



TEAM APPLICATION GUIDE



Welcome to the 2026 Memphis in May Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest May 13-16, 2026

Applications are now open for the 2nd annual Memphis in May Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest at Liberty Park in Memphis, Tennessee on May 14 and 15, 2026. The Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest is held within the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest, which is recognized globally as the premier competition among world class barbecue pitmasters.

The World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest has been featured on A&E's King's of BBQ with Cedric The Entertainer and Anthony Anderson, the Food Network's BBQ USA with Michael Symon, and has been recognized by USA Today as the "Most Prestigious" barbecue competition in the world.

If you are up to the challenge of competing with the best-of-the-best junior competitors from across the country, we invite you to apply for entry into the contest. The competition is fierce, but the rewards are abundant as teams vie for the fame and glory of the coveted crown of Junior Grand Champion, as well as a total cash prize purse of \$15,000!

Preliminary contest information follows, along with an application for entry into the contest. We encourage you to submit your application and entry fee early. **Application deadline is March 16, 2026.** Successful applicants will receive confirmation of their entry into the contest after March 23, 2026.



Give Em Hell, Karley Aleksines, 2025 Junior Grand Champion

2026 APPLICATION INFO

ENTRY FEES:

Your entry fee includes your team space and entry into ALL FOUR categories (pork, poultry, steak, dessert), as well as the following:

- Weber Premium Kettle Grill (Yours to keep)
- Smokin' Brothers Pellet Grill or Gateway Drum (To use during contest and available for purchase at a deep discount after contest)
- Charcoal and Pellets
- Proteins for Pork entry compliments of Prairie Fresh
- Proteins for Steak entry compliments of Korte Meats
- Proteins for Poultry entry compliments of Springer Mountain Farms
- One (1) – 110v/20 amp circuit
- Two (2) 8-foot tables, four (4) chairs and 1 waste bin
- 4 - 24-hour wristbands
- 1 Load-In pass
- 1 Parking pass
- General Liability Insurance

Note: Memphis in May **WILL NOT** provide a tent. Junior Teams should supply their own tent and ensure it is weighted properly.

TEAM INFORMATION:

Each team may include up-to-3 individuals between the ages of 9-17 (at the time of the competition). Each team must designate a Head Cook. The Head Cook and their Parent / Guardian are required to attend the Junior Team Meeting which will be held on April 16, 2026 via ZOOM.

Once the competition begins, teams may not have adults within their team space except for MIM designated staff and/or volunteers to ensure safety and provide limited assistance if needed. Junior Teams may receive adult guidance from outside the designated team space, however the Junior team must do all preparations and cooking. Violations may result in disqualification. Teams may only use grills / smokers and proteins provided by MIM.

BOOTH SPACE:

Each team will have a 15'x15' space to compete within. Two (2) 8-foot tables, four (4) chairs and 1 waste bin will be provided. Teams may use Memphis In May approved vendors for tent and port-o-let rentals. If your team chooses to bring their own tent, the tent must be in accordance with regulations by the Memphis/Shelby County Fire Department.

ADDITIONAL TEAM PARKING:

A limited number of additional paid team parking spaces are available at Liberty Park. **ONLY ONE ADDITIONAL PAID SPACE PER TEAM IS PERMITTED.** No RV's, tractor trailers, tour buses, trucks with trailers attached. Access to the lot is from May 9 – 16, 2026. The cost is \$160 per spot.

INSURANCE:

All teams are required to carry a general liability insurance policy with a minimum policy limit of \$500,000. Your entry fee includes a general liability insurance policy provided by Memphis in May's carrier that will help insure your team from load-in through load-out.

SPONSORSHIP:

Memphis in May recognizes the need for teams to secure sponsors. In consideration of event sponsors, teams may display only one sign or banner that includes corporate logos or identification that either faces or is directly exposed to the general public. This sign or banner should be no larger than three feet by ten feet (3' x 10'). Multiple banners are acceptable if the total combined signage area does not exceed three feet by ten feet (3' x 10'). Team sponsors may not be in conflict with official Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest sponsors.

TEAM ACCEPTANCE:

Submission of an application for entry into the 2026 Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest is not a guarantee of acceptance. Team selection and entry preference can be based upon several criteria, including but not limited to date of submission of team entry form along with payment. Acceptance into the 2026 Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest is guaranteed for the following:

- Previous WCBCC Junior Grand Champion
- 2025 WCBCC First Place in each of the four categories. (Pork, Poultry, Steak, and Dessert)

Entry is NOT AUTOMATIC for teams with guaranteed acceptance; an application with payment must be submitted prior to the application deadline. Teams will be notified of acceptance after March 23, 2026. Teams not selected will receive a full refund.

TEAM MEETING:

A Team Meeting will be held via ZOOM on Thursday, April 16, 2026. The Team Meeting will serve to communicate all the necessary information and any important updates to the 2026 Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest. Representatives from Memphis In May will be present to answer questions.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 16, 2026

THE CONTEST

COMPETITION CATEGORIES

Judged on Thursday, May 14, 2026 and Friday, May 15, 2026

At the Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest, barbecue is defined as meat, **FRESH OR FROZEN AND UNCURED**, prepared only on a wood and/or charcoal fire, basted or not, as the cook sees fit, with any consumable substances and sauces as the cook believes necessary. Electrical devices may be used within the cooker as long as they do not directly generate heat. Approved devices include rotisseries, fans and delivery systems for approved fuels (e.g. pellet grills). Electric smokers, holding ovens or other devices with heat producing electrical coils are not allowed. **MEAT FOR COMPETITION MAY NOT BE PRE-COOKED, SAUCED, INJECTED, MARINATED, OR CURED IN ANY WAY.**

As it relates to the official meat categories for the Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest, Memphis in May defines the cooking process as the time from the product's raw state until the finished product is removed from the grill for placement in the blind box. Any violation is subject to investigation by Memphis in May contest officials and possible disqualification.

Each team is responsible for observing required temperature control and good hygienic practices. Propane, compressed or liquid gas may be used within the cooker only to start the initial fire. No type of flammables may be used with the cooker once the meat has been placed on the cooker. Flammables may be used outside the cooker to make additional coals. All flammables used must be in accordance with regulations by the Memphis/Shelby County Fire Department.

The official meat categories for the Memphis in May Junior Barbecue Cooking Contest are as follows:

PORK:

Teams will receive proteins and a blind container for this category. Proteins will consist of two (2) pork chops that will be distributed during the Cook's Meeting and must be used as the entry for the contest. No outside proteins may be brought in or used. Each contestant must include one whole pork chop as their entry. Do not cut or slice the pork chop. Up to two sauces, in separate containers, may be submitted with the entry. No garnish is allowed in the container with the entry. Each contestant must supply all seasonings, utensils, and other qualified equipment to prepare entry. MIM will have a pantry with various rubs, spices, rubs and sauces for use by all participants.

STEAK:

Teams will receive proteins and a blind container for this category. Proteins will consist of two (2) ribeye steaks that will be distributed during the Cook's Meeting and must be used as the entry for the contest. No outside proteins may be brought in or used. Each contestant must include one whole ribeye steak as their entry. Do not cut or slice the steak. Up to two sauces, in separate containers, may be submitted with the entry. No garnish is allowed in the container with the entry. Each contestant must supply all seasonings, utensils, and other qualified equipment to prepare entry. MIM will have a pantry with various rubs, spices, rubs and sauces for use by all participants.

POULTRY:

Teams will receive proteins and a blind container for this category. Proteins will consist of a package of ten (10) chicken drumsticks that will be distributed during the Cook's Meeting and must be used as the entry for the contest. No outside proteins may be brought in or used. Each contestant must include six (6) drumsticks as their entry. Do not cut or slice the drumsticks. Up to two sauces, in separate containers, may be submitted with the entry. No garnish is allowed in the container with the entry. Each contestant must supply all seasonings, utensils, and other qualified equipment to prepare entry. MIM will have a pantry with various rubs, spices, rubs and sauces for use by all participants.

DESSERT:

Teams will receive a blind container only for their entry. A dessert entry is defined as any baked good prepared from scratch, on-site and on grill, within the team space. Each contestant must supply all ingredients, cooking utensils and cooking equipment to prepare entry. Each entry should contain 6 samples for the judges. An edible garnish is allowed in the container with the entry. It is recommended not to submit any entries that require refrigeration.

JUDGING:

All categories will be judged blind by trained MIM judges. Each judge will sample entries without knowing which team cooked them. Each team will receive one container and two cups (for optional sauce and/or rub) for their entry at the Cook's Meeting. Containers will be pre-labeled with the team's name and site number. **DO NOT** remove the label. Each team will need to bring their entries to the check-in station in the Junior Contest Judging Tent at the designated times. Once the entry is turned in and checked, the sticker will be replaced with a code known only by the Judging Committee.

JUDGING CRITERIA:

Memphis in May judges are trained to look for particular aspects of your food. The following criteria pertain to all Junior Barbecue entries (Pork, Poultry, Steak, Dessert):

1.APPEARANCE OF ENTRY- (Both Proteins & Dessert Categories)

This criterion refers to the aesthetics of the product. Does the entry itself look appetizing in the container? This is the visual appeal of the entry.

2.TENDERNESS OF ENTRY- (Proteins Only)

For this criterion, the judge will be looking for some firmness but easy separation of the meat. There should be some texture, but the entry should be moist and easy to chew.

3.TEXTURE OF ENTRY (Dessert ONLY):

For this criterion, the judge will be looking for a texture that is appealing to mouth feel. Textures can vary from dessert to dessert, from being smooth and creamy, light and airy, crispy and crunchy or chewy and gooey. Each texture offers a unique experience but should be consistent with the type of dessert.

4.FLAVOR OF ENTRY: (Both Proteins & Dessert Categories)

This criterion refers to the flavor of the entry (and sauce if included with a protein).

For proteins, a sauce can be added before, during or after the cooking process. Dry rubs and marinades may cook with the meat juices to make a sauce. If a team offers no table sauce, the judges are instructed to score the flavor of the entry based on the sauce made by the rubs/spices added before or during the cook. If a team serves more than one table sauce, the judges are instructed to choose the sauce that, in their opinion, best compliments the entry and base the score on that combination.

5.OVERALL IMPRESSION- (Both Proteins & Dessert Categories)

This criterion is a subjective score based on the judge's opinion of the total experience of judging the entry, and is not an average of the other scores. Judges will be reflecting on their general overall feeling of their judging experience when they have finished judging all the entries at the blind table.

SCORES

Judges will score each criterion on a scale ranging from 8-10, with 10 being the highest. A score of 10 is not a perfect score, it's just the best a judge had that day. Scores will include two decimal points. Scores will be sent to each team approximately two weeks after the contest.