



2026 OFFICIAL RULES

Early Entries

1. The Creative Living Center will accept early entry items for competition only during the dates and times as listed on the Alabama National Fair website (alnationalfair.org). Under the “Participate” tab select “Competitions”, then choose “Creative Living Center”. This information is also provided on the individual contest information sheets.
2. Baked goods and perishable horticultural products will only be accepted on the date and time listed on the Alabama National Fair website (alnationalfair.org). Under the “Participate” tab select “Competitions”, then choose “Creative Living Center”. This information is also provided on the individual contest information sheets.
3. Early entries may be brought to Creative Living Center by another person but must be entered in the name of the owner/exhibitor.
4. Entries must be the handiwork/creation of the exhibitor (exception: Antiques & Collectibles). **Any entry that was purchased or is not the workmanship of the exhibitor will be disqualified.**
5. Drawings/paintings/collages and other artwork entered into any Art, Handicraft or Special Friends/Needs category or class should be matted, and may have a protective covering (i.e., Grafix Acetate Film). Exception: paintings, drawings or other artwork on a stretched canvas frame or wood panel. All artwork must have a hanging apparatus (adhesive plastic sawtooth picture hangers work the best on matted artwork and a hanging wire works best on stretched canvas frames or wood panels). **Entries shall not include any glass coverings. The following hanging apparatuses are NOT allowed: string or wire that has been hot-glued, glued or taped on, command strip type hangers.**
6. Any photograph entered into any photography category/class should be matted or framed and must contain a hanging apparatus (adhesive plastic sawtooth picture hangers work the best on matted photographs). **Entries must not contain a glass covering. The following hanging apparatuses are NOT allowed: string or wire that has been hot-glued, glued or taped on, command strip type hangers.**
7. Any item entered in a previous year’s fair is not eligible for entry into the 2026 Alabama National Fair. This includes all contests, divisions, and classes.
8. **Updated** - Youth Exhibitors are defined as any individual age 17 or under. **Exception:** Students who are 18 years of age and currently attend a public or private high school (student ID required). In youth contests where there are separate divisions based on the exhibitor’s age, determination of age shall be based on the age of the exhibitor as of September 1, 2026.
9. Youth exhibitors who wish to submit an early-entry item for which there is no corresponding youth division, may enter their item in the appropriate adult division with the understanding that their item will be competing against adult entries.
10. You may enter multiple items in a specified division but may only enter one (1) item in each class within the division unless otherwise noted on the individual contest rules.
11. Each entry receives an individual entry number and is labeled with an entry number tag. An entry tag stub for each entry shall be given to the exhibitor when entries are delivered. **TAG STUBS** must be retained by the exhibitor until the close of the Fair and **MUST BE PRESENTED TO CLAIM ENTRIES.**

12. Recipes for items entered in the “Home Baking Contest” must be on the official Alabama National Fair recipe form. Entries without recipes on the official form shall be disqualified.
13. **Updated** - Exhibitors may register entries online at www.alnationalfair.org. Choose the “Participate” tab, then choose “Competitions” and “Register”. On-line registration opens Wednesday, July 1, 2026, and the deadline for online registration is Sunday, September 13, 2026. Please note that there is a processing fee when registering online.
14. There is no charge for entering items into the Creative Living Center. However, there is a small processing fee charged when registering online.
15. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor to investigate and adhere to State and Federal tax laws/regulations regarding any premiums paid and awards received.
16. All contests are subject to change.

Live Contest

17. **Updated** – Competitors MUST pre-register in order to participate in any Live Cooking Contest no later than Tuesday, October 6, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. Competitors who show up for any live cooking contest(s) in which they have not pre-registered will not be allowed to participate in the contest(s). Competitors may register for Live Cooking Contest by doing one of the following:
 - ✓ Online Registration – Competitors may register online at www.alnationalfair.org (see rule 13).
 - ✓ Entries are limited to one competitor. There are no team competitions.
 - ✓ During Early Entry Registration – Competitors may register at the CLC building during the dates and times when early entries are being accepted (see CLC Rule #1).
 - ✓ At the Creative Living Center on the following days and times.

Friday, September 25, 2026	- 9am – 4pm	Tuesday, September 29, 2026	- 9am – 4pm
Saturday, September 26, 2026	- 9am – 2pm	Wednesday, September 30, 2026	- 9am – 12pm
Monday, September 28, 2026	- 9am – 4pm	Tuesday, October 6, 2026	- 9am – 12pm
18. Competitors registered for live cooking contest(s) must purchase a competitor pass at the time of registration. One pass is good for all Live Contest and is valid for use only by the purchaser. Each competitor’s pass is **\$20.00 (check or cash only)** and includes parking. Although the Competitor’s Pass is accepted at all gates, competitor’s **must** enter through the “competitor’s gate” when bringing in their contest items (see rule 53 – 58). Anyone purchasing a competitors pass who fails to participate in a live cooking contest and where said pass was used to enter the Fair will be in violation of the rules and will not be allowed to participate in any future live events hosted by the Creative Living Center.
19. Any recipe entered in a previous year’s cooking contest is not eligible to be used in the current year’s cooking contest. A recipe may only be used once. At the discretion of the CLC Director, a recipe that is closely similar to a past recipe may also be disqualified.
20. Live contest competitors may only enter one (1) item in each contest division.
21. All contests are subject to change.

22. Recipes for items entered in any Cooking Contest must be on the official Alabama National Fair recipe form. A recipe form should be completed prior to arrival at the CLC. Entries without recipes on the official form shall be disqualified. Incomplete recipes will be disqualified.
23. Recipes must be submitted to CLC Staff at the time of contest sign-in. Recipes must contain a complete list of ingredients, including proper measurements. Recipe directions must be thorough, including directions on how/when each ingredient is used, cooking temperatures, and cooking times. Recipes may not be altered once the judging has started. The name of your dish shall not include your name or the name of your business/company.
24. All recipes become the property of the Alabama National Fair and the specific contest sponsor, including editing and publication rights. The Alabama National Fair and the contest sponsor reserves the right to use the competitors name, photograph and recipe for publicity, promotion, and advertising. **Exception:** Information pertaining to youth competitors shall not be released.
25. Some Cooking Contests require the use of specific products, proof of purchase of these products is required.
26. **Updated** - Competitors may sign-in for a live contest no more than forty-five (45) minutes prior to the contest start time. Set up will begin thirty (30) minutes prior to contest time.
27. Sign-in for live cooking contests shall close ten (10) minutes prior to the start time of the contest. Any competitor who has not signed-in in accordance with this rule will not be allowed to participate.
28. Re-Heating: Competitors may warm/re-heat their food starting thirty (30) minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the contest. Ovens will be pre-heated to 300 degrees and cooktops are available. Crockpots / slow-cookers or insta-pots may not be plugged in prior to 30 (thirty) minutes before the scheduled start time of a contest. Once re-heated, competitors should move their dish to their assigned spot.
29. Preparation of food in the CLC kitchen is prohibited.
30. Competitors are responsible for removing all items from their assigned contest area. The CLC is not responsible for washing or cleaning any item belonging to a contestant.
31. **Updated** - Competitors are responsible for bringing all serving dishes/serving utensils, etc., and providing all decorative items necessary for their entry/display area. The CLC is not responsible for furnishing serving utensils. Wax candles are not allowed. **Alcohol is strictly prohibited.**
32. The basic USDA rules of food safety must be followed. All meat, poultry, milk, eggs, and vegetable dishes must be kept cold (below 40 degrees F) or hot (above 160 degrees F). This means that ice chests or other insulated containers must be used when transporting or holding food. For information on food safety, contact your County Extension Agent.
33. It is the responsibility of the competitor to investigate and adhere to State and Federal tax laws/regulations regarding any premiums paid and awards received.
34. Competitors must comply with the following Alabama National Fair policies:
 - **“Clear Bag Policy”** (see www.alnationalfair.org) - Competitors may bring in food items, dishes, utensils, decorations, etc., for the various live cooking contest through the competitors gate, traveling directly to the Creative Living Center. If the competitor leaves the Creative Living Center and visits any other part of the Fair (Garrett Coliseum, Food Court, Midway, Circus, etc.) they must comply with the coliseum’s clear bag policy (purses, pocketbooks, back packs, tote bags, carts, wagons, etc., are not allowed in any other areas of the fairgrounds).

- **“Age Policy”** - Youth competitors participating in any contest(s) during the Alabama National Fair must comply with the ANF Age Policy. Everyone seventeen (17) years old and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Parent or guardian must be at least twenty-one (21) years of age. Photo ID will be required to verify age.

Fair’s Responsibility

35. The Creative Living Center shall be open to the Public each day beginning when the Fair Gates open and shall close at the discretion of the CLC Director or Fair Management. For gate times, please visit www.alnationalfair.org.
36. While every reasonable precaution will be taken for safeguarding entries, it should be understood that the entries are entered in competition for prizes, and the owner assumes all responsibility for any accidents, loss, or damage that may occur.
37. Neither the Alabama National Fair and Agricultural Exposition, Inc., its officers, directors, employees, or volunteers; the Kiwanis Club of Montgomery, its officers, directors, or members, or the Garrett Coliseum Redevelopment Corporation will be responsible for any accident, loss or damage.
38. The Fair Management reserves the right to decline any entry or exhibit. Fair management may disqualify any entry for violation of any CLC Rule or individual contest rule.
39. Home Baking items shall become the property of the Alabama National Fair. ANF will be responsible for the disposal of these items.
40. Exhibits and/or entries may not be removed from the Creative Living Center during the duration of the Fair.

Picking Up Exhibited Items

41. The Creative Living Center will be open to return entries to their owners only during the dates and times listed on the Alabama National Fair website (alnationalfair.org). Under the “Participate” tab select “Competitions”, then choose “Creative Living Center”.

****Any item(s) not picked up in accordance with this rule will be discarded*****

42. Exhibitors must present entry tag stubs to claim their entries.
43. CLC staff shall be responsible for returning all entries in compliance with dates/times advertised.

Judging

44. Judging days/times for Early Entry contest(s) will be prior to opening day of the Fair (closed judging).
45. Judging for all Live Contest(s) shall be at the time of the contest (open judging).
46. All contests are judged based on the criteria defined for each specific contest(s) (see each individual contest(s) for judging criteria).
47. Where only one entry is made in any one class, the entry will be judged on its own merits.
48. Special contest (Baker of the Year, Cook of the Year & It’s a Tradition) are subject to the criteria defined in the individual contest rules for those contests. Assignment of “points” for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place wins are as follows:

1st Place = 5 points

2nd Place = 3 points

3rd Place = 1 point

In the case of a tie in the “Baker of the Year” or “Cook of the Year” contest, the CLC Director shall tally the actual judge’s scores for each qualifying contest where the competitor placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd. The competitor with the highest overall judge’s score shall be determined the winner.

49. Some early entry contests award a monetary prize for “Best of Fair”. The “Best of Fair” winner shall be determined by taking the first-place winner in each “Division” and re-judging those entries to determine the “Best of Fair” for that specific contest.
50. The Judges and Fair officials reserve the right to reclassify and/or disqualify any entry.
51. No awards/ribbons will be awarded for any article that falls outside the division/classes listed on each individual contest information sheet or is disqualified for violation of rules.
52. Monetary prizes shall be paid based on the scoring documented by the judge(s) on the official judge’s sheets. Monetary prizes shall not be paid based on ribbons that may be attached to exhibits. In case of a tie in early entry judging, the winner will be determined by a random drawing. In the case of a tie in a live cooking contest, the winner will be determined by the judges.
53. During all live contests where, open judging is taking place, contestants must refrain from interacting with judges/officials.
54. **THE DECISIONS MADE BY THE CLC JUDGES ARE FINAL.**

Creative Living Center Location & Parking

55. The Creative Living Center is located in the building directly behind the Garrett Coliseum.
56. Due to the Fair’s “Clear Bag Policy”, competitors will not be allowed to bring food items or any other contest supplies into the Fair through any public ticket gate. Competitors must have a “competitor’s pass” and must enter through the “Competitors Gate”. For more information on the “Clear Bag Policy”, please go to www.alnationalfair.org.
57. Competitors arriving at the Fair to participate in a “Live Contest” should park in the South Parking Lot and enter the fairgrounds through the “Competitor’s Gate” which is located to the left of the South Ticket Gate. If parking is full, please let the parking attendants know that you are here for the Live Cooking Competition. There are usually open spaces for you to park in. Exhibitors should then follow the sidewalk/ramp down to the CLC building.
58. The “Competitor’s Gate” will only be open and allow a competitor to enter starting one (1) hour prior to a scheduled live contest. This gate will close at the scheduled start time of the live contest.
59. Only competitors who have a “Competitors Pass” (wristband) will be allowed entry through the Competitor’s Gate. All other persons must enter through a Public Ticket Gate.
(Map provided on next page)

60. Competitors may exit using any exit gate.

