

# 2026 Virginia ProStart Invitational



## Procedures and Rules for Individual Competitions

Students are responsible for understanding and following all the procedures and rules contained in this document; they will not be reviewed at the Virginia ProStart Invitational. Please read this document carefully to maximize your opportunity for success and to avoid receiving penalties during the competition. Refer all questions to Dr. Jai Girard prior to arrival at the Virginia ProStart Invitational.

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## **Chicken Fabrication Competition: Airline Cut Edition**

The Chicken Fabrication Competition challenges individual competitors to showcase their culinary knowledge, technical precision, and time management by expertly fabricating a whole chicken into precise industry-standard portions.

Each competitor will have **10 minutes** to fabricate one whole chicken into the required portions: **airline breasts with drumette attached, bone-in thighs with the oyster intact, drumsticks, and wings.**

This competition emphasizes industry-level butchery standards and requires participants to demonstrate:

- Advanced knife skills
- Portioning accuracy and consistency
- Waste minimization and yield awareness
- Strict adherence to food safety and sanitation protocols
- Time efficiency under pressure

### **Fabrication Task**

Each competitor will have 10 minutes to fabricate one whole chicken into the following standard portions:

- Two **airline breasts** (skin-on, boneless, with drumette attached), uniform in size and free of visible fat or cartilage
- Two **bone-in thighs** (with oyster intact; skin-on or skin-off, competitor's choice)
- Two **drumsticks** (cleanly separated, with skin intact)
- Two **whole wings** (flat and wingtip, separated from drumette)

### **Requirements**

- Competitors must bring **sharp, appropriate knives**
- **Sanitized cutting boards and workstations** will be provided
- **Fabrication must be completed within 10 minutes**

*Note: Judging will focus on precision, portioning, waste reduction, sanitation, and timing.*

### **Judging Overview**

Competitors will be evaluated on their ability to fabricate a chicken with technical skill, consistency, and professionalism. Judges will assess five core competencies:

- Advanced knife technique
- Portioning accuracy and uniformity
- Waste management and yield optimization

- Adherence to safety and sanitation protocols
- Timely efficiency under pressure

*All cuts must reflect professional industry standards for appearance, accuracy, and yield.*

### **Scoring: Chicken Fabrication (Total: 50 Points)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Description</b>
Accuracy of Cuts	15	Clean separation at joints, proper technique, and correct fabrication of required parts (airline breasts, drumsticks, bone-in thighs, and wings).
Oyster Intact on Each Thigh	5	Both thighs must include the oyster muscle, fully intact and properly trimmed. Missing or damaged oysters result in point deductions.
Uniformity of Portions	10	Consistency in size and shape of both sides: breasts should match, as should thighs, drumsticks, and wings. Cuts should reflect industry standards.
Cleanliness & Yield	10	Cuts should be clean and well-trimmed with minimal waste. Excessive fat, cartilage, or lost meat will reduce score. Efficient use of the whole bird is expected.
Station Sanitation & Knife Safety	5	Maintains a clean, organized workstation; demonstrates proper knife handling and safe work habits throughout the fabrication process.
Completion Within 10-Minute Time Limit	5	Fabrication must be completed within the allotted time. Points deducted for exceeding 10 minutes.

***Tie-Breaking Procedure:*** *In the event of a tie, the tying competitors will each participate in a short interview with the judging panel. Competitors will answer questions about their techniques, decision-making process, and responses to real-world culinary scenarios.. Judges will then deliberate and determine the final rankings based on the depth, clarity, and quality of the responses.*

## **Cake Decorating Competition Description**

The Cake Decorating Competition challenges individual competitors to demonstrate their **technical precision, artistic skill, and time management** by transforming a basic crumb-coated cake into a professionally finished, retail-ready product that is both visually appealing and flavorful. Competitors will be evaluated not only on decoration but also on the **quality and consistency of the cake itself**, including a **filled middle layer** that complements the design and enhances taste.

This competition emphasizes:

- Clean execution of **core decorating techniques**
- **Visual appeal** and creative composition
- **Flavor and texture** of cake and filling
- **Time management** under pressure
- Adherence to **food safety and sanitation protocols**

### **Decorating & Tasting Task**

Each competitor will have 25 minutes to complete the decorating process. Cakes must begin in a crumb-coated state, and all decorative elements must be applied during the competition.

Cakes must include:

- A **smooth, white buttercream base coat**
- A **top shell border** using white buttercream
- **Embellishments** using **at least two additional buttercream colors** (e.g., flowers, leaves, etc.)
- Script **lettering** with the message: *“Happy Birthday Chef”*
- A **filled middle layer** (e.g., fruit, jam, ganache, flavored buttercream) that enhances the overall flavor and presentation

*Note: The filling must be fully contained and appropriate for a professional retail setting.*

### **Cake Requirements**

- Cakes must measure:
  - **8 inches in base diameter**
  - **4–6 inches in height**
- Each cake must contain **at least one filled layer** visible upon cutting
- Competitors are limited to **3 lbs of white buttercream icing**
- Cakes must be fully edible and safe for tasting

## Allowed Tools

Competitors may use the following tools only:

- **Piping bags and up to 5 tips**, including: round, star, petal, and leaf styles
- **Primary food colors**: red, yellow, blue, and black (for custom mixing)
- **Decorating comb, bench scraper, and/or offset spatula**
- **Flower nail** for buttercream flower construction
- **Measuring spoons or small cups** (for portioning icing or color)
- **Basic cake board or stand** for support during decoration

## Judging Overview

Competitors will be evaluated on their ability to create a cake that demonstrates both **technical proficiency** and **retail appeal**, with the added challenge of delivering **excellent flavor and texture**. Judges will assess:

- **Clean execution** of required decorating techniques
- **Creative design** and aesthetic cohesion
- **Flavor, texture, and quality** of the cake and filled layer
- **Adherence to competition guidelines**, including cake size, tool limitations, and required design elements
- **Workstation cleanliness, food safety, and knife/tool handling**
- **Completion within the 25-minute time limit**

*All cakes must reflect professional industry standards for appearance, execution, and taste.*

## Scoring: Cake Decorating (Total: 50 Points)

Category	Points	Description
Design & Creativity	15	Judged on originality, visual composition, and retail appeal. Designs should be eye-catching, cohesive, and professionally appropriate.
Execution & Technique	15	Clean and accurate application of required techniques, including smooth buttercream coating, consistent piping, and legible lettering.
Flavor & Filling	10	Evaluated for flavor, texture, and proper execution of the filled middle layer. Points may be deducted for imbalance, inconsistency, or messiness.
Adherence to Standards & Sanitation	5	Compliance with competition guidelines, tool usage, cake dimensions, required design elements, and safe, sanitary practices.
Time Efficiency	5	25 minutes or less

## **Napkin Folding Competition Description**

The Napkin Folding Competition challenges individual competitors to demonstrate their **creativity, precision, and consistency** by executing a refined napkin fold suitable for professional table settings. This fast-paced event highlights the importance of **fine motor skills and visual detail**, critical elements in enhancing the guest experience in both casual and fine dining environments.

Competitors will have **3 minutes** to complete three identical folds of their chosen design. Judging will focus on execution, accuracy, presentation, and stability.

### **Folding Task**

- Each competitor will receive **three standard square napkins** and will have **3 minutes** to complete the same fold **three times**
- Competitors may use **any design of their choosing**, but it must be **achievable within the 3-minute time limit**
- Designs must be completed **by hand only**, with no tools or supports used
- Prior to the competition, competitors must **submit a photo** of their design and a brief **folding guide** (written or visual) by **January 31st at NOON**
  - Judges will be provided with each competitor's submitted photo and folding instructions during scoring to evaluate design accuracy.
  - Late submissions may result in a deduction of up to 5 points in the "Accuracy to Submitted Design" category, at the discretion of the judges.
- Competitors may be disqualified for use of unapproved materials, failure to follow time restrictions, or receiving outside assistance during the competition.

### **Materials & Setup**

- Three napkins will be provided by the event organizers at the start of the competition
- No additional materials or tools may be used
- Competitors will work at **individual stations**, each with a flat surface and adequate space to complete their folds

### **Judging Overview**

Judges will evaluate competitors on the **accuracy, creativity, and craftsmanship** of their napkin folds. Criteria include:

- **Speed and Time Management:** Completion of all three folds within the 3-minute time limit
- **Precision and Neatness:** Clean lines, crisp folds, and overall tidiness
- **Consistency:** All three folds should match in shape, size, and structure
- **Creativity:** Design should be visually appealing and unique while still practical for table service
- **Stability:** Each fold must **stand or hold its shape unassisted**

All folds should reflect **professional dining standards** and elevate the guest's visual experience

at the table. At the end of the time limit, competitors must present all three folded napkins side-by-side on the table surface for evaluation.

**Scoring: Napkin Folding (Total: 50 Points)**

Category	Points	Description
Accuracy to Submitted Design	15	Folds will be evaluated for fidelity to the competitor's pre-submitted photo and instructions. Points are awarded for matching shape, structure, and fine details.
Precision & Neatness	10	Clean, symmetrical folds with crisp lines and minimal wrinkling or sloppiness.
Consistency	10	All three folds must be uniform in size, symmetry, and execution.
Creativity	10	Judged on originality, aesthetic appeal, and professionalism of the design.
Stability	5	Folds must remain upright or hold their shape independently without collapsing.

*Time Penalty*

- ***All three folds must be completed within the 3-minute time limit.***
- ***5 points will be deducted for each incomplete fold at the end of the time period.***
- ***Competitors who fail to complete **any folds** within the time limit will receive a **zero** in the scoring categories listed above.***



## General Competition Overview

### Purpose

The Virginia ProStart Invitational (VPSI) provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skill, and creativity within the restaurant and foodservice industry. Through Culinary, Management, and Individual competitions, participants apply the techniques and concepts learned in their ProStart programs and the *Foundations of Restaurant Management and Culinary Arts* curriculum.

### Eligibility

#### *Students*

1. To be eligible, students must be currently enrolled in a high school ProStart program recognized by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) and certified by the NRAEF-recognized Virginia ProStart Coordinator.
2. Students may compete at VPSI for a maximum of **two years**, which do not need to be consecutive. For eligibility purposes, “competitor” refers to active team members (e.g., those who cook or present) and designated team managers.
3. Students may compete on both the Culinary and Management teams in a single year; this dual participation counts as **one year** of eligibility. Participation in individual competitions **does not** count toward the two-year team competition limit.

### Event Personnel

1. **Event Organizers:** Staff members from the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association Foundation (VRLTAF)
2. **Volunteers:** Trained individuals assigned by VRLTAF to assist with event operations
3. **Team Ambassadors:** Trained VRLTAF personnel who serve as official timekeepers for assigned teams during all competition segments
4. **Judges:** Industry professionals and post-secondary culinary educators selected for their expertise and trained by VRLTAF in advance of the event

Lead Judges do not score but help ensure consistency across judging panels. All judges participate in a structured orientation and are expected to apply scoring standards fairly and consistently. By participating in the competition, each team acknowledges that while every effort will be made to ensure objective and impartial evaluation, a degree of professional discretion is inherent in any judged event. All judges’ decisions are **final**. All judges will receive standardized instructions and a rubric to ensure consistency in scoring across all competitors.

*Scoring inquiries should be directed to Dr. Jai Girard at [jai@vrlta.org](mailto:jai@vrlta.org). Judge assignments are consistent across categories (e.g., all culinary teams will be evaluated by the same panel for that portion).*

### Schedules

Competition schedules will be released in advance once all teams and individual competitors are

confirmed. These will include assigned start and end times for each event segment. Schedules are subject to change and will be updated with as much notice as possible.

### **General Disqualifications**

1. All competitors must meet eligibility requirements as outlined above. Ineligible students will be disqualified.
2. Attendance at the **Opening Ceremony** is mandatory unless a verified travel delay prevents timely arrival.
3. Competitors must **check in** and report to their designated location at the scheduled time or risk disqualification. Travel delays must be communicated to VRLTAF staff immediately.
4. **Coaching or communication** from spectators, educators, mentors, or anyone else is strictly prohibited from check-in through the conclusion of judge feedback. This includes verbal or non-verbal communication. **No warnings will be issued.** Violations result in **immediate disqualification** at the discretion of VRLTAF staff and judges.
5. **Misconduct**, including the use of alcohol, non-prescription drugs, unsportsmanlike behavior, or any illegal activity (federal, state, or local), will not be tolerated. This applies during competition, at social events, during free time, and in any setting affiliated with the event. Reported incidents will be investigated, and disciplinary action, including disqualification, is at the sole discretion of the VRLTAF.

*By participating, each student agrees to comply with all competition rules, procedures, and expectations.*

### **General Provisions**

Participants will be working with tools that, if used improperly, may cause injury. All competitors are expected to adhere to proper safety protocols at all times. **Horseplay and hazardous behavior are strictly prohibited.**

Teachers, mentors, chaperones, and families are expected to help ensure that competitors comply with all laws, event rules, and instructions. Competitors must follow all written and verbal directives provided by Event Organizers and competition staff.