



21st Annual APWA BBQ Challenge and Membership Drive July 24th, 2026

General Information and Rules

General Contest Information

The contest will be held at the Knights of Columbus Park, located near the intersection of Shawnee Mission Parkway and Midland Drive in Shawnee, Kansas. Maps and driving directions are available from the APWA BBQ Committee, upon request.

This is a friendly contest and is intended to be a fun event to generate interest in APWA and encourage membership. With this goal in mind, contestants do not need to have any experience with BBQ competitions. However, contestants must believe themselves to be a BBQ “expert” to enter!

Contestants will be able to enter the park and setup their equipment beginning at approximately 5:30 a.m. on the day of the contest. The APWA BBQ Committee will be distributing the meat for the contest (except for the Sausage category). We will be conducting a brief cooks’ meeting to discuss the contest rules at approximately 7:30 a.m. Teams must have at least one member (preferably the Chief Cook) in attendance at this meeting to compete in the contest.

All entries for the contest must be smoked on-site, but the team members themselves will be able to enter and leave the park throughout the day, as necessary.

Teams will have only about 9 hours of smoking time before the first category turn-in. Therefore, the APWA BBQ Committee has selected meats for the contest that can be properly cooked within this time frame.

Besides preparing meat samples to be judged in the contest, teams will also be smoking a portion of the meat for the evening’s membership dinner. The APWA BBQ Committee will be responsible for preparing any beef brisket that may be served at the membership dinner, as teams will not be able to thoroughly prepare this meat category within the allowable timeframe.

Meat for the evening’s membership dinner will need to be finished by teams and delivered to the buffet table for the membership dinner. Dinner is planned to be served at 6:00 p.m. Foil pans and lids will be provided to teams for meats prepared for the membership dinner. Teams will need to place their samples on the buffet table in their designated locations for the membership dinner.

Water for use by teams is available within the Knights of Columbus Park. Electricity may also be available to teams, on a limited basis, at the discretion of the APWA BBQ Committee.

The schedule for meat category turn-in times is provided in the attached judging procedures. Again, the membership dinner is planned to begin at 6:00 p.m., following the contest judging. The contest awards presentation will be held at approximately 7:00 p.m., or whenever the membership dinner is concluded.

All contest team members will receive an event T-shirt and wristband for admittance to the membership dinner included with their registration fee, as described on the event entry form. **ALL** attendees of the membership dinner must have paid for a wristband as a team member, online in advance, or at the door.

A sponsorship program is available for organizations that would like to receive extra recognition at the event. Please refer to the recently distributed Sponsorship Form for a detailed description of the benefits (and costs) of sponsorship.

Contest Rules & Regulations

1. Each team will consist of a Chief Cook and up to three assistants (for a maximum total of four team members). Each team should provide a pit/smoker to be used exclusively by that team within the team's own assigned cooking space. However, the use of a single pit/smoker (or similar cooking device) by more than one team may be permitted, with the prior approval of the APWA BBQ Committee. Even if a single cooking device is utilized by more than one team, all seasoning and cooking shall be done on-site within the confines of the team's assigned cooking space. No cook or assistant will be allowed to participate on more than one team in the contest.
2. No cooking of any kind may be done prior to the event. All meat for the contest must start out in raw form, with no pre-seasoning (except sausage entered in the sausage category) or marinade permitted. Product for the Sausage category must be inspected and approved by the APWA BBQ Committee prior to cooking. Sausage does not need to be ground and stuffed on-site, but must be raw at the time of inspection. Any competition meats not meeting these qualifications will be disqualified.
3. Once meat has been inspected and approved, it must not leave the contest site.
4. Only meats supplied to the contestants by the APWA BBQ Committee shall be entered in the Chicken, Ribs, and Pork categories.
5. The following meat holding conditions must be met for all meats used in the competition:
 - a. All meats must be on ice or refrigerated before being cooked, at a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or less.
 - b. After cooking, meat must be maintained at 140 degrees Fahrenheit or above in a covered container (except during the cooking process).
6. Contestants must provide all needed equipment and supplies, except as arranged for in advance (electricity, shared smoker/pits, etc.) with the APWA BBQ Committee. Contestants must adhere to all electrical, fire, and other codes, whether City, County, State, or Federal.
7. Pits, cookers, props, trailers, vehicles, tents or any other equipment (including generators) shall be generally contained within a team's assigned cooking space.
8. Fires must be of wood, wood pellets, or charcoal. No electric or gas grills will be permitted in the contest. Propane is permitted as a fire starter only. Other electrical accessories, such as spits, augers, or forced draft are permitted.
9. No open pits or holes are permitted, except with the prior approval of the APWA BBQ Committee. Fires may not be built directly on the ground.
10. It is the responsibility of the contestant to see that the team's assigned cooking space is kept clean and policed following the contest. All fires must be extinguished, pits or holes filled (if allowed), and all equipment removed from the site. It is imperative that clean-up following the contest be thorough. Any team's assigned cooking space left in disarray or with loose trash, other than trash bags, bins, or other containers, may disqualify said team from participation at future APWA BBQ events.
11. Excessive or continued complaints regarding any team regarding any of the following rules infractions shall be considered grounds for immediate disqualification from the contest by the APWA BBQ Committee: Excessive use of alcoholic beverages by a team, its members, or guests; Use of any controlled substances by a team, its members, or guests; Foul, abusive, or unacceptable language by a team, its members, or guests; Excessive noise generated from speakers / sound systems; Use of gas or other auxiliary heat sources inside the smoker/pit.
12. First Aid will not be provided, except at the election of the APWA BBQ Committee.
13. Refund of any entry fees will only be permitted with the approval of the APWA BBQ Committee.
14. Judging times will be posted in advance, with sufficient preparation time allowed between rounds. An entry will be judged only at the time posted by the APWA BBQ Committee.
15. The following miscellaneous cleanliness and safety rules will apply for the contest:
 - a. No use of any tobacco products while handling meat.
 - b. Cleanliness of the Cook, assistants, and the team's assigned cooking space is required.
 - c. Sanitizing of the work area should be implemented with the use of a diluted bleach/water rinse. Each contestant will need to provide a separate container for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing utensils.
 - d. A fire extinguishing device shall be in place near all smokers/pits used in the contest.
16. The decisions and interpretations of these rules and regulations are at the discretion of the APWA BBQ Committee, whose decisions and interpretations are final.

Judging Procedures & Awards

1. Contest judging procedures will NOT strictly adhere to standard KCBS (Kansas City Barbeque Society) rules and scoring.
2. Judging will be completed by a total of up to eighteen (18) judges, with most holding the position of Past President of the APWA – KC Metro Chapter. Judges will be seated at tables of six (6).
3. Contest teams will be provided Styrofoam boxes by the APWA BBQ Committee for use in submitting meat samples for judging.
4. Entries for the contest meat categories will be required to be turned in on the following schedule:
 - 4:30 – Sausage
 - 4:50 – Chicken
 - 5:10 – Ribs
 - 5:30 – Pork
5. Teams will have from five (5) minutes before until five (5) minutes after the turn-in times listed above to submit entries for judging, with no exceptions.
6. Every effort will be made to keep judges from seeing which team is submitting each sample box. Random numbers will be assigned by the APWA BBQ Committee to each team, and affixed to corresponding sample boxes, prior to presentation for judging.
7. Sample boxes must contain at least six (6) separate and distinct samples for judging. Failure to provide a sample for each of the six (6) judges will result in a disqualifying score of “1” from all judges who are left without a meat sample.
8. The judges, with the approval of the APWA BBQ Committee, have the right to reject any meat entry that they feel is not completely cooked, or has not been handled properly.
9. Judging will be based only on taste and tenderness. No considerations for the appearance of meat samples will be made. Therefore, teams shall not submit entry boxes containing any form of garnish or stuffing, or any foreign objects, such as aluminum foil, toothpicks, skewers, etc.
10. Marking of any kind on the meat or container will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, painting, sculpting, or decorating. Disqualifications for marking will be at the discretion of the APWA BBQ Committee’s Chief Judge.
11. To simplify the judging process, no side sauce containers will be permitted in the meat judging containers. Meats may be presented with or without sauce on them, as the contestant wishes. Sauce shall not be pooled or puddled within the sample container.
12. Judging for each meat sample will be on a “1 to 9” scale, with a score of “1” being reserved only for disqualifications. Any disqualifications will require the approval of the APWA BBQ Committee’s Chief Judge.
13. Each meat sample will be judged on its own merits. Comparison of samples from various teams within a given meat category by the judges will be strongly discouraged by the APWA BBQ Committee and enforced by the Chief Judge.
14. Only six (6) judges will evaluate a team’s samples presented for each meat category. Team samples will be randomly assigned to only one (1) of the three (3) tables seated with judges. Judging of meat samples will always be completed by equal teams of judges.
15. For every meat category, the low score received in each of the taste and tenderness criteria will be discarded. Results for the remaining five (5) scores will be tallied, with winners determined by the highest combined taste and tenderness score. In the event of a tie, the highest overall score received in the taste category will determine the winner. If still tied, the discarded lowest score for the taste category will be compared, and the higher of the two scores will determine the winner. Any remaining ties will be determined by a coin toss.
16. Product for the Sausage contest category will need to be provided by the teams, and approved by the APWA BBQ Committee at the time of event check-in.
17. Sausage category entries must also be smoked on-site the day of the contest.
18. The winner in each meat category will be awarded a first-place trophy. In addition, ribbons will be awarded in each category for first, second, and third places.
19. The contest Grand Champion award will be based on the combined scores for the chicken, ribs, pork, and sausage categories.
20. The contest Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion teams will receive trophies. In addition, a traveling trophy, engraved with the names of all Grand Champion teams, will be awarded. Teams will take possession of this traveling trophy (following engraving) until the date of the subsequent APWA BBQ Challenge and Membership Drive event.