



Australian Culinary Federation

Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge 2026



**Australian Culinary
Federation**

Australian Culinary Federation
At the ACF, our members are
at the heart of everything we
do

- ▶ As the premier industry organisation, we proudly represent professional Chefs, Cooks, Young Chefs, Apprentices, and Culinary Students, prioritising their needs and aspirations across all areas of the cooking and hospitality sectors.
- ▶ At the heart of our mission lies a steadfast commitment to supporting our members and fostering their professional growth. Through a range of tailored initiatives, we provide specific member support, including workshops led by industry professionals, personalised mentoring programmes, online learning hub and resources focused on mental health awareness, social responsibility, and sustainability. Our goal is to equip our members with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to excel in their careers and contribute positively to the culinary community.

Competition Overview



- ▶ Each year the Australian Culinary Federation (ACF) conducts a cooking competition for Secondary School Students in each Australian Region.
- ▶ The SA competition has been running for 17 years
- ▶ This competition is a great opportunity for students with an interest in becoming a chef to gain invaluable contacts within the hospitality industry.
- ▶ It is also a lot of fun, and a great learning experience for staff and students alike.
- ▶ The aim of this competition is to give students an insight into the hospitality industry and to identify and encourage students who demonstrate a talent and a passion for cooking.

Who Can Enter



- ▶ The competition is open to unlimited entries from each school. If you are in years 10, 11 or 12, enrolled in a secondary school and are studying either a Home Economics, Food Technology, Hospitality or Commercial Cookery course, then you are eligible to enter.
- ▶ Students compete in teams of two.
- ▶ Competitors must be aged 19 years or less on 31st October 2026.

How You Can Incorporate Into The Curriculum

Action Plan/Research

The **Action Plan** assesses students' ability to identify, research, and plan for a task. Here's how the competition could fit:

- ▶ **Research:**
 - ▶ Investigate the guidelines, themes, and judging criteria of the competition.
 - ▶ Incorporate industry trends
 - ▶ How students could incorporate Indigenous Foods within their planned meal
- ▶ **Goals:**
 - ▶ Plan a dish that aligns with the competition's requirements.
 - ▶ Workplan: Identify roles, resources, and timelines for preparation
- ▶ **Planning Process: (Action Plan)**
 - ▶ Develop a step-by-step plan for recipe testing, budgeting, and skill development.
 - ▶ Consider food safety, sourcing local ingredients, and presentation techniques.
- ▶ **Practical Application:** Internal Competition to see who competes as a class
- ▶ **Reflection:**
 - ▶ Reflect on the challenges of balancing creativity with the competition's constraints.

Group Task

The **Group Task** focuses on collaboration and teamwork in a practical setting. Here's how it could work:

► Task Concept:

► Collaborative Planning

- Assign roles within the team (e.g., head chef, sous chef).
- Develop a team menu inspired by South Australian produce incorporating the competition restraints

► Practical Application:

- Practice preparing and presenting the dish within the competition's time constraints.
- Troubleshoot challenges such as time management, flavour balance, and presentation.

► Presentation:

- Showcase the dish to a mock panel of judges (e.g., teachers or peers).
- Include a visual presentation (poster or digital slideshow) explaining the inspiration, techniques, and teamwork behind the dish.

► Evaluation:

- Reflect on how the team worked together.
- Discuss improvements that could enhance their performance in the actual competition.

Teachers



- ▶ Teachers / Lecturers will receive a Certificate of Engagement
- ▶ It will be up to the individual establishments to assign a weight to our certificate with regards to industry currency and Personal Development
- ▶ The opportunity to join the ACF as a Professional Hospitality Member. This membership is designed to include industry professionals who do not have a chef qualification but would like to have a voice in future of our industry, enjoy access to ACF resources, events, and networking opportunities.

Competition Guidelines Main Course

- ▶ Each team of 2 must prepare, cook and display a main course for two people on two separate plates using chicken within a time limit of 1 hour.
- ▶ They will have 30 minutes to set up (in which time a briefing will be held) prior to the competition starting, and 30 minutes to clean up after the competition.
- ▶ Standard recipe cards, a preparation list and workflows must be displayed on the day of competition



What Needs To Be On The Plate Main

- ▶ The dish must contain an appropriate starch, vegetable, garnish and white & dark meat must be both be used from the chicken
- ▶ A minimum of 2 precision vegetable cuts to be displayed, e.g. brunoise, macedoine, julienne
- ▶ A minimum of four (4) accepted cookery methods to be shown in your preparation of your menu
- ▶ White plates must be used
- ▶ All ingredient except the chicken to be supplied by school



Competition Guidelines Dessert

- ▶ Each team of 2 must prepare, cook and display a dessert course for two people on two separate plates using a Queen Product within a time limit of 90 minutes.
- ▶ They will have 30 minutes to set up (in which time a briefing will be held) prior to the competition starting, and 30 minutes to clean up after the competition.
- ▶ Standard recipe cards, a preparation list and workflows must be displayed on the day of competition



What Needs To Be On The Plate Dessert

- ▶ Must use a Queen product (not including food colouring)
- ▶ The dish must contain a variety of temperatures & textures
- ▶ White plates must be used
- ▶ All ingredient to be supplied by school



Awards & Prizes



- ▶ All competitors start with 100 points and a gold medal. Points will be deducted for incorrect skills and preparation, personal hygiene, taste and flavour of dish, unsafe storage and food handling procedures, and excess wastage
- ▶ The Teams with the highest points in both Main Course & Dessert competitions will be announced the winners. This year's winning school will receive a Trophy, and students will receive individual trophies
- ▶ The winning teams will be travelling to the National Final venue & date TBC

Previous National Finals

- ▶ The students in past years have had the opportunity to visit iconic venues, dine in some fantastic restaurants & meet influential people
 - ▶ Melbourne Cricket Ground back of house tour & Australian Sports Museum, made Rocky Road at Yarra Valley Chocolate Factory
 - ▶ Canberra - Australian Institute of Sport & Australian War Memorial
 - ▶ Tours of Adelaide Markets & Adelaide Hills including Melba's chocolate factory, Grunthal Brewery & Beerenberg Farm
 - ▶ Brisbane Back of house tour Convention & Exhibition Centre

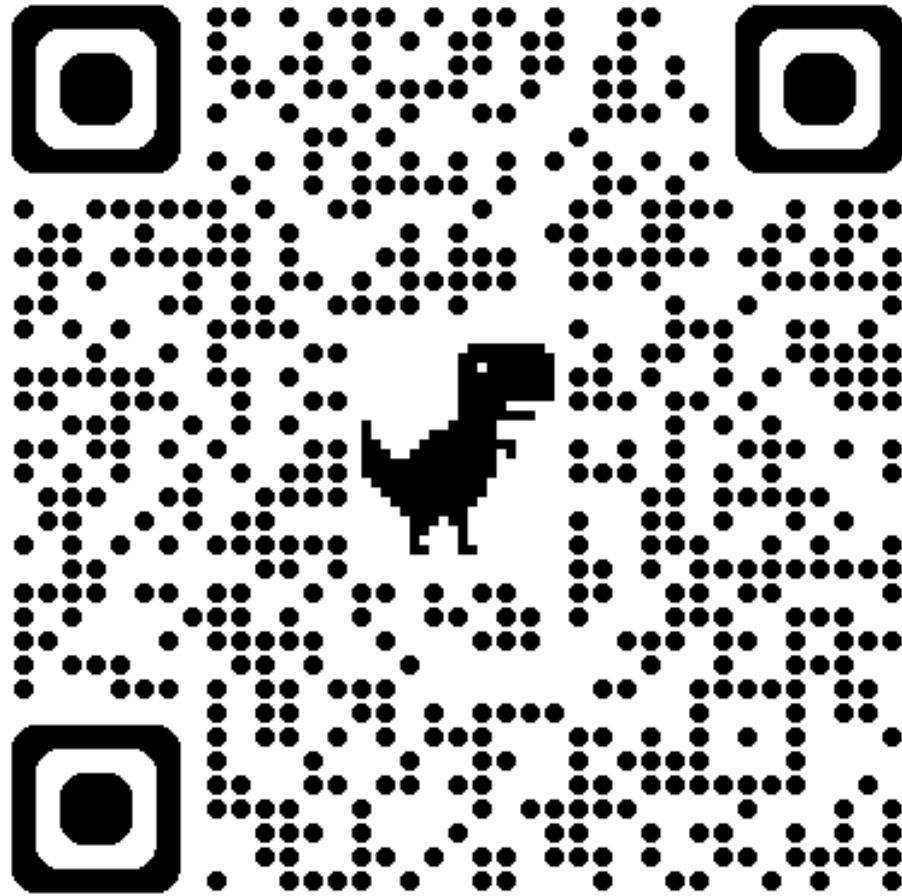


National Final Prize

- ▶ The winners of the National Final will win an Educational Culinary Experience, that will be exclusively tailored for the team
- ▶ The travel dates will be negotiated with the school
- ▶ Previous winners have spent a week in Thailand, visited Sydney and attended a series of masterclasses at the Patisserie Academy at Ryde



Secondary
Schools
Culinary
Challenge
Web Page



Membership
Web Page





2026 Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge

Information regarding region heats
please contact your local
competition Convenor

Criteria: [Click Here](#)

Entry Fee: \$55 per Team





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**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN
2026**