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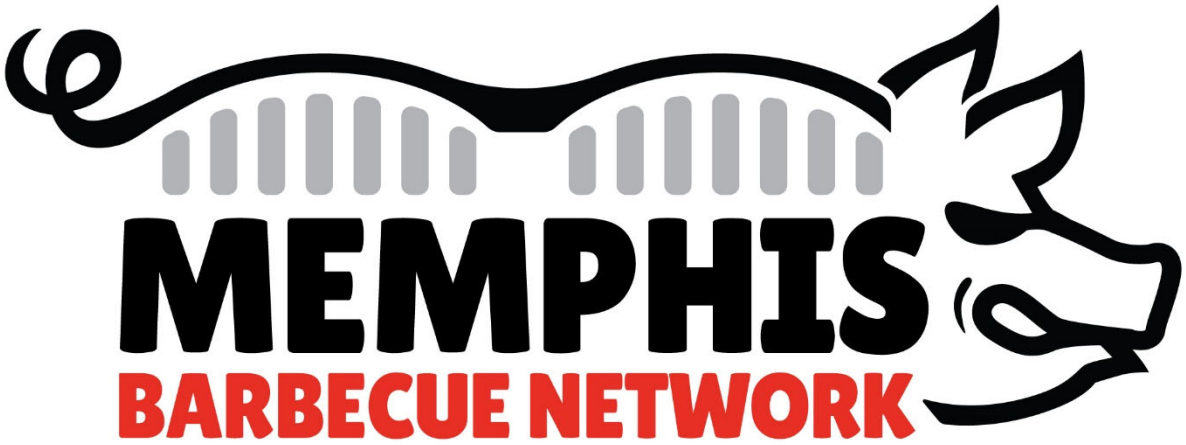
GENERAL RULES
AND INFORMATION



Memphis Barbecue Network

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INTRODUCTION

This manual was written as a guide to assist cooking teams at contests sanctioned by Memphis Barbecue Network, Inc.

It includes helpful information on what to expect when cooking at MBN contests and suggestions on amounts needed to compete. It also includes information given to judges that attend the judging training seminar, requirements of contest organizers, and rules and recommendations from the Memphis Barbecue Network.

It is not intended to provide the definitive answers to all situations that could arise during a contest.

If you need more specific information on the rules and/or requirements of a particular contest, please contact the organizer and/or the MBN Representatives. If you need specific information not covered in this manual, feel free to contact us WWW.MBNBBQ.COM

Thank you for your contribution to competition barbecue and to the Memphis Barbecue Network.

THE BASICS OF ALL MBN CONTESTS

MBN standard sanctioned contests offer three official pork categories: Whole Hog, Pulled Pork, and Pork Ribs and teams may enter any or all of these categories. These contests have two (2) rounds of judging – **Blind Preliminaries and On-Site Finals.** Some contests limit the number of categories and are classified as a "specialty" contest, i.e., whole hog or rib only contests.

Specialty contests also include categories other than pork, such as hamburgers, hot tamales, etc. Many of these only use blind preliminary judging.

Each contest supplies the teams with a list of rules for that contest and the rules required by the Memphis Barbecue Network (found on the MBN website), in addition to any local requirements.

Contests are required to include in their team application the order and time of judging and this cannot be changed once it is published. Teams are responsible for knowing the assigned turn-in times, turn-in order and judging start times before beginning to cook..

The contests will usually provide only a regulation space for teams to set up and cook in the event. Teams are required to provide all their own assistants, utensils, meat, sauce, charcoal, wood, cookers, tents, tables, chairs, and/or anything else they may need to compete and serve their entries.

Some contests have electricity, water, ice and other amenities on site. Some have nothing available. The entry form should mention anything the contest has to offer in addition to the space.

If you have a question, please contact the contest organizer.

MEAT CATEGORY DEFINITIONS AND SUGGESTED AMOUNTS

Whole Hog

Whole Hog is defined by the Memphis Barbecue Network as an entire hog, whose dressed weight is 85 pounds or more prior to the optional removal of the head, feet and skin. The hog must be cooked as a complete unit on one grill surface. No portion of the whole hog may be separated or removed, and returned to the grill, prior to or during the cooking process.

Portions of the ham, shoulder and loin must be present and identifiable in the blind box. No other portions of the whole hog are allowed in the blind box. All meat in the blind box MUST come from the whole hog cooked as a complete unit. No other meat or garnish of any kind is allowed in the blind box.

The blind box must contain, at a minimum, enough pork for six (6) judges to sample each of the three (3) required entries (ham, shoulder, loin). All portions must fit inside the container provided, must close and must be in serving size pieces as the judges will not have utensils to cut or divide the entry. No garnish of any kind is allowed in the blind box.

During on-site judging, other portions of the whole hog may be presented to on-site judges in addition to the ham, shoulder and loin. However, these portions will not be judged/scored by the finals judges. No garnish is allowed on the grill.

One (1) whole hog is sufficient per contest. It is the team's discretion whether to cook one (1) or more hogs.

Pulled Pork

Pulled pork entry is defined by Memphis Barbecue Network as a portion of the hog which may contain the arm bone, hind leg bone, shank bone, portion of the blade bone or a pork collar. A whole shoulder, a picnic shoulder, a ham, a Boston Butt or a pork collar are all considered to be valid entries. The entry must be cooked as one whole unit. No portion of the pulled pork entry may be separated or removed, and returned to the grill, prior to or during the cooking process.

The blind box must contain, at a minimum, enough pulled pork for six (6) judges to sample the entry. All portions must fit inside the container provided, must close and must be in serving size pieces as the judges will not have utensils to cut or divide the entry. No garnish of any kind is allowed in the blind box.

You will also need additional portions to present to the judges if you make the finals round. However, no garnish is allowed on the grill.

A minimum of two (2) shoulders/Boston Butts and/or hind legs is sufficient per contest (one for the preliminary blind box and one for finals). It is up to the team whether you use all shoulders, Boston Butts, hind legs or a combination as long as it meets the criteria described above.

Pork Rib

Pork Ribs are defined by Memphis Barbecue Network as the portion of the hog containing the ribs and further classified as a spare rib or loin rib portion. Country style ribs are not a valid entry.

The blind box must contain, at a minimum, 6 sections of ribs for 6 judges to sample the entry. All portions must

fit inside the container provided, must close and must be in serving size pieces as the judges will not have utensils to cut or divide the entry. No garnish of any kind is allowed in the blind box.

You will also need additional portions to present to the judges if you make the finals round. However, no garnish is allowed on the grill.

A minimum of five (5) to six (6) slabs are sufficient per contest.

GENERAL RULES

Teams may cook with any type of wood and/or charcoal. Other flammables (propane, compressed or liquid gas, etc.) may be used within the cooker ONLY TO START THE INITIAL FIRE. No type of flammable may be used within the cooker once the meat has been placed there. If a cooker has a built-in propane burner, the lines must be disconnected after the initial fire is started. Gas cannot be used to generate heat for the smoker or holding oven. Any team who violates this rule will be disqualified from the contest. Local fire and safety laws may prevent the use of gas anywhere on the grounds at any time, and, if so, these laws shall prevail.

Electrical devices may be used within the cooker if they do not directly generate heat. Approved devices include rotisseries, fans, and delivery systems for approved fuel (i.e., pellet grills). Electric smokers, holding ovens or containers or any other devices with heat-producing electrical coils are not allowed. Holding containers that do not produce heat are allowed. Microwaves may be used to warm/heat sauces, but not to cook, warm, or reheat meat.

Meat for the contest may be fresh or frozen. Meat may not be precooked, sauced, spiced, injected, marinated, cured in any way, or otherwise pre-treated prior to official meat inspection. Meat must be maintained at a temperature below 40 degrees Fahrenheit prior to cooking, and at or above 145 degrees Fahrenheit after cooking. All meat must be inspected at the times set by the contest organizers and prior to preparing, seasoning or cooking in any way. Each team must prepare and cook their own meat on their own cookers on site. Any team who turns in sample meat that is not prepared and cooked on site will be disqualified from the contest.

Each team must have a designated head cook. The head cook is responsible for all team members/cooks and their cooking area. This includes, but is not limited, to the cleanliness of the cooking area, excessive use of alcohol, foul language, fighting, theft, cheating, and excessive noise. Cooks/Team members can cook for different MBN teams, but they can only present for one MBN team during a BBQ season. Special exceptions can be made on a per contest basis. A team and/or cook/team member can only get one exception per BBQ season. Approval must be granted by the MBN contest representatives prior to start of the finals round. Contests outside MBN do not matter. A team cannot cook in more than one MBN contest using the same name on the same date.

It is the team's responsibility to have a team member at the cooks' briefing. Any announcements or changes to the contest (if necessary) made at the cooks' briefing will take precedence.

Times are announced at the cooks' briefing.

Age classification and participation of minors

The minimum age requirement for Standard MBN events, including teams (head cook) and judges, is 18 years.

Minors aged 12-17 may participate in specialty or patio events only if a youth/kids' contest is unavailable at the event. Participation of minors is subject to the contest organizer's approval and stipulations. A separate team application for the minor's team must be submitted along with the appropriate fees and liability release statement. During the contest, minors must always remain under adult supervision. Supervising adults may assist with starting the fire but are not allowed to handle the entry beyond the initial knife work. Both the minor and the supervising adult are required to attend the cook's meeting.

Rules and regulations for these events will be at the contest organizer's discretion.

JUDGING

There will be 2 rounds of judging consisting of a preliminary blind round and a final on-site round.

Blind Preliminary Judging

During the cooks' meeting, teams will be informed of when and where they will receive containers for their blind samples, as well as the time and location for turning in those samples. The MBN representative is responsible for getting containers to teams. Teams are required to deliver their blind sample to the judging area or a specified check-in area. You should have enough team members to accomplish this task. In the preliminary round there are 6 judges at each table with 3 to 6 samples at each table. The lowest score in each criterion is dropped.

Teams are required to have their sample at the specified turn in area, at a certain time, within a 15-minute window. The sample must be delivered during this 15-minute window. Any sample submitted after the turn-in window will not be accepted and will result in disqualification from the category. No points will be awarded toward the team's overall standings in that category. There is no grace period. If the team member with the sample is not in line at the end of the window, the entry will not be accepted.

Preliminary Judging Standard Turn-in and Judging Times

STANDARD CONTEST		
CATEGORY	**TURN-IN TIME**	**JUDGING BEGINS**
WHOLE HOG	9:45 – 10:00 AM	10:00 AM
PULLED PORK	10:45 – 11:00 AM	11:00 AM
RIBS	11:45 – 12:00 PM	12:00 PM
FINALS		1:00 PM

DUAL CONTEST		
CATEGORY	**TURN-IN TIME**	**JUDGING BEGINS**
WHOLE HOG	9:15 – 9:30 AM	9:30 AM
PULLED PORK	10:15 – 10:30 AM	10:30 AM
RIBS	11:15 – 11:30 AM	11:30 AM
FINALS		1:30 PM

Teams should pay special attention to the way their meat is prepared for the blind judges. Remember, there are no sharp knives in the judging area, so we suggest that teams cut their entries into small enough sections to easily fit in the container. No garnish is allowed in the blind box entry.

When teams receive their container, it will have a label on the top that has the team name, the meat category and the time the sample is to arrive at the blind check-in area.

With each entry container, a team may also submit up to two sauce containers with lids. Teams may send any combination of sauce, rub, marinade, or basting sauce. Only the cup(s) and containers that were issued at the

contest may be used for sauce; no other container is allowed. Sauce containers should never be put inside the sample container box. Teams will turn them in in addition to their blind container. The check-in volunteers will put a routing code number on all the containers.

Teams are not allowed to mark on the meat or sauce containers in any way. If a team is turning in a "HOT/ SPICY" sauce for judging, the volunteer will mark that sample as "hot." If marks are on the container, the sample(s) will be put in replacement containers. The judges do not know what number any team is assigned before, during or after judging. The code numbers and corresponding team names are not published or divulged to anyone at any time.

Meat turned in for blind judging may not be sculpted, shaped or presented in any way to make it identifiable. Any suspicion of this will result in the sample being returned to the contestant for "correction". If the corrected sample container is returned and is acceptable before the entry time deadline, the entry will be accepted.

The preliminary round of judging will consist of blind judging only. This round determines the three (3) hog, three (3) pulled pork and three (3) rib teams that will advance to the finals round of judging.

Blind Preliminary Judging Criteria

- Appearance of Entry
- Tenderness of Entry
- Flavor of Entry
- Overall Impression

See the following section on "Criteria" for descriptions.

On-Site Finals Judging

Finals round judging is operated as a separate contest with nine entries: three (3) whole hog, three (3) pulled pork and three (3) rib teams. All previously stated rules for the three (3) meat entries and cooking processes will still apply. All judging in the final round is on-site. Final judges are escorted by an MBN contest representative that will monitor the time they spend with each team.

Teams will be provided with official MBN plates (formerly known as the MBN placemat), which must be used for all onsite presentations. No other plates are permitted.

There will be four (4) finals judges traveling in a group, judging all nine (9) entries. They are responsible for ranking the nine (9) teams without regard to meat category to choose the Grand Champion.

They will judge the meat categories in the same order as the preliminary judging round. When the teams are notified that they are in the finals, they are told approximately what time the final judges will arrive. Teams will be notified if there is a delay.

If there is a chance for an early arrival, teams will be asked if they can take the judges earlier. A team is not obligated to do this and will not be marked down if they cannot take the judges earlier than originally scheduled.

Each team will be judged independently even though the judges are traveling in a group. The scoring criteria are

the same, but the judges are required to use decimals in all criteria, not just Overall Impression.

Final judges are not announced prior to judging, and teams do not have the right of refusal of a finals judge prior to finals.

Final judges will not be changed once judging has started. If a team chooses to protest and refuse a finals judge for any reason, they will automatically receive all 7's for that judge in each category in which the team is competing in finals.

If a team is in the final round in more than one meat category, the judges will visit that team area once for each category. Teams cannot serve judges more than one meat category during a visit. Teams will make their presentation each time the judges enter the team area for a category as though they had not been there before. A team's preparation and cooking methods probably will not be the same for each category.

The finals judges will spend 15 minutes with each team in each category. Even though teams will be presenting and feeding four (4) people, the presentation must still fit the 15-minute limit.

Teams have 15 minutes for their finals presentation. The Contest Rep acts as the official timekeeper and will provide the team visual notifications of the remaining time. If the team exceeds this limit and the Contest Rep must remove judges from the team area, the maximum score per judge will be 9.8 in presentation.

The official time starts at rep introduction to team.

No garnish will be allowed on the grill in finals judging. Aluminum foil is allowed on the grill surface only and cannot be used for any type of decoration. Only paper/disposable plates, napkins, cups, etc. may be used during finals judging. Any team violating these rules will have 1/10 point deducted from their presentation score for each violation. It is the team's discretion as to what they present the sample/entry on at the table and table cloths are allowed. Teams are to provide water (either bottled or in a disposable cup) to each finals judge.

Teams are prohibited from providing any personalized or team-branded items (including disposables) for use by the judges during onsite presentations.

Standard Time for On-site Finals Judging

Finals judging should start at approximately 1:00 pm (1:30 pm for Dual Contests).

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING

- Area and Personal Appearance (On-Site Judging Only)
- Presentation (On-Site Judging Only)
- Appearance of Entry
- Tenderness of Entry
- Flavor of the Entry
- Overall Impression

Area and Personal Appearance (On-Site Judging Only)

This criterion refers to the appearance of the team area and members of the presentation team. Judges will not

score on the amount of dollars spent on the area, the "rig", clothing, etc., but rather the area you are charged with is clean and organized. Each member of the presentation team should be clean and be wearing clean, neat clothing. The area should have all trash picked up, extra supplies organized neatly and trash cans clear from the area or covered. Anyone that is not part of the presentation team should not be in the judging area. Any other little touches that you feel will add to the appearance of your team or area is acceptable.

Presentation (On-Site Judging Only)

This criterion refers to the verbal introduction of and information about the team, area, grill, and the entry. Judges will evaluate your presentation based on your team introduction, details about your cooker, your meat preparation process prior to grilling, cooking time and temperature, and what you do with/to the entry while it is cooking. Meat must be presented on the cooker/smoker that the product was prepared on. No cookers/smokers are allowed for display purposes only. No garnish is allowed on/in the cooker/smoker during finals presentation. Aluminum foil is allowed on the grill surface only. You can only use paper and plastic (disposable) supplies in a finals presentation. Teams will be provided with official MBN plates (formerly known as the MBN placemat), which must be used for all onsite presentations. No other plates are permitted. China and glass/ crystal settings for judges are not allowed. This does not apply to platters or items used by the team. Tablecloths (fabric/linen) are allowed. Any team violating these rules will have 1/10 point deducted from their presentation score for each violation. Teams are to provide water (either bottled or in a disposable cup) to each final judge.

Teams are prohibited from providing any personalized or team-branded items (including disposables) for use by the judges during onsite presentations.

Appearance of the Entry

This criterion refers to the esthetics; does the entry itself look appetizing in the blind container (preliminary judging) and at the cooker/smoker/table for finals judging. The judges will be informed of the possibility of a smoke ring or red layer on the top surface of the meat entry or throughout the entry. Judges are instructed to score the appearance of the entry in the blind container in preliminary judging and on the cooker/smoker/serving plate during finals judging. They should ask themselves – "Does this entry look appealing and appetizing?" You should make every effort to ensure that the judge sees your product at its best.

Tenderness of the Entry

In this criterion, the judge will be looking for some firmness but easy separation of the meat. There is a range in barbecue from tough (under cooked) to tender (just right) to mushy (cooked past tender). There should be some texture, but the entry should be moist and easy to chew. Ribs with meat "falling off the bone" will be judged as overcooked. A mild shake of the ribs should leave meat still attached. With loin ribs, one pull/bite should remove meat portion easily. With ribs, a bite should leave a half moon crescent in the meat.

Flavor of the Entry

This criterion refers to the flavor of the meat sample. Sauce can be added before, during, or after the cooking process. If a team serves more than one table sauce, the judges are instructed to choose the sauce that, in their opinion, best complements the entry. The flavor score is based on the combination of the sauce chosen to go with that particular entry. Only two (2) containers of sauce may accompany your blind entry. It is possible for a team to have good meat and get a poor score because of their sauce. Remember, the sauce should complement the meat entry, not cover it up.

Overall Impression

Overall impression is a subjective score based on the judge's opinion of the total experience of judging the sample in the preliminary round and judging the team and sample in the finals round and is not an average of the other scores. Judges will reflect their general overall feeling of their judging experience when they have finished judging all samples at the blind table and as they leave the area in the finals round. This is the only criterion where preliminary judges can use a decimal in their score. This area allows judges to consider factors that influence their decision when a team does not warrant a full-point difference compared to another team within the same criterion. The judge can deduct a tenth, or two, or three, here without costing the team a whole point or more. The judges are instructed not to judge dollars spent, trophies displayed, size of the cooker or anything else not designated as a judging criterion on the scorecard.

RULES VIOLATIONS

It is the intent of the Memphis Barbecue Network that all contest rules are followed and adhered to in order to create a fair, competitive environment for all contestants. The MBN Contest Reps of record can, at their discretion, inspect any team's meat entry, cooker/smoker and/or area at any point during the contest to ensure the rules are not violated. However, the MBN reps/officials cannot monitor all team activities. The responsibility of monitoring rules violations is shared among the teams/team members (self-regulation), the MBN contest reps/officials, the contest organizer/judges chair, and finals judges during the finals judging.

The MBN strongly encourages any of the above groups/individuals that observe a team violating any of the rules set forth by the MBN to contact the MBN Contest Rep immediately. The claimant should document the violation with physical or visual proof or provide a second witness to the violation. The claimant and/or claimants will be required to sign a written affidavit stating the details of their claim are not fabricated.

The interpretation of the MBN rules and regulations as previously stated are the responsibility of the MBN contest reps at said contest and those decisions are final. If disqualified, the team will forfeit any entry fees paid and points awarded in that meat category.

WHEN THE CONTEST IS OVER

Load out and tear down times will be enforced. These times are designated by the contest and will be posted on the contest entry form. Generally, teams may begin to tear down once they are informed of who made finals. We ask that all teams be mindful of their neighbors who are in finals. Excessive noise can be a distraction to teams hosting finals judges.

Each team is responsible for cleaning their own site, taking trash to the dumpsters, making sure fires are out completely, and leaving the site in the same condition as it was prior to load-in. Failure to adhere to site conditions could result in forfeiture of deposit and/or participation in future Memphis BBQ Network events.

AWARDS PROGRAM

The Awards Program recognizes those teams that most actively participate in Memphis Barbecue Network competition barbecue cooking contests. The contest year runs from January 1 through December 31. The awards program pays cash awards to qualifying teams at the end of the BBQ competition season.

POINT AWARDS

Teams receive points based on how they finish/rank in each meat category in the top 15 places at each sanctioned standard MBN contest. Those points are as follows:

Place	Points Awarded
15th	1
14th	2
13th	3
12th	4
11th	5
10th	6
9th	7
8th	8
7th	9
6th	10
5th	11
4th	12
3rd	13
2nd	14
1st	15

The Grand Champion will be awarded one (1) additional point in the category in which the Grand Champion title was earned.

Teams that achieve a Perfect Score in the preliminary or final round will be awarded one (1) additional point in their perfect score category.

A minimum of four (4) teams must compete in each meat category (Whole Hog, Pulled Pork, and Rib) for that category to be considered valid for MBN Team of the Year points standings.

If fewer than four teams compete, no MBN points will be awarded for that category for that contest.

TEAM OF THE YEAR - WHOLE HOG / PULLED PORK / RIB

The team with the highest accumulated points in each meat category will be designated as the Team of the Year for that category (Whole Hog, Pulled Pork, and Rib). The chart above will be used to assign points.

The Overall MBN Team of the Year will be calculated using the points earned during their finals presentations. The team with the highest accumulated total score in a single category will be named the Overall MBN Team of the Year.

If you need more specific information on the rules and/or requirements of a particular contest, please contact the organizer and/or the MBN Representative. If you need specific information not covered in this manual, please contact the MBN at info@mbnbbq.com.

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