

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

- | | | |
|--|-----|---|
| <div style="position: absolute; top: 0; left: 0; right: 0; bottom: 0; border: 1px solid black;"></div> | 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 |
| <div style="position: absolute; top: 0; left: 0; right: 0; bottom: 0; border: 1px solid black;"></div> | 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 |
| <div style="position: absolute; top: 0; left: 0; right: 0; bottom: 0; border: 1px solid black;"></div> | 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 ½ x 11" photo per plate
 - Menu with prices (simple typed menu 8 ½ 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