

2026 APC National Pie Championships Guidelines

Submit Entry:

- 1) To enter a pie, click on the “start application” link above.
- 2) Log in.
- 3) Complete the form as instructed. Please note entry due dates and specific instructions below.

Pie Entry Due Dates

Entries are due Monday, March 16, 2026, Midnight PAC.

Late entries are accepted for an additional fee per each individual entry (see below). Late entries are accepted from Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 12:01 a.m. PAC to Friday, March 20, 2026, Midnight PAC.

Pie Entry Fees Per Division

Entry discounts apply to APC members. To become an APC Member, please visit <https://piecouncil.org/membership/>

All entry and membership fees must be paid by Friday, March 20, 2026.

Choose Your Division

Commercial Division

A company must enter the Commercial Division if your pie-specific sales – not overall bakery sales -- are \$1 million plus annually.

Member - \$175 each entry

Non-Member - \$275 each entry

Late entry -- \$100 additional/each entry

Independent Division

A company would enter the Independent Division if your pie-specific sales – not overall bakery sales – are less than \$1 million annually.

Member - \$50 each entry

Non-Member - \$100 each entry

Late entry -- \$50 additional/each entry

Professional Division

The Professional Division is for individuals only (not companies). The individual would be deemed professional if they receive an income of more than \$500 annually related to the pie industry. An individual chef who works for a commercial or independent bakery entering the competition also is allowed to enter pies in the professional division. For example, an independent bakery may enter pies in the independent division, while the bakery’s owner or its chef can enter the same or different pies in the professional division. Must be 18 years or older to enter.

Member - \$30 each entry

Non-Member - \$45 each entry

Late entry -- \$50 additional/each entry

Amateur Division

This is open to individuals who make less than \$500 annually related to pie sales. One of the most creative divisions, pie lovers and bakers from all walks of life with no experience necessary enter the amateur division. Must be 18 years or older to enter.

Member - \$25 each entry

Non-Member - \$40 each entry

Late entry -- \$50 additional/each entry

COMMERCIAL AND INDEPENDENT DIVISIONS – Flavor Categories and Instruction

One blue ribbon will be awarded to each flavor category plus subcategory. In addition, our sponsor Karo Corn Syrup will award a **choice of: 1,275 gallon tote, 24.5 gallon pails or 132 gallon jugs shipped to your bakery** to a Commercial and an Independent winner of their new “Where Creativity Meets the Crust” category. There is no fee to enter the Karo Corn Syrup category.

Categories and Flavors

In the online entry form, for each pie that you enter, you will be prompted to select from one of the categories below. And to select a corresponding flavor.

- **Family and NSA Family** wholesale cost under \$5.00 (indicate flavors)
- **Premium and NSA Premium** wholesale cost under \$7.00 (indicate flavors)
- **Gourmet and NSA Gourmet** wholesale cost under \$9.00 (indicate flavors)
- **S-Gourmet and NSA S-Gourmet** (Super Gourmet) wholesale cost over \$9.00 (indicate flavors)
- **Hand-Finished Pies** (any hand-finished fresh fruit pie that is not Super Gourmet)
Wholesale cost is determined by the total ingredients, labor, packaging, fob plant.
- **Portion Control Pies (Flavors same as NSA plus savory pie)**
 - Hand-held
 - 4”-6” pie

Additional Categories to Enter

KARO Corn Syrup Category -- “Where Creativity Meets the Crust” – **Free to Enter for Commercial and Independent bakers and sponsored by ACH Foods. To enter, select category “family” and flavor “Karo Corn Syrup.”** Karo Corn Syrup will award your choice of: **1,275 gallon tote, 24 five-gallon pails or 132 gallon jugs shipped to your bakery to one Commercial and one Independent winner.** ACH Food Company challenges you to use Karo Corn Syrup to showcase one of your boldest recipes yet. Think beyond a pecan pie to create a new Karo masterpiece. Each entry must contain at least one-half cup of Karo Corn Syrup (light or dark or a combination of both).

Best New Product Category --This category aims to recognize the most innovative and unique pie creation that introduces new flavors, ingredients and/or techniques to the world of pie-making, highlighting pies that are ready for commercialization or have been introduced after last year's APC National Pie Championship (so a pie introduced after April 15, 2025). **To enter, select “Best New Product” flavor and one of these categories -- Family, Premium, Gourmet, and Super Gourmet.**

R & D Category – This category encourages bakers to push the boundaries of traditional pie-making and come up with something truly extraordinary. The R&D category is designated to be a focus group for judge’s feedback with scorecards and comments on your specific concept and provide guidance on determining market potential. This category only provides scoring and comments with no blue ribbons awarded.

Key Requirements

Same Pie, Multiple Flavors and Categories - Entrants may enter the same pie in multiple flavors so long as that pie fits the criteria for the different flavors and categories. Do not enter the same flavor pie in multiple categories, i.e. Family and Premium or Gourmet and Premium. There is no limit to how many different pies a company can enter in any flavor or category. Pies with the same formula cannot be entered more than once within a flavor.

Determining the Correct Flavor to Enter -- Use the predominant fruit/flavor in the entry to determine the correct flavor to enter. At least 50 percent of your pie filling should be made of the flavor.

Crust -- Dessert pies entered must have a bottom and side crust. **Savory pies are not required to have both.**

Number of Pies to Bring Per Entry -- Two Pies (Four Pies for handheld and smaller pies) -

Commercial and Independent Bakers only -- please bring TWO of each of your pies to the competition. One will be judged; the second will be placed on our pie display table grouped together with your company name so that entrants can view each others’ pies. For HANDHELD and 4-6" PIES, please bring FOUR PIES -- THREE pies for competition and ONE pie for display.

Pie Name/Identification – Please do not use the name of your company, brand or any type of similar identifier in the name of your pie(s) in the entry form submission. This is a requirement to ensure unbiased judging.

As Sold to Consumer -- All pies entered in the competition should be submitted baked as they are sold to the consumer.

Pies must be in production -- For pies not currently in production, considering entering the R & D category.

No Hand-Decorating or Finishing -- **With the exception of the Super Gourmet Category**, no hand-decorating or finishing will be allowed with the exception of egg wash, toppings that come with the pie in a standard package or pies that are sold topped with fresh fruit on machine filled bases.

Blue Ribbons – One blue ribbon will be awarded to each category and flavor. Blue ribbons may not be awarded in flavor categories with only one contestant. Evaluations, however, will be provided. All entrants may request evaluations after the competition. Please allow the APC time to provide these.

NSA - No sugar added. NSA or “no added sugars” **means the item cannot be processed with any sugar or sugar-containing ingredients**, though it can have sugar alcohol or artificial sweeteners.

Baked Dairy -- Includes custard, chess, sugar cream, etc.

Please note:

Pies may be disqualified if entered into the incorrect flavor and/or category. Rules are subject to change. The decision of the judges is final. Proper labeling of your pies with the flags is the responsibility of the entrant. The codes on the flags should match your entry spreadsheet supplied in your registration packet which is picked up on-site at the hotel the day prior to bringing your entries.

Please notify staff at registration if there are any changes or mistakes.

All fees must be paid by Friday, March 20, 2026.

Amateur and Professional Divisions –

Entry Flavors and Instruction

Entry Flavors

Amateurs and pros are invited to compete in one, some or all of the four flavors below as many times as you'd like.

- 1) *Open Cream* – At least one-half of the pie must be cream-based.
- 2) *Open Fruit or Berry* – At least one-half of the pie must contain a fruit, berry or mix of these.
- 3) *Open Savory* – Common savory entries include -- but are not limited to -- pot pies, meat and/or vegetable combinations (e.g., chili beef, chicken, lamb), and those utilizing unique, hearty, or semi-spicy flavors.
- 4) *Karo Corn Syrup Pie* “Where Creativity Meets the Crust” -- Sponsored by Ach Food Company, this pie must use at least one-half cup of Karo Corn Syrup (light, dark or a mixture of both) in the recipe and may only contain up to one-quarter cup of nuts. For your best shot at winning, our friends at Karo are looking for atypical Karo Corn Syrup pies – no pecan-dominant pies, please! Use your culinary creativity to Wow our judges with your innovation and out of the crust baking!

Key Requirements

Crust – Each pie must contain a bottom crust (of any kind you choose), but does not require a top crust unless you choose to include it.

Cream and Refrigerated Pies – These will be placed in a cooler immediately upon your checking in your pie.

Savory Pies -- Must be submitted fully baked and will be placed in a warming box upon pie check-in.

Recipe -- Each entry must include a recipe that is original and has never been entered in this or any other pie competition. The APC and Karo Corn Syrup will own the recipe, which will be shared on piecouncil.org and used in marketing.

Number of Entries – Amateurs and pros may enter as many pies as you'd like in each flavor category, as long as each pie is: 1) different from each other, 2) an original, first-time recipe and 3) follows the rules. The more you enter, the more opportunity for a blue ribbon!

Delivering Your Pies – Amateurs and pros need only bring one pie for each entry you submit (unlike the commercial and independent divisions).

Please note:

Pies may be disqualified if entered into the incorrect flavor and/or category. Rules are subject to change. The decision of the judges is final. Proper labeling of your pies with the flags is the responsibility of the entrant. The codes on the flags should match your entry spreadsheet supplied in your registration packet which is picked up on-site at the hotel the day prior to bringing your entries.

Please notify staff at registration if there are any changes or mistakes.

All fees must be paid by Friday, March 20, 2026.

Prizes

Prizes in the both the amateur and professional divisions will be awarded in each flavor category, as follows:

Open Cream, Open Fruit and/or Berry and Open Savory:

- 1) First Place – Blue Ribbon and \$250
- 2) Second Place – Red Ribbon and \$100
- 3) Third Place – Yellow Ribbon and \$50

Karo Corn Syrup “Where Creativity Meets the Crust”:

- 1) First Place – Blue Ribbon, gift bag and \$500
- 2) Second Place – Red Ribbon, gift bag and \$250
- 3) Third Place – Yellow Ribbon, gift bag and \$100

All Divisions -- Evaluation of Pies

Judges will be evaluating pies in all four divisions based on the criteria below:

- **First Impression:** Pre-slice score – Includes appearance and consistency of crust or topping. After-slice score – Based on degree of appropriate runniness, juiciness or firmness. Overall appearance -aroma, first taste, etc.
- **A Closer Look:** Flavor – Strength and balance of flavor appropriate for type of pie; balance of sweet and/or tartness. Peripheral flavors should be balanced with main ingredient of pie.
- **Mouthfeel:** Appropriate consistency, i.e. thick, thin, smooth, creamy, versus chalky, mushy, runny, dry, sticky, etc. should be considered when appropriate. Crust – Flaky or mealy. Aftertaste – Pleasant or unpleasant
- **Overall Appeal:** After scoring for appearance and taste, how impressive was it, how appealing and memorable.
- **Creativity:** (Only for Best New Product) – How creative is this pie?

FAQ

What is an NSA pie?

No sugar added.

Do we bake onsite?

No, entrants bring their pies ready-made to drop off for judging. For commercial and independent divisions, several commercial kitchens in Orlando will provide space at an hourly rate. Please email weloveallpie@gmail.com for more details ASAP, as slots fill up fast. Pros and amateurs typically make their entries at their bakeries or home kitchens, or find a rental home in Orlando. Our 2026 host hotel Caribe Royale offers condos with kitchens.

How many pies can we enter?

Commercial and independent bakers – please see your guidelines in the rules and regulations. Amateurs and pros can enter several pies in each of the four flavors, as long as each pie is: 1) different from each other, 2) an original, first-time recipe and 3) follows the rules.

How do we receive the flags to use with our pies?

Please come to our event registration desk in the Caribe Royale Hotel's convention center from noon to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 8. You will be able to pick up your registration packet, which will include your pies' flags and instructions for placing these in your pies.

When do we deliver our pies?

You will be assigned a half-hour time period sometime from 6 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 9 in which to deliver your pies to the Caribe Royale. Times will be assigned about a week prior to the event and shared via email. Please consider Orlando traffic if you are not staying onsite, as all pies must be checked in by 9 a.m. that morning.