



Cornell Cooperative Extension | St. Lawrence County

March 28, 2026

**** Team Registration Deadline January 16, 2026 ****

TEAM PACKET

North Country Jr. Iron Chef Competition inspires Farm to School programs by encouraging regional middle and high school students to develop tasty, healthy recipes that showcase local produce and build lifelong cooking skills.

North Country Jr. Iron Chef is adapted to accommodate a Federal USDA Farm to School grant and is an evolving program through Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County. A list of eligible school districts for the 2025 competition is on page 3. North Country Jr. Iron Chef is a legacy project of the St. Lawrence County [Health Initiative](#).

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North Country Jr. Iron Chef

Team Packet

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PLEASE NOTE: The North Country Jr. Iron Chef has transitioned from management by the Health Initiative to a program of Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County (CCE). New elements in 2026 include nutrition education programming available to school districts as well as highlighting produce available through the Fresh-cut Farm-to-School Program. Due to new management, staff and funding, the 2026 competition will be smaller than previous competitions with a goal of growth in future years. CCE hopes to build a strong foundation and expand the program with annual competitions. We are glad you'll be joining us in this transitional year! Input from participating teams is welcome to help shape later competitions.

Team Guidelines

- The competition is open to North Country teams participating in St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES [Farm to School Fresh-Cut program](#) in Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties. As of August 2025, the districts that participate in this program include Brasher Falls Central, Canton Central, Clifton-Fine Central, Colton-Pierrepont Central, Edwards-Knox, Gouverneur Central, Hammond, Harrisville, Hermon-DeKalb, Heuvelton Indian River, Lisbon, Lyme, Madrid-Waddington, Morristown Central, Norwood-Norfolk, Potsdam, Sackets Harbor, Salmon River, and Watertown City. Congratulations, your school supports local food and farming !
- Each team **must** consist of 3 to 5 students in one of the districts named above.
- Teams are any combination of middle and high school students.
- Each team **must** have one Team Coach who is present for the duration of the competition. Team Coaches must be 25 years of age or older. Teams may also have one additional Assistant Coach.
- Only students may prep and cook during the competition, unless a prior request has been submitted and approved during the recipe review process. For teams without prior approval, the Team Coach and/or Assistant may only provide hands-off guidance in cooking techniques and safety. Any other adult involvement in the cooking will result in disqualification of the team.
- A maximum of two teams per school may register. Teams must submit ALL materials fully completed to be guaranteed a spot; please see page 4, “How to Register Your Team & Submit Your Recipe” for list of required materials. Additional teams from the same school may be added to a waitlist and will be notified no later than a week after the close of registration if a slot is available.

If there is high demand within a district, you can:

- Hold an in-school cook-off, with the two winning teams attending the March event!
 - Use a lottery or random drawing to select the participating teams.
- North Country Jr. Iron Chef reserves the right to cancel the competition. If the competition is cancelled, an announcement will be made at least one month prior to the event and registration fees will be refunded.
 - OPTIONAL: Eligible team members can participate in Farm to School Educational Programming through CCE. These sessions can be held in class, club, or afterschool setting. These sessions are available September 2025-March 2026. Find session information [HERE](#). To arrange sessions contact ncjrironchef@cornell.edu.

How to Register Your Team & Submit Your Recipe

Step	When To Do or Expect It	Notes
1 Team Registration Confirmation & Payment • Team Registration Form • Payment Options: (1)Online payment (2)Purchase Order	9:00 a.m., December 1, 2025 to 5:00 p.m., January 16, 2026	The Adult Team Coach will receive confirmation within two business days of your Team Registration via email. • There is a Team Entry Fee of \$20.00 (twenty dollars). Entry fee is non-refundable.** Due at time of Registration. ** Ideas to raise funds for the Team Entry Fee: • Approach a business or community foundation to sponsor your team. • Hold a fundraiser, such as babysitting or leaf raking as part of a “rent-a-teen” day. Click here for more healthy fundraising ideas.
2 Team Google Drive Folder Assignment Print, complete, scan, and upload: • Student Release • Adult/Coaches Release Complete electronically: • Recipe Template	NO later than 5:00 p.m., February 6, 2026 +	Once registered, an event representative will send the team coach(es) a link to the assigned team folder. Teams must fully complete all required forms by the deadline to be accepted. Teams complete the Recipe Template following guidance from page 10. See Recipe Template here (viewable example).
3 Recipe Review by North Country Jr. Iron Chef	February 16-20, 2026	The recipe review process may include one or more requests for recipe changes prior to approval.
4 Recipe feedback to Teams via Zoom	Late February 2026	At least two representatives from the team must attend. CCE will share the notes from each session in the assigned team Google Drive folder. • Teams must resubmit their final revised recipe, including Recipe Review Checklist within 1 week of the Zoom session. • All recipes must have North Country Jr. Iron Chef final approval. Once your recipe is approved, you may NOT make any changes.
5 Compete at North Country Jr. Iron Chef @ Hermon-DeKalb Central School	Saturday, March 28, 2026	<i>Have Fun!</i>

Ingredients

Teams must bring all ingredients to the competition.

ITEM	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	PROHIBITED *
Colorful Fresh Fruits and/or Vegetables (see page 6)	2 must be whole, not prepared or processed. At least one must be a Farm to School fresh-cut item.	more than 2	
Additional Ingredients		as needed for recipe healthy, whole foods are encouraged minimally processed foods** are allowed, see here for examples	see items listed below in this table
Herbs		fresh or dried	
Broth		vegetable	beef, pork, seafood, poultry, bone
Home Processed Items			processed, canned, frozen, dried
Meat			beef, pork, poultry, fish, shellfish
Nuts			all varieties
Wine/Alcohol			including cooking wine

* Prohibited items are not allowed due to food safety, allergy and/or legal concerns, not because of nutritional content or impact on health.

** For this competition, minimally processed is defined as: processing that does not substantially change foods from their raw, unprocessed form, and retains most of their nutritional properties. Minimal processing includes: washing, peeling, slicing, juicing, blanching, and/or removal of inedible parts.

Required Foods

- **Colorful Fresh Fruits and/or Vegetables**

- Recipes must contain at least two colorful fresh fruits and/or vegetables.
 - One of these must be a Farm to School item available as part of the [Fresh-cut Program](#): Apple, carrot, butternut squash, cabbage, corn, onion, pepper, tomato.
- For ideas, see the American Heart Association's Eat More Color webpage at: <http://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/add-color/eat-more-color>.
 - The above resource is provided only as a source of inspiration. Other colorful fresh fruits and/or vegetables may be allowed to meet this requirement.

All ingredients, including required foods,
must be brought by the team to the competition.

NO ingredients will be provided
by North Country Jr. Iron Chef.

Equipment

Helpful Tip: Label equipment with your team name.

North Country Jr. Iron Chef **WILL PROVIDE** the following:

- food preparation station, consisting of two tables set in an “L” shape
- fitted table covers
- food service gloves
- hairnets
- items for presentation to judges (tray, utensils, presentation plate, sample cups)

North Country Jr. Iron Chef **WILL LOAN** to teams using ovens:

- half-sheet pan (to put under team-provided baking pan)
- oven space (first-come, first-served)

ATTENTION: North Country Jr. Iron Chef does NOT provide stovetops. Teams must bring their own tabletop cook burners if needed to cook their dish; see “Teams MAY BRING” section below for details.

Teams MUST BRING:

- dish cloths and paper towels
- trash bucket
- compost bucket
- two (2) oven mitts if using any heat source (tabletop burner and/or oven)
- two (2) hot pads/trivets if using any heat source (tabletop burner and/or oven)
- container to carry all supplies back to your home base; dish cleaning facilities are **NOT** available on site
- sufficient water for cooking; water is **NOT** available for cooking or cleaning on site
- For Teams Using Ovens: stainless or aluminum baking pan; glass or ceramic dishes are **NOT** allowed

Equipment, continued

Teams **MAY BRING:**

- Up to two (2) tabletop burners. Once the venue is confirmed, if there are limitations on equipment, teams will be notified.
- cooler (to hold approved foods brought to the competition)
- non-electric hand tools (examples: mixing spoons, whisks, battery-operated immersion blenders, can openers, cheese graters, etc.)
- cutting boards and knives
- mixing bowls and other food prep containers
- cooking pots and pans
- thermometer
- timer
- containers to pack extra/leftover food
- hats and/or uniforms (examples: aprons, chef or baseball caps, bandanas, t-shirts, etc.)
- team banner for table display

Teams **MAY NOT BRING:**

- glass or ceramic dishes for oven use
- tablecloth for cooking surface due to safety concerns
- electric tools including toaster ovens, hot plates, crock pots, electric griddles, food processors, blenders, etc. **(the competition cannot support the demands of ANY electric device)**
- pressure cooker
- your own plates/utensils for judging presentation (all food entries will be presented on uniform items provided by the competition)

Equipment, continued

Teams **MAY RESERVE OVENS:**

- **Ovens are convection ovens and will be set at 350°F.**
- **All** Oven use must be indicated on the Recipe Form; **oven space is limited** and will be allotted on a first-come, first-served basis during the recipe review process.
- North Country Jr. Iron Chef kitchen staff will operate the ovens.
- Each team will be responsible for keeping time on their dish and must notify kitchen staff when to remove the dish from the oven. One team member will receive the hot dish and carry it back to your cooking station. If adult help is needed, the request must be on your Recipe Form.
- The ovens are "Community Ovens". Your dish may need extra time to cook as the door may be opened and closed while your dish is cooking.

Recipe Development & Review

- Teams are encouraged to use original recipes!
- This is a one dish (not a complete meal) competition.
- Recipe criteria is based on [current school meal guidelines](#) including calorie count, sodium content, saturated fat content, and other food and nutrition recommendations. Recipes are also required to be “food-service friendly”, including cost and time considerations.
 - For example, costly ingredients such as saffron or cassava flour may be disallowed.
 - For example, preparation of homemade pasta or crepes may be disallowed.
 - North Country Jr. Iron Chef reserves the right to determine what constitutes “food-service friendly” during Recipe Review.
- Recipe Review Checklist: Your recipe must meet all of the criteria in the Recipe Review Checklist to be approved for the competition.
 - The Checklist is part of the required Recipe Template.
 - North Country Jr. Iron Chef will use the same Checklist to review submitted recipes. North Country Jr. Iron Chef reserves the right to request changes to the recipe.
- Nutrient Analysis: Your recipe must meet specific nutrition criteria. A nutrient analysis is required and selected results must be included in the appropriate section on page 2 of the Recipe Form.
 - The Verywell Fit Recipe Nutrition Calculator* is suggested for this purpose. Verywell Fit’s Recipe Nutrition Calculator can be accessed at:
<https://www.verywellfit.com/recipe-nutrition-analyzer-4157076>
 - No more than ¼ tsp salt per entire dish allowed. Consider other ingredients to add flavor.

**North Country Jr. Iron Chef, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and others affiliated with the competition do not necessarily promote or endorse this calculator, company, or any of their advertisers or affiliates.*

Recipe Development & Review, continued

- Your recipe should make at least four, 8-ounce servings. Presentation items and judge sampling cups will be provided.

- One 8-ounce serving will be plated as a demonstration serving. This serving will be plated on the provided plate and/or bowl and tray. This will be your presentation to the judges.



- The remaining three servings will be split into 4-ounce servings (just a few bites) for up to 6 judges. These servings will be plated in the provided sample cups. You will serve one of these to each judge.



- If your recipe makes an amount larger than four, 8-ounce servings, you may **not** provide samples to spectators. Be sure to bring containers to take home any remaining ingredients or prepared recipe.

Practice Your Recipe

- **Food safety** is a top priority! Make sure to wash your hands, tie back hair, and wear gloves when necessary. Food and equipment should be clean and stored safely. Visit [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) for more information. (Note: all team members will be required to restrain their hair, and all “prep chefs” will be required to wear food service gloves at the competition.)
- **Time yourself!** At the competition, you’ll have up to 75 minutes for set-up and 90 minutes for food preparation, cooking, and plating. All preparation and cooking must happen on-site. Teams may not bring any prepared components of the dish to the competition.
- **Get help** when you need it. Each Team Coach and/or Assistant Coach can offer support and guidance. If you’d like to connect with the Recipe Review Team, email ncjironchef@cornell.edu.
- **Sample your dish.** Be sure your team serves something you and your friends would like to eat in the cafeteria.
- **Take pictures!** CCE wants to celebrate your activities with a shared slideshow on the day of the event. We encourage you to take photos of the team, the cooking process and the finished dish. Photos can be uploaded to your team's shared Google Drive folder.
- **Have fun!**

Judging

Awards are based on the total number of points determined by the judges' scores. In the event of a tie, the dish with the higher "Taste" score will place higher.

Note: *Judging will happen over time so your dish may have cooled when judged. Teams can expect to wait for up to five to twenty minutes to present their dish to the judges. Judges have been instructed to not score based on the temperature of the dish.*

Judges will use the following criteria at the competition to choose the North Country Jr. Iron Chef winners:

- **Taste** – Is this dish yummy? (15 points)
- **Creative Use of Fresh-cut Ingredients and Colorful Fresh Fruits & Vegetables (Required Foods)** – Does the dish include colorful fresh fruits and vegetables: including one Fresh-cut product and are these ingredients used in a unique and fun way? (15 points)
- **Plated Presentation** – Does your dish look and smell delicious? (10 points)
- **Oral Presentation to Judges** – Does your oral presentation convince the judges that your dish is the winner? (10 points)

Teams will make a brief oral presentation when presenting their dish to the judges. Presentations should be kept to five minutes or less. Be creative! Teams may wish to:

- State the team name and introduce members;
- Describe the dish, highlighting colorful fresh fruit and vegetable, highlight the Farm-to-School Fresh-Cut item(s) and a [North Country farm](#) partnering in the Fresh-Cut program that could have supplied that item;
- Demonstrate different ways you would encourage your peers to try this dish, such as:
 - give your dish a cool name
 - highlight one or two things that would entice your friends
 - develop a catchy slogan;
- Share something you've learned, or your favorite thing about the competition;
- Thank the judges.

Event Day Schedule & Information

Event Date: Saturday, March 28, 2026

Location: Hermon-DeKalb Central School, 709 E De Kalb Rd, De Kalb Junction, NY 13630

Event Schedule

- Teams **MUST** adhere to the times below.
- Please allow adequate time to travel, unload, check-in and set-up.

9:00-10:15 a.m.	Team Check-In & Set-Up
10:15-10:30 a.m.	Welcome
10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Competition
11:15 a.m.-1:00 p.m. *	Team Presentations to Judges
<i>After their Team Presentation, teams clean their stations.</i>	
1:00-1:30 p.m. *	Judge Deliberation
1:30-2:00 p.m. *	Awards

*** Times may vary.**

Team Check-In

- **Sign-In:** All team members must sign-in. Only registered and confirmed student and adult team members will be allowed to participate in the competition.
- **Equipment & Ingredient Check:** All equipment and ingredients will be checked by North Country Jr. Iron Chef staff. North Country Jr. Iron Chef staff reserves the right to disallow equipment and/or ingredients.
- Only team members will be allowed in the competition area before the Welcome.

Competition

- Teams have 90 minutes to prepare and plate their recipe.
- If your team has not finished preparation and plating, you will be asked to plate what you have completed and present this to the judges. Your team, however, will not be eligible for an award.

Team Presentations to Judges

- Presentations will begin no earlier than 11:15 a.m. to allow judges adequate time to visit all teams' stations.
- Teams will be ushered by staff from the competition area to the judging area.

Event Day Schedule & Information, continued

Spectators and supporters of all ages are welcome and encouraged to attend!

- Attendees are welcome to observe the competition and cheer on the teams.
- Activities and displays will be available to enjoy throughout the day.
- Food and beverages will not be available for purchase.
- The event venue is an accessible facility.

After the Competition

- Awards will be presented.
- All participants will receive a certificate of participation.
- Teams will receive judges' feedback and scores via email within two weeks after the competition.
- ***Celebrate!***

Appendix A: Examples of Minimally Processed Foods

These are examples of some foods that follow nutritional guidelines of cafeterias.

FRUITS
Apple Juice, 100%, Unsweetened
Applesauce, Unsweetened, Canned
Apricots, Frozen
Apricots, Canned in 100% Juice
Cherries, Canned in 100% juice or Frozen
Mixed Berries (Blueberries, Strawberries), Frozen
Mixed Fruit (Cranberries, Raisins), Dried, Unsweetened
Mixed Fruit, Canned in 100% Juice
Orange Juice, 100%, Unsweetened
Peaches, Canned in 100% juice or Frozen
Pears, Canned in 100% Juice
Strawberries, Unsweetened, Frozen

VEGETABLES
Beans, Green, No Salt Added/ Low-sodium, Canned or Frozen
Carrots, No Salt Added/Low-sodium, Canned or Frozen
Corn, Whole Kernel, No Salt Added, Canned or Frozen
Mixed Vegetables, No Salt Added/Low-sodium, Canned or Frozen
Peas, Green, No Salt Added/Low-sodium, Canned or Frozen
Spinach, No Salt Added, Frozen
Squash, Butternut, No Salt Added, Frozen
Sweet Potatoes, No Salt Added, Frozen
Tomato Paste, No Salt Added, Canned
Tomatoes, No Salt Added/Low-sodium, Canned

LEGUMES
Beans, Black, Low-sodium, Canned
Beans, Black-eyed Pea, Low-sodium, Canned
Beans, Garbanzo, Low-sodium, Canned
Beans, Great Northern, Low-sodium, Canned
Beans, Baby Lima, Low-sodium, Canned
Beans, Pinto, Low-sodium, Canned
Beans, Red Kidney, Low-sodium, Canned
Beans, Small Red, Low-sodium, Canned
Lentils, Dry

YOGURT
Yogurt, High-Protein, Non-fat, Plain

CHEESE
Cheese, Cheddar, White, Reduced Fat, Shredded
Cheese, Mozzarella, Low Moisture Part Skim
Cheese, Mozzarella, Low Moisture Part Skim, Shredded
Cheese, Mozzarella, Low Moisture Part Skim, String

GRAINS
Flour, 100% Whole Wheat
Flour, White Whole Wheat/Enriched 60/40 Blend
Oats, Rolled
Pasta, Macaroni, Whole Grain-Rich Blend
Pasta, Rotini, 100% Whole Grain
Pasta, Spaghetti, 100% Whole Grain
Rice, Brown, Long-Grain, Regular
Tortillas, Whole Grain or Whole Grain-Rich, 8 inch