

January 23-25, 2017

Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday



OFFICIAL RULES OF THE FIERY FOOD CHALLENGE

The Fiery Food Challenge is the longest running, most recognized and most prestigious competition judging manufactured products in the zesty food world.

Conceived as a means of recognizing superior products and implemented through a series of blind food tastings by culinary experts, the Fiery Food Challenge has become the industry benchmark.

Entering the Consumer Ready Division:

All entrants must be certified professional manufacturers, following all FDA regulations designated for consumer mass production by a certified kitchen, and/or co-packer. Products must be available for sale by January 1, 2017 to qualify.

A copy of your canning license or Federal registration will be required upon entry of the contest. If your product is packaged by someone else, you must submit a copy of your manufacturer's license or registration. No "home packed" products may be entered. Labels must meet FDA guidelines.

All entrants will submit three (3) samples of each entry unless otherwise noted on the entry form. Your product will be shipped along with the entry form, copy of your license/registration and full payment of fees to the designated collection site of the contest, and must be received by the entry date to be considered eligible.

You may enter as many products as you like. For instance, you may enter the mild, medium, and hot versions of your salsa, but these count as three separate entries. Products that are submitted in various flavors must have one entry per flavor.

A category is defined as a major grouping of sub-categories. Barbecue Sauce, Hot Sauce Condiments etc. It is not permissible to enter the same product in different categories of the contest. Products may only be entered in one category. For example, a product cannot be entered into a Hot Sauce sub-category, and then again in a Barbecue Sauce sub-category. If your sauce fits in several sub-categories of one category, then you may enter it in all that are appropriate. All entries will be reviewed to deem them Category Appropriate. The Fiery Food Challenge management reserves the right to move products to another category, to create or to split categories as it deems necessary, without notice.

All products entered in the Consumer Ready contest will be judged "as is" and will not be mixed or served with any other products before tasting. Unless you are entered into a "Fresh" category, your product should not require refrigeration prior to opening.

If your product is fresh and must be refrigerated, it must be entered in the Fresh Salsa category, unless special permission is granted. Fresh entries must be packaged in dry ice and must arrive at the contest address between the dates specified on the entry form.

All food products entered must be canned or sealed in accordance with standard food and health safety procedures and protocols. The Fiery Food Challenge reserves the right to discard and disqualify any entries that are not properly canned or sealed, according to food and health safety procedures.

Each product must be properly labeled with ingredients listed along with the name of the product. All entries must be carefully packaged. The Fiery Food Challenge will not be held responsible for any damage incurred during shipping.

Entering the Cook-Off Division:

All rules for entering the Fiery Food Challenge apply to the Cook-Off division, but with the following exceptions. The Cook-Off division includes products that will be judged in a cooked application or in a mixture with other products. For example, this category includes powdered dips that must be mixed with sour cream and grilling sauces which must be tasted on prepared meat. All products in the Cook-Off division will be prepared by culinary professionals using like ingredients, under controlled supervision.

The ingredients that are provided by the contest will be at the sole discretion of the Fiery Food Challenge and preparing chefs. Chile con carne, marinades and dry seasoning rubs will be made with beef. Jerk seasoning, grilling and finishing sauces, and wing sauces will be made with chicken. Pasta sauce will be served on pasta without any proteins added.

Dip mixes and salsa mixes must be made with dried seasonings/ingredients that are to be combined with sour cream or other ingredients to be eligible for this category. For example: a Consumer Ready salsa or dipping sauce with instructions to mix with cream cheese would not be accepted in this category.

Soup and Stew mixes and Side Dishes must be ready to heat or made with dried seasonings/ingredients with no more than three (3) additional ingredients to be added by the contest. For example: a tortilla soup mix should come with most of the ingredients needed in the mix, but may need to be mixed with water, chicken, and cream from the contest. However, the entrant should not provide a seasoning packet and ask the contest to provide the bulk of ingredients such as fresh vegetables, meats, etc., to complete the entry.

Beverages will be included in the Cook-Off division, as most of these products must be mixed in order to be properly tasted. If your product is a "mix" you may designate ONE ingredient (alcohol or otherwise) to be supplied by the contest. For example: If you enter a Bloody Mary Mix that needs to be mixed with tomato juice and vodka, you must supply the tomato juice as well as your mix and the contest will supply the vodka.

The Cook-Off division is conducted by the same chefs, in the same commercial kitchen, at the same time. The Fiery Food Cook-Off is not judged by the preparing chefs, but by other culinary professionals.

Entering the Marketing Division:

One sample per entry is required. All labels and logos must be mounted on white art board, with company name and entry category clearly printed on the back. Packaging entries are entered as freestanding pieces. Samples in the marketing division will not be returned.

Entering the Best New Product Division:

Products must not have been marketed before February 1st, 2016.

This division recognizes distinguished achievement in the introduction of a new product. Its purpose is to promote the development and marketing of excellent new products. The Best New Product award is based on tasting and a marketing statement provided by the contestant. The marketing statement should describe the product, but should not state the company or product name, or appear on company letterhead, as it will still be judged as a blind tasting. The marketing statement must be Fifty (50) words or less.

The Best New Product requires three (3) samples per entry. Entries **MUST** include a marketing statement of the product in Fifty (50) words or less. Products in the food category will be tasted **and** judged against this written statement.

The Fiery Food Challenge is not responsible if this written statement is not included in the entry. If the statement is not included, it will adversely affect your final score.

Best of Category and Overall Grand Prize:

You do not need to enter separately for these awards. If you are entered in any category you are already eligible for the Best of and Overall Grand Prize. This prize is awarded to the single product with the overall highest score in each category and across all categories.

For example: If product "XYZ" is entered in the Hot Sauce-Fruit category and its score is a 50, and the next highest score in the Hot Sauce category is product "ABC" with a 47, then product "XYZ" is the winner of the Best of Category prize. The Product with the highest total overall, wins the Grand Champion award.

JUDGING CRITERIA:

The judging panel will be made up of food industry professionals, including chefs, restaurant owners, culinary instructors, restaurant owners, culinary instructors, food writers, food manufacturers not entered in the contest, and other industry leaders and professionals. A limited number of judges may be "Chileheads" who have served as judges at other food events such as ICS sanctioned cook-offs and may also include celebrities or media professionals.

All product sampling will be conducted under the strictest of standards using fair, impartial and blind judging methods.

A sub-category must receive a minimum of three (3) entries to qualify for judging. If a sub-category does not receive at least three entries, the remaining entries will be combined into a "General" sub-category.

Management reserves the right to create or delete categories based on the number of product entries.

All staff members of the Fiery Food Challenge, Spicy Food Productions LLC, or ZestFest 2017 will be excluded from judging. The decision of the judges is final, may not be contested, and in no way reflects the opinions of the above organizations.

Products in the Consumer Ready and Cook-Off divisions will be judged on the following criteria: appearance, aroma, texture, flavor, use of heat, overall impression and compliant for category.

Products in the Marketing division will be judged on: design, creativity, visual impact, originality, marketability, and overall impression.

Products in the Best New Product will be judged on: appearance, aroma, texture, flavor, use of heat, overall impression, and comparison to marketing statement.

Each food entry is judged in a blind tasting using a numbered cup to represent each entry. Judges are not allowed to see any indication of the brand, owner, or manufacturer of the product. The judges each sign an objectivity of judging form that states that should they recognize the brand, owner or manufacturer of any product by the appearance, taste, aroma, texture or any other indication, they will excuse themselves from judging the entire category.

Scoring:

Each entry shall be scored on its own merits with a whole number from 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest. No pluses (+), minuses (-), fractions (1/2) or decimals (.5) will be taken into consideration. Each entry must be scored by a minimum of six judges. Score sheets are then tabulated by calculating the total score for each entry and dividing by the number of judging sheets for each product to obtain an overall average score. The total will be carried two decimal places. If there is a tie after carrying to two decimal places, an additional award will be given and considered a tie for that category. No Smoking is allowed in the judging area.

Tasting:

Beverages and bite-sized snacks such as crackers, cheese, fruit, tortillas are supplied to judges to allow them to cleanse their palates between tastes. New spoons must be used for each entry.

Announcing Winners:

Winners will be announced at ZestFest 2017 at the predetermined time & place of the organizers. Winning products will not be revealed until this time. Upon the announcement of the winning products, the awards will be given to those who are present. For those who are not present, the awards will be shipped to them within one month of the announcements.

Disclaimer:

Organizers will not be held responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged entries and reserve the right to refuse any product that, in their judgment, may present a health hazard. In any of the categories that are judged visually, the Fiery Food Challenge has the right to decline any product it deems lewd or offensive. It also reserves the right not to list any winning product's name on the website or in the magazine or any other distribution that it deems lewd or offensive. All declared winners are final. No containers or leftover products will be returned. All entry fees are nonrefundable.

The contest rules have been established for the best interests of all concerned. In the event of necessity, any rule may be altered at the discretion of Spicy Food Productions LLC. In any event, all interpretation of rules and final decisions will rest with the judges. The decisions of the judges are final, binding, and conclusive in all matters.

Any controversy or claim arising out of or related to the Fiery Food Challenge will be settled by arbitration according to the rules of the American Arbitration Association. By signing the entry form, you understand these rules and agree to abide by the decisions of the judges.

No Smoking is allowed in the judging area.

For additional information contact June DeRousse – 210-882-0952 – june@zestfest.net.