

CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest

Questions and Answers

These questions and answers refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest](#).

1. Who is eligible to participate in the CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest?

The CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest is open to all school nutrition programs participating in the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#) and early childhood education (ECE) providers participating in the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#).

2. What is the purpose of the CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest?

The CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest was developed to celebrate and highlight the great work school food authorities (SFAs) are doing to serve local food to their students in delicious and creative meals.

3. How do I know what award category I fit into?

There is one award category designated for ECE providers. For K–12 schools, entries are classified into two categories: Rooted and Sprouting.

- **Rooted:** For K-12 schools that have been consistently purchasing Connecticut-grown or -raised ingredients and incorporating them into school menus for two or more years.
- **Sprouting:** For K-12 schools that are new to local procurement, have been purchasing Connecticut-grown foods for fewer than two years, or have only incorporated local ingredients on an occasional basis.

4. What criteria must applicants meet to be eligible for entry into the contest?

K-12 submissions must depict a reimbursable lunch with all five USDA meal components (fruits, vegetables, grains, meats/meat alternates, and milk) and at least one CT grown minimally processed ingredient in addition to milk. Any photograph that does not clearly display all five required meal components will be disqualified.

ECE submissions must depict a balanced age-appropriate lunch with the five USDA meal components for the CACFP lunch meal patterns (fruits, vegetables, grains, meats/meat alternates, and milk) with at least one CT grown minimally processed ingredient in addition to milk.

Any photograph that does not clearly display all five required meal components will be disqualified.

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5. How do I submit an entry to the CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest?

To submit a photo for the CT Fresh Great Plates contest, complete the [Great Plates Submission Form](#) and email your photo (and recipes if applicable) to CSDEChildNutritionPrograms@ct.gov. Use the subject line “**Great Plates Spring 2026 [Name of school/district and title of photo]**.” For example, “Great Plates Spring 2026 ABC District Rainbow Veggie Power Bowl with Grilled Chicken.”

6. How will submissions be judged?

Entries will be judged by the CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest Committee. The winners of the previous CT Great Plates Contest will also be invited to score submissions. Submissions will be scored using a blind review process in which judges will not have access to the identities of the submitters. All entries will be judged by the following categories:

- number of CT Grown items;
- creativity;
- scratch cooking;
- presentation;
- recipe included; and
- number of regional items.

For more information, refer to the [CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest Scoring Rubric](#).

7. Do I have to include a standardized recipe with my submission?

Contest entrants are not required to submit recipes with their entries. However, up to three additional points may be awarded for providing a standardized recipe for a scratch-cooked item featured in the photograph.

8. Can I submit more than one entry?

Schools and ECE programs are encouraged to submit as many qualifying entries as they wish during the entry period. Each school or ECE program is eligible to receive only one award per contest. As a result, a school that submits multiple entries cannot receive both the Winner and Runner-Up awards within the same contest cycle.

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9. If one of my schools won in a previous Great Plates Contest this school year, am I eligible to win again?

Schools may receive a First-Place award in their category only once per school year. Schools that earned a Runner-Up award remain eligible to win within their category. If a winning entry is submitted by a district, that district is not eligible to receive another award during the same school year. However, if an individual school submits a winning entry, other schools within that district remain eligible to participate and may still win within the same school year.

For more information, visit the "[CT Great Plates Contest](#)" section of the CSDE's CT Fresh Ed webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/farmschool/greatplates/ct_great_plates_contest_questions_answers.pdf.



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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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