

2026 Nebraska State Fair 4-H Culinary Challenge Participants

Welcome to the 2026 Nebraska State Fair 4-H Culinary Challenge! We look forward to seeing you and your partner on **Saturday, August 29**, at the Nebraska State Fair. Please review the information below as you prepare for the state contest.

Contest Registration: All participants must be entered in Showworks by **August 10, 2026**. Contest registration information is available on the Nebraska State Fair website: <https://go.unl.edu/state-fair-contests>. Each team member must register individually through Showworks: <https://go.unl.edu/state-fair-register>. The registration fee is \$5.00 per 4-H member.

Contest Location: The Culinary Challenge will be held in the Raising Nebraska Building on the Nebraska State Fairgrounds in Grand Island.

Supply Drop-Off and Parking: Refrigeration and temporary storage are available. However, for the smoothest experience, please plan to bring contest supplies to Raising Nebraska after 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. Several events will affect access to the building:

- The **State Fair Marathon** will take place on Saturday morning and begins and ends in the parking lot near Raising Nebraska. Vehicles will not be allowed into the loading/unloading parking area (west of Raising Nebraska and the 4-H/FFA Building) until the marathon concludes, approximately around noon.
- The **4-H Fashion Show** will also be held in Raising Nebraska throughout the day, with shows at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 1:00 p.m. The building will close to the public between shows to allow participants to prepare. It is expected to reopen around 2:30–3:00 p.m.
- If dropping off supplies after 3:00 does work for you, please contact Cami Wells so we can make alternative arrangements.

Unloading Passes: If you would like an unloading pass, please contact Cami in advance. The pass may only be used after the marathon has ended and allows access through Gate 5 on the northwest side of the 4-H/FFA Exhibit Building. Vehicles may remain in the unloading area for a maximum of 30 minutes while unloading or loading supplies. Vehicles left longer than 30 minutes may be towed.

Equipment and Supplies: Participants are responsible for bringing all equipment and supplies needed for their presentation. Chairs will be provided. Tables are available upon request—please let us know if you need one. A microwave will be available in a nearby

preparation area. Remember to bring any items needed for setup, food preparation, and cleanup.

Schedule: We will contact teams regarding available presentation times and scheduling. Please arrive at the check-in area before your assigned presentation time. This will allow sufficient time for setup and preparation. We understand that many participants are involved in multiple State Fair activities and will do our best to accommodate scheduling conflicts. After your presentation and interview with the judge are complete, you may remove your display and enjoy the rest of the fair.

Presenters ONLY: Only event participants will be permitted in the preparation area. No relatives or friends, please!

Attire: Participants may wear clothing, costumes, or accessories that complement their theme. We encourage participants to wear a 4-H chevron or 4-H emblem during their presentation. Each exhibitor will receive a Nebraska State Fair 4-H T-shirt at check-in, which may also be worn during the contest.

Challenge Ingredient: Each team must incorporate the 2026 challenge ingredient—white **POTATOES**—into at least one item on their menu. Sweet potatoes are not included. Teams may choose any variety of white potatoes: russet, red, white, yellow, blue/purple, fingerling, or petite.

Food Safety: Please follow safe food handling practices when preparing, transporting, and presenting food items. Review USDA food safety guidelines here: <https://go.unl.edu/food-safety-basics>.

Results and Awards: Each participant will receive a purple, blue, red, or white State Fair ribbon. Special awards will be presented to the first, second, and third-place teams in each age division. Ribbons and results will be distributed through county packets following the Nebraska State Fair. Results will also be posted online after the contest has concluded.

We look forward to seeing you in Grand Island and wish you the best as you prepare for the contest! Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Cami Wells

Extension Educator in Hall County

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