after the close of the Fair to the address shown on the online entry registration, or as updated by the exhibitor via written notification to the Entry Office. Auction checks may be held longer if the buyer has not paid. Checks not cashed within 6 months from the date of issue will be forfeited. Replacement checks may be subject to a \$35 stop payment fee.
20. The 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) is required by the Internal Revenue Service to report any premiums paid totaling the amount of \$600 or more. Exhibitors may be required to submit a W-9 form.
21. The 22nd District Agricultural Association management reserves the right to amend or add to these rules; the 22nd District Agricultural Association (San Diego County Fair) assumes no liability or responsibility not herein expressed.

California State Rules apply and are available [here](#).



Entry Limit

Two (2) entries per exhibitor per class. Exhibitors may enter as many classes as desired.

Recipes may only be entered once.

Entry Fees

Adult divisions: \$10 per entry

Entry fees are payable online with a credit card and are not refundable.

Fair Tickets

Each exhibitor will receive two (2) Fair Entry Tickets.

How to Enter

1. After reading all entry materials, click the “Enter Now” link below to go to the ShoWorks Entry Homepage.
2. Register as an **Exhibitor** (or **Quick Group** if entering for members of a family, club or guild).
3. Select the appropriate division and class and input the required information. (See “Divisions and Classes” below for a list of all divisions and classes.) In the Description field, provide appropriate information, including the technique, so that the work can be identified if the entry tag becomes unattached. For example, “Child’s wool sweater, knit, original pattern,” or “San Diego Padres Bobblehead Collection – 27 pieces.” Character limit is 100 including spaces.
4. Review your entry before completing registration to ensure that you have entered the correct division and class for each entry.
5. Click the check-out button and pay for all entries.
6. Read the confirmation statement and type YES. **Do not click multiple times**, as it will charge you each time.
7. You will receive a confirmation email with a summary of your entry(ies).

If you plan to make changes to your entries or need to leave ShoWorks at any time, SAVE YOUR CART before exiting out.

For additional help with entering, review this detailed step-by-step guide:

[Entry Tutorial](#)

Still have questions? Please call or [email the Entry Office](#).

Phone: (858) 792-4207, Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm

How to Prepare Your Entry for Delivery

Please see individual Division and Class container and labeling requirements.

Ingredients List Requirement: An Ingredient List for each entry is required to allow judges to avoid allergens during judging. The list must include every ingredient used to prepare the entry, including fillings, toppings, decorations, herbs, spices, and flavorings. Be specific. For example, “powdered pectin” rather than “pectin” or “apple cider vinegar” rather than “vinegar”.

This completed **Ingredient List** must be delivered with each Culinary Entry. In consideration of exhibitors with no printer, blank Ingredient List forms will be provided, and must be completed by exhibitors, at entry delivery.

Judging

The Home Arts & Hobbies competition uses the American system of judging for adult competitions.

Judging Process - Prior to judging, each Culinary entry will be evaluated for eligibility as described under each category. Once eligibility is confirmed, points will be awarded in accordance with the judging criteria outlined under each division.

Preserved Foods entries will be disqualified for the following:

- Unsealed jar
- Mold or foreign objects (hair, insects, etc.) found in a sealed jar or container
- Foods dried using sun, solar, or air methods
- Product considered unsafe to taste

Judging Results - Results will be posted on the San Diego County Fair's website within two weeks after Fair open or within five days after the entry delivery date for each competition.

HEAD JUDGE

We are excited to welcome extraordinary State and County Fair Culinary Exhibitor and **Award-Winning Cookbook Author Linda Amendt** to lead our culinary judging team! Linda has won over 700 Blue Ribbons in Preserved Foods and Baked Goods Competitions and has authored top titles such as *Blue Ribbon Preserves: Secrets to Award-Winning Jams, Jellies, Marmalades & More* and *Blue Ribbon Baking*.

Entry Delivery & Pickup

Entries must be delivered to the Fairgrounds. Please refer to the Competition Timeline for in-person delivery dates. Exhibitors will be emailed delivery and pick up instructions including a **map** showing access to the Fairgrounds.

Home Arts & Hobbies will provide entry tags at entry delivery. Please allow time to attach entry tags to projects with materials and assistance provided by fair staff. Exhibitors will be responsible for attaching tag.

A claim check will be issued to each exhibitor upon entry delivery and must be presented at the time of entry pick up. If an exhibitor is unable to pick up their entry, they may arrange for another person to bring in their claim check with a signed written authorization from the exhibitor.

For Preserved Food entries requiring two (2) containers: The container opened for judging will become the property of the San Diego County Fair. The unopened container may be picked up on the Display Container Pick Up date listed in the Culinary Competition Timeline.

Culinary entries other than Preserved Foods, Liqueurs, and Decorated Foods must be delivered in disposable containers. Food items and containers for Culinary entries other than these categories will be disposed of after display.

Decorated Food entries and Decorated Food containers may be picked up on the Decorated Food Pick Up date listed in the Culinary Competition Timeline.

Quick Group Delivery Appointments - If you registered as a Quick Group (families, clubs, guilds, organizations) and plan to deliver all entries in the group together, please [CLICK HERE](#) to request an appointment time on one of the in-person delivery dates listed in the Competition Timeline.

Awards

Award checks will be mailed within two (2) weeks of the last day of the Fair. Please submit address updates to the [Entry Office](#) in a timely manner.

Award-winning exhibitors will receive an invitation to our Home Arts & Hobbies Awards Reception and free Fair admission for the day of the event.

1 st Place - Awarded in each class	\$25 and ribbon
2 nd Place - Awarded in each class	\$20 and ribbon
3 rd Place - Awarded in each class	\$15 and ribbon
An Honorable Mention may be awarded at judges' discretion	Ribbon
Best of Show - Chosen from 1 st Place winners from each class	\$100 and ribbon

PRESERVED FOODS DIVISIONS AND CLASSES

See [Glossary](#) for all definitions

PRESERVED FOOD SAFETY REQUIREMENTS: Food safety is of utmost importance and any entry deemed by the judges or Fair staff to be unsafe for consumption will be disqualified. **Entries must be prepared in accordance with the USDA guidelines available from the [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#).**

ELIGIBILITY OF PRESERVED FOODS ENTRIES:

- Entries must have been canned within the past year (after July 6, 2025).
- Home-prepared product only. Commercially canned or preserved foods are not eligible.
- Entries must meet all requirements below and be considered safe to taste.

Due to food safety concerns, the following items are NOT eligible:

- Non-pickled vegetables
- Pesto
- Mustards
- Oil-packed product
- Pumpkin product (i.e., pumpkin butter, jam, etc.)
- Product containing meat (except Jerkies), dairy, or eggs
- Chocolate or Chocolate sauces

Quantity Requirements: Each entry must consist of two (2) identical containers of product from the same batch – one container for display and one for judging. The judge will choose which container to open. Jars and lids must be identical. Seals and bands must be made by the same manufacturer (Bell & Kerr are interchangeable).

Jar Requirements: Jars must be sterilized, clear (non-colored), regular or widemouthed, Mason-type (Ball, Kerr, etc.), threaded, home canning jar, sealed with a metal lid and ring band. No decorations are allowed on jars (except those from the manufacturer).

Jar Seal Requirements: Jars must be sealed with **new**, two-piece, vacuum seals, consisting of metal screw ring band and metal lid, specifically made for canning jars. Ring band must unscrew easily.

**Label Requirements:**

- Use plain white labels without any decoration or embellishments.
- Jars must be labeled on their lids only with no overlap onto the screw ring band.
- Dried food labels must be placed on the upper right corner of resealable plastic bag.
- Labels must contain **only** the following information:
 - WEN# (Found on entry receipt)
 - Division and Class
 - Description of Entry
 - Canning or Drying Method used (Must be a method listed below)/ Processing Time (*Minutes* in a water bath, steam canner, or pressure canner, or *Hours* of oven or dehydrator drying time)
 - Description of Entry
 - Date of Preservation (Month/Day/Year)
 - Elevation (Your altitude effects the necessary processing time of preserved foods.)
- No additional labeling is permitted.

Labels must be formatted as shown:**Label Example 1**

Division 130: Jams, Class 001: Single Berry

E6B25C	130-001
Strawberry Jam	A/10
03/04/2026	122 ft.

Label Example 2:

Division 135: Dried Food, Class 003: Jerky

KNN10F	135-003
Beef Jerky	B/14
04/12/2026	1,052 ft.

Canning Requirements: All Preserved Foods entries (including jam and jelly) must meet proper acid levels and be processed according to USDA standards using **only** one of the three following canning methods.

- **Canning Method A. Water Bath Method:** Used for acid foods (example: most fruits, excluding figs). Tomatoes, figs and some fruits are considered borderline low-acid foods. These foods should be made more acid by adding lemon juice, citric acid or vinegar as appropriate for the type of food.
- **Canning Method B. Pressure Canner Method:** Usually used for low acid foods but can also be used to process acid foods. Due to safety concerns, low acid foods processed using the pressure canner method are not eligible for competition at the San Diego County Fair.
- **Canning Method C. Steam Canner Method:** Processing times are the same for both water bath and steam canning. Products requiring a water bath processing time longer than 45 minutes cannot be safely processed in a steam canner.

Dried Foods Requirements: Dried foods entries must be home-prepared using an oven or electric dehydrator. All Dried Foods entries must be prepared using a tested recipe and processed according to USDA standards using **only** one of the methods below:

- **Dehydration Method A. Oven:** Any standard or convection home oven. Most foods are dehydrated at 130 °F (54 °C), although meats being made into jerky should be dehydrated at a higher temperature of 155 °F (68 °C), or preheated to that temperature, to guard against pathogens that may already be in the meat.
- **Dehydration Method B. Electric Dehydrator:** Any kitchen appliance marketed as a Food Dehydrator/Dryer which circulates warm air over the food surfaces. These offer precise temperature control at lower temperatures than a conventional oven.

Ingredient List Requirement: This completed **Ingredient List** must be delivered with each Culinary Entry. In consideration of exhibitors with no printer, blank Ingredient List forms will be provided, and must be completed by exhibitors, at entry delivery.

Division 130: Jams

Entry consists of two (2) 4-ounce jars or two (2) 8-ounce jars, 1/4-inch headspace.

JUDGING CRITERIA: Texture (35%), Flavor (35%), Appearance (30%)

Class 001	Single Berry Jam (any one berry)
Class 002	Mixed Berry Jam (two or more berries)
Class 003	Stone Fruit Jam (apricots, plums, peaches, cherries, etc.)
Class 004	Spiced Jam (any jam containing sweet, fragrant, or hot spices)
Class 005	Fruit Jam - Other than listed, includes jams made with herbs, extracts, and other flavorings.

Division 131: Soft Spreads

Entry consists of two (2) 4-ounce jars or two (2) 8-ounce jars, 1/4-inch headspace.

JUDGING CRITERIA: Texture (35%), Flavor (35%), Appearance (30%)

Class 001	Marmalade
Class 002	Preserves
Class 003	Conserves
Class 004	Butter (Non-Dairy)

Division 132: Jellies

Entry consists of two (2) 4-ounce jars or two (2) 8-ounce jars, 1/4-inch headspace.

JUDGING CRITERIA: Texture (35%), Flavor (35%), Appearance (30%)

Class 001	Berry Jelly
Class 002	Fruit Jelly - Other than berry
Class 003	Spiced Jelly
Class 004	Pepper Jelly
Class 005	Specialty Jelly, with Wine, Beer or Spirits

Division 133: Canned Fruit and Sauces

Entry consists of two (2) 1-pint jars, 1/2-inch headspace.

JUDGING CRITERIA (Fruit and tomatoes, whole and pieces): Flavor (35%), Product (30%), Pack (25%), Container (10%)

JUDGING CRITERIA (Sauce, salsa and chutney): Flavor (30%), Consistency (25%), Smoothness to the palate (25%), Appearance (20%)

Class 001 Fruit – Whole, pieces or sauce

Class 002 Tomatoes – Whole, pieces or sauce

Class 003 Salsa

Class 004 Chutney

Division 134: Pickles and Relishes

Entry consists of two (2) 1-pint jars, 1/2-inch headspace.

JUDGING CRITERIA: Flavor (35%), Product (30%), Pack (25%), Container (10%)

Class 001 Cucumber Pickles - Dill and/or Spicy

Class 002 Cucumber Pickles - Sweet (including bread & butter)

Class 003 Pickled Fruits and Vegetables (other than cucumbers)

Class 004 Relishes, Fruit and/or Vegetable

Division 135: Dried Food

Entry consists of two (2) jars just large enough for the amount of product described in the class descriptions. Desiccant packets are **not** permitted.

JUDGING CRITERIA: Appearance (40%), Texture (40%), Flavor (20%)

Class 001 Dried Fruit or Tomatoes. Eight (8) full-diameter pieces/slices, or 1-2 cups of smaller pieces

Class 002 Fruit Leather. Eight (8) pieces, rolled, 4-to-6-inch squares or 2-inch strips

Class 003 Jerky. Eight (8) serving-size pieces/strips or 1-2 cups of smaller pieces

Class 004 Herbs or Herb Blends - 2-4 ounces (1/4 cup to 1/2 cup)