

American Culinary Federation
Flint-Saginaw Valley Chapter
Presents
Our 35th Annual Professional Chefs' Competition & Tasting
"Flavors of the Riviera"
A Mediterranean Affair!
Monday, February 8th, 2026



Proceeds Support
American Culinary Federation Flint-Saginaw Valley Chapter
Monday, February 8th, 2026
Judging starts at 4:00 p.m.
Awards Ceremony at 7:45 PM
Doors open to the Public at 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Bavarian Inn Lodge – Frankenmuth, MI

Our culinary competition is open to all chefs, cooks, bakers, and pastry chefs who are members of the American Culinary Federation or work in an ACF House. An ACF House is defined as a food service facility with at least one active ACF member, in good standing, on its staff.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Entry deadline: 11:00PM, Monday, January 25th, 2026.

There will be three savory categories and one baking category.

Competitors can enter both the savory and baking categories.

Competitors are limited to 2 entries in total.

Competitors will be given a table (1) for all entries. Ex. Chef Z is competing in Dessert and Seafood. Chef Z has one table for both entries.

SAVORY CATEGORIES

1. Poultry– Duck
2. Seafood –Tiger Shrimp
3. Red Meat – Lamb

DESSERT CATEGORY

Mediterranean-Inspired Pastry Competition

CATEGORY DESCRIPTION

Competitors will create one refined dessert inspired by the flavors, ingredients, and culinary traditions of the Mediterranean Riviera. Entries should demonstrate sound pastry technique, balanced flavor, appropriate texture, creativity, and attractive presentation.

CATEGORY RULES

Scratch Preparation

The dessert must be prepared from scratch by the competitor, including the pastry, crust, dough, or other primary component when applicable.

Two Identical Entries

Competitors must submit two identical desserts. One will be displayed in the designated display area, and the second will be presented to the judges for evaluation.

Dessert Format

The competitor may choose the dessert format. Acceptable examples include:

- Tart or pie
- Cake or gateau
- Individual pastry
- Cookie or petit four
- Custard or baked dessert

- Other appropriate pastry dessert

Mediterranean Inspiration

The dessert must demonstrate a clear and intentional connection to the Mediterranean Riviera through its ingredients, flavors, techniques, or presentation.

Examples may include citrus, olive oil, honey, almonds, pistachios, hazelnuts, figs, dates, grapes, stone fruits, chocolate, herbs, spices, or other ingredients traditionally associated with Mediterranean cuisine.

GUIDELINES

1. There is an entry form at the end of this packet. Please fill in all the information including a phone number, preferably a cell phone number where you can easily be reached.
2. There is no entry fee required for competing chefs from an ACF House. ACF membership and sponsor support cover the cost of your entry. Your only out-of-pocket expenses will be the side dishes you may want to add to your presentation to enhance your entry and your table display.
3. Disposable plates, napkins, and knives/forks/spoons will be provided for your samples to be served to the public.
4. All competing chefs are responsible for their own equipment – knives, chafers, Sterno, cutting boards, etc. Do not forget power strips and EXTENSION CORDS.
5. Each competing chef is limited to Two ASSISTANTS to set up displays and get food ready for judging.
6. A maximum of three wristbands will be issued to each competing team, one for the competing chef and one or two for the chef's assistant(s). All other chef's helpers must purchase admission.
7. By entering our competition, you agree to allow ACF to use photos, videos, and recipes without further compensation or notice.

JUDGING

1. The ACF Hot Food Competition organizing committee will select qualified judges. A minimum of one ACF Certified Chef will be assigned to each category. Judging panels may also include local celebrity foodie judges. A minimum of three judges will be assigned to each of the categories.
2. The decision of the judges is final.
3. The judging will be based on modified ACF hot food guidelines. Taste, texture, flavor, eye appeal, practicality, and nutritional balance are all considerations. A judging form is enclosed with this packet of information.
4. Judging begins promptly at 4:00 p.m.

5. Competitors will need to take one complete plate to the Judges room before the doors to the judging room will close at 4:00 pm. Chefs need to place a plate of one full size portion in the Judges room by their competitor number and leave the room. Judges will enter the room after all competitors leave and begin judging.
6. Competitors will also need to provide a display plate and leave it on their table for the public to see the entry.
7. Only judges and ACF event officials are allowed access to the judging room and Composer Rooms after 4:00 pm and during judging.
8. **AWARDS AND CASH PRIZES ANNOUNCED at 7:45 PM**
9. In the event of a tie in any of the food categories, Best Display Award, and People's Choice Awards, the individual display plate score will be used as the tiebreaker. The decision of the judges is final.

FOOD PREPARATION

1. **Bavarian Inn Lodge will be the pick-up location for your proteins.** You will be notified about **one week in advance** concerning when products will be available for pick-up. The contact is Chef Jason Wellnitz CEC. Email JWellnitz@bavarianinn.com
2. Competing chefs will be required to produce one plated serving of their recipe for the judges to taste and one plated serving to be displayed and garnished on their table in the same manner as you would for service in your food service facility.
3. Chefs will also be required to prepare their recipe to yield 400-500 one- or two-ounce tasting portions for our paying guests. Keep in mind that the tasting samples should be one or two bites and that the sample will be served on a disposable foam plate, with disposable plastic flatware to cut and eat the sample while standing.
4. All competing chefs and their helpers must abide by the Michigan Department of Public Health guidelines – hot food hot/ and cold food/cold, use of gloves, hair restraints, etc. Failure to maintain temperatures will disqualify a competing chef.
5. Limited kitchen space is available at Bavarian Inn Lodge on the day of the competition. We recommend that you do most, if not all, of your cooking off premises before arriving at Bavarian Inn Lodge. Oven and warmer spaces are available on a “first come – first serve” basis. Call Chef Jason Wellnitz at 989 652-7200 if you need to use kitchen facilities. **DEEP-FAT FRYERS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE DINING ROOMS – FRYERS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE KITCHEN AREA.**
6. The Bavarian Inn Lodge kitchen staff will not cook, prepare, or assist chefs with any of the food that is being judged or used as samples for the public.

7. Chefs who do not have judges' plates ready by 4:00 pm will not be judged and will be disqualified from the People's Choice award.
8. All competing chefs are responsible for cleaning up their kitchen work area and dining room display area after the event.

TABLE DISPLAYS

1. WE ENCOURAGE COMPETING CHEFS TO DECORATE THEIR TABLE BASED ON THE EVENING'S THEME –Flavors of the Riviera - A Mediterranean Affair
2. For the Best Display award, judges will be looking for edible displays using your talents. For example, cake displays, tallow, fruit carvings, etc.
3. Bavarian Inn Lodge will provide each chef with one 8-foot table – draped in white skirting. Chefs may add or subtract from this linen set-up or opt to use their own skirting. No additional front table may be added to the display. A worktable or prep cart may be used, but these must be positioned behind your front table/main display table.
4. Bavarian Inn Lodge dining rooms will be available for set-up at 1 p.m. on the date of the competition. The exact location of each chef's table is determined by "luck of the draw" which will take place one week before the competition.
5. ACF judging officials reserve the right to ask competing chefs to modify their displays to conform to fire, health, or safety codes. No umbrella or canopy tent-like structures, open flame tiki torches, or charcoal-fired grills will be allowed in the dining rooms due to smoke and fire concerns.
6. All chefs and their helpers must wear double-breasted chef jackets of any color and toques. No baseball-style caps.
7. Competing chefs are encouraged to promote their places of employment once the judging is completed, and the public enters the dining rooms. While judging, however, all references to your operation must be covered to allow for fair and unbiased "blind judging."

(If you need electricity, please let me know, and remember an extension cord).

See Chef Lance Buchinger or Chef Jacob Austin if you have questions.

AWARDS

Gold and Silver awards will be presented in each of the five categories. Winners will receive commemorative plaques and cash prizes for their accomplishments.

“Best Display Award”

Gold and Silver awards plus cash prizes to the one chef who best use culinary techniques and artistry to represent the evening’s theme. Chefs are encouraged to use ice, sugar, pastry, chocolate, salt dough, tallow, and vegetable/fruit carvings to enhance their presentation.

“Peoples’ Choice Award”

The People’s Choice Award honors the chef who is the public’s favorite. The top vote-getter will receive a trophy and cash prize. Only fully paid guests will receive a ballot. Results will be announced at 7:45 p.m.

Gold and Silver Awards in Each of the Five Categories

GOLD 1st Place – Plaque & \$250

SILVER 2nd Place – Plaque & \$200

BEST DISPLAY OF SHOW

\$250 and Four Post Trophy for 1st place

All Event Judges Vote in This Category

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

\$250 and Three Post Trophy

Only Paid Guests Receive a Ballot

All Competing Chefs and Assistants will Receive a Commemorative Medal with Neck Ribbon
Custom Designed for Our Event.

*“Flavors of the Riviera”
A Mediterranean Affair*

Monday, February 23, 2026

Chef's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP: _____

Cell Phone: _____ ACF # _____

E-mail _____

Place of Employment: _____ City _____

Recipe Name or Names for Program: _____

Name of Assistant #1 _____

Name of Assistant #2 _____

Categories: ☐ Chicken ☐ Shrimp ☐ Pork ☐ Pastry

Recipe Name and Application must be emailed to Chef Lance Buchinger CSC.

Submit them as a Word Doc or a PDF.

Category slots are awarded on a first-come basis.

Applications must be 100% complete to be considered.

Entry Deadline: 11:00PM Monday, January 25, 2026

lancebuchinger@gmail.com Questions Cell: 989-450-1912

ACF Flint/Saginaw Valley Chapter

“Flavors of the Riviera”

Savory 2026

OVERALL COMPOSITION _____ Low High
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Look at the tasting sample. Does it look appetizing? Is it something that you, personally, would order in a restaurant? Are the sauces/glazes smooth and silky? Are the various ingredients that make up the dish recognizable? Are the colors & tones appealing?

Judges' Comments

TASTE _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Too much or too little salt, pepper, or seasoning? Are any off tastes present, i.e., burn, scorch, sour, bitter, metallic, or sharp? Are sauces, if any, smooth or are they greasy or fatty to the palate?

Judges' Comments

TEXTURE _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Are vegetables cooked al dente? Are the differing elements within the dish overcooked or undercooked? Are ingredients cut into proper sized pieces or are they too big/too small? Are sauces/coulis too thin/thick or grainy? Is “center of plate” meat tender to the bite?

Judges' Comments

ORIGINALITY _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is the dish unique? Is there a creative or unusual use of ordinary ingredients? Is this similar or too close to standard restaurant fare?

Judges' Comments

PLATE PRESENTATION _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

IN THE EVENT OF A TIE VOTE, THIS CATEGORY SCORE SERVES AS THE TIE BREAKER.

Look at the displayed plate. Is this the way you would present it in your restaurant? Is the food sloppy on the plate? Does the food display “a picture in a frame”? Is the portion too big or too small? Is the display attractive and artistic?

Judges' Comments

RECIPE NAME: _____

CATEGORY: _____ **TABLE NUMBER:** _____

JUDGE'S NAME: _____ **FINAL SCORE:** _____

ACF Flint/Saginaw Valley Chapter

“Flavors of the Riviara”

Pastry 2026

OVERALL COMPOSITION _____ Low High
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Uniform attractive edges - Edges sealed well, no leaks - Blistery surface - Crust is close to filling,
Well blended; no clumps of starch - Filling is moist - Filling holds its shape. - Fruit filling did not leak
from the crust

Judges' Comments

TASTE _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(of Filling & Crust) - Crust has a pleasant bland flavor which enhances fruit. – Filling is flavorful. –
Components complement each other - Spices and flavorings add to the flavor of the filling

Judges' Comments

TEXTURE & TENDERNESS _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Crust cuts easily with a table knife or fork but holds shape when served. - Flakes layered throughout the
crust

Judges' Comments

ORIGINALITY _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is the pie unique? Is there a creative or unusual use of ordinary ingredients? Is this similar or too close to
standard restaurant fare?

Judges' Comments

PLATE PRESENTATION _____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

IN THE EVENT OF A TIE VOTE, THIS CATEGORY SCORE SERVES AS THE TIE BREAKER.
Look at the displayed pie. Would you buy this pie?

Judges' Comments

RECIPE NAME: _____

CATEGORY: Pastry **TABLE NUMBER:** _____

JUDGE’S NAME: _____

FINAL SCORE: _____