Tips for Planning a County/District Qualifying Culinary Event

Counties and districts will need to have some type of qualifying event to select one team from the district to participate in the state contest. How that is done, is up to the district.

At the county level...

- Agents are encouraged to recruit volunteers who have an interest in cooking to lead 4-H SPIN Clubs. Local chefs and caterers may be willing to serve as volunteer leaders or mentors.

- Master Food Volunteers: about 10 counties across the state have initiated and provided training through a Master Food Volunteer program. Extension Specialist Sandra Bastin has also provided training for these volunteers. Some of the MFV’s might be interested in leading local cooking clubs.

If counties or districts wish to set up a qualifying event similar to the state event, here are some tips:

- **Secret Ingredients:** With an emphasis on using more Kentucky products and the need for youth to include fruits and vegetables in their diet, be sure these are among the contest’s secret ingredients. Place the secret ingredients in a brown bag on each preparation station so they will remain secret until the contest begins.

- **The Clue:** Be creative in thinking of a clue that will give team members guidance in using the secret ingredients.

- **Common pantry:** Select items that are generally used in recipes that include the ingredients chosen as secret ingredients. Look through recipes containing the secret ingredients to get an idea of what should be included in the pantry. Locate recipes and ingredient lists on the Internet, Food Network, American Dietetic Association books, Plate It Up, magazines, etc. Remember to keep the pantry items healthy and have substitutes that can be used to modify recipes, such as replacing high-fat ingredients with substitutes. Place the common pantry items on tables in the center of the room where they are equally accessible to all. Place refrigerated items in coolers or a nearby refrigerator. Make sure all team members know where these items are located.

- **Category selection:** Select a food category that will challenge the youth. Require all teams to make a dish representing one of the four possible food categories: Main Dish, Fruits and Vegetables, Bread and Cereal, and Nutritious Snacks. All teams will be assigned the same category and the same secret ingredients. The category, secret ingredients and the clue will not be announced until the start of the contest.

- **Equipment:** Keep in mind that teams will not have access to ovens and will be limited to cooking utensils in the equipment tub. Teams need to practice using equipment in kit.

- **Food Limitations:** During pre-registration, ask participants to indicate if they have any food allergies or religious practices that should be considered when participating in a 4-H food contest.
Contest Example:

Clue: Veggies make Bagels Smile

Secret Ingredients provided:
Whole wheat bagels
Low fat cream cheese
Radishes
Broccoli

Common Pantry Items:
Carrots      Garlic powder
Green peppers Dried onion
Kidney beans Ranch dressing
Black olive
Photo taken at the 2013 Oklahoma 4-H Food Showdown