

Pie Competition Judging Criteria

General Rules for Participants:

All pies must be homemade. This means no pre-made pie crusts, fillings, or other commercial products. We're looking for your personal touch and baking expertise. The crust should be made from scratch unless otherwise specified in the rules. While traditional pie crusts are common, alternative crusts such as graham cracker, nut, or cookie crusts are acceptable, as long as they complement the filling and the overall pie. Participants can choose between fruit pies, cream pies, custard pies, or savory pies, but all must be prepared and baked from scratch. The pie should be presented in a standard pie dish, and if it's a large pie, it should be easily sliceable for serving.

Judging Criteria (Total Score: 100 Points)

Appearance (20 Points)

The first thing judges will notice is the pie's visual appeal. A well-baked pie should have a golden, even crust with a consistent color across the top. The top crust should be evenly browned, with no burned spots or areas that are too pale. If the pie has a lattice top, the crust should be woven neatly with no gaps or overly thick spots. For pies with a decorative top or lattice, the design should look intentional and well-executed. The filling should not be spilling over the edges or look too runny, and any garnishes (whipped cream, fruits, etc.) should enhance the pie's presentation without overpowering it.

Crust (25 Points)

The crust is one of the most important parts of any pie, and judges will evaluate its flavor, texture, and appearance. The ideal pie crust should be flaky and tender with a slight crispness. It should not be tough, doughy, or soggy. A good crust should complement the filling without competing with it, providing a balanced texture against the softness of the filling. The crust should have a pleasant buttery flavor, and while it should not be too salty or too sweet, it should have a flavor profile that enhances the entire pie. If the pie has a bottom crust, judges will look for an evenly baked, crisp layer, ensuring the crust holds its shape and does not become soggy from the filling.

Filling (35 Points)

The filling is the heart of the pie, and judges will pay close attention to its texture, consistency, and flavor. For fruit pies, the filling should have a balanced texture that is not too runny or too thick. The fruit should retain its shape and provide a tender bite, but not be mushy or overcooked. The filling should be flavorful, with the natural sweetness or tang of the fruit (or the savory ingredients in a non-sweet pie) coming through without being overly sugary or bland. For cream or custard pies, the filling should be smooth, rich, and well-set without being too stiff or watery. The flavor should be well-balanced, and in pies with mixed ingredients, each component should complement the others. The consistency of the filling should also be uniform, without any separation, lumps, or uneven textures.

Taste (25 Points)

Taste is one of the most critical aspects of the competition. Judges will assess the overall flavor balance of the pie, ensuring it is not too sweet, too tart, or too bland. The pie should be enjoyable from the first bite to the last, with the flavors working together in harmony. In a fruit pie, the fruit flavor should be prominent,

and the sugar and spices should enhance, rather than overpower, the natural flavors. For cream pies, the custard or filling should have a rich, balanced flavor, while savory pies should have well-seasoned, complementary ingredients. A pie's filling should leave a pleasant aftertaste that is not too heavy or cloying, and the combination of crust and filling should leave the judge wanting more.

Creativity and Originality (10 Points)

In this category, judges will reward participants who bring new ideas or unique twists to their pies. This might include unusual flavor combinations, such as a savory pie with unexpected ingredients or a fruit pie with a unique blend of spices. Creativity also extends to how the pie is presented—whether it's a traditional pie or a more unconventional style, such as a hand-pie or galette. If the participant has added a personal or seasonal touch, such as using local ingredients or incorporating a flavor inspired by a holiday or regional dish, it will be evaluated for originality and how well it enhances the overall pie.

Overall Impression (10 Points)

The overall impression considers the entire experience of eating the pie. Judges will think about how well the pie balances all its elements, from crust to filling, and whether it is an enjoyable dessert. Does the pie leave a lasting positive impression? Is the pie satisfying and memorable? It should have a cohesive flavor profile where the crust, filling, and any garnishes all come together to create a delightful and harmonious dessert. The pie should also have a good texture that's easy to cut and eat, with each bite being a pleasure. This category considers everything in totality, focusing on the pie's ability to impress and satisfy.

Bonus Criteria (Up to 5 Extra Points)

Judges may award up to 5 additional points for exceptional pies that go beyond the ordinary. This could be a pie with an extraordinary level of creativity, whether through the ingredients, presentation, or concept. Pies that reflect a unique cultural influence, such as a regional or holiday-inspired recipe, may also earn bonus points. Similarly, pies that are exceptionally well-crafted in terms of both texture and flavor may receive bonus points for being a standout example of baking skill and artistry.

Judging Process:

After tasting each pie, judges will score it based on the criteria outlined above. Each judge will evaluate the pies independently, taking notes on appearance, crust, filling, taste, creativity, and overall impression. Once all pies are tasted, judges will submit their individual scorecards before any discussion takes place. After deliberation, the pie with the highest overall score will be crowned the winner of the competition.