

# **2026 Memphis in May Open Fire World Championship**

Welcome to the 48th Annual Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest at Liberty Park in Memphis, Tennessee. This year introduces the inaugural Open Fire World Championship, featuring 15 elite live fire cooking teams from around the world. Five teams qualified from the 2025 Texas Open Fire Meat Up, one team from the 2025 World Food Championships, and nine will be selected from applicants.

## **Applications & Key Dates**

Applications Open: December 17, 2025

Applications Close: March 2, 2026

Team Notifications: March 16, 2026

Team Meeting (Zoom): April 1, 2026

Judges Meeting (Zoom): May 1, 2026

Team Entry Fee: \$1,500

Each team will receive eight (8) 24-hour wristbands.

## **Event Schedule**

Team Load-In: Tuesday, May 12, 2026 (7:00 AM–6:00 PM)

Team Load-In: Wednesday, May 13, 2026 (7:00 AM–10 AM)

Team Load-Out: To Be Announced by Memphis in May

Wednesday, May 13, 2026:

- 11:00 AM — Cook's Meeting
- 12:00 PM — Teams may begin cooking

Thursday, May 14, 2026:

- 12:00 PM — Preliminary Judging Begins
- ~3:00 PM — Finalists Announced
- Finals Judging begins one hour after finalist notification

Friday, May 15, 2026 7:00 PM — Winners announced on the Main Stage

## **Judging Overview**

All judging is on-site. There is no blind judging.

Judges are vetted by the Live Fire Cooking Association.

Each team receives 20 minutes for their presentation.

Teams must prepare a four-course meal consisting of:

1. Soup
2. Appetizer
3. Entrée including one protein, one vegetable, and one starch
4. Dessert

### **Starch Definition:**

A starch may include rice, potatoes, pasta, bread, corn, legumes, or other carbohydrate■dense components traditionally served as part of a composed entrée.

Weighted Scoring:

- Presentation — 15%
- Appearance — 15%
- Technique — 20%
- Flavor — 30%
- Overall Impression — 20% (scored to two decimal places)

Scoring Scale:

Presentation, Appearance, Technique, Flavor: 8–9–10 scale

Overall Impression: 8–10 with two decimal precision.

### **Team Requirements**

Teams are responsible for supplying all ingredients, tools, and equipment needed for their 10' x 20' space, including:

- Grills, tables, chairs, canopies, utensils
- Serving and presentation materials

**Water and hand washing stations will be available onsite.**

### **Important Cooking Guidelines**

This is an Open Fire Only competition.

#### **Not Allowed:**

- Grills with lids
- Propane or gas equipment
- Propane torches
- Electric cooking devices used to heat or cook food

#### **Allowed:**

- Electric rotisseries or similar cooking attachments
- Electric accessories such as blenders

**All prep and cooking must be done onsite, including stocks, sauces, brines, and doughs. If you claim a component was made from scratch, it must be prepared onsite.**

### **Competition Day Schedule — Thursday, May 14, 2026**

Round 1 — Preliminary Judging:

- 12:00 PM — Team 1
- 12:20 PM — Team 2
- 12:40 PM — Team 3
- 1:00 PM — Team 4
- 1:20 PM — Team 5

Finals — Approximately 4:00 PM (one hour after finalist announcements):

- 4:00 PM — Team 1
- 4:20 PM — Team 2
- 4:40 PM — Team 3

## **Judging Structure**

Round 1:

Three groups of judges evaluate teams. One team from each group advances to the finals. A Memphis in May Ambassador escorts judges and manages time.

Finals:

Same format and scoring as Round 1.

Finalist times will be delivered immediately after announcement.

## **Live Judging Expectations**

Teams must:

- Present and explain all four courses
- Describe cooking techniques and components
- Answer judge questions
- Maintain a clean and professional site
- Have all team members present and prepared

Your presentation is part of your score; professionalism matters.

## **Tie-Breaker Procedure**

In the event of a tie, the following tie-breaker system will be used in order:

1. Highest Flavor Score

The team with the higher total Flavor score will advance or place higher.

2. Highest Technique Score

If still tied, the team with the higher Technique score will advance.

3. Highest Overall Impression Score

Using the two-decimal scoring system, the team with the higher Overall Impression score will advance.

4. Judges' Majority Vote (Silent Ballot)

Each judge will privately cast a vote. Majority vote wins.

5. Final Tie-Breaker — Coin Toss Conducted by Live Fire Cooking Association

## **Awards & Prize Purse**

1st Place: Trophy + \$3,000

2nd Place: Trophy + \$1,500

3rd Place: Trophy + \$1,000

4th Place: Trophy + \$500