High School Culinary Challenge

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

March 7, 2026

Purpose of Challenge:

To promote professionalism, team building and the pursuit of culinary excellence.

Overview:

Each three-member team of high school students, using provided recipes, will prepare four servings of a three-course meal (appetizer, entrée, and dessert) to an advanced level of the CTS Foods Program. Four portions of each course are to be plated and presented to judges - three portions are for tasting; one portion is for presentation. All food is to be presented on provided plates. Competitors are free to consult reference books of their choice.

Kitchen stations will be drawn and assigned by competition organizers. Food items listed as par stock will be made available to all participants and held in a common area. Judges reserve the quantities. Carefully note the presentation times for all courses.

All competitors are responsible for the complete cleanup of their work areas, stoves, sinks, floors, and surrounding areas before leaving the competition site. Points will be deducted for competitors who do not comply.

Location:

NAIT Culinary Kitchens, O122, South kitchen labs beside the Common Market

Divisions:

There are two divisions in the competition. Schools that offer a CKA-level course will compete in Division A, while schools that offer a FOD-level course will compete in Division B. Teachers from Division B may request to participate in Division A if space is available. However, students who are being taught at the CKA level are not permitted to compete in Division B.

Competition Menu

Appetizer

Spinach & Ricotta Filled Pasta with Tomato Sauce

Main

Pan Fried Pork Chop, Mushroom Pan Gravy, Duchess Potato,
Green Beans Amandine

Dessert

Choux Pastry with Custard Filling,
Fruit Sauce, Edible Garnish

Pulse Category

Bring in your own Alberta Pulses Appetizer to serve 4, using one of the Alberta Pulses found on their website https://albertapulse.com/. Dishes will be judged by Alberta pulses and other industry professionals. This dish can be hot or cold and will be served at 9:30 and 2:30. Prizes will be awarded for the best use of pulses.

Competition Timeline

March 7th, 2026	Division A	Division B
Arrival / Setup	6:30 am	11:30 am
Competition Start	7:00 am	12:00 pm
Pulse Course	9:30 – 9:35 am	2:30 – 2:35 pm
Appetizer	10:00 - 10:05 am	3:00 - 3:05 pm
Main Course	10:30 – 10:35 am	3:30 – 3:35 pm
Dessert	11:00 – 11:05 am	4:00 – 4:05 pm
Competition End	11:15 am	4:15 pm

General times are provided and are subject to change to meet competition logistics.

Labs are to be completely cleaned, or marks will be deducted.

CLOTHING REQUIREMENTS:

Competitors will be professionally attired in a white chef jacket, checked or black pants, apron, and hairnet as required. Chef hats will be provided and must be worn by all competitors. Appropriate kitchen shoes (closed toes, non-skid soles, and leather-style surface) ***No athletic or running shoes are allowed.***
Please reference this video for more information on clothing requirements.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaJ6hHsFBj8

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS:

French knife, paring knife, vegetable peeler, French whip, wooden spoon, food containers, meat mallet, piping bag, tips, measuring spoons, hand mixer, tool box, and any other small tools required. NAIT will ***NOT*** provide the pots, pans and bowls. ***Competitors must bring their own tools, smallware's and knife kits.***

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS:

- Oven mitts, white terry cloth or t-towel
- Non-slip leather-style shoes
- No rings, watches or personal jewelry
- Loose hair completely restrained
- Competitors are required to observe all safety standards during the competition.

Course Information

Appetizer	• Portion size: 150 g – 200 g • Pasta shape of your choice • Tomato sauce • An appropriate edible garnish of your choice • Provided 6” Plate
Main	• Portion size: 250 g – 300 g • Contains pan fried pork chop, green bean amandine, duchess potato, mushroom pan gravy. • Provided 10” Plate
Dessert	• Portion size: 125 g – 175 g • Must include a choux pastry component • Custard-based filling of your choice • Minimum one fruit sauce of your choice • An appropriate edible garnish of your choice • Provided 6” Plate
Pulse	• Portion size: 200 g – 250 g • This is a required course that every team must complete • Provided 10” Plate

Recipes

- The recipes are intended as a guide and may/should be adjusted as required to produce appropriate quantities, flavours and correct seasoning.
- Recipes should be scaled up or down according to required amounts.

Menu

- Bring a typed copy of your menu, detailing the three courses you are serving. Menus should not state the name or school of the competitor.

MARKING CRITERIA:

15% Sanitation	Professional attire, hats, aprons, shoes Personal hygiene, hair restrained. Cutting board and utensil sanitation. Correct food handling and storage **Cleanup - entire work area and adjacent areas/sinks and stoves cleaned and sanitized** (5-mark penalty if incomplete) other_____
5% Timing	All products presented at noted time. 5-minute period of grace – any later results in zero
5% Temperature	**Hot food served hot on heated plates.** **Cold foods served cold on chilled plates.**
25% Organization	Follows worksheet, follows timetable. Professional use of knives, tools, and equipment Station maintained neat, clean, and orderly. Demonstrates safe working practices. Effective food utilization / wastage Accuracy of knife skills Correct cooking methods Teamwork other_____
15% Presentation	Portion size / balance Effective color / contrast Clean plates, neatness Technical skills (slicing, dicing, turning etc.) other_____
35% Taste	Correct textures of food, consistency of sauces Degree of doneness, not over/undercooked Balanced taste and seasonings – enhanced natural flavors Not bland, under/over seasoned Not excessively salty, sour, sweet or bitter Not burnt, metallic tasting or aftertaste

JUDGING CRITERIA:

Includes:

- adherence to safety and sanitation rules as contained in the sanitation code.
- interpretation skills of scope documents.
- general cooking skills, work habits, cooking techniques, development of flavors, degrees of doneness, texture, temperature controls, presentation skills and effective utilization of food products.
- cooperation with others in kitchen, effective team participation.

RELATED CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY STUDY MODULES:

- Module FOD 1020 Baking Basics
- Module FOD 2070 Stocks, Soups and Sauces
- Module FOD 2080 Vegetables Fruits and Grains
- Module FOD 2090 Creative Cold Foods
- Module FOD 2100 Basic Meat Cookery
- Module FOD 2110 Fish
- Module FOD 2150 Food Safety & Sanitation
- Module FOD 3050 Advanced Soups and Sauces
- Module FOD 3060 Food Presentation
- Module FOD 3080 Advanced Meat Cookery

COOKING TERMINOLOGY:

- Batonnet – 1/4 inch by 1/4 inch by 3 inches (6mm x 6mm x 76mm)
- Small dice – 1/4 inch by 1/4 inch by 1/4 inch (6mm x 6mm x 6mm)
- Medium dice – ½ inch by ½ inch by ½ inch (12mm x 12mm x 12mm)
- Reduce – to cook down to desired consistency
- t – teaspoon – 5 ml
- T – tablespoon – 15 ml

(a) Tourné: 2 in. long × 3/4 in. diameter, with 7 sides, and flat-ended (5 cm × 2 cm).

(b) Large dice: 3/4 in. × 3/4 in. × 3/4 in. (2 cm × 2 cm × 2 cm).

(c) Medium dice: 1/2 in. × 1/2 in. × 1/2 in. (12 mm × 12 mm × 12 mm).

(d) Small dice: 1/4 in. × 1/4 in. × 1/4 in. (6 mm × 6 mm × 6 mm).

(e) Brunoise (broon-wahz): 1/8 in. × 1/8 in. × 1/8 in. (3 mm × 3 mm × 3 mm).

(f) Fine brunoise: 1/16 in. × 1/16 in. × 1/16 in. (1.5 mm × 1.5 mm × 1.5 mm).

(g) Rondelle: round or bias-rond cuts, varied diameter or thickness.

(h) Paysanne: 1/2 in. × 1/2 in. × 1/8 in. (12 mm × 12 mm × 3 mm; round, square, or rectangular).

(i) Lozenge: 1/2 in. × 1/2 in. × 1/8 in. (12 mm × 12 mm × 3 mm; diamond-shape).

(j) Fermière: irregular shape, varied diameter or thickness.

(k) Batonnet: 1/4 in. × 1/4 in. × 2 1/2-3 in. (6 mm × 6 mm × 6–7.5 cm).

(l) Julienne (or allumette potatoes): 1/8 in. × 1/8 in. × 2 1/2 in. (3 mm × 3 mm × 6 cm).

(m) Fine julienne: 2 in. long × 1/16 in. × 1/16 in. (1.5 mm × 1.5 mm × 5 cm).

Par Stock

Vegetables	Fruits	Grocery	Herbs
Onions	Strawberries	Olive Oil	Fresh Basil
Celery	Raspberries	Vanilla Extract, Paste	Flat-leaf parsley
Carrots	Lemons	Agar Agar	Fresh Rosemary
Garlic	Mango, Frozen	AP, Pastry, Bread Flour	Fresh Thyme
Green Onion	Rhubarb, Frozen	Honey	Bay leaf
Russet Potatoes	Navel Oranges	Sugar, White, Gold, Brown	Fresh Chives
Spinach, frozen	Blueberries	Vinegar, Cider, White	Fresh Mint
Cremini Mushrooms	Blackberries	Corn Starch	
Green Beans		Powdered Sugar	**Spices**
Shallots	**Other**	Whole Tomato, Canned	Pepper / White Pepper
	Chicken Stock	Canola Oil	Kosher Salt
Dairy		White Chocolate	Table Salt
Butter, unsalted		Milk Chocolate	Paprika
Whipping Cream, 32%		Dark Chocolate	Onion Powder
Milk, 3.25%		Baking Powder	Garlic Powder
Parmesan	**Protein**	Baking Soda	Nutmeg, Whole
Ricotta	Pork Loin	“OO” Flour	
Eggs		Slivered Almonds	
		Tomato Paste	
		Cocoa Powder	
		Gelatin, Powder, Sheets	

Appetizer

Ricotta and Spinach Filling

Yield: 300 g

Ricotta Cheese	280 g
Parmesan Cheese, Grated	50 g
Egg Yolk	1 each
Chopped Parsley	10 g
Frozen Spinach, Chopped	150 g
Nutmeg	.5 ml
Salt	To taste
Pepper	To taste

1. Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl.
2. Stir until the mixture is completely smooth and well blended.
3. Season with salt and pepper.

Tomato Sauce

Yield: 0.75 L

Olive Oil	120 ml
Onion, Medium Dice	55 g
Carrots, Medium Dice	55 g
Celery, Medium Dice	55 g
Tomatoes, Canned, Whole	750 L
Garlic Glove, Minced	1
Salt	7.5 g
Sugar	3.5 ml

1. Heat olive oil in a pan and gently cook the vegetables until softened, without browning.
2. Add the tomatoes along with their juice.
3. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer gently for 45 minutes, until the sauce reaches the desired consistency.
4. Strain the sauce, then purée or pass it through a food mill.
5. Season to taste with salt and sugar

Egg Pasta

Yield: 714 g

OO Flour	454 g
Whole Egg	260 g

1. Mound the flour on a clean work surface.
2. Make a well in the center and add the eggs.
3. Starting from the center, gradually mix the flour into the eggs to form a dough.
4. When the dough is firm enough, begin kneading.
5. Knead thoroughly for at least 15 minutes.
6. Cover the dough and let it rest for at least 30 minutes.

Main

Pan Fried Pork Chop

Yield: 4 Servings

Pork Loin	500 g
Salt	To taste
Pepper	To taste
Olive Oil	2 Tbsp
Unsalted Butter	60 g
Garlic Clove, Smashed	2 each
Rosemary, Fresh	2 sprigs
Thyme, Fresh	2 sprigs

1. Cut the pork loin into 125 g portions.
2. Season each pork chop with salt and pepper.
3. Heat a large frying pan over medium-high heat.
4. Add olive oil to the pan.
5. Place the pork chops in the pan and sear until golden brown, about 2–3 minutes per side.
6. Reduce the heat to medium.
7. Push the chops to one side of the pan.
8. Add butter, garlic, rosemary, and thyme to the empty side.
9. When the butter melts and foams, tilt the pan and spoon the butter over the chops repeatedly for 2–4 minutes.
10. Place pan in the oven at 400 F and take out when pork reaches 150F
11. Rest pork chops and serve

Mushroom Pan Gravy

Yield: 600 g

Cremini Mushrooms	120 g
Unsalted Butter	30 g
AP Flour	30 g
Chicken Stock	400 g
Salt	To taste
Pepper	To taste
Heavy Cream	To taste

1. Remove the pork chops and herbs from the pan, leaving the browned bits and some butter behind.
2. Add the sliced mushrooms to the pan.
3. Sauté over medium heat until the mushrooms release moisture and turn golden brown.
4. Add butter and flour to make a roux.
5. Stir constantly for 1–2 minutes to cook out the raw flour taste.
6. Slowly whisk in the stock until smooth.
7. Simmer for 2–3 minutes until slightly thickened.
8. Add cream to bring the sauce to proper consistency.
9. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Green Bean Amandine

Yield: 275g

Green Beans	200 g
Butter, Unsalted	30 g
Sliced Almonds	25 g
Butter, Unsalted	20 g
Salt	To taste
Pepper	To taste

1. Sauté the sliced almonds in butter until lightly browned, then set aside.
2. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil.
3. Blanch the green beans in the boiling water.
4. When the beans are tender, shock them in ice water.
5. Heat butter in a sauté pan.
6. Add the beans and toss over heat until hot and coated with butter.
7. Add the almonds and toss to combine.

Duchess Potato

Yield: 800 g

Potatoes, Peled and Quartered	750 g
Butter Melted	25 g
Salt	To taste
White Pepper	To Taste
Nutmeg	To taste
Egg Yolk	50 g

1. Simmer the potatoes in salted water until tender. Drain in a colander and let them dry in the oven for several minutes.
2. Pass the potatoes through a food mill or ricer.
3. Add butter and mix into a smooth paste. Season with salt, pepper, and a hint of nutmeg (the flavor should be subtle).
4. If the mixture is very moist, stir over low heat to stiffen. It should be much firmer than mashed potatoes.
5. Off the heat, add the egg yolks and beat until smooth.
6. Transfer the mixture to a pastry bag with a star tip and pipe into desired shapes. Cone-shaped spirals are most popular for individual portions.

Dessert

Choux Pastry

Yield: 600 g

Milk	90 g
Water	90 g
Salt	2 g
Sugar	5 g
Butter	90 g
All Purpose Flour	123 g
Eggs	200 g

Scale all ingredients.

1. In a saucepan, bring the milk, water, salt, sugar, and butter to a simmer over medium heat, stirring constantly.
2. When the butter has melted, add the flour to make a roux. Cook for 2–3 minutes to remove the raw starch taste.
3. Transfer the mixture to a mixer with a paddle attachment and mix briefly until steam escapes. Cool to about 43°C (110°F).
4. Add tempered eggs a little at a time. The mixture should have a sheen and just hold its shape when finished.
5. Pipe into the desired shape.
6. Bake at 375°F for about 30 minutes.

Pastry Cream

Yield: 450 g

Milk, 3.25%	280 g
Sugar, White	70 g
Whole Egg	35 g
Egg Yolk	25 g
Cornstarch	22 g
Butter, Unsalted	17 g
Vanilla	4.5 g

1. In a pot combine milk, vanilla, 1/2 sugar, bring to a simmer
2. In a bowl mix together whole egg, yolk, cornstarch and the rest of the sugar.
3. Temper hot milk into egg mixture.
4. Place over medium heat and cook until thick and there is no starchy flavor.
5. Take off the heat and stir in the butter
6. Chill pastry cream in the cooler

Crème Diplomat

Yield:: 900 g

Pastry Cream	450 g
Whip Cream	450 g

1. Whip cream to soft peaks, set aside.
2. Mix the pastry cream until smooth.
3. Fold the whipped cream into the pastry cream.

Competitor Number: _____

	Perfect (**10**) Excellent **(9)**	Very good **(8)** Good **(7)**	Satisfactory (6)	Borderline(5)	Unacceptable(4, 3)
Taste ____/10	• outstanding flavour • no improvements suggested	• overall pleasant flavour • minor improvements suggested	• flavour needs some enhancement • neutral flavour, somewhat bland	• highly over or under seasoned, but not to the extent that it would be sent back • too spicy or salty for some tastes	• far over or under seasoned • unpleasant flavour or smell
Texture ____ /10	• perfect texture and balance between dishes • no improvements suggested	• overall good texture of major components • some minor adjustments may be recommended	• minor number of components on the plate definitely need adjustments	• major components on the plate slightly tough or too firm or soft, but still servable	• some products on plate inedible • unpleasant texture, would be sent back
Doneness ____/10	• all items on plate cooked perfectly no improvements suggested	• most items on plate cooked to ideal doneness • some minor adjustments may be recommended	• minor items on plate slightly over or undercooked some adjustments recommended but not critical	• major items on plate somewhat over or undercooked, but still moist and tender adjustments definitely needed	• items extremely over or undercooked • item would be sent back • food safety concern with doneness
TOTALS: ÷3 = _____					

	Perfect (10) Excellent (9)	Very good (8) Good (7)	Satisfactory (6)	Borderline(5)	Unacceptable(4, 3)
Presentation ____/10	• plate presented in modern, artistic style • portion sizes perfect • ideal balance of shapes and colours • no improvements suggested	• plate attractively presented • portion size within recommended range • range of shapes and colours • some minor adjustments may be recommended	• plates clean, not sloppy • portion sizes may need some adjustment • may be lacking colour	• plates lacking visual interest or colour • portion sizes too large or small • somewhat difficult to eat	• extremely sloppy plates • unappealing colour (grey, burnt, etc.) • portion sizes far too large or small
TOTAL:					

JUDGE _____

Kitchen Marking Criteria #_____

Sanitation: *includes*

- ☐ Appropriate footwear
- ☐ Hand washing, personal hygiene
- ☐ Professional attire, hats, apron side towel
- ☐ Hair restrained, hair nets
- ☐ No watches, jewellery or nail polish
- ☐ Cleanliness of work tools
- ☐ Cleaning & sanitation of work area
- ☐ Cutting board sanitation
- ☐ Correct food handling and temperature control
- ☐ Cross /direct contamination
- ☐ Perishable food storage
- ☐ Other

Notes:

10 – Perfect

9 – 1 infraction

8 – 2 infractions

7 – 3 infractions

6 – 4 infractions

5 – 5 infractions

4 – 6 infractions

Total Score ____ /10

No more than 6 infractions deducted.

Organization *includes*

- ☐ Has work sheet, follows recipes
- ☐ Station maintained in neat and orderly manner
- ☐ Demonstrates safe working practices
- ☐ Demonstrates team work
- ☐ Correct knife skills /applications
- ☐ Maintains correct temperature controls
- ☐ Tool boxes orderly & correctly stored
- ☐ Effective food utilization- wastage
- ☐ Effective time management
- ☐ Applies appropriate cooking methods
- ☐ Refrigerated products correctly stored
- ☐ Other

Notes:

10 – Perfect

9 – 1 infraction

8 – 2 infractions

7 – 3 infractions

6 – 4 infractions

5 – 5 infractions

4 – 6 infractions

Total Score ____ /10

No more than 6 infractions deducted.

*Please deduct only **one point** per criteria.