

# Virginia ProStart Invitational

## 2026 Judging Rubric – Culinary Competition

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## Category 1: Product Check-in

### Score

4-5	Complete inventory template displayed inside and outside each container in a plastic sleeve All items well packed, no leaking, no cross contamination All items properly labeled and dated All items at proper temperatures No disallowed items
3-4	Inventory template displayed inside and outside each container in a plastic sleeve Most items well packed, no leaking, no cross contamination Most items properly labeled and dated Most items at proper temperatures No disallowed items
1-2	Incomplete inventory template displayed inside and outside containers, missing lists Some items well packed, some leaking, possible cross contamination Some items properly labeled and dated Some items at proper temperatures Some disallowed items
0-1	Inventory list missing, very incomplete Items poorly packed, much leaking, obvious cross contamination Few items properly labeled and dated Many items not at proper temperatures Some disallowed items

### Special Notes

- If any product fails to meet temperature or cross contamination criteria, it must be discarded
- The team's teacher or mentor can present a replacement for the product to the Product Check-In judges up to the start of the team's assigned competition report time
- Teams are submitting five (5) soft bound folders

## Category 2: Work Skills / Organization

### Work Organization/Cooperation Score

4-5      Detailed timeline/prep list displayed and utilized  
Always display mastery of skills  
Workload evenly distributed among all team members  
Team communicates effectively  
Mise en place maintained throughout all of competition  
Always display professional attitude

3-4      Timeline/prep list displayed, mostly utilized  
Usually display mastery of skills  
Workload somewhat evenly distributed among team members  
Team mostly communicates effectively  
Mise en place maintained throughout most of competition  
Usually display professional attitude

1-2      Timeline/prep lists missing, not utilized  
Rarely display mastery of skills  
Workload not evenly distributed among team members  
Team rarely/never communicates or communicates ineffectively  
Mise en place rarely maintained, station excessively cluttered  
Rarely display professional attitude

### Proper Cooking Procedures/Equipment Use Score

4-5      Always uses appropriate cooking method for product  
Two (2) or more of required cooking methods used  
Procedures follow plan/timeline  
Procedures correct for recipe  
All waste visible and accounted for  
Always use proper equipment for task  
Mastery of all equipment used

3-4      Usually uses appropriate cooking method for product  
Two (2) required cooking methods used  
Procedures usually follow plan/timeline  
Procedures usually correct for recipe  
Most waste visible and accounted for  
Usually use proper equipment for task  
Mastery of most equipment used

1-2      Sometimes uses appropriate cooking method for product  
Zero (0) to one (1) required cooking methods used  
Procedures sometimes follow plan/timeline  
Procedures sometimes correct for recipe  
Some waste visible and accounted for  
Sometimes use proper equipment for task  
Mastery of some equipment used

### Proper Cooking Procedures/Equipment Use Score (cont'd)

0-1      Rarely/never uses appropriate cooking method for product  
Zero (0) to one (1) required cooking methods used  
Procedures rarely follow plan/timeline  
Procedures rarely correct for recipe  
Little to no waste visible or accounted for  
Rarely/never use proper equipment for task  
Mastery of little/none equipment used

Degree of Difficulty Score

4-5      Innovative creativity displayed and mastered  
Fundamental techniques perfected  
Multiple higher level techniques displayed and mastered

3-4      Creativity displayed and mastered  
Most fundamental techniques perfected  
Some higher level techniques displayed/mastered

1-2      Little creativity displayed and/or mastered  
Some/few fundamental techniques perfected  
Few higher level techniques displayed and/or mastered

Special Notes

- Match the level-of-difficulty-expectation to the competitors - these are high school students
- Key on fundamental skills, not intricacy or exotic

## Category 3: Team Presentation/Knife Skills

### Team Presentation Score

4-5	All uniforms complete and identical All uniforms very clean-pressed All have proper shoes
3-4	Most uniforms complete Most uniforms clean - some wrinkles, soil Team mostly identical Most have proper shoes
1-2	Team members missing uniform components Uniforms soiled, wrinkled Do not look like a team Improper footwear

### Proper Knife Usage Score

4-5	All cuts consistent in size and shape All cuts accurate in size for the type of cut used All cuts clean Minimal waste Waste accounted for in containers Safe use of knives at all times Completed all knife cuts within allotted time
3-4	Most cuts consistent in size and shape Most cuts accurate in size for the type of cut used Most cuts clean Some waste Waste somewhat accounted for, use of containers Safe use of knives at most times Completed some knife cuts within allotted time
1-2	Some/none cuts consistent in size and shape Some/none cuts accurate in size for the type of cut used Some/none cuts clean Waste missing or unaccounted for, no containers Unsafe use of knives Did not complete knife cuts within allotted time

### Special Notes

- Students must execute two (2) of the eleven (11) knife cuts listed below and set aside 1oz volume measurement for judge evaluation. Knife cuts and ingredients must be listed on the menu.

## Category 4: Safety and Sanitation

### Follows Safety and Sanitation Procedures Score

4-5     Always keeps station clean and neat  
Washes hands often  
Wipes station and utensils with sanitation towels and solution many times during the day  
Always works in a safe manner

3-4     Sometimes keeps station clean and neat  
Sometimes washes hands  
Occasionally wipes stations and utensils with sanitation towels and solution  
Sometimes works in a safe manner

1-2     Rarely/never keeps station clean and neat  
Does not/rarely washes hands  
Rarely/never wipes stations and utensils with sanitation towels and solution  
Rarely/never works in a safe manner

### Proper Food Handling Score

4-5     Always wears gloves when handling foods that are not going to be further cooked  
Changes gloves often, as needed  
Always keeps uncooked proteins on ice or under refrigeration  
Minimizes time in danger zone during prep  
Always sanitizes cutting board and utensils after working with potentially hazardous foods  
Always stores potentially hazardous foods beneath other foods  
Uses side towels only for handling pots and pans  
Does not wipe hands or knives on apron

3-4     Usually wears gloves when handling foods that are not going to be further cooked  
Changes gloves occasionally  
Usually keeps uncooked proteins on ice or under refrigeration  
Mostly minimizes time in danger zone during prep  
Usually sanitizes cutting board and utensils after working with potentially hazardous foods  
Usually stores potentially hazardous foods beneath other foods  
Usually uses side towels only for handling pots and pans  
Rarely wipes hands or knives on apron

2-3     Sometimes wears gloves when handling foods that are not going to be further cooked  
Sometimes changes gloves  
Sometimes keeps uncooked proteins on ice or under refrigeration  
Somewhat minimizes time in danger zone during prep  
Sometimes sanitizes cutting board and utensils after working with potentially hazardous foods  
Sometimes stores potentially hazardous foods beneath other foods  
Sometimes uses side towels only for handling pots and pans  
Occasionally wipes hands or knives on apron

1-2    Rarely/never wears gloves when handling foods that are not going to be further cooked  
Rarely/never changes gloves  
Rarely/never keeps uncooked proteins on ice or under refrigeration  
Does not minimize time in danger zone during prep  
Rarely/never sanitizes cutting board and utensils after working with potentially hazardous foods  
Rarely/never stores potentially hazardous foods beneath other foods  
Regularly uses side towels only for handling pots and pans  
Wipes hands or knives on apron often

Work Area & Equipment Cleaned Score

5    Area very clean  
Completed on time

3-4    Area mostly clean, some debris  
Completed on time

1-2    Area not cleaned, much debris, floor not swept  
Not completed on time

## Category 5: Taste and Finished Product – Starter

### Starter Taste Score

9-10 Hot foods/Hot plate- Cold food/Cold plate as appropriate  
All items cooked properly  
Sauces of very good consistency and viscosity  
Very good, fully developed flavors  
Balanced, layered flavors

7-8 Generally hot food-cold food as appropriate  
Items mostly properly cooked, slightly over/under cooked  
Some sauces slightly thick or thin  
Good flavors, not fully developed  
Mostly balanced, layered flavors

5-6 Generally hot food-cold food as appropriate  
Some items properly cooked, slightly over/under cooked  
Some sauces slightly thick or thin  
Some good flavors, not fully developed  
Some balanced flavors, lacking layered flavors

3-4 Hot food served cool/Cold food served cool  
Few items properly cooked, over/under cooked  
Many sauces thick or thin  
Average flavors, little development  
Few balanced flavors, little layered flavors

1-2 Hot food served cold/Cold food served room temperature  
Items not properly cooked, very under or over cooked  
Sauces very thick, pasty or thin  
Poor flavors, off flavors, very underdeveloped  
Very unbalanced flavors  
No or inappropriate garnish  
Missing items

### Special Notes

- 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:
  - **Oral:** Flavor, Texture, Temperature
  - **Visual:** Color, Shape
- A starter has been specified in the rules to consist of:
  - A first course: soup, salad, appetizer
  - 4-6 oz of total edible weight

### Starter Appearance Score

5	Very good product color, evidence of proper cooking techniques Sauces of very good color All portion sizes appropriate Clean plate, with appetizing appearance and presentation Balanced presentation Multiple textures and shapes displayed No inedible garnish
3-4	Good colors Sauces' color somewhat light or dark Most portion sizes appropriate Mostly clean plate with appetizing appearance and presentation Mostly balanced presentation Some textures/shapes displayed Little inedible garnish
1-2	Very few, or confusing colors Sauces' color very light or dark Inappropriate portion sizes Messy/dirty plate, appearance and/or presentation Poorly balanced presentation Few textures and/or shapes displayed Inedible garnish

### Special Notes

- 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:
  - **Oral:** Flavor, Texture, Temperature
  - **Visual:** Color, Shape

## Category 6: Taste and Finished Product – Entrée

### Entrée Taste Score

13-15 Hot foods/Hot plate- Cold food/Cold plate as appropriate  
All items cooked properly  
Sauces of very good consistency and viscosity  
Very good, fully developed flavors  
Balanced, layered flavors

10-12 Generally hot food-cold food as appropriate  
Items mostly properly cooked, slightly over/under cooked  
Some sauces slightly thick or thin  
Good flavors, not fully developed  
Mostly balanced, layered flavors

7-9 Generally hot food-cold food as appropriate  
Some items properly cooked, slightly over/under cooked  
Some sauces slightly thick or thin  
Some good flavors, not fully developed  
Some balanced flavors, lacking layered flavors

4-6 Hot food served cool/Cold food served cool  
Few items properly cooked, over/under cooked  
Many sauces thick or thin  
Average flavors, little development  
Few balanced flavors, little layered flavors

1-3 Hot food served cold/Cold food served room temperature  
Items not properly cooked, very under or over cooked  
Sauces very thick, pasty or thin  
Poor flavors, off flavors, very underdeveloped  
Very unbalanced flavors  
No or inappropriate garnish  
Missing items

### Special Notes

- 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:
  - **Oral:** Flavor, Texture, Temperature
  - **Visual:** Color, Shape
- An entrée has been specified in the rules to consist of:
  - Center of the plate item: 4-6 oz suggested
  - Accompaniments such as a vegetable or starch: 2-3 oz each suggested
  - Sauce

### Entrée Appearance Score

5     Very good product color, evidence of proper cooking techniques  
Sauces of very good color  
All portion sizes appropriate  
Clean plate, with appetizing appearance and presentation  
Balanced presentation  
Multiple textures and shapes displayed  
No inedible garnish

3-4    Good colors  
Sauces' color somewhat light or dark  
Most portion sizes appropriate  
Mostly clean plate with appetizing appearance and presentation  
Mostly balanced presentation  
Some textures/shapes displayed  
Little inedible garnish

1-2    Very little, or confusing colors  
Sauces' color very light or dark  
Inappropriate portion sizes  
Messy/dirty plate, appearance and/or presentation  
Poorly balanced presentation  
Few textures and/or shapes displayed  
Inedible garnish

#### Special Notes

- 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:
  - **Oral:** Flavor, Texture, Temperature
  - **Visual:** Color, Shape

## Category 7: Taste and Finished Product – Dessert

### Dessert Taste Score

9-10 Hot foods/Hot plate- Cold food/Cold plate as appropriate  
All items cooked properly  
Sauces of very good consistency and viscosity  
Very good, fully developed flavors  
Balanced, layered flavors

7-8 Generally hot food-cold food as appropriate  
Items mostly properly cooked, slightly over/under cooked  
Some sauces slightly thick or thin  
Good flavors, not fully developed  
Mostly balanced, layered flavors

5-6 Generally hot food-cold food as appropriate  
Some items properly cooked, slightly over/under cooked  
Some sauces slightly thick or thin  
Some good flavors, not fully developed  
Some balanced flavors, lacking layered flavors

3-4 Hot food served cool/Cold food served cool  
Few items properly cooked, over/under cooked  
Many sauces thick or thin  
Average flavors, little development  
Few balanced flavors, little layered flavors

1-2 Hot food served cold/Cold food served room temperature  
Items not properly cooked, very under or over cooked  
Sauces very thick, pasty or thin  
Poor flavors, off flavors, very underdeveloped  
Very unbalanced flavors  
No or inappropriate garnish  
Missing items

### Special Notes

- 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:
  - **Oral:** Flavor, Texture, Temperature
  - **Visual:** Color, Shape
- A dessert has been specified in the rules to consist of:
  - A little something sweet served at the end of the meal
  - Size appropriate: 3± oz total edible weight

### Dessert Appearance Score

5	Very good product color, evidence of proper cooking techniques Sauces of very good color All portion sizes appropriate Clean plate, with appetizing appearance and presentation Balanced presentation Multiple textures and shapes displayed No inedible garnish
3-4	Good colors Sauces' color somewhat light or dark Most portion sizes appropriate Mostly clean plate with appetizing appearance and presentation Mostly balanced presentation Some textures/shapes displayed Little inedible garnish
1-2	Very little, or confusing colors Sauces' color very light or dark Inappropriate portion sizes Messy/dirty plate, appearance and/or presentation Poorly balanced presentation Few textures and/or shapes displayed Inedible garnish

### Special Notes

- 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:
  - **Oral:** Flavor, Texture, Temperature
  - **Visual:** Color, Shape

## Category 8: Menu and Recipe Presentation

Required in each folder:

- State, Territory, or Region Name and year on cover
- Recipes; typed on official template
- Recipe costing sheets; typed on official template
- Menu pricing sheet; typed on official template
- Plate photographs (color) – One 8 1/2 x 11" photo per plate
- Menu with prices (simple typed menu 8 1/2 x 11")

### Score

5      Typed and easily readable  
All spelling and grammar correct  
Pricing is within guidelines and reasonable  
Photographs are clear and depict actual menu items  
Recipes are in correct format  
Recipes are correct for dishes presented  
Recipe costing calculations are correct and complete  
Menu price calculations are correct at 33% and rounded  
All sources are properly acknowledged using MLA formatting

3-4    Typed and easily readable  
Most spelling and grammar correct  
Pricing is within guidelines and reasonable  
Photographs are mostly clear and depict actual menu items  
Recipes are in correct format  
Recipes are correct for dishes presented  
Most recipe costing calculations are correct and complete  
Most menu price calculations are correct at 33% and rounded  
Most sources are properly acknowledged using MLA formatting

1-2    Most is typed and easily readable  
Some spelling and grammar correct  
Some pricing is within guidelines and reasonable  
Some photographs are clear and depict actual menu items  
Some recipes are in correct format  
Some recipes are correct for dishes presented  
Some recipe costing calculations are correct and complete  
Some menu price calculations are correct at 33% and rounded  
Some sources are properly acknowledged using MLA formatting  
Items are missing