



American Culinary Federation
The Standard of Excellence for Chefs

ACF Professional Culinary Competition Manual

Chapter 4: **Competition Scoring and Critiques**

Assessment for Category F, FP, FMH, G, and W

The dynamics of judging these categories is quite different from those when judging other categories. The assessment for these categories is divided into two areas: kitchen/floor evaluation and service/tasting evaluation. Each of these components is broken into different areas, which are scored individually. The kitchen and tasting scores are added to yield a maximum score of 100 points.

Kitchen/Floor Evaluation - 40 Possible Points

- Sanitation/food handling - 5 points
- Mise en place/organization - 5 points
- Culinary & cooking technique and proper execution - 15 points
- Proper utilization of ingredients - 5 points
- Timing/work flow - 10 points

Sanitation:

Cutting boards should be scrupulously clean. Knives should be sharp. The toolbox/knife bag must be clean and sanitary inside. Sanitizing solution is at the right strength, not over or under-powered, and whether it's being used as a washing solution instead of sanitizing a pre-washed area. Are the competitors using towels correctly? For example, they should not be wiping debris off a table and then wiping a knife or a plate with the same towel. Consider whether or not competitors are using their aprons as hand wipes. Products should be stored at the correct temperature. Gloves must be used when the last contact with food is occurring, for example, plating up. Areas are required to be kept sanitized, particularly during fish-to-meat to vegetable or dairy transitions. Frequent hand sanitizing is encouraged.

Mise En Place/Organization:

Table should be kept clear of nonessentials. For example, a mixer that may not be needed for the next 30 minutes should not be displayed. Work systematically on one job at a time. Use correct cutting motions and the correct knife for the job.

Storing Of Products:

Use an organized refrigerator, rack cart, knife and equipment storage.

Waste Storage:

Is it useable or not? Useable waste is properly labeled and stored for future use. Competitors are required to store food and non-food waste in third pan in judge's view and get the judges' approval before disposing them in trash. The table should be free from debris. Floor spills must be attended too quickly. The dish area should not be used as a storage dump. Competitors should have an organized withdrawal from the kitchen, leaving it as clean as it was found. Any infractions will lead to point deductions from the kitchen score.

Butchery and Boning Skills:

Efficient and profitable removal of muscle or fish from a bone is encouraged. Sinew and/or fat removal and correct tying methods will be evaluated.

Cooking Techniques and Skills:

Follow classical cooking techniques. The competitor should use the technique as stated in the recipe. For example, pan frying instead of sautéing, or braising with a lid on. Demonstrate proper technique when deglazing a pan rather than simply adding wine or a liquid. Mirepoix should be browned properly, not just heated. Product should be roasted correctly and basted as needed, not just placed in the oven. Poached items should not be simmered. Follow correct method when preparing a farce. Consider how many different techniques have been displayed. Competitor displays good basic pastry skills and techniques such as piping, folding, and the creation of creams or meringues. Items should be baked to the correct doneness.

Utilization of Ingredients:

Follow classical and widely accepted use of ingredients and proper cooking techniques applied to food at hand. Display minimal waste such as the use of trim and bones to fortify sauces or used in stock production. Are the vegetable or fruit scraps being used for other preparations?

Timing:

Menu items should not be held too long. Consider whether or not meats have the time to rest. Serve within the five-minute window. Deduction of 1 point for every minute they competitor is late.

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Work Flow:

Crossover duties should show teamwork. There should be smooth transitions from one job to another. A logical progression of jobs is admired. For example, avoid chopping herbs or mincing garlic on several occasions. Use proper timing of the menu items.

Service/Tasting Evaluation - 60 Possible Points

- Serving methods and presentation - 5 points
- Portion size and nutritional balance - 5 points
- Creativity, menu and ingredient compatibility - 15 points
- Flavor, taste, texture and doneness - 35 points

Serving Methods and Presentation:

Hot food should be hot, and cold food should be cold (including plates). Food should be fresh and colorful, visibly seasoned, presented with some height, easy to eat and pleasing to the eye. Meat/fish slices must be even, straight and evenly shingled. Items should be closely placed together to help maintain temperature and to keep the plate from resembling a smiling face.

Portion Size and Nutritional Balance:

Components of the meal must be balanced so that the main item is complemented in size/amount by the accompanying garnish(es) and/or sauce. The necessary nutritional standards should be adhered to. The protein weight must be within the set limits.

Creativity:

Dishes should show a degree of difficulty and creative flair rather than something copied and overused. If competitors use an old or classical idea, they should use a new and creative idea to transform the dish.

Menu Composition and Progression of Courses:

The menu must have a thread or a theme running throughout. For example, it is a regional, seasonal or celebration menu. No courses should be out of sync with the menu, such as an Asian-type dish inserted into an American-type menu. In the progression of courses, there should be no erratic or over-dominant flavors that disrupt the flow of the theme. The dishes should portray a high level of skill and exactness. The number of different skills employed throughout the menu must distinguish the caliber of the cook(s).

Ingredient Compatibility:

Ingredient colors should harmonize. Ingredient amounts should be correctly portioned to demonstrate a perfect harmony. Have any of the ingredients been duplicated?

Flavor, Taste, Texture and Doneness:

The stated flavor in the menu and recipe should be profound. For example, the duck broth should taste like duck. Doneness temperatures must be correct. Stated vegetable cuts should be correct. The stated cooking techniques must be applied correctly. The textures should correspond to what was implied in the recipe. The flavor of the sauce or vinaigrette should reflect what the recipe stated and should be the correct consistency. Competitors must demonstrate the correct degrees of caramelization. The dishes should taste great.

Assessment for Category KC, KP, KG, and W

The assessment for these categories is divided into three areas: organization, cooking skills and culinary techniques, and taste. Each of these areas is further divided into other specific areas which are scored individually. There is a maximum of 100 points possible.

Organization - 25 Possible Points

- Sanitation/work habits - 10 points
- Utilization of ingredients - 10 points
- Use of allotted time - 5 points

Cooking Skills and Culinary Techniques - 25 Possible Points

- Creativity, skills, craftsmanship - 15 points
- Serving, portion size - 10 points

Taste - 50 Possible Points

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- Flavor and texture - 30 points
- Ingredient compatibility, nutritional balance - 10 points
- Serving Method and Presentation - 10 points

Sanitation/Work Habits:

Proper temperatures maintained while working with foods and ice pans should be used for proteins. The proper use of gloves should be worn when food does not require additional cooking and during service. Food should be stored properly to avoid cross contamination. Display the proper use of sanitizing solutions and sanitizing station throughout the cooking process. Display an uncluttered work area, and have a proper time line. Equipment and food are organized. Usable waste, compost, recycles, and trash are separated and disposed of properly.

Utilization Of Ingredients:

Proper cooking techniques applied to food at hand. Minimum waste.

Use Of Allotted Time:

1 point will be deducted for each minute past the service window for a maximum of a 5 point deduction.

Creativity, Skills, And Craftsmanship:

The competitor should use the right knife or tool for the job at hand and display a mastery of butchering skills and knife skills. They should execute classical cooking techniques properly such as braising, sauté, poach, roast, and the proper preparation of forcemeats. Does the dish show thought and practice behind the execution? Had enormous attention been paid to detail?

Serving/Portion Size:

Is the preparation ready in time for service? Is the flow of service smooth and efficient? Is the portion appropriate for the guest?

Flavor And Texture:

Are the different flavors and textures of the dish harmonious? Are the flavors balanced, where individual components can be distinguished and not overpowered? Is the food properly seasoned? Do the garnish components add to the taste of the main ingredient? Is there a pleasant aftertaste? Hot food HOT and Cold food COLD. Is there a variation of textures?

Ingredient Compatibility/Nutritional Balance:

Do each of the ingredients have a purpose of enhancing the overall dish? Has each ingredient been prepared in a way that enhances its flavor? Is there nutritional balance to the dish? Is there a balance of proteins, starch, vegetables?

Serving Method/Presentation:

Recipe true to the correct name of the dish? Good use of service area of the plate. There should be nothing on the rim of the plate. Is it evident what the main ingredient is? Is the presentation appetizing and inviting to the guest? Is it comfortable for the guest to eat or awkward? All items on the plate are edible. Presentations and components are not too complicated for efficient service. Is there additional sauce on the side if needed?

Chapter 5: Awards

Official ACF culinary competition medals must be awarded to competitors participating in an ACF-sanctioned competition. The host chapter for the competition is expected to purchase and present the medals to competitors.

Medals are available at the gold, silver, and bronze levels for both professional and student competitors. Each medal includes a corresponding medal certificate. These medals can apply toward ACF certification.

Scoring Criteria are as Follows:

The ACF scoring point scale is:

Gold medal with distinction certificate **100 points**

Gold medal **90-99.99 points**

Silver medal **80-89.99 points**

Bronze medal **70-79.99 points**

Certificate of Participation:

These certificates are presented to competitors who do not qualify for a medal. For competitors to receive points/hours toward certification, an official ACF Certificate of Participation must be used.



Medal Policy

Medals may be requested prior to the competition. If paying by credit card, a 50 percent deposit is required. If paying by check or money order, payment in full is required. If a pre-competition medal order is placed less than two weeks before start of competition, a rush-fee will apply.

Medals must be returned within 30 days of competition date. If medals are not returned in timely fashion, then balance due will be billed to the credit card used to make the initial deposit.

Returned medals will be processed as a return order. If a balance is owed, then the credit card used for the initial deposit will be processed for the amount due. If a credit is due, then a refund will be processed.