



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026 POWERED BY TAAZA



The core purpose is to challenge Chefs to set and maintain the highest level of culinary excellence, food standards and professionalism and to showcase their national cuisine. Through The National Cuisine Challenge these goals are set at the highest level and accomplished along with the transfer of knowledge, dedication and the development of skills.

Ethnic cuisine plays a huge role in what we do as chefs around the world and this class is designed to unite national cuisines under the umbrella of the Emirates international salon culinaire. The competition is not only about a plated main course dessert and appetizer but brings together cuisines from around the world that are then served as they would be traditionally this could be a family style of service down to a fine dining 3 plated set menu.

The creativity lies with the teams and these teams will be cooking against each other and guests will be able to enjoy the cuisine served during the dinner period of the Emirates international salon culinaire 2026. This is the second year that we have run this competition and based on last year's competition the standards were set very high and we are expecting these to be exceeded once again in 2026. The interest in this class was so high that we had government dignitaries and ambassadors of the countries competing come to witness their chefs in action during the competition and were able to enjoy the dinner that was served in 2025. Once again another leading competition from the Emirates culinary Guild that continues to set the standards of culinary competitions globally.





The National Cuisine Challenge 2026

The theme of the National Challenge is to cook with all things wholesome for mind, body and soul by representing traditional methods of cookery.

Conditions of participation

The teams are to be made up of minimum 2 Nationals of their home country cuisine they are representing. Passport copies of all team members are required at time of registration. This competition is by invitation only and open only to team working in the United Arab Emirates. There shall be a limit of 9 teams only.

1. Team Composition

Each team will consist of three chef participants plus one team captain/manager, plus one steward. The team structure would be as follows:-

- Team captain/manager (can cook) and can guide and assist in the service time
- Team chef any age, level
- Team chef Young chef 25 years and below
- Team pastry chef any age, level

- One Steward only to wash clean and help set up kitchen but not touch any food

For each team, five individuals are being recognized at the award ceremony.

The team is to be made up of a minimum of two nationals of the country cuisine they are representing

The participants are to be working within the culinary profession, hotels, restaurants, production facilities, schools. A copy of the passport of each team member should be submitted to the organizer for the young chef upon registration to the competition.

The team captain/manager is responsible for the team and will be allowed in the hot kitchen during service. (The team manager can announce)

All competitors are required to wear white chef's jackets, hats, dark trousers and black shoes for the duration of the competition.



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026

The team to supply their own steward to assist the teams, teams are responsible to wash pots and pans and to ensure hygiene is maintained to the highest standards.

The teams need to submit, their menu with photographs for marketing purposes by the organizers 2 months prior to competition date. The organizers shall stipulate the compulsory ingredients to be used latest by 01/04/2026, 3 months prior to the competition if sponsored.

There is to be no use of high end expensive products, like lobster, caviar or Foi gras etc., the ingredients and food are to be representative of the culture and cuisine of the team's country.

2. Obligations of the Organizers

A professional kitchen in the competition venue for each team, as attached to this document

Service staff on the day to serve to the guests

Organizer will supply all chairs tables service equipment and service staff for guest service

3. Competition Task:

The Teams will be required to produce a three-course menu for 22 PAX including 2 plates for photographs & media coverage. 2 plates shall be served to jury members and sponsors. The theme of the meal is to be the countries national cuisine no other cuisine shall be allowed per country. Meal must represent the food that is National to the competing team's country. The food to be presented as it would be in the house or traditionally for a special occasion in their home country. If served family style then quantity served needs to be for 20 PAX for the table and separate 2 pax for the judges.

3 courses to be served to include a selection of Appetizers, warm/ cold, main course with minimum of 2 protein dishes and 2 accompaniments, 2 desserts.

One main course to show case Sponsors as mandatory item TBC

Teams must bring their Mise en place prepared to the Worldchefs guidelines (see attached) to the competition kitchen. It is recommended that teams read carefully the guidelines and teams are to supply all ingredients, kitchen utensils and small equipment as needed.



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026

Teams shall be allowed to bring table decoration if they wish however this not judged.

12 copies of a printed menu need to be provided, and 2 sets of type written recipes are to be submitted.

Competition timing: TBC

16:00 – Arrival of teams to Expo Hall
16.30- set kitchen
17:00 – start cooking
19:00 – start service appetizers served
19.30 Main Courses served
20.00 – Dessert service
20:30 – clear kitchen

Service of dishes will be as per a restaurant call-off service. The dishes have to be prepared completely 100% in the competition kitchen.

Teams must use their own serving dishes. The meal is to be presented on plates, bowls or other containers supplied by the teams, no plates will be supplied from the organizers, except for guests dining which is supplied by the organizer.

4. Competition Kitchen

A complete competition kitchen will be supplied to each Team competing. A full plan with layout will be made available to each team on registration. A comprehensive list of small kitchen utensils and tools will also be made available and teams can bring additional as needed.

Written authorisation must be obtained from the organisers to bring in any additional specialised equipment and this confirmation must be shown to the head juror at the competition briefing.

5. Registration

Registration for participation in The National Cuisine Challenge 2026 should be completed latest by 01/3/2026, 4 months before the Competition.

This will be an invitation only event by the organizers as a first right of refusal. There shall only be one team per nationality made up of the following 9 Cuisines:



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026

India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Syria, Egypt, Malaysia, French, Georgia, China, Thailand, Mauritius, South Africa. If no team is available from these first choice 9 then the organizer shall reach out to other nationalities or two teams from one nationality may compete.

6. Awards for the Teams

All participating teams will receive a participation certificate. Medals and achievement certificates will be awarded corresponding to the reached number of points. All judging points and judges will be abiding by Worldchefs Rules. A team of qualified Worldchefs judges shall be appointed by the organizers, if there are questions about the food be served by the judges then the team manager will be allowed to explain to the judges the dishes when presented.

Judging points & Criteria:

- For the starter – 0-100 of the possible points
- For the main course – 0-100 of the possible points
- For the dessert – 0-100 of the possible points
- In total up to 300 of the possible points / 3 = 100 points
 - Mise en place 5 marks
 - Hygiene & Food Waste 10 marks
 - Correct professional Prep 15 marks
 - Innovation 5 marks
 - Service /timing 5 marks
 - Presentation 10 marks
 - Taste 50 marks
- Total 100 marks

Medals and Certificates are awarded as follows:-

- 100 points –Gold medal with Distinction
- 90-99.99 points – Gold medal with certificate
- 80-89.99 points – Silver medal with certificate
- 70-79.99 points – Bronze medal with certificate
- 50-69.99 points – Diploma

The Team that is awarded the highest number of points will become the:



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026

The National Cuisine Challenge 2026 Champions

Trophies shall be awarded for 2nd place and 3rd place teams

7. Jury

Judgment by the Jury – The jury will be appointed by Worldchefs and the organizers.

The judges will judge accordingly to the issued conditions of participation and guidelines of Worldchefs. The result declared by the jury is final.

The Worldchefs rules and regulations are found [here](#)

8. [Culinary Rules - WORLDCHEFS](#)

General

The venue is Madinat Jumeirah Convention Centre, and is held during Emirates International Salon Culinaire. 6-8 July 2026

Photographs – all competing teams will assign all rights concerning photographs to the organizers.

Organizers will assist with extensive media coverage

All questions to be directed to emiratesculinaryguild@gmail.com and to Andy Cuthbert andic@eim.ae and a Q&A document shall be circulated to all teams as and when questions come from teams. Attached registration form to be filled and returned ASAP.

NOTES ON PRACTICAL COOKERY

**Notes on the Practical Cookery Classes - These notes pertain to all practical cookery classes.
They must be read in combination with the brief of the class entered.**

1. The preparation, production and cooking skills of each competitor must be demonstrated during her/his time in the kitchen.
2. Waste and over-production will be closely monitored. Please refer to the ECG Sustainability Guidelines on the website
3. Competitors are to avoid the use of single use plastics, acceptable items are reusable, recyclable, compostable, bio-degradable, items for ingredient containers etc., reusable tasting spoons to be used.
4. There is a point penalty deduction for wastage or over-production.
5. Timing is closely monitored.
6. There is a 1-point penalty deduction for every 1 minute that the meal is overdue.
7. All food items must be brought to the Salon in hygienic, chilled containers: Thermo boxes or equivalent.
8. Failure to bring food items in a hygienic manner will result in disqualification.
9. All dishes are to be served in a style equal to today's modern presentation trends.



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026

10. Portion sizes must correspond to a three-course restaurant meal.
11. Dishes must be presented on individual plates with appropriate garnish not exceeding 250g total food weight excluding sauces.
12. Unless otherwise stated, competitors must supply their own plates/bowls/platters with which to present the food.
13. Competitors must bring with them all necessary mise-en-place prepared according to WORLDCHEFS guidelines in the hot kitchen discipline (www.worldchefs.org).
14. Including Worldchefs Hygiene rules, https://worldchefs.org/wp-content/uploads/Hygiene_rules.pdf
15. Including Worldchefs Best Practices <https://worldchefs.org/wp-content/uploads/Worldchefs-best-practices.pdf>
16. Including Worldchefs chefs Judges code of conduct <https://worldchefs.org/wp-content/uploads/JuryCodeOfConduct-1.pdf>
17. Competitors to ensure they read the latest Food safety guidelines from Worldchefs'
18. Competitors are to provide their own pots, pans, tools and utensils.
19. All brought appliances and utensils will be checked for suitability. The use of any additional equipment must receive prior approval before the competition from the organizers.
20. The following types of pre-preparation can be made for the practical classes:
EXPLANATION (what foods are permitted to be brought into the kitchen)
 - a) Salads – cleaned, washed, not mixed, or cut.
 - b) Vegetables – cleaned, peeled, washed, not cut, must be raw.
 - c) Fish may be scaled and filleted, and the bones cut up.
 - d) Meat may be de-boned, and the bones cut up
 - e) Stocks – basic stock, not reduced, not seasoned, no additional items (garlic, etc.).
Hot and cold samples must be available for the judges.
 - f) Pastry sponge, biscuit, meringue, basic dough's – can be brought in but not cut.
 - g) Basic pastry recipes can be brought in weighed out but no further processing.
 - h) Fruit pulps – fruit purees may be brought in but not as a finished sauce.
 - i) Decor elements – 100% must be made in the kitchen.
21. No pre-cooking, poaching, marinating etc. is allowed.
22. No ready-made products are allowed.
23. No pork products are allowed.
24. No alcohol is allowed.
25. If a farce is to be used for stuffing, filling, etc., at least one of the three portions of the farce must be prepared in front of the judges to show the competitor's skill
26. Within 10 minutes after the end of the competition, competitors must have the kitchen thoroughly cleaned and tidied and ready for the next competitor to use.
27. Two copies of the recipes - typewritten - are always required.
28. Submit one copy of the recipe/s to the clerk when registering.
29. Submit one copy of the recipe to the duty marshal at the cooking station.
30. No transglutaminase (meat glue) is permitted to be used
31. No gold, silver leaf or powders are permitted.



The National Cuisine Challenge 2026