

Official Holiday Treat Contest Rules & Guidelines

1. Eligibility & Entry Categories

- **Amateur Status:** Open to all home bakers. No professional pastry chefs
- **Definition of Handheld:** All entries must be individual, bite-sized, or finger-food treats designed to be eaten neatly without forks, spoons, or knives.
- **Approved Categories:**
 - **Cookies:** Rolled, dropped, shaped, or pressed seasonal cookies.
 - **Bars & Blondies:** Brownies, layered magic bars, or sliced sheet treats.
 - **Candies & Confections:** Fudge, truffles, chocolate bars, or brittle.

2. Submission Requirements

- **Quantity:** Bakers must provide exactly **2 dozen (24 pieces)** of their treat for the judging panel and share with the public.
- **Freshness:** All items must be prepared fresh within **24 hours** of the competition drop-off.
- **From-Scratch Rule:** Entries must be made entirely from scratch. Pre-packaged "slice-and-bake" doughs or store-bought frostings are prohibited.
- **Allergen Transparency:** A recipe listing all **ingredients** must accompany the entry to protect individuals with food allergies (e.g., nuts, dairy, gluten, eggs).

3. Presentation & Drop-Off

- **Anonymous Labeling:** To ensure unbiased judging, all entries will be assigned a random number at check-in. Submit your treats on a plain, disposable plate or platter.
- **Temperature:** Treats must be served at room temperature. The venue cannot provide refrigeration or heating elements for presentation.
- **Stability:** Items must be completely set. Icings, glazes, or chocolates should not melt instantly upon being handled.

4. Official Judging Rubric (100-Point Scale)

Judges will score each handheld treat independently based on the following criteria:

- **Taste & Flavor (40 Points):** Rich, balanced seasonal flavor. No overpowering artificial extracts or raw flour taste; proper balance of spices and sweetness.

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- **Texture & Doneness (25 Points):** Perfect bake or confectionery set. Soft/chewy bars, crisp or tender cookies, smooth melting candies with no sugar grains.
- **Holiday Appearance (20 Points):** Festive presentation, clean decorating, uniform sizes, and neat cuts on bars.
- **Portability & Neatness (15 Points):** Holds shape when picked up. The item must not crumble excessively or leave sticky residue on fingers.