



Meat Smoking Competition Rules 2026

Categories

- Tomahawks Sponsored by B Heart Cattle
- Ribs sponsored by Tip Top Lounge
- Wings Sponsored by Terra Firma Organics

General Rules for Meat Smoking

- Competition will take place on Saturday, September 19th, 2026 at the Tip Top Lounge 111 E Washington Ave, Chester, MT.
- Teams: Up to Ten (10) 2-4 person teams per category. Max of 8 teams for Tomahawks.
- Registration Fee: \$20 per team per category, \$50 for all 3 meat smoking competitions (tomahawk, wings, & ribs)
 - Registration is first come first served, you are not registered until you have paid your team fee. You may register online at hilineharvestfest.com.
- Meats Provided (Teams must use the meats provided – no outside meat allowed)
 - 1 Tomahawk per team sponsored by B Heart Cattle
 - 1 bag (5 lbs) of wings per team sponsored by Terra Firma Organics
 - 2 Spare Ribs per team sponsored by Tip Top Lounge

- Pickup: You may pick up your meat on Wednesday, September 16th, 2026.
- Meats must be cooked on-site at the Tip Top Lounge - 111 E Washington Ave Chester, MT 59522.
- Competitors must provide their own gear including but not limited to grills or smokers, pop up tents, thermometers, extension cables, etc. Power is available at Tip Top Lounge, but is **limited**. Please plan on bringing a back up power option.
 - No deep fryers allowed.
 - ***The Hi-Line Harvest Festival is not responsible for any damages or stolen property***
- Judging will take place in the Tip Top Lounge parking lot between 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM.
 - 4:00 PM Tomahawks, 5:00 PM Wings, 5:30 PM Ribs
- A panel of 3 judges per category will be provided by the Hi-Line Harvest Festival.
- *You hereby grant permission to the rights of your image, likeness and sound of your voice as recorded on audio or video tape without payment or any other consideration.*

Tomahawk Cooking Rules

- All tomahawk steak entries must be prepared entirely by the competitor using a raw, bone-in tomahawk ribeye.
- Steaks may be grilled, smoked, or prepared using a combination of smoking and grilling (such as reverse searing).
- Competitors may season their steak with any combination of rubs, herbs, spices, marinades, or compound butters, but the natural flavor of the beef should remain the star of the entry.
- Each steak should be sliced into uniform portions and presented neatly, providing enough samples for all judges.
- The goal is to demonstrate exceptional barbecue technique, proper doneness, outstanding flavor, and respect for this premium cut of beef.
- Tomahawks must be cooked and ready for judging at 4:00 PM on Saturday, September 19th, 2026.

Wing Cooking Rules

- Wings may be grilled, smoked, or a combination of both, but frying is not permitted in this competition.
- All wing sauces must be homemade. Sauce must include at least 3 ingredients.
- Competitors may choose to present whole wings or separate flats and drumettes, but all should be consistent in size and evenly cooked.
- Each entry should provide enough samples for all judges, with wings presented neatly and ready for immediate tasting.
- The goal is to showcase barbecue technique, flavor mastery, and creativity while staying true to the spirit of smoked or grilled chicken wings.
- Temperature Requirement: All wings must reach an internal temp of 165°F minimum.
- Wings must be cooked and ready for judging at 5:00 PM on Saturday, September 19th, 2026.

Rib Cooking Rules

- All spare rib entries must be homemade, cooked entirely by the participant, and prepared from raw ribs. No pre-cooked, commercially prepared, or store-bought heat-and-serve ribs are allowed.
- The cooking method is up to the pitmaster—smoking, grilling, or slow-roasting are all acceptable—as long as the ribs are properly cooked and presented.
- Ribs should be turned in as whole racks or pre-sliced portions, depending on competition rules, but they must be neatly prepared so that each judge can sample easily.
- The goal is to showcase both technical skill and creativity while staying true to the essence of great barbecue ribs.
- Ribs must be cooked and ready for judging at 5:30 PM on Saturday, September 19th, 2026.

Meat Smoking Judging Process

1. Judges will independently evaluate meats using the judging criteria listed on the website.
2. Notes should be taken for constructive feedback.
3. Each judge scores meats on appearance, tenderness, flavor, balance, creativity, and overall impression.
4. After scoring, judges submit their scorecards before discussion.
5. The highest total score wins the competition.
6. If competitors compete in all 3 categories, points will be tallied to determine overall meat smoking winner.
7. Prizes will be given to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places in each category. An engraved Traveling Trophy handmade by Cary Kolstad of Ick Metal will be given to 1st place winners in each meat smoking category.