



2026 Virginia ProStart Invitational

Procedures and Rules for the Culinary and Management Competitions

Participating teams 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.

2026 Virginia ProStart Invitational Procedures and Rules

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What's New for 2026

The following provides a review of information added or updated to the 2026 VPSI rules.

General

1. Eligibility Requirement Updated: Competitors must now be currently enrolled ProStart students at the time of both their state and national competitions.

Culinary

1. A digital copy of a revised proposal with the annotated changes must be sent to jai@vrlta.org no later than Wednesday February 18th 2026 so that it can be provided to judges (p. 7).
2. The formatting and order of proposal materials are now a required component of the submission. (pg. 8-9)
3. The presentation menu must be displayed in the provided acrylic frame on the team's table (pg. 9).
4. The "Culinary Station Doorway" is now called the "Presentation Staging Area", as the designated plate presentation area. No equipment may be placed here and tray jackets must be set within 10 minutes of the end of production time (pg. 10).
5. Team uniforms must include closed heel (pg. 12).
6. Aerosols has been added to the list of prohibited equipment (pg. 14).
7. New culinary penalties added:
 - a. Team presentation menu was not displayed at the time of team presentation or not displayed in provided acrylic frame— 1 pt (pg. 18).
 - b. Team knife cuts not included on the list – 1 pt (pg. 18).

Management

1. Team uniform description updated to include same color of shirts and inclusion of the Virginia ProStart logo (pg. 37).
2. Penalty for teams including alcoholic beverages on their menu updated to include any "adult consumable" product (pg. 40).
3. Demographic data have changed (pg. 43).

General Competition Overview

Purpose

Students participating at the Virginia ProStart Invitational (VPSI) will demonstrate their knowledge of, passion for, and creativity in the restaurant industry through the Culinary and Management competitions. Participation reinforces the skills and knowledge learned from the ProStart program and the "Foundations of Restaurant Management and Culinary Arts" curriculum.

Eligibility

Students

1. All high school students currently enrolled in a confirmed ProStart program recognized by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation who have been certified by the NRAEF-recognized ProStart Coordinator for Virginia are eligible to compete.
2. Students may participate at VPSI as a competitor for only two years, which may be non-consecutive. For the purposes of VPSI, competitors are defined as active team members (i.e., cooking or presenting) and/or team managers.
3. Students may compete in one or both the Culinary and Management teams in any year. Competing on two teams at any one VPSI counts as one year of competition.
4. Teams that fail to certify they meet the national eligibility requirements are subject to disqualification.

Teams

1. Participating teams will consist of two (2) to four (4) student team members and one (1) optional team manager, for a maximum total of five (5) students.
 - a. Educators and mentors are not considered members of the team, and as such may not communicate with team members from report time through dismissal.
2. Teams are not permitted to bring an alternate competitor to VPSI, beyond the team members who register for the event. Only the team manager may be designated to replace a team member, unless there is a special circumstance (educators must contact Dr. Jai Girard prior to competition).
3. Team members must be currently enrolled in a confirmed ProStart program at the time of state (and national) ProStart Invitationals.

Team Manager

1. The team manager is an important asset to the team but is not required. There are no additional provisions for teams without a team manager.
2. The team manager is considered a part of the team and may not have any verbal or non-verbal communication with anyone outside the competition area.
3. If a team member cannot participate or continue, the team manager may replace that team member with Lead Judge and Event Staff's approval.
 - a. The replaced team member, or any other competitor, may not return, step in for or replace the team manager. If the team manager replaces a team member, they must stay in the role for the remainder of the competition.
 - b. The replaced team member should leave the station/booth and, at the discretion of the team's educator, may leave the event or may stay and watch as an observer. The replaced member is not permitted to communicate with their team from the moment they are replaced until after dismissal.

In the Culinary competition, the one optional team manager may serve as an expeditor.

- *The team manager may talk to the team at any time and have printed materials such as timelines, recipes or notes to assist in keeping the team on track.*
- *The team manager is not permitted to handle, organize, or prepare anything during Mise en Place or Production segments.*
- *The team manager may taste food throughout the competition. To do so, the team manager must carry their own supply of tasting spoons. Used, disposable tasting spoons may be discarded in the trashcans located on the shared space of the competition floor to avoid interfering with team station.*

In the Management competition, the team manager is an important asset to the team.

- *The team manager will not be permitted on the competition floor and must stay in the designated team manager seating area.*
- *The team manager may be introduced and shake hands at the end of the feedback session.*
- *The team manager may not communicate with the other team members, their educator, or observers to collaborate on answers during the competition period.*

Event Personnel

1. Event Organizers: VRLTAF staff members
2. Volunteers: Assigned and trained by VRLTAF to assist with the event
3. Team Ambassadors: Personnel designated and trained by the VRLTAF, who are charged with keeping the official time for assigned teams during all segments of the competition.
4. Judges: Sourced from post-secondary education and the restaurant and foodservice industry, including two Co-Lead Judges. Lead Judges do not score teams.
 - a. All judges have been carefully selected by the Event Organizers for their related skills, experience, and expertise. Judges have reviewed the rules in advance of the competition and participated in an orientation and in-person training. By participating in the competitions, each team and its participants acknowledge that while every effort will be made to provide fair and impartial judging, some discretion and subjectivity is present in any judged competition. All decisions and scoring by judges are final. Any questions about scoring should be submitted to the Dr. Jai Girard at jai@vrlta.org.
 - b. All judges will be consistent from team to team (ie. culinary or management check-in will be responsible for that category across all teams).

Scoring

Culinary

A maximum of 100 points can be earned by a team during the Culinary competition. Product Check-In is worth five (5) points, Team Presentation/Knife Skills is worth ten (10) points, Work Skills/Organization is worth fifteen (15), Safety and Sanitation is worth fifteen (15) points, the Starter is worth fifteen (15) points, the Entrée is twenty (20) points, the Dessert is fifteen (15) points, and Menu and Recipe Presentation is worth five (5) points.

In the event of a tie, the tying teams will each be interviewed by a panel of judges for further insights into their performance. Teams will be asked questions to be answered verbally with regard to the methods, preparation and presentation of their meal/concept. Judges will discuss and make a group determination as to the ranking of final winner(s).

Management

A maximum of 200 points can be earned by a team during the Management Competition. Management Check-In is worth five (5) points, Concept worth is thirty (30) points, Menu and Costing is worth thirty-five (35) points, Marketing is worth forty (40), Operations is worth thirty

(30), Critical Thinking is worth fifty-five (55), and Menu and Recipe Costing is worth five (5) points.

In the event of a tie, the tied team with the highest number of Critical Thinking points will be awarded one (1) additional point to break the tie. Teams will only be evaluated on the information and materials requested in these rules. If a team has scores from multiple rounds of judging in a single segment, the scores will be averaged (e.g. two rounds of critical thinking).

Team Proposal Submissions

To allow officials and judges adequate time to review team proposals, an electronic copy of the required deliverables must be submitted as one pdf document to jai@vrlta.org no later than **Monday, February 2, 2026**. Minor adjustments and corrections to the proposals are allowed, but major changes are not allowed after submission. If there is a question about what constitutes a minor adjustment, please contact jai@vrlta.org. A penalty will be issued if the team does not submit as stated above.

VRLTAF will review all submitted proposals to determine if they are significantly repetitive of work previously submitted at VPSI up to three years prior and will provide feedback to teams no later than two (2) weeks prior to competition, by **February 6, 2026**, to permit each team time to revise. Ignoring VRLTAF guidance and submitting for review or bringing work, or parts of work, previously submitted at VPSI, will result in immediate team disqualification via email or onsite.

To ensure compliance, the proposal requirements and standard for change is included below:

Culinary Proposal Submission	Management Proposal Submission
Proposal Requirement	Proposal Requirement
Menus, recipes, recipe costing, and photographs for all courses.	All eleven (11) components of the concept proposal.
Standard for Change	Standard for Change
<p>Standard for Change</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrée and Starter: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Protein: The protein or cooking method must change. b. Vegetable: The vegetable or cooking method must change. c. Starch: The starch or cooking method must change. d. Presentation: The presentation must be visibly different from the previous years. 2. Dessert: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Base (e.g. mousse/Bavarian/tart/cake, etc.): The base must change. b. Garnish: The garnish components or processing must change (e.g. raspberry whole v. coulis). c. Presentation: The presentation must be visibly different from the previous years. <p>Additionally, we request a digital copy of the revised proposal with the annotated changes sent to</p>	<p>Teams that make changes to their proposals after the initial submission must include a page following the cover sheet that highlights all changes from the original proposal as well as the page number where the change was made.</p> <p>Video or promotional post must also be submitted to VRLTAF via Google Drive no later than February 2, 2026. An updated version of the video or post may be sent to the Drive no later than February 13th, 2026.</p> <p>Additionally, we request a digital copy of the revised proposal with the annotated changes sent to jai@vrlta.org no later than February 18th, 2026 so that we can provide it to our judges.</p>

jai@vrlta.org no later than February 18th, 2026 so that we can provide it to our judges.	
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Schedules

Competition schedules will be distributed in advance of the event once all teams have been identified. The schedule will include assigned start and finish times for all competition segments. All schedules are subject to change and will be communicated out with as much advance notice as possible.

General Disqualifications

1. Teams and all associated competitors must be eligible to compete, as defined by the eligibility terms above. Teams found to be ineligible will be disqualified. Additionally, any individual students found to be ineligible will result in complete team disqualification. Students must be currently enrolled with ProStart at both the state and national levels.
2. Teams must attend the required Opening Ceremony at the time and place designated by the VRLTAF Event Organizers. Teams must check in by the required time on date of arrival or they will be disqualified. The only exception made will be for travel delays beyond the control of the team with appropriate notice to Event Staff.
3. Teams must arrive at the appointed time to compete or they will be disqualified. The only exception made will be for travel delays beyond the control of the team with appropriate notice to Event Staff.
4. No team member can receive coaching or any form of communication from anyone, including spectators, educators, mentors, or coaches during the competition from the team's report time until after the competing team receives feedback from the judges (Management) and/or completes dishwashing (Culinary). The determination of what constitutes coaching or communication is solely at the discretion of the VRLTAF and the judges. No warnings will be provided; violations will result in immediate team disqualification.
5. Misconduct including, but not limited to, any nonprescription drug use, alcohol use, unsportsmanlike conduct, or any activity that is illegal under federal, state or local laws at the event, during competition, during unsupervised free time, during supervised competition social activities or in activities or locations related to the event. Should such alleged misconduct come to the VRLTAF's attention, the matter will be investigated as the VRLTAF deems appropriate. Any decision as to appropriate action due to misconduct, up to and including team disqualification, is at the sole discretion of the VRLTAF and is final.
6. Teams must participate in each event segment in the competition, or they will be disqualified. For details on competition segments see Culinary and Management rules. Failure to compete in any segment will result in team disqualification.
7. By entering the competition, the student and the team he/she represents accepts all conditions and requirements of the Virginia ProStart Invitational.

General Provisions

Teams will be using tools that may cause cuts, burns or injury if not used appropriately. Proper safety techniques must be followed by all team members. No horseplay or unduly hazardous behavior will be allowed or tolerated. The mentors, teachers, chaperones, and families are expected to ensure that the team members comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations. Team members shall comply with all other written as well as verbal instructions or warnings provided by the Event Organizers.

Culinary Competition Description

Teams demonstrate their culinary knowledge, skills, and creative abilities during the competition through demonstration of skills and the preparation of a unique three-course meal consisting of (i) a starter; (ii) an entrée; and (iii) a dessert. Performance during the Culinary event is observed and rated by judges from the foodservice industry and post-secondary schools. Teams demonstrate their ability to work together while creating and presenting their meal.

1. Each team prepares two (2) identical three-course meals, garnished and served appropriately. One meal is evaluated by the judges for both taste and presentation, and one meal will be used for display. The meal consists of:
 - a. A starter consisting of:
 - i. A first course: soup, salad, appetizer
 - ii. Size appropriate: 4-6 ounces total edible weight
 - b. An entrée consisting of:
 - i. Center of the plate item: 4-6 ounces suggested
 - ii. Two accompaniments such as vegetable and/or starch: 2-3 ounces each suggested
 - iii. Sauce
 - c. A dessert consisting of:
 - i. Something sweet served at the end of the meal
 - ii. Size appropriate: 3± ounces total edible weight
2. Each meal component should be appropriate to the complete menu. Flavors across the menu should have harmony for the palate. The five characteristics considered for a plated meal will be:
 - a. **Oral:** Flavor, Texture, Temperature
 - b. **Visual:** Color, Shape
3. Teams must bring all ingredients necessary to prepare the menu they have developed.

Preparation for Culinary Competition

Team Proposal Submission (See Exhibit A for Deliverables Checklist)

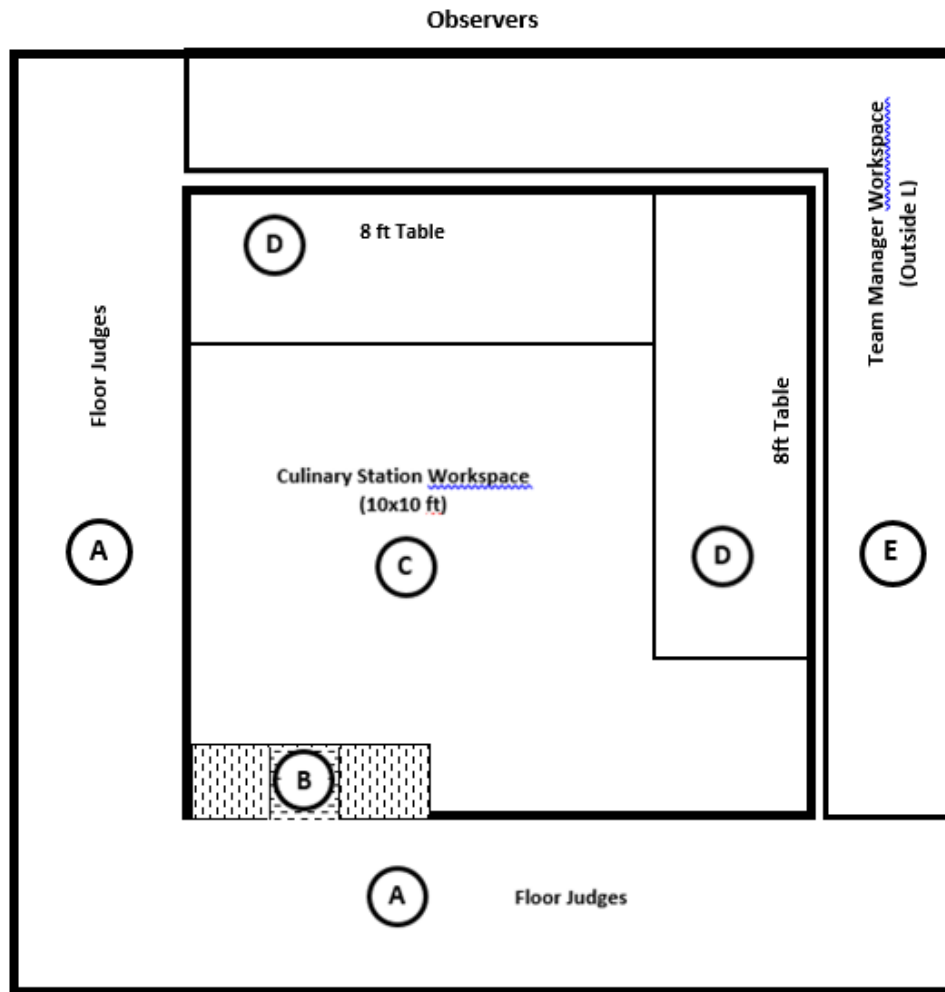
1. Each team prepares five (5) softbound folders/binders with the team's school and year clearly shown on each cover.
 - a. Do not use plastic pockets to hold pages, as this impedes judges' ability to provide feedback.
 - b. Examples of folder:
 - i. https://www.staples.com/Avery-Flexible-5-Inch-Round-3-Ring-View-Binder-Blue-17670/product_614315
 - ii. http://www.staples.com/JAM-Paper-Plastic-2-Pocket-Eco-School-Folders-with-Metal-Tang-Fastener-Clasps-Clear-6-Pack-382ECCLDD-/product_2329283
2. Each binder/folder must contain a copy of the following items. All materials should be single-sided and organized together in order from a-e by course (menu, recipe, recipe

costing, menu pricing, and color photograph of the starter would be placed together, followed by all materials for the entrée, etc.

- a. A typed menu with menu prices printed on an 8½" x 11" sheet of paper, two selected knife cuts to be used listed in the footer of the page.
 - b. Recipes: all recipes for the meal presentation, typed and submitted on the official recipe template. Acknowledgements and sources must be listed on each recipe in MLA formatting. Must be written in a logical sequence. See *Exhibit B and C for Recipe example*.
 - c. Recipe Costing: all recipe costing sheets for the meal presentation. Recipe cost must be calculated for each individual recipe, typed and submitted on the official costing template. See *Exhibit D and E for Recipe Cost example*.
 - i. Small amounts of kosher/table salt and black pepper may be priced at 1% of the total recipe cost. Everything else must be costed out.
 - ii. Oil for deep frying may be priced at 2% of the total recipe cost. Everything else must be costed out.
 - d. Menu Pricing: one menu price worksheet for each of the three courses, based on the recipe costs and calculated at a 33% food cost percentage. See *Exhibit F for Menu Price example*.
 - i. Each course on the presentation menu is priced separately.
 - ii. Menu price on the presentation menu may be rounded up after applying the 33% food cost percentage for a more realistic menu price.
 - iii. Final calculation before rounding must be indicated on costing template.
 - iv. Total menu price for the three-course meal may not exceed \$125.00 after applying the 33% food cost percentage.
 - e. Color Plate Photographs: an 8½" x 11" color photo of each plate. Final plates presented to the judges are compared to the photos provided.
3. Binders/Folders are submitted to the judges at Product Check-In. Failure to submit the folders at Product Check-In will result in a penalty. See *Culinary Competition Penalties*.
 4. Each participating team also provides one (1) copy of a presentation menu:
 - a. Frames will be provided by VPSI staff when teams are grabbing their speed racks.
 - b. Presentation menu is kept with team equipment and not turned in with folders.
 - c. Must include descriptions and final menu prices for each course. Creative elements may be included on the menu but should not obstruct the view of the required menu components.
 - d. Must include two selected knife cuts, listed in the footer of the page. Teams may include them within their menu descriptions as well, as long as they also are highlighted in the footer as required.
 - e. School name must be clearly identified on presentation menu.
 - f. Must be displayed on the team's table at the start of competition in the acrylic frame provided by VPSI staff, remain there until presentation of plates when it's left in the tasting room, and then moved to the display area with the team's display plates upon completion of the tasting and menu critiques.
 - g. No other additions to the display are allowed.

Workspace and Equipment

Culinary Station Blueprint



- A. Competition floor outside of Culinary Station Workspace
 - a. Floor judges have access to this space. Teams may access this area to use handwashing station ONLY.
- B. Presentation Staging Area approximately 2 ½ ft wide.
 - a. Space designated for presentation trays (no equipment allowed, tray jackets will be set within the final 10 minutes of production).
- C. Culinary Station Workspace
 - a. The station tables are covered with fire-retardant materials to keep the table surface consistent across stations which must remain in use during competition.
 - b. 10ft x 10ft – All materials must be inside this designated area. Teams may store equipment under and around the tables.
- D. Two 8ft tables set up in “L” formation.
- E. Designated Team Manager space
 - a. Floor judges and the team Team Ambassador will also have access to this space.

Note: This is a sample layout. The locations of tables, doorways, observer spaces, etc. are subject to change; however, general configuration will remain consistent. Image not to scale.

1. Event Organizers provide:
 - A. Two (2) eight-foot tables, at approximately 36 inches in height
 - B. One speed rack and four (4) full size sheet pans
 - C. Sanitation buckets
 - D. Two (2) 1oz containers for Knife Skills selections
 - E. Access to ice
 - F. Access to running water (available prior to and after the competition only)
 - G. Two (2) Sterno Model 50108, 15,000 BTU burners (or equivalent) and necessary fuel. *Teams may not bring additional burners or fuel*
 - H. Acrylic frames for presentation menus

2. Team must provide:
 - A. ALL necessary supplies to prepare the food they have selected, such as small utensils, plating vessels, cutting boards, small hand tools, cookware, gloves, and enough cloths for competition and clean-up.
 - B. Plates for presentation

Competition Segments and Scoring

Day Prior to Competition		
Competition Segment	Time	Possible Points
Product Check-in & Critique	Open check-in during allotted timeframe	5 points
Day of Competition		
Report to Competition	15 minutes	
Team & Menu Introduction	5 minutes	<i>Included with Team Presentation & Knife Skills below</i>
Production Mise en Place	20 minutes	
Meal Production	60 minutes	
Present Plates	5 minutes	
Team Presentation & Knife Skills Critique	10 minutes	10 points
Work Skills & Organization Critique		15 points
Tasting Judges Critique	10 minutes	Starter – 15 points Entrée – 20 points Dessert – 15 points
Menu & Recipe Critique	10 minutes	5 points
Station Clean-up	20 minutes	
Sanitation Critique & Dismissal	5 minutes	15 points
Dishwashing (optional)	15 minutes	
Totals	~2hrs, 10 minutes	100 points

Culinary Competition Rules

Uniform

1. Teams must present a uniform appearance from Product Check-In through dismissal to dishwashing.
2. Appropriate required apparel consists of:
 - a. Long sleeve, chef coats with Virginia ProStart logo
 - i. Logos and sponsor names are permitted on chef coats
 - ii. Accent colors are permitted
 - b. Checkered or black pants
 - c. Nonporous, closed toe, closed-heel, non-slip, hard sole black shoes
 - d. Aprons and hats; hair must be restrained and covered with chef hat
 - e. Team manager will wear a colored arm band indicating their role
 - f. Facial piercings must be taped over or removed; this is only required during the time from Report to Competition and end of dishwashing
 - g. Jewelry and other accessories may not be worn on the competition floor.
3. Aprons and team manager's colored arm band will be provided by Event Organizers at Product Check-In. These items are not required to be worn before or during Product Check-In, as teams will not have access to them prior to presenting at Product Check-In. Teams should add these uniform items from competition report time through dishwashing.
4. Failure to be fully uniformed or in appropriate uniform components from Product Check-In through dismissal to dishwashing will result in a penalty. See *Culinary Competition Penalties*.

Product Check-in

The team manager is allowed to fully participate in the Product Check-In segment. Teams' teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present in a designated space adjacent to the check-in tables to observe only during the Product Check-In process, including feedback.

1. It is the responsibility of each team to store all product prior to Product Check-In.
2. Product Check-In is the first segment of the evaluation process. Team is judged according to:
 - a. Proper shipping and receiving procedures.
 - i. Complete printed product inventory list of every item contained in each cooler or other container holding food items must be attached to the **inside and outside** of the cooler and/or container. The list must be attached in a plastic sleeve. Inventory list must be submitted on the official Inventory template. See *Exhibit F for Inventory List example*.
 - ii. All ingredients must be turned in at Product Check-In.
 - iii. Proper temperature of ingredients must be maintained.
 - iv. If an item has been found to be in the temperature danger zone, the item will not be available for use in the competition. See #3 below.
 - b. Proper packaging.

- i. Items should be packaged properly i.e. no liquid pooling from meats, poultry or fish; no seeping liquid; vegetables and fruits in proper containers and/or bags
 - ii. Items should be in their original packaging, professionally/commercially labeled and packaged properly. Label should include date it was packaged, weight, item type, and where it was packaged i.e. butcher shop or grocery store.
 - For example, if you purchase a whole chicken and are only using chicken breast in your recipe, you may bring the whole chicken in its original, unopened package OR you may purchase chicken breasts and enter in their original, commercial packaging. Prepping or rewrapping proteins by the team is prohibited.
3. Any team that has a product disallowed during Product Check-In has until their assigned competition report time to present to the judges a replacement product for approval.
 - a. Teams will lose points if their entire product list does not meet the established criteria at the original check-in.
 - b. Replacement product that does not meet requirements at competition report time will also be discarded. The team will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission.
4. All refrigerated product is placed on a provided speed rack during check-in. Teams are limited to the product that can fit on the speed rack due to limited walk-in cooler space. Freezer storage is NOT provided at any point.
5. Team should have all dry storage product (including dishware) collected in a single container ready to be checked in.
6. Each team's food is placed in an appropriate and secure location at the competition site until the team's designated report time.
7. Ingredients:

Permitted Ingredients	Prohibited Ingredients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team-prepared stocks • Team-prepared clarified butter • Team-prepared pre-soaked beans • Dry goods, open but in the original packaging/not premeasured • Pre-measured butter and oil • Pre-washed produce* • Dry ice • Commercially manufactured food items such as jams, breadcrumbs, bases and mayonnaise in the original, sealed container or packaging. Must be used as an ingredient, not as a finished product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-chopped, pre-sliced, or pre-prepared food not commercially manufactured <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meat, poultry, seafood that is not in original or commercial/professional labeled packaging (see 2b Proper Packaging above) • Reductions, finished sauces, and clarified broths • Items that risk food illness • Pre-measured dry goods

**Team may also wash produce during Production Mise en Place.*

Note: Follow your state or school guidelines concerning alcohol in your recipes. VPSI permits the use of alcohol in Culinary competition recipes.

8. During Product Check-In, teams will set aside the dishes they have brought for their meal presentation. Teams must review their dishes at that time to ensure no chips, cracks, or breaks.
9. The previously prepared softbound folders are given to the judges at Product Check-In. No equipment is checked in during this time.

10. Any shipped items should be addressed to the competitor, team educator, or state ProStart Coordinator directly. The VRLTAF is not responsible for tracking, obtaining, or holding any shipments prior to competition. Event personnel are only responsible for holding shipped items. Event site cannot accept items more than 3 days prior to the start of competition, and perishable items should not be shipped, as safe temperature storage cannot be guaranteed. Any items shipped are the sole responsibility of the recipient, and neither the VRLTAF, hotel, nor event staff are responsible for any lost, damaged, or spoiled items. Shipping directions will be sent to all State Coordinators prior to the event.
11. Should travel delays arise, and as a result a team is unable to check-in their ingredients during the times allotted, the team will be allowed to store those items in the VPSI refrigerated storage area. The team must contact their state ProStart Coordinator to make arrangements for access the storage area.
12. Product Check-In Feedback will occur immediately following each team's check-in.

Day of Competition

Report to Competition

1. Team should arrive promptly to the Report to Competition area at their assigned report time to retrieve their products (No more than 15 minutes before their assigned time).
 - a) Should a team arrive late, a ½ point per 15 seconds will be assessed. If a team is more than 10 minutes late, they will be disqualified. No adjustments will be made to the schedule if a team is late.
2. Team will be introduced to their VRLTAF-assigned Team Ambassador who will announce the start and end of each competition segment.
3. Teams will be allowed to place equipment on and/or otherwise organize their speed rack during their report time prior to entering the competition floor.
4. Team members must carry and/or roll all their equipment and products onto the competition floor.
5. Teams may not move the doorway or tables in the workspace prior to or during the competition.

<i>Permitted Equipment</i>	<i>Prohibited Equipment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handheld whipped cream chargers • Digital scales and thermometers • Handheld butane/propane torch for FINISHING or CARAMELIZING only any item, sweet or savory • Metal, stone or other types of plates or apparatus to extend the cooking surface of the burners • Dry ice • Audio recording device to record the critique and feedback sessions • Electronic devices which contain no communication abilities (e.g. basic calculator or timer) • Additional sheet pans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional heat sources (ie. insulated bags, MRE heater packs, etc.) • Electric, battery-operated, or compressed air/aerosol or gas devices (exceptions: handheld whipped cream chargers, digital scales, digital thermometers) • Plastic or Plexiglas for the purpose of covering tables • Cell phones, tablets, smart watches, or other communication devices, unless needed for health reasons with prior approval from event staff • Additional speed racks, hotel luggage carts, or equipment exceeding the external dimensions of 2 ft (width) x 4 ft (height) x 3 ft (depth)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camping oven and/or smoker attachments for provided burner <p><i>All equipment must be used in a safe manner and not obstruct proper butane function.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large equipment may not be stacked in the workspace to create additional workspace or exceed 2ft (width) x 4ft (height) x 3ft (depth) parameters Mandolins
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Team and Menu Introduction

The team has five (5) minutes to verbally present its menu to judges. During this time, students should be prepared to:

- Present their framed menu & describe their three-course meal.
- Tell what each team member is charged with executing.
- Explain how they designed their unique menu.

Production Mise en Place

The team has twenty (20) minutes to pre-set their station for the meal production segment. During Production Mise en Place:

Teams are allowed to:	Teams are not allowed to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set their station, ensuring it is properly sanitized before starting. Obtain water and ice from designated areas on the competition floor Obtain sanitizing solution from designated areas on the competition floor (provided by Event Organizers) Measure dry and liquid ingredients Wash produce at the vegetable washing station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to any spectators, coaches, educators, or mentors Process any ingredients (including but not limited to - heating, mixing, marinating, and knife work) Teams may not alter or process any ingredients beyond their original state beyond the measuring/washing permitted.

After Mise en Place, team members may only leave the workstation to use the handwashing stations. Other requests to leave the workstation must be approved by a judge or Event Staff.

Meal Production

The team has sixty (60) minutes to cook and plate all dishes. VRLTAF-assigned Team Ambassador will announce the time at regular intervals, becoming more frequent towards the end of meal production time. It is the responsibility of each team to know their start time and be ready to begin when their assigned time is announced. *Teams may bring a manual or battery-operated timer, but Event Organizers will keep and display the official time.*

1. Menu Course Requirements

- a. Each team must employ a minimum of two cooking methods from the following list: Poach, Shallow Poach, Braise, Pan Fry, Steam, and Sauté.
 - i. Additional techniques are also permitted.
 - ii. Molecular gastronomy in the competition:
 1. Use of liquid nitrogen is not allowed.
 2. Spherification, foams, and meat glue (transglutaminase) are allowed.
2. Knife Skills
- a. Knife skills are demonstrated during the first 20 minutes of the 60-minute Meal Production segment. Presentation/Knife Skills judges will evaluate knife cuts during this time; teams do not need to alert judges upon completion.
 - b. Cutting guides (i.e. cutting boards) with rulers or other measurement aids are not permitted for selected knife cuts. They are permissible for ingredients not included in the knife cuts selected for evaluation. Mandolins are strictly prohibited.
 - c. The team must demonstrate a minimum of two (2) of eleven (11) specified knife cuts to incorporate in their meal.
 - d. Cuts must be demonstrated on fruits, vegetables, or herbs only.
 - i. **Rondelle**: 1/4" thick disc shaped slices
 - ii. **Diagonal**: 1/4" thick oval shaped slices
 - iii. **Batonnet**: Cut into long, thin, rectangular pieces 1/4" x 1/4" x 2"
 - iv. **Julienne**: Cut into long, thin, rectangular pieces. 1/8" x 1/8" x 2"
 - v. **Large Dice**: Cube shaped 3/4" x 3/4" x 3/4"
 - vi. **Medium Dice**: Cube shaped 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2".
 - vii. **Small Dice**: Cube shaped 1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4"
 - viii. **Brunoise**: Very small dice. 1/8" x 1/8" x 1/8"
 - ix. **Paysanne**: Square cut 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/8"
 - x. **Chiffonade**: Leafy green vegetables such as spinach or basil that are stacked, rolled tightly, and then cut into long thin strips. Approximate width is 1/8".
 - xi. **Tourne**: football shape, 3/4" diameter, 2" long, seven equal sides and flat ended
 - e. Team must identify the selected cuts in the footer of their printed menu i.e. Knife cuts used: medium dice and brunoise.
 - f. Team must set aside and fill a 1oz. cup **volume** measurement for each knife cut for evaluation by Team Presentation/Knife Skills judges. Event staff will provide 1oz. containers. This should be done within the first 20 minutes of meal production and judge evaluations will rotate based on schedule.
3. A team is considered done cooking when each requirement is met:
- a. The food is plated.
 - b. The dishes are on the service trays.
 - c. All team members have stepped away from the trays and raised their hands to signal they are finished.
 - i. Teams may present plates to judges up to three (3) minutes before the 60-minute cooking time has completed. *See Culinary Competition Penalties.*

Judge Critiques

A maximum of four (3) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the Tasting & Menu critique sessions. Communication with the team is still prohibited.

After a team completes their two (2) identical meals, the team will determine which meal will be evaluated by tasting judges and which will be for display.

- a. Team members transport both service trays and their presentation menu to the judges' table and leave immediately. The team manager may accompany the team to the tasting area but may not carry plates. The team manager is permitted to carry the menu.
 - b. The evaluation plates receive the most critical judging.
 - c. There should not be a major variance in composition of the finished plates. If there is a great variance, then the team will be assessed a penalty. If the second meal is not presented, the team will be disqualified. *See Culinary Competition Penalties and Disqualifications.*
1. Team returns to their station for the Work Skills/Organization and Team Presentation/Proper Knife Usage feedback.
 2. Tasting judges have ten (10) minutes to evaluate the plates.
 3. Team then takes display plates and presentation menu to the display area. *Reminder: the team is still competing, and students may only converse with their teammates.*
 1. Team returns to their station to begin Station Clean-up (20 minutes).
 - a. The team must return station to the condition it was in when they arrived.
 - b. The team manager is allowed to assist during Station Clean-Up.
 - c. Team or team member cannot leave the floor unless released by Sanitation judge and accompanied by their assigned Team Ambassador.
 4. Teams will stay at their station for their Sanitation Critique (5 minutes).
 5. Teams will be given a 15-minute break. *Reminder: the team is still competing, and students may only converse with their teammates. This is an opportunity for students to gain composure, drink water, and use the restroom.*
 6. The team will proceed next to the menu and recipe judges for a five (5) minute feedback session. Only the designated teacher and mentor may accompany and listen to feedback.
 7. The team will report to the tasting room for their Tasting Critique. At that time, the entire team (including the team manager) returns to the tasting area for a ten (10) minute feedback session. Only the designated teacher(s) and mentor for a total of four (4) people may accompany the team and listen to feedback. The team will exit the tasting room to be dismissed.

Dishwashing

1. After teams receive Tasting Critique, they may then collect supplies to be washed and bring all their equipment off the competition floor. Team members will be escorted by timekeepers to the appropriate area of the competition venue for dishwashing. *Reminder: the team is still competing and may only converse with their teammates.*
 - a. Teams should clean items so that food is clear from the equipment; however, teams do not need to sanitize, etc. A surface clean of all items is sufficient and will ensure that teams may move more quickly through the dishwashing process.
2. Teams have 15 minutes to complete dishwashing. Once complete with dishwashing and released by their assigned Team Ambassador, the team has officially completed the competition and may communicate freely.

3. The Dishwashing segment is optional but capped at 15 minutes if teams opt in. Teams will confirm whether they will opt in/out at Report to Competition time.

Post Competition

The softbound folders and framed presentation menu must be picked up by 4pm on the last day of competition or the Event Organizers will dispose of unclaimed materials. Report to the registration desk with a team member's badge to claim the team folders. VRLTAF will retain one copy of the folder from each team.

Culinary Competition Penalties

The following are fixed deductions.

1. Menu does not meet specifications, or was not submitted on time i.e., by **Monday, February 2, 2026** to jai@vrlta.org – 5 pts
2. The team is not dressed in uniform – 5 pts
3. Team did not submit folders with menu, plate photographs, recipe and recipe costing at Product Check-In – 2 pts
4. Team presented menu items that did not match submitted proposal or presented updated dishes that were not approved. – 5 pts
5. Team presentation menu was not displayed at the time of team presentation or not displayed in the acrylic frame. -1 pt
6. Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded – 2 pts
7. Team manager touches or handles any equipment or food when not allowed – 5 pts
8. Team begins any competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts
 - d. ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds
 - e. 10 or more minutes early, team is disqualified
9. Team does not complete any competition segment within their allotted time – ¼ pt to 10 pts
 - a. ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds
 - b. After 10 minutes, team is disqualified
10. Use of prohibited equipment – 5 pts
11. Use of prohibited ingredients – 5 pts
12. Team produces two meals, which are not identical – 2 pts
13. Station left in unsanitary manner – 3 pts
14. Knife cut selections are not included on the presentation menu as required. – 1pt
15. Team presented knife cuts not included on the list. -1 pt
16. Team arrives to Report to Competition late/after their assigned competition start time.
 - a. ½ point is deducted per 15 seconds
 - b. 10 or more minutes late, team is disqualified

Culinary Specific Disqualifications

1. Team submitted work, or parts of work, that was previously submitted.
2. Team started any competition segment more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late.

3. Team used an electric/battery operated device or additional heat source.
4. Team did not produce two (2) complete meals.

Exhibit A – Culinary

Deliverables Checklist

Present at Product Check-In

Five binders/folders, each containing

Example 1: https://www.staples.com/Avery-Flexible-5-Inch-Round-3-Ring-View-Binder-Blue-17670/product_614315

Example 2: http://www.staples.com/JAM-Paper-Plastic-2-Pocket-Eco-School-Folders-with-Metal-Tang-Fastener-Clasps-Clear-6-Pack-382ECCLDD-/product_2329283

- ☐ Menu with prices and selected knife cuts – Simple typed menu 8 ½” x 11”
- ☐ High School Name and Year on cover
- ☐ Recipes typed on official template
- ☐ Recipe Costing Sheets typed on official template
- ☐ Menu Price Sheets typed on official templates
- ☐ Plate Photographs – A separate, 8½” x 11” color photograph of each plate

Checklist of other items required

- ☐ Complete printed list of the contents of each cooler or dry storage container on the inside and outside of each cooler or container in a plastic sleeve **(High School name and year must be included on inside and outside list)**.
- ☐ One copy of framed Presentation Menu

Exhibit B – Culinary

Recipe Example

Culinary teams must complete this form prior to the competition. Make five (5) copies to include in the folders turned in at Product Check-In.

School Name	Awesome School		
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe		
Menu Item	French Fries		
Number of Portions	4	Portion Size	5 ounces
Cooking Method(s)	Fry		
Recipe Source (MLA)	TNN. "French Fries Recipe." <i>Times Food</i> , https://recipes.timesofindia.com/us/recipes/french-fries/rs54659021.cms <u>Accessed 30 June 2021.</u>		
Ingredients			
Item	Amount		
Potato	500 gm		
Kosher Salt	TT		
Black Pepper	TT		
Frying Oil	AN		
Procedure			
<p>Chop potatoes and soak in ice-cold water for 10-15 minutes.</p> <p>Heat the oil in deep bottomed pan.</p> <p>Once hot, add the potatoes to the pan.</p> <p>Cook about 5 to 7 minutes.</p> <p>Remainder of procedures...</p>			

Exhibit C – Culinary

Recipe Example

Culinary teams must complete this form prior to the competition. Make five (5) copies to include in the folders turned in at Product Check-In.

School Name	Awesome School		
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe		
Menu Item	Ratatouille		
Number of Portions	6	Portion Size	5 ounces
Cooking Method(s)	Sauté		
Recipe Source (MLA)	Lagasse, Emeril. "Ratatouille." <i>Food Network</i> , http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/emeric-lagasse/ratatouille-recipe0.html . Accessed 30 September 2016.		
Ingredients			
Item	Amount		
Olive oil	¼ cup		
Yellow onion, small dice	1 ½ cup		
Garlic, minced	1 tsp		
Eggplant, medium dice	2 cup		
Thyme	½ tsp		
Green bell pepper, diced	1 cup		
Red bell pepper, diced	1 cup		
Zucchini squash, diced	1 cup		
Yellow squash, diced	1 cup		
Tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped	1 ½ cup		
Basil, chiffonade	1 tbsp		
Parsley, chopped	1 tbsp		
Salt and black pepper	TT		
Procedure			
<p>Set a large 12-inch sauté pan over medium heat and add the olive oil.</p> <p>Once hot, add the yellow onions and garlic to the pan.</p> <p>Cook the onions, stirring occasionally, until they are wilted and lightly caramelized, about 5 to 7 minutes.</p> <p>Remainder of procedures...</p>			

Exhibit D – Culinary

Recipe Cost Example

Culinary teams must complete this form prior to the competition. Make five (5) copies to include in the folders turned in at Product Check-In.

School Name	Awesome School		
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe		
Menu Item	French Fries		
Number of Portions	4	Portion Size	5 ounces

Ingredient	Purchase Unit	Purchase cost	Unit cost	Amount Needed	Ingredient Cost
Potatoes	5 kg	\$2.65	\$0.0005/g	500 g	\$0.25
Kosher Salt					
Black Pepper					
Frying Oil					

Subtotal	\$0.25
1 % for small amounts of salt and pepper (Q Factor)	\$0.003
2 % for frying oil (if used)	\$0.005
Total Recipe Cost	\$0.257
Portion Cost	\$0.064

Exhibit E – Culinary

Recipe Cost Example

Culinary teams must complete this form prior to the competition. Make five (5) copies to include in the folders turned in at Product Check-In.

School Name	Awesome School		
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe		
Menu Item	Ratatouille		
Number of Portions	6	Portion Size	5 ounces

Ingredient	Purchase Unit	Purchase cost	Unit cost	Amount Needed	Ingredient Cost
Olive oil	51 oz / 6.375 cup	\$16.79	\$2.634 / cup	¼ cup	\$0.658
Yellow onion, small dice	1 lb / 4 cup	\$1.40	\$0.35 / cup	1 ½ cup	\$0.525
Garlic, minced	1 head	\$0.50	\$0.10 / tsp	1 tsp	\$0.100
Eggplant, medium dice	1 lb / 3 cup	\$2.05	\$0.683 / cup	2 cup	\$1.367
Thyme	1 bunch / 18 tsp	\$2.09	\$0.116 / tsp	½ tsp	\$0.058
Green bell pepper, diced	1 lb / 4 cup	\$2.30	\$0.575 / cup	1 cup	\$0.575
Red bell pepper, diced	1 lb / 4 cup	\$1.07	\$0.268 / cup	1 cup	\$0.268
Zucchini squash, diced	1 lb / 2.5 cup	\$1.93	\$0.772 / cup	1 cup	\$0.772
Yellow squash, diced	1 lb / 2.5 cup	\$1.93	\$0.772 / cup	1 cup	\$0.772
Tomatoes, peeled, seeded, & chopped	1 lb / 2 cup	\$2.40	\$1.20 / cup	1 ½ cup	\$1.80
Basil, chiffonade	1 bunch / 1 cup	\$1.54	\$0.096 / tbsp	1 tbsp	\$0.096
Parsley, chopped	1 bunch / ½ cup	\$0.53	\$0.066 / tbsp	1 tbsp	\$0.066

Subtotal	\$7.057
1 % for small amounts of salt and pepper (Q Factor)	\$0.071
2 % for frying oil (if used)	\$0.00
Total Recipe Cost	\$7.128
Portion Cost	\$1.212

Exhibit F – Culinary

Menu Price Example

Culinary teams must complete this form prior to the competition. Make five (5) copies to include in the folders turned in at Product Check-In.

School Name	Awesome School
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe

Menu Category	X Starter	Entree	Dessert
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Recipe	Portion Cost
Ratatouille	\$1.212
Couscous (from additional recipe and costing sheets)	\$0.972
Garnish (from additional recipe and costing sheets)	\$0.127

Total Plate Portion Cost	\$2.311
Menu Price at 33% Food Cost	\$7.003
Actual Price on Menu	\$8.00

Exhibit G – Culinary

Product Check-In Inventory List

Product Check-In Inventory Lists must be completed and contain the inventory list of every item, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER contained in each cooler or other container holding food items. Inventory forms must be attached to the inside and outside of the cooler and/or container. The list must be attached in a plastic sleeve.

School Name	Awesome School
Year	2024
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe

Container Purpose	X Refrigerator	Dry Storage
Number of Items in Container/Cooler	11	

Inventory List	
Item	Confirmed (This column for judge use only)
Basil	
Eggplant	
Garlic	
Green Bell Pepper	
Parsley	
Red Bell Pepper	
Thyme	
Tomatoes	
Yellow Onion	
Yellow Squash	
Zucchini	

Exhibit H – Culinary

Sample Culinary Competition Timeline

Team	Station	Report (15)	Team & Menu Introduction (5)	Mise en Place (20)	Start Cooking (60)	Present Plates / Skills Critique (10)	Clean Up (20)	Sanitation Critique (5)	break (15)	Menu Critique (5)	Tasting Critique (10)	Out
1	1	8:00 AM	8:15 AM	8:20 AM	8:40 AM	9:40 AM	9:50 AM	10:10 AM	10:15 AM	10:30 AM	10:35 AM	10:45 AM
2	2	8:10 AM	8:25 AM	8:30 AM	8:50 AM	9:50 AM	10:00 AM	10:20 AM	10:25 AM	10:40 AM	10:45 AM	10:55 AM
3	3	8:20 AM	8:35 AM	8:40 AM	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	10:10 AM	10:30 AM	10:35 AM	10:50 AM	10:55 AM	11:05 AM
4	4	8:30 AM	8:45 AM	8:50 AM	9:10 AM	10:10 AM	10:20 AM	10:40 AM	10:45 AM	11:00 AM	11:05 AM	11:15 AM
5	5	8:40 AM	8:55 AM	9:00 AM	9:20 AM	10:20 AM	10:30 AM	10:50 AM	10:55 AM	11:10 AM	11:15 AM	11:25 AM
6	6	8:50 AM	9:05 AM	9:10 AM	9:30 AM	10:30 AM	10:40 AM	11:00 AM	11:05 AM	11:20 AM	11:25 AM	11:35 AM
7	7	10:00 AM	10:15 AM	10:20 AM	10:40 AM	11:40 AM	11:50 AM	12:10 PM	12:15 PM	12:30 PM	12:35 PM	12:35 PM
8	1	10:10 AM	10:25 AM	10:30 AM	10:50 AM	11:50 AM	12:00 PM	12:20 PM	12:25 PM	12:40 PM	12:45 PM	12:45 PM
9	2	10:20 AM	10:35 AM	10:40 AM	11:00 AM	12:00 PM	12:10 PM	12:30 PM	12:35 PM	12:50 PM	12:55 PM	12:55 PM
10	3	10:30 AM	10:45 AM	10:50 AM	11:10 AM	12:10 PM	12:20 PM	12:40 PM	12:45 PM	1:00 PM	1:05 PM	1:05 PM
11	4	10:40 AM	10:55 AM	11:00 AM	11:20 AM	12:20 PM	12:30 PM	12:50 PM	12:55 PM	1:10 PM	1:15 PM	1:15 PM
12	5	10:50 AM	11:05 AM	11:10 AM	11:30 AM	12:30 PM	12:40 PM	1:00 PM	1:05 PM	1:20 PM	1:25 PM	1:25 PM
13	6	11:20 AM	11:35 AM	11:40 AM	12:00 PM	1:00 PM	1:10 PM	1:30 PM	1:35 PM	1:50 PM	1:55 PM	1:55 PM
14	7	11:30 AM	11:45 AM	11:50 AM	12:10 PM	1:10 PM	1:20 PM	1:40 PM	1:45 PM	2:00 PM	2:05 PM	2:05 PM
15	1	11:40 AM	11:55 AM	12:00 PM	12:20 PM	1:20 PM	1:30 PM	1:50 PM	1:55 PM	2:10 PM	2:15 PM	2:15 PM
16	2	11:50 AM	12:05 PM	12:10 PM	12:30 PM	1:30 PM	1:40 PM	2:00 PM	2:05 PM	2:20 PM	2:25 PM	2:25 PM
17	3	12:00 PM	12:15 PM	12:20 PM	12:40 PM	1:40 PM	1:50 PM	2:10 PM	2:15 PM	2:30 PM	2:35 PM	2:35 PM
18	4	12:10 PM	12:25 PM	12:30 PM	12:50 PM	1:50 PM	2:00 PM	2:20 PM	2:25 PM	2:40 PM	2:45 PM	2:45 PM

Exhibit I – Culinary**Sample Culinary Competition Score Sheet**

EVALUATION CRITERIA	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT	SCORE
Product Check-In						
Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper temperature • Proper packaging • Complete product inventory list(s) • Uniform and hygiene 	1	2	3	4	5	
Work Skills/Organization						
Work Organization/ Teamwork Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilization of a team plan • Mastery of skills required for individual tasks • Workload evenly distributed • Team cohesiveness • Communication • Professionalism • Proper Production Mise en Place • Proper time management 	1	2	3	4	5	
Proper Cooking Procedures Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate cooking method for product used • Required cooking techniques used minimum of two cooking methods from provided list • Cooking procedures done in a time efficient manner • Proper amount of product for recipe requirements • Effective use of remaining product • Proper pans and tools for intended use 	1	2	3	4	5	
Degree of Difficulty Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity • Complicated techniques • Preparation of item during competition rather than using commercial product 	1	2	3	4	5	
Team Presentation/Knife Skills						
Team Appearance Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia ProStart chef coats, long or quarter sleeve • Black or checkered pants • Uniform clean & presentable • Hard sole shoes • Hats, aprons, and arm band (provided) • Team uniformity 	1	2	3	4	5	
Proper Knife Usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate Selection • Consistency • Accuracy • Safety • Waste 	1	2	3	4	5	

EVALUATION CRITERIA	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT	SCORE
Safety and Sanitation						
Follows Safety and Sanitation Procedures Including but not limited to: Personal hygiene Proper knife safety Proper use and handling of food contact surfaces	1	2	3	4	5	
Proper Food Handling Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper use of gloves Appropriate temperature control of ingredients Proper sanitation practices regarding food contact surfaces Proper storage of food Avoidance of cross contamination 	1	2	3	4	5	
Work Area Cleaned Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work area cleaned in appropriate time frame Dishes & equipment properly prepared for dishwashing and packaging Return of station to original condition 	1	2	3	4	5	
Product Taste						
Product Taste – Starter A subjective category based on tasting judges' expertise	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Finished Product						
Appearance – Starter Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance of color Shape Texture Portion size 	1	2	3	4	5	
Product Taste						
Product Taste – Entrée A subjective category based on tasting judge's expertise	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	
Finished Product						
Appearance – Entrée Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance of color Shape Texture Portion size 	1	2	3	4	5	
Product Taste						
Product Taste – Dessert A subjective category based on judge's expertise	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	

EVALUATION CRITERIA	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT	SCORE
Finished Product						
Appearance – Dessert Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance of color • Shape • Texture • Portion size 	1	2	3	4	5	
Menu and Recipe Presentation						
Presentation Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typewritten • Recipe structure • Menu presentation • Recipe costing • Menu pricing • Within food cost guidelines • Sources and acknowledgements listed 	1	2	3	4	5	
DISQUALIFICATION						
Reason for Disqualification:						
_____ Team submitted work, or parts of work, that was previously submitted.						
_____ Team started any competition segment more than 10 minutes early or finished more than 10 minutes late.						
Disqualifying Segment _____						
_____ Team used an electric/battery operated device or additional butane burner.						
_____ Team did not produce two (2) complete meals.						
_____ Violation of the General Disqualifications on page 5.						
PENALTY						
Reason for Penalty:						
_____ Menu does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 2, 2026 to jai@vrlta.org – 5 pts						
_____ Team not dressed in uniform. 5 pts						
_____ Team did not submit folders with menu, plate photographs, recipe and recipe costing at Product Check-In – 2 pts						
_____ Replacement product did not meet requirements and was discarded – 2 pts.						
_____ Team presented menu items that did not match submitted proposal or presented updated dishes that were not approved – 5 pts.						
_____ Team manager touches or handles any equipment or food when not allowed – 5 pts						
_____ Team begins any competition segment before their assigned start time – ¼ pt to 10 pts ¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds 10 or more minutes early, team is disqualified						
_____ Team does not complete any competition segment within their allotted time – ¼ pt to 10 pts						

<p>¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds</p> <p>After 10 minutes, team is disqualified</p>
<p>_____ Use of prohibited equipment – 5 pts</p>
<p>_____ Use of prohibited pre-prepared ingredients – 5 pts</p>
<p>_____ Team produces two meals, which are not identical – 2 pts</p>
<p>_____ Station left in unsanitary manner – 3 pts</p>
<p>_____ Knife cut selections are not included on the presentation menu as required – 1 pt</p>
<p>_____ Team arrives to Report to Competition late/after their assigned competition start time – ½ pt to 10 pts</p> <p>¼ point is deducted per 15 seconds</p> <p>After 10 minutes, team is disqualified</p>

Management Competition Description

Participating teams will demonstrate their knowledge of the restaurant and foodservice industry by developing a new restaurant concept and presenting to a panel of judges at a simulated business exposition. The teams will also submit a written proposal for review and will present their concepts to various groups of judges through verbal presentations, question and answer periods, and posters.

The competition is designed for students to present their restaurant concept to judges as they rotate throughout the competition floor. The students will set up a 6-foot table to demonstrate their restaurant concept. At the table, students will have a copy of their written proposal and 2 (two) 24 x 36 inch posters. More information on the requirements for the written proposal, booth display, and posters are found on the following pages.

1. Mentors and educators may assist teams in preparation for the competition; however, they may not prepare the written proposal or posters. Their expertise is limited to acting as a sounding board for concept development.
2. The team's work must be unique and not built off previously submitted work. Submitting work, or parts of work, that was previously submitted will result in immediate disqualification. *See Management Specific Disqualifications.*
3. The Management team may collaborate with their school's culinary team on the menu and recipe items, including recipe development, costing, pricing and photography.
4. Requirements
 - a. Restaurant Concept must be located in ProStartville. Exhibit A contains the city's description, including demographics and local points of interest.
 - b. Students will select 1 of the 4 provided restaurant space scenarios provided in Exhibit C.

Preparation for Management Competition

Team Proposal Submission (See Exhibit B for Written Proposal Outline and Checklist)

1. Teams should utilize *Foundations of Restaurant Management & Culinary Arts* Levels 1 and 2 when crafting their written proposals. Definitions, explanations, and examples of complex topics are included throughout the curriculum and can provide sufficient background knowledge for teams to develop unique and creative concepts. Additional research and use of outside resources is also encouraged.
2. General Guidelines for the Written Proposal
 - a. Typed, 12 point, Times New Roman or Arial font, 1-inch margins
 - b. Printed on white paper, double-sided, and stapled (NOT in a folder, spiral bound, 3-ring binder, etc.)
 - c. The front cover must include only the following information: school, names of team members, concept name, concept logo, and year. Style and font of the cover page should match the contents.

d. Sections should be separated by tabs, with each tab labeled with its corresponding section. *Note: tabs do not need to be comprised of a single page, tabs may be attached to proposal pages.*

e. All 15 copies must be identical. *Note: large printing companies (e.g. Staples, Office Depot, FedEx, etc.) may offer educational printing discounts.*

VRLTAF will retain one copy of the written proposal at the completion of the competition. This may be used by VRLTAF for promotional, educational, research or other purposes. The remaining written proposals will be available for pick up in the Registration space following the completion of the competition.

3. In addition to the Written Proposal, teams must prepare one additional copy of the sample menu, the recipes, photographs, costing and menu pricing worksheets. This copy should be placed in a standard manila colored folder. The team's school must be listed on the front of the manilla folder. *Note: the student's names should not be included.*
4. Requirements of the Written Proposal are detailed in the following section.

Written Proposal Contents

1. **Restaurant Concept Description (2 pages maximum):** The following information must be included in the description:
 - a. Type of establishment
 - b. Purpose and impact
 - c. Meals served (breakfast, lunch, dinner, etc.)
 - d. Hours of operation
 - e. Type of cuisine served
 - f. Target market within the fictional city of ProStartville (defining characteristics, demographics, business/leisure, etc.)
2. **Floorplan and Selected Restaurant Space Scenario (1 page maximum):** VRLTAF will provide four (4) restaurant space scenarios to choose from. Students must use one of the four scenarios provided to create a unique floorplan. (*See Exhibit C for Restaurant Space Scenario Options.*) A basic floorplan of the restaurant's layout (front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house) must be provided. The floorplan may be handwritten or electronically diagrammed. Students are encouraged to make it as much to scale as possible; however, the floorplan will not be judged on scale and proportions, but on how well it conveys the restaurant's flow and the inclusion of features necessary to run a restaurant. (*See Exhibit D for Sample Floorplan.*)
3. **Interior and Décor (2 pages maximum):** Teams will prepare a description of interior and décor for their concept. This may include photos, samples of paint, etc. These should be entirely flat and printed on paper and should NOT include 3D objects affixed to the pages.
4. **SWOT Analysis (1 page maximum):** Teams will prepare a SWOT analysis for their concept.
5. **Organizational Chart (1 page maximum):** Teams must include an organizational chart that lists the positions that will be necessary to staff the restaurant. It is not mandatory to include how many staff will fill each position. Charts should not be hand-drawn; many programs and websites offer free templates. (*See Exhibit E for sample Organizational Chart.*)
6. **Menu (1 page maximum):** Teams must develop a menu to support the restaurant concept that includes exactly twelve (12) menu items. The sample menu should be representative of how this information would be communicated to customers including pricing and should

include all necessary menu item descriptions. The menu may not exceed one standard 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. *See Exhibit F for clarification on what counts as a menu item.*

7. **Recipes:** For one (1) of the twelve (12) menu items, teams will prepare and provide recipes. Recipes should be typed and submitted on the official recipe and costing templates can be found in Exhibits G & H. Acknowledgements and sources must be listed on each recipe. Recipes must be written in a logical sequence. *See Exhibit G for a sample recipe.*
8. **Costing:** For one (1) of the twelve (12) menu items, teams will prepare and provide costing information. Costing information should be typed and submitted on the official recipe and costing templates can be found in Exhibits G & H. Acknowledgements and sources must be listed on each recipe in MLA formatting. *See Exhibit H for a recipe cost example.*
 - a. Small amounts of kosher/table salt and black pepper may be priced at 1% of the total recipe cost. Everything else must be costed out.
 - b. Oil for deep-frying may be priced at 2% of the total recipe cost, only if used.
9. **Menu Pricing:** Prices must also be developed for the same one menu item costed in item 8 above—calculated at a 33% food cost percentage. The menu price may be rounded up after applying the 33% food cost percentage for a more realistic menu price. For example, if the menu price is calculated to be \$7.67, it would be acceptable to have a price of \$7.95 or \$8.00. However, the final calculation before rounding must be indicated on the menu pricing template. *See Exhibit I for menu price example.*
10. **Photographs (2 pages maximum):** Teams will prepare and photograph at least one, and up to four, menu items to be included in the written proposal. Photographs must be of items made by the team, and should not be stock photo, clipart, or other published images.
11. **Marketing Tactics (2 pages maximum per tactic, including sample):** Teams will develop two (2) marketing tactics to launch their restaurant concept. *See Exhibit J for additional information on the different tactics.* Alcohol-related activities or promotions may not be used as one of the marketing tactics. At least one of the two tactics must be a traditional tactic, from the list below. The other tactic may involve the use of social media, and teams will create a video or an image that promotes their unique restaurant concept. A team may opt for two traditional marketing tactics or one traditional marketing tactic and one social media tactic. A team may NOT opt for two social media tactics. For each marketing tactic, teams must submit a description of the tactic, the goal of the tactic, a detailed budget that shows all associated costs, and the estimated return on investment (ROI). Students are encouraged to use creativity to develop their tactics. For the budget for each tactic, teams must use local rates and list the rate source. Teams may not enlist the services of a PR firm or a 3rd party agency as a marketing tactic. For the two marketing tactics, teams must submit a paper-based sample, which may not exceed one standard 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper of the tactics.

Examples of acceptable samples of the traditional marketing tactic include:

- a. Print or digital ad – mockup of ad
- b. Radio commercial – script
- c. TV commercial – storyboard
- d. Public relations campaign – sample press release
- e. Promotional giveaway items – photo or mockup of item
- f. Email or mail campaign – email text and mockup of accompanying artwork

Teams may utilize a social media driven marketing tactic that promotes their restaurant by creating one of the following:

- a. Video (no longer than 20 seconds) – submitted via QR code with the management proposal, on the paper-based sample page
- b. Promotional post – submitted via QR code with the management proposal along with a screenshot, on the paper-based sample page

Social media marketing tactics must be specific to a social media platform. Teams must choose **ONLY ONE** of the following platforms:

- a. Instagram
- b. Facebook

Teams must demonstrate the return-on-investment for their social media marketing tactic by using the standard ROI formula.

$$\text{ROI} = (\text{Return [profit]} - \text{investment [expense]} / \text{investment [expense]}) \times 100$$

Each social media platform has its own cost, or base rate. Below are the costs for each platform's cost-per-click (the amount a team spends per the cost of each click the ad receives):

- a. Instagram: \$3.56 per click
- b. Facebook: \$0.97 per click

All content must be produced by the team but may feature an influencer.

Posters

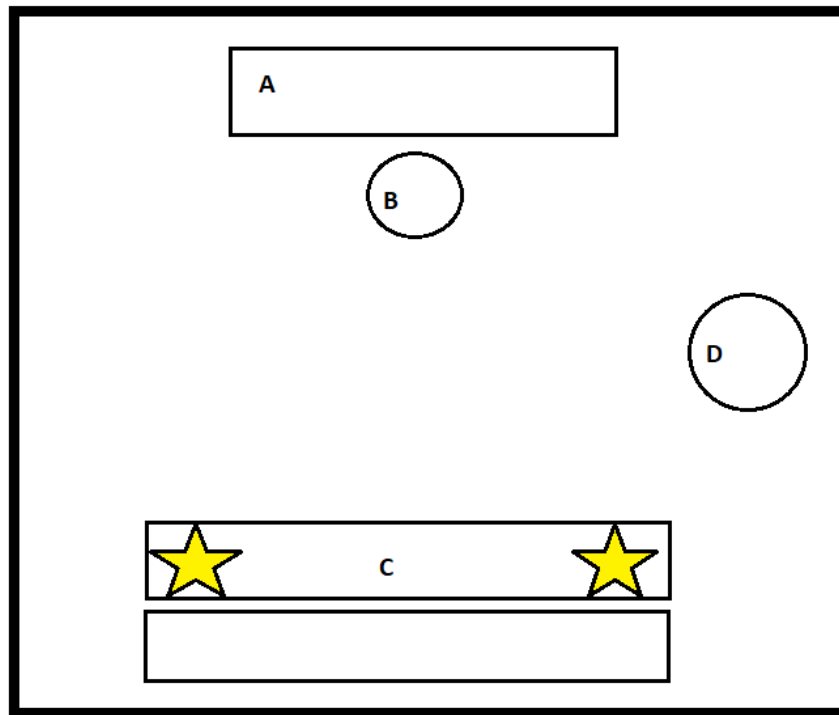
Teams will prepare two posters, 24" x 36" in size. Posters must be entirely flat and may not include any 3-dimensional objects. The poster, when fully constructed, should be able to be rolled up for storage at Check-In.

One poster should display the sample menu and the floorplan; the second poster should display one marketing tactic. If a team opts to display their social media marketing tactic on their poster, they are permitted to include their QR code but must include an image of the tactic itself. If the tactic is a reel/story/video post, a screenshot suffices.

Please note: Judges will not view videos during a team's time on the competition floor. Concept logos are permitted on the posters, but no other information should be included. See *Management Competition Penalties*.

Booth and Equipment

Management Station Blueprint



- A. Competition booth
 - a. Teams will remain at their booths from the time they report and setup until the competition is over, and they are escorted to judge feedback. During competition, each judge category grouping will rotate between all teams.
- B. Team table
 - a. Teams' two (2) posters and copies of three (3) proposals will be placed here prior to report and setup.
- C. Spectator seating
 - a. Outermost front-row seats reserved for optional team manager and Team Ambassador.
- D. Judge high-top table
 - a. Reserved for judges to discuss and enter notes in between category rotations. Please refrain from placing any personal items on these tables.

Event Organizers provide:

- A. Easels to display posters
- B. Eight (8) pins
 - a. Pins are used to affix posters to competition booth. More pins available upon request.

Competition Segments and Scoring

Day Prior to Competition		
Competition Segment	Time	Possible Points
Materials Check-in	Open check-in during allotted timeframe	5 points
Day of Competition		
Report and Setup	5 minutes	
Concept	10 minutes	30 points
Menu	10 minutes	35 points
Marketing	10 minutes	40 points
Critical Thinking A	10 minutes	55 points (total)
Critical Thinking B	10 minutes	
Operation	10 minutes	30 points
Menu & Costing	10 minutes	5 points
Break	5 minutes	
Judge Feedback	10 minutes	
Totals		

~1hr

Management Competition Rules

Uniform

Each team is required to dress in uniform during all portions of the competition. This includes Team Check-In, as well as feedback sessions.

- The uniform should consist of:
 - Solid color, $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeve or long sleeve, collared dress shirts. Team members must wear the same color to ensure uniformity. Neckwear of any sort (e.g. necktie, bowtie, bolo tie, bandana, etc.) should not be worn.
 - Dress pants or skirts.
 - Professional footwear suitable for a business meeting, with heel height no more than 3 inches.
- The Virginia ProStart logo must be displayed on the participants' right or left chest if embroidered or placed in this location if using a pin. The choice of embroidery or pin has no impact on scoring. VPSI sponsor logos are allowed on uniform shirts. No other logos are permitted, including concept logos. Please see the VRLTAF branding guidelines for questions on logo usage.
- All team members should wear the same style of shirt, and pants should be worn appropriately and professionally (not sagging, etc.). Khaki pants may be worn; jeans are not

permitted. The team's uniform should reflect a professional event, not their concept, as concept logos are prohibited on their uniforms. Teams should wear appropriately colored socks (not white). Teams should also wear the same color belt.

Materials Check-In

1. Teams should schedule their travel, so they arrive at the competition property with sufficient time to check-in their materials. Team check-in is on a first comes, first served basis with no assigned times given.
2. Should travel delays arise and, as a result, a team is unable to check-in their materials during the times specified by Event Organizers, the team must contact Dr. Girard, ProStart Coordinator, who will communicate with the event staff to make arrangements to submit materials.
3. At check-in, teams will report in uniform to submit the following items (*See Exhibit B for Outline and Checklist*)
 - a. Fifteen (15) copies of the written proposal
 - b. Menu and Costing information in a separate manila folder
 - c. Two (2) 24 x 36-inch posters, rolled for storage
4. Any team that arrives to check-in with incomplete items has until the end of the check-in time on Day 1 to resubmit completed items. Teams will be penalized for each incomplete check-in attempt. Judges will not provide feedback on content at this time and will only notify teams of completion status.
 - a. Judging and scoring is based on the initial check-in by the team.
 - b. Teams will lose points if their submission does not meet the established criteria at the initial check-in.
 - c. The team will be assessed an additional penalty for each failed submission. Completed items that do not meet requirements by close of check-in time will be assessed a penalty.
 - d. Items not submitted by close of check-in time will not be accepted at a later time.

Day of Competition

Report To Competition

1. Teams will report to the Management Competition floor and their assigned table five (5) minutes before their scheduled start time. Team posters and three (3) copies of the Written Proposal will be in the assigned booth at this time. Teams will have an additional five (5) minutes to set up their booth. Each student may bring a bottle of water and notecards into the booth. No other items will be permitted. Note: Teams should not enter their booth until told to do so by Event staff.
2. At the designated time, the competition will begin and will include 7-minute presentation segments. During this time, students will present on the relevant section of their concept, reference their posters, and answer judge questions. Each set of judges will rotate to the next booth at the conclusion of this 7-minute period. There will be a 3-minute break, and announcement of the next group of judges before the next judges arrive. There may be

more than one round of judging per segment. Scores from multiple rounds will be averaged (e.g. two rounds of critical thinking).

3. Teams may not shake hands, distribute materials to judges or use additional materials (e.g. business cards, promotional items, props, etc.) during the competition segments. Any relevant materials must be included in the written proposal.
4. Critical Thinking Judges will question each team and evaluate their critical thinking skills and ability to react to management challenges. The judges will present each team mini-scenarios from four (4) of the following seven (7) categories: 1) safety and sanitation, 2) customer service, 3) social media, 4) human resources and staffing, 5) menu development and design, 6) marketing, and 7) concept knowledge. All teams will be evaluated on the same categories – the chosen categories will NOT be distributed at check-in. The team will then present how they would address that scenario from the context of their unique restaurant concept. (For sample scenarios, see Exhibit K).
5. The entire team (including the team manager) will report to the Feedback Room at the designated time for a ten (10) minute feedback session. A maximum of two people comprised of designated teacher(s) and/or mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the Feedback sessions.
Any communication with the team by outside parties, including teacher(s), mentor(s), or other observers is prohibited during this time.
6. See Exhibit L for a sample Management Competition timeline

Judge Critiques

A maximum of two (2) people comprised of designated teacher(s) and/or mentor(s) are allowed to be present to observe only during the Feedback sessions. Communication with the team is still prohibited.

After the final judge rotation of the competition is complete, all teams will receive a 5-minute break. Teams will then be escorted to a room where they will receive feedback from judges. Only the designated teacher and/or mentor may accompany and listen to feedback.

Post Competition

1. Once teams receive judge feedback, they will be escorted back to their tables.
2. Teams must remove their posters from their easels and may collect the three (3) proposals displayed at their table during competition.
3. Teams take their posters to their designated booth at the Hall of Champions for display. Volunteer event staff will assist with affixing the posters for display.

Management Competition Penalties

The following are fixed deductions.

1. Written proposal was not submitted on time i.e. by **February 2, 2026** to jai@vrlta.org –5 pts
2. The team is not dressed in uniform – 5 pts
3. Posters do not meet specifications or include additional information – 5 pts
4. Restaurant concept is not located in ProStartville or does not match one of the provided restaurant space scenarios – 5 pts
5. Team submits more or fewer than 12 menu items – 5 pts
6. Team includes an alcoholic beverage or adult consumables as one of their menu items – 5 pts
7. Team submits recipes for more or fewer than 1 menu item – 5 pts
8. Team submits food costing worksheets for more or fewer than 1 menu item – 5 pts
9. Team submits more or fewer than 1 menu pricing worksheet – 5 pts
10. Team submits more or fewer than 2 marketing tactics – 5 pts
11. Team uses an alcohol-related activity or promotion as one of their marketing tactics – 5 pts

Management Specific Disqualifications

1. Team submitted work, or parts of work, that was previously submitted.
2. Team does not check in for Management Check-In or fails to successfully check-in within the allotted window on the appropriate date.

Exhibit A – Management

2026 Location Description – ProStartville, USA

Demographics:

The geographic location of ProStartville, USA is at your discretion. ProStartville, USA is home to a diverse group of families, students, and young professionals. Residents of ProStartville enjoy a thriving arts scene, a large university with a strong sports program, an international airport, and unique neighborhoods.

Population

- 275,508
- Year-over-year population change - +2.6%
- Median age – 31.8
- Population breakdown by age

Age	% of Population
0-9	8%
10-19	12%
20-29	26%
30-39	16%
40-49	11%
50-59	10%
60-69	9%
70+	9%

- Families – represent 33% of the population.
- Foreign-born population – 13%
- Gender
 - Men: 49%
 - Women: 51%
- Median income - \$76,817

Economy

- In civilian labor force – 65%

Education

- High school graduate or higher (25+ years old) – 96%
- Bachelor's degree or higher (25+ years old) – 50%

Exhibit B – Management

Written Proposal Outline and Checklist

The information in the fifteen written proposals must be presented in the following order in sections separated by tabs:

- ☐ Restaurant concept description
 - Type of establishment
 - Purpose and impact
 - Meals served
 - Hours of operation
 - Type of cuisine served
 - Target market
- ☐ Floorplan of selected Restaurant Space Scenario
- ☐ Description of interior and décor
- ☐ SWOT Analysis
- ☐ Organizational Chart
- ☐ Sample menu
- ☐ Recipe(s) for one menu item
- ☐ Costing worksheet(s) for one menu item
- ☐ Menu pricing worksheet(s) for one menu item
- ☐ Photo of one to four menu items
- ☐ Two marketing tactics
 - Description
 - Goal
 - Budget
 - ROI
 - Sample
 - QR Code linking to actual social media tactic, if one is used

Additional Materials:

In a single Manila Folder with the team's school name on the front, teams must place one additional copy of:

- Sample menu
- Recipes
- Photographs
- Costing
- Menu pricing worksheets

Example of folder: https://www.staples.com/Staples-Manila-File-Folders-Letter-3-Tab-Assorted-Position-100-Box/product_116657

Further information on the construction of the Written Proposal is found on pages 33 -35.

Exhibit C – Management

Restaurant Space Scenario Options

There are four scenarios available to choose from. The Management team may enhance their selected scenario but the team may not change the set parameters.

Example of prohibited change of set parameter – A team selects the freestanding option but explains that many of the offices are actually open seven days a week so it's always busy.

1. Freestanding – Located in the heart of Main Street, a spot just opened up in between the county courthouse and the ProStartville Community Center.
 - a. Pro: There's plenty of activity in the area to draw in customers by foot traffic.
 - b. Con: Location in business district lends itself to busy days and quiet nights.
2. Airport – Restaurant space available in the ProStartville International Airport in Concourse B after passengers pass through TSA security.
 - a. Pro: People are always traveling, and the seasonal busy times mean big business.
 - b. Con: The customer base is limited to travelers and airport employees.
3. Food Truck – Perhaps the most flexible option. You are bringing the food to the masses.
 - a. Pro: You can bring your business to busy locations and popular events.
 - b. Con: Limited working space within the truck so having a dependable staff is crucial.
4. Strip Mall – The strip mall is located near the large university and contains a nail salon, a craft store, a bank, and a few other new businesses opening up.
 - a. Pro: With new businesses opening up, they are sure to draw attention.
 - b. Con: Due to the increased activity, parking may be a challenge.

Exhibit D – Management

Sample Restaurant Floorplan

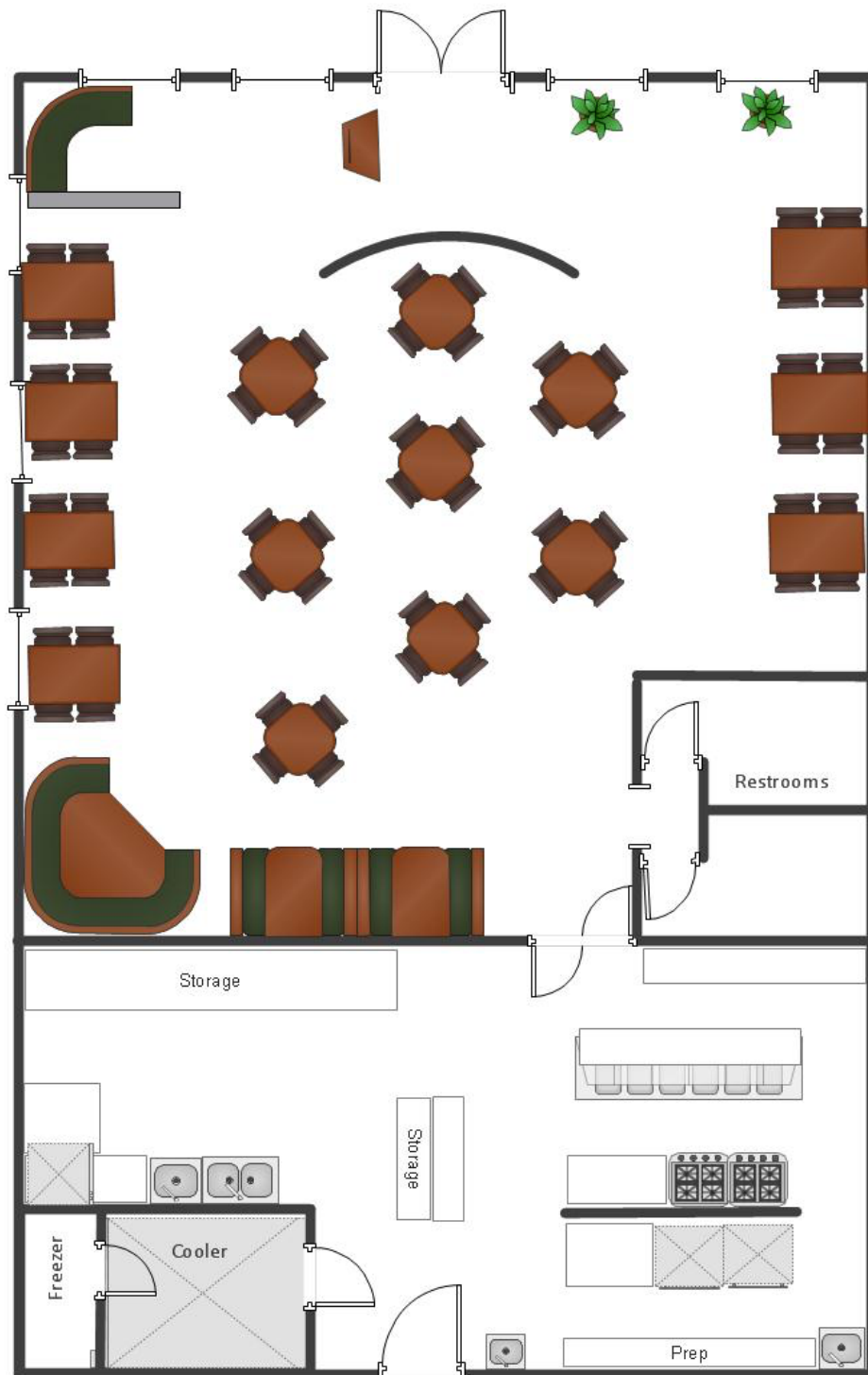


Exhibit E – Management

Sample Organizational Chart

The Organizational Chart below is an example of the positions needed to staff a full-service restaurant with catering functions.

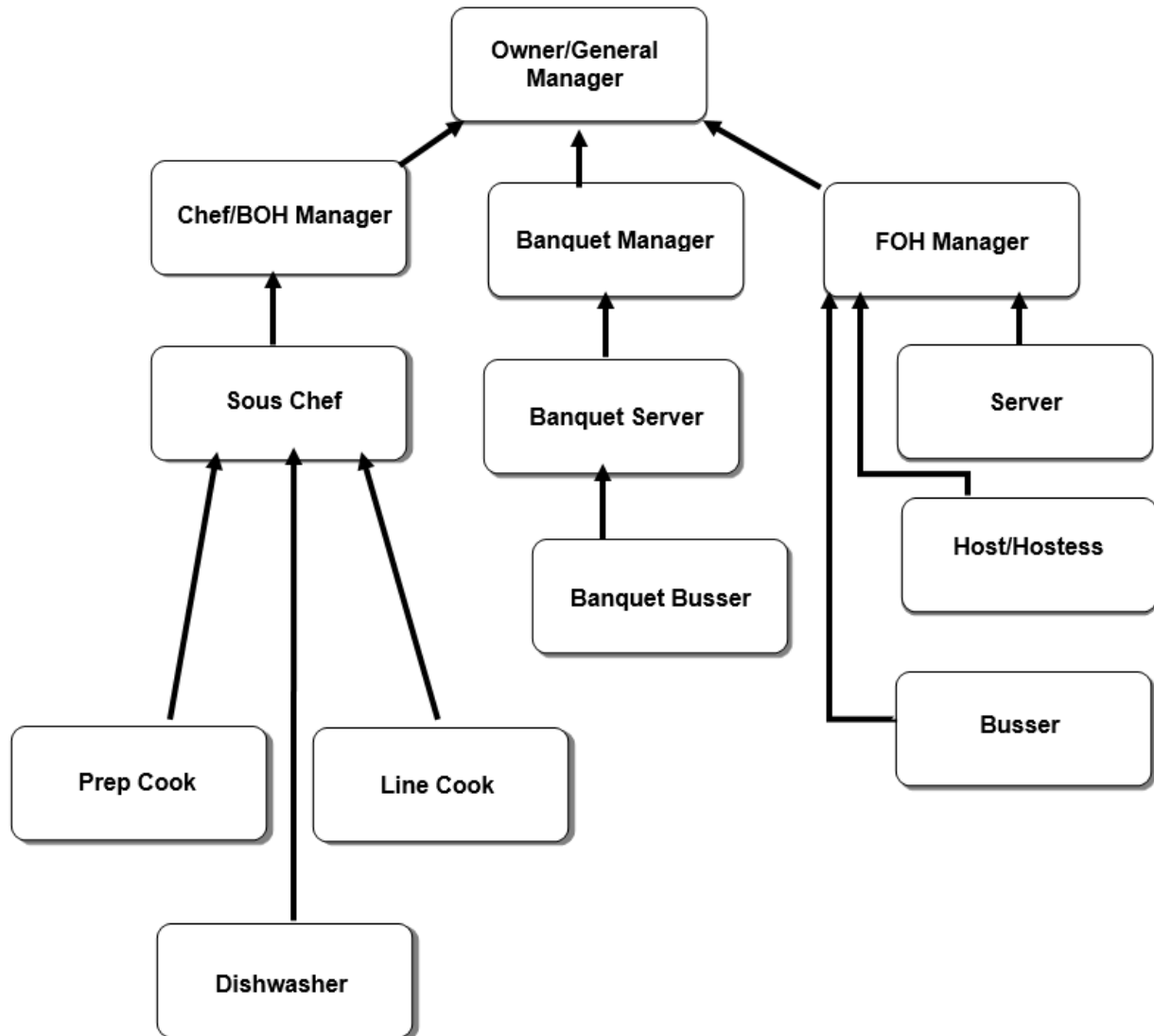


Exhibit F – Management

Menu Item Clarification

The intent is for teams to develop a menu featuring only twelve menu items. This may be treated as a representative sample that is reflective of the concept's broader menu, with the twelve selected menu items serving as the true highlights of the restaurant's brand and concept. Please see the below information on what constitutes a menu item.

Menu Item Clarification

The general rule of thumb for what counts as a menu item is that anything that is packaged together for one price counts as one item. Please see the examples below for further clarification.

An exception to this rule is a table d'hôte menu (*see Foundations of Restaurant Management & Culinary Arts Level 2, 1st Edition, pgs. 473-74, or pgs 28-29 of the 2nd Edition*) or prix fixe menu. In those cases, each dish that makes up the table d'hôte or choice for prix fixe counts as one menu item.

On the sample menu below, there are examples of how to count menu items.

- Each Appetizer and Salad counts as one menu item
- Each Sandwich counts as one menu item. The costing for each item would include the most costly of the side choices
- Each Dinner item counts as one menu item. Costing would include all sides and sauces
- Each Dessert is one item. Each Beverage is one item
- Total menu items count for this menu is: 16

Appetizers Calamari ¹ Fresh, tender squid lightly floured then deep fried, served with lemon wedges and homemade marinara sauce. Spinach and Artichoke Dip ² Warm blend of creamy spinach, tender artichokes, and melted Asiago and Parmesan cheeses. Served with tortilla chips.	Salads House ³ Spring greens, avocado, roasted peppers, onions, shredded carrots, tomatoes & balsamic dressing Crazy ⁴ Chicken breast, goat cheese, spring greens, crushed walnuts, bacon, roasted peppers, onions & balsamic dressing Wild Alaska Salmon ⁵ Alaska salmon, spring greens, tomatoes, sliced lemon & balsamic dressing
Sandwiches <i>Available with your choice of potato, pasta, or green salad.</i> Best Burger ⁶ ¼ lb. beef patty, pickle, tomatoes, sautéed onions, spring greens, cheddar cheese Best Chicken ⁷ Chicken breast, spring greens, tomatoes, onions & basil mayo Garden Burger ⁸ Veggie patty, sun-dried tomato pesto, spring greens, avocado, tomatoes, onions, shredded carrot & basil mayo	Entrees Pot Roast Dinner ⁹ Piled high with cipolini onions, carrots & mushrooms over mashed potatoes, served au jus Chili Glazed Salmon ¹⁰ Served over a roasted vegetable & quinoa pilaf finished with micro greens Chicken Pot Pie ¹¹ Roasted chicken in an herbed cream sauce with leeks & carrots under a pastry crust
Desserts Cake of the day ¹² Ice Cream Sundae ¹³	Beverages Soda ¹⁴ Housemade Lemonade ¹⁵ Brewed Coffee ¹⁶

For beverages, each item that is individually priced would count as a menu item. The example below includes 20 items. **Note:** The Cappuccino and Café Latte, while priced the same, are two

separate menu items as they are substantially different items. The Brewed and Iced Coffee are two separate menu items as they are priced differently.

Central Perk Coffee Shop

Item	Small	Medium	Large
Espresso	1.75 ¹	1.95 ²	--
Cappuccino	2.95 ³	3.65 ⁴	3.95 ⁵
Americano	2.15 ⁶	2.55 ⁷	2.95 ⁸
Café Latte	2.95 ⁹	3.65 ¹⁰	3.95 ¹¹
Vanilla Latte	3.45 ¹²	4.15 ¹³	4.45 ¹⁴
Brewed Coffee	1.95 ¹⁵	2.45 ¹⁶	2.95 ¹⁷
Iced Coffee	2.15 ¹⁸	2.65 ¹⁹	3.15 ²⁰

For a “build your own” concept, ingredients that are individually priced would count as one menu item. The example below includes 9 menu items and are noted in red below.

a

Item Type Choose 1	Protein Choose 1	Toppings Choose 2 (\$1 for additional topping) ⁵	Extras
Burrito	Chicken ¹ \$6.25	Beans and Rice	Chips and Salsa ⁶ \$3.00
Bowl	Steak ² \$6.50	Cheese	Guacamole ⁷ \$4.00
Tacos	Ground Beef ³ \$5.95	Salsa	Chips and Guacamole ⁸ \$5.00
Salad	Vegetarian ⁴ \$5.75	Sour Cream	Chips only ⁹ \$2.00

Note: While a “build your own” concept is permissible, it is not recommended. Teams instead should focus on their core menu, composed of items that reflect their unique brand signature., There can then be an acknowledgement that there are opportunities to “build your own” integrated into the concept’s broader menu.

Exhibit G – Management

Recipe Example

Note: For a menu item consisting of Chicken Gruyere served with sautéed spinach, and roasted potatoes, you should include separate recipes for the chicken, the spinach, the potatoes and the sauce.

Management teams must complete this worksheet prior to the competition and include in both the written proposal and costing folder. Portion size is at your discretion.

School Name	Awesome School
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe

Menu Item	Chicken Gruyere		
Number of Portions	4	Portion Size	1 breast / approx. 8 oz.
Cooking Method(s)	Sauté, bake		
Recipe Source	Doe, Jane. "Chicken Gruyere." <i>Awesome State School</i> , 2015.		

Ingredients	
Item	Amount
Butter	2 oz.
Onion, sliced	8 oz.
Swiss Cheese, shredded	3 oz.
Bread Crumbs	3 oz.
Paprika	1 teaspoon
Chicken Breast, Airline, skinless	4, approx. 8 oz. each
Salt and Pepper	To taste
White Wine	3 oz.
Chicken Stock	3 oz.

Procedure
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sauté onions and ½ butter until soft but not brown.2. Combine cheese, breadcrumbs and paprika3. Sprinkle chicken breasts with salt and pepper <p>Remainder of procedures...</p>

Exhibit H – Management

Recipe Cost Example

Note: For a menu item consisting of Chicken Gruyere served with sautéed spinach, and roasted potatoes, you should include separate recipe costing sheets for the chicken, the spinach, the potatoes, and the sauce.

Management teams must complete this worksheet prior to the competition and include in both the written proposal and costing folder.

School Name	Awesome School		
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe		
Menu Item	Chicken Gruyere		
Number of Portions	4	Portion Size	1 breast/ approx.8 oz.

Ingredient	Purchase Unit	Purchase cost	Unit cost	Amount Needed	Ingredient Cost
Butter	1 pound	\$4.59	\$0.287/oz.	2 oz.	\$0.574
Onion	3 lbs.	\$1.98	\$0.041/oz.	8 oz.	\$0.328
Swiss Cheese	1 pound	\$5.99	\$0.374/oz.	3 oz.	\$1.122
Breadcrumbs	15 oz.	\$1.75	\$0.117/oz.	3 oz.	\$0.351
Paprika	2 oz. / 12 tsp	\$1.79	\$0.895/oz.	.167 oz./1 tsp	\$0.149
Chicken Breast	1 pound	\$1.98	\$1.98/#	2 #	\$3.96
White Wine	750 ml / 25.4 oz.	\$12.00	\$0.472/oz.	3 oz.	\$1.416
Chicken Stock	1 gallon	\$6.00	\$0.047/oz.	3 oz.	\$0.141

Subtotal	\$8.041
1 % for salt and pepper (Q Factor)	\$0.08
2 % for frying oil (if used)	\$0.000
Total Recipe Cost	\$8.121
Portion Cost	\$2.03

Exhibit I – Management

Menu Price Example

Note: For a menu item consisting of Chicken Gruyere served with sautéed spinach, and roasted potatoes, you should include one (1) menu price sheet for the completed menu item.

Management teams must complete this worksheet prior to the competition and include in both the written proposal and costing folder.

School Name	Awesome School
Educator Name	Chef Jane Doe

Menu Category	Starter	X Entree	Dessert
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Recipe	Portion Cost
Chicken Gruyere	\$2.03
Sauteed Spinach (from additional recipe and costing sheets)	\$0.753
Roasted Potatoes (from additional recipe and costing sheets)	\$0.961
Sauce (from additional recipe and costing sheets)	\$0.354

Total Plate Portion Cost	\$4.098
Menu Price at 33% Food Cost	\$12.42
Actual Price on Menu	\$14.50

Exhibit J – Management

Marketing Tactic Clarification

Teams must include two marketing tactics as a part of their proposal. Teams may submit two traditional marketing tactics, or one traditional marketing tactic and one social media marketing tactic. Teams MAY NOT submit two social media marketing tactics. The below categories will help identify what qualifies as a marketing tactic and what can be seen as specific examples of each tactic.

For the traditional marketing tactic, website and social media presence are not tactics in and of themselves. For example, Sprinkles Cupcakes uses twitter for a “whisper words” promotion. Each day a “whisper word” is announced via the official Sprinkles Twitter account, and the first 50 patrons to whisper the word-of-the-day receive a free cupcake. In this example, Twitter is the vehicle for the promotion. The marketing tactic employed is actually sample/free product.

Social Media:

The video or promotional post created by teams should focus on strong brand recognition and reinforce the restaurant concept.

Video – Promoted short form videos, with captions

- Instagram story
- Instagram reel
- Facebook reel

Promotional Post – Promoted posts with images and captions

- Instagram post
- Facebook post

Traditional:

Advertising – Paying to present or promote an operation’s products, services, or identity.

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Magazine
- Billboard
- Metro Transit
- Digital advertisements on social media

Promotions – Incentives to entice customers to patronize an operation.

- Frequent shopper program
- Special Pricing
- Special Events
- Samples
- Contest/sweepstakes
- Signage & display materials
- Merchandising
- Carryout & door hanger menu

Public Relations – The process by which an operation interacts with the community at large.

- Hosting a charity event
- Press release
- Sponsoring a team or event

Direct Marketing – Making a concerted effort to connect directly with a certain segment of the market.

- Post Card mailing campaign
- E-mail campaign
- Deal of the Day website (Groupon, Living Social, etc.)
- Smart phone application that updates and informs customers directly
- Flyers

Exhibit K – Management

Sample Critical Thinking Scenarios

Social Media

A guest leaves a negative comment of your restaurant on a popular restaurant review website. How would you handle?

Someone posts a bad comment on your restaurant's Facebook page – what should you do?

Safety & Sanitation

While pulling out the beef for your signature ribeye, your prep cook notices that the walk-in seems a bit warm. What do you do?

While cutting lemon wedges for iced teas, your server finds a moldy lemon halfway through the box of lemons. What should the server do?

We see that you have a line cook position. While the line cook is carrying your signature soup, he slips in a puddle of water by the dish area. What do you do?

Customer Service

A reservation for a party of 4 is showing up in your system as cancelled, yet they have arrived and checked in – what will you tell them?

A guest chokes on a toothpick on their way out the door - what do you do?

Human Resources & Staffing

One of your employees reports that he is being bullied by another employee. How would you address this? Who would you speak to first?

A guest calls the day after dining and complains that the server added an extra \$5 to the tip the guest left. How do you address this?

Marketing

In the coupon you printed in the newspaper, you forgot to put an expiration date. Two months later, a table presents it for redemption- what do you do?

Menu Development and Design

You don't sell as much of the filet as you anticipated on Friday night, what will you do with the extra filets?

A guest at your steakhouse is a vegetarian – what can you serve him/her?

Concept Knowledge

Due to your location, you serve a high-volume during lunch. However, dinner tickets are down. What can you do to increase dinner volume?

A restaurant very similar to yours opens up across the street – how do you compete?

Exhibit L – Management

Sample Management Competition Timeline

Note: The exact order of which category will be judged will vary for each team depending on where the judges start. The order will be announced once the competition schedule is set.

Team	8:00 AM	8:05 AM	8:15 AM	8:25 AM	8:35 AM	8:45 AM	8:55 AM	Break	Feedback Sessions	Students Out
1	Report & Setup	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing		9:10 AM	9:20 AM
2	Report & Setup	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept		9:10 AM	9:20 AM
3	Report & Setup	Concept	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu		9:20 AM	9:30 AM
4	Report & Setup	Menu	Concept	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B		9:20 AM	9:30 AM
5	Report & Setup	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing	Operations	Critical A		9:30 AM	9:40 AM
6	Report & Setup	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing	Operations		9:30 AM	9:40 AM
7	Report & Setup	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing		9:40 AM	9:50 AM
8	Report & Setup	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept		9:40 AM	9:50 AM
Team	10:05 AM	10:10 AM	10:20 AM	10:30 AM	10:40 AM	10:50 AM	11:00 AM	Break	Feedback Sessions	Students Out
1	Report & Setup	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing		11:15 AM	11:25 AM
2	Report & Setup	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept		11:15 AM	11:25 AM
3	Report & Setup	Concept	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu		11:25 AM	11:35 AM
4	Report & Setup	Menu	Concept	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B		11:25 AM	11:35 AM
5	Report & Setup	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing	Operations	Critical A		11:35 AM	11:45 AM
6	Report & Setup	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing	Operations		11:35 AM	11:45 AM
7	Report & Setup	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept	Marketing		12:00 PM	12:10 PM
8	Report & Setup	Marketing	Operations	Critical A	Critical B	Menu	Concept		12:00 PM	12:10 PM

Exhibit M – Management

Sample Management Competition Score Sheet

EVALUATION CRITERIA	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT	SCORE
Check-In (5 points)						
Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival within timeframe • Items meet specifications • Complete submission • Uniform 	1	2	3	4	5	
Concept (30 points)						
Description of Concept	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
SWOT Analysis	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Presentation Skills	1	2	3	4	5	
Q & A – Depth of Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	
Menu and Costing (35 points)						
Menu Matches Concept	1	2	3	4	5	
Description of 12 items	1	2	3	4	5	
Sample of how presented	1	2	3	4	5	
Photos	1	2	3	4	5	
Presentation Skills	1	2	3	4	5	
Q & A – Depth of Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	
Menu Poster	1	2	3	4	5	
Marketing (40 points)						
Matches Concept	1	2	3	4	5	
ROI	1	2	3	4	5	
Tactic Budgets	1	2	3	4	5	
Samples	1	2	3	4	5	
Creativity	1	2	3	4	5	
Presentation Skills	1	2	3	4	5	
Q & A – Depth of Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	
Marketing Poster	1	2	3	4	5	
Critical Thinking (55 points)						
Teamwork	1	2	3	4	5	
Presentation Skills	1	2	3	4	5	
Q & A – Depth of Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	
Category 1	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Category 2	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Category 3	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Category 4	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Operations (30 points)						
Layout Selection & Floorplan	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	10	

Interior and décor	1	2	3	4	5	
Organizational chart	1	2	3	4	5	
Presentation Skills	1	2	3	4	5	
Q & A – Depth of Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	
Menu and Costing (5 points)						
Recipes, Costing, Pricing	1	2	3	4	5	

DISQUALIFICATION
Reason for Disqualification:
_____ Team submitted work, or parts of work, that was previously submitted.
_____ Violation of the General Disqualifications on page 5.
PENALTY
Reason for Penalty:
_____ Written proposal does not meet specifications, or was not submitted by February 2, 2026 to jai@vrlta.org – 5 pts
_____ The team is not dressed in uniform – 5 pts
_____ Posters do not meet specifications or include additional information – 5 pts
_____ Restaurant concept is not located in ProStartville or does not match one of the provided restaurant space scenarios – 5 pts
_____ Team submits more or fewer than 12 menu items – 5 pts Number of items submitted _____
_____ Team includes an alcoholic beverage as one of their menu items – 5 pts
_____ Team submits recipes for more or fewer than 1 menu item – 5 pts Number of recipes submitted _____
_____ Team submits food costing worksheets for more or fewer than 1 menu item – 5 pts Number of costing worksheets submitted _____
_____ Team submits more or fewer than 1 menu pricing worksheet – 5 pts Number of menu pricing worksheets submitted _____
_____ Team submits more or fewer than 2 marketing tactics – 5 pts Number of marketing tactics submitted _____
_____ Team uses an alcohol-related activity or promotion as one of their marketing tactics – 5 pts