

Dinner 911!

Cooking Challenge



Military, Veterans and First Responders face off in a live cooking challenge at the California State Fair. Teams of two will use a mystery ingredient to prepare a 3-course meal in front of a live fair audience and a panel of qualified Judges, in the Cooking Theatre. Space is limited, apply today!

APPLICATIONS: Applications are accepted on a first-come-first-served basis
3 Teams

DATE & TIME: **Wednesday, July 29, 2026**
"Military, Veteran & First Responder Day!"
4:30 pm – 6:30 pm

LOCATION: California's Kitchen Exhibit in Building B, Cal Expo

QUALIFICATIONS: Any team of two veterans, active-duty military or first responders from the same unit/station/veterans organization.

AWARDS: Champion State Fair **Golden Bear Trophy**
Reserve Champion State Fair Rosette
3rd Place State Fair Rosette

AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT:

- [Induction Range](#) & electric oven, microwave, sink and electrical outlet.
- Tools and small appliances typically found in a home kitchen are available.
- Teams are encouraged to bring their own knives or any specialty equipment needed.

AVAILABLE INGREDIENTS:

- A mystery ingredient will be provided and MUST be featured in 1 or more dishes.
- The pantry is stocked with a variety of common ingredients for cooking and baking.
- Teams may not bring any outside food or spices into the competition.

CONTACT: Michelle Johnson, Program Coordinator
916.263.3189, mejohnson@calexpo.com

JUDGING CRITERIA

- 30% **Taste:** Complimentary courses, seasoning, flavor, temperature/doneness
- 25% **Presentation:** Portion size, harmonious garnish, color, slicing/placement
- 20% **Skill Level:** Difficulty, cooking & knife skills, use of ingredients, creativity
- 15% **Use of Mystery Ingredient:** Prominence in meal, good use of ingredient
- 10% **Work Habits & Showmanship:** Food safety and sanitation, organization of work area, professional and courteous, communication with MC and Judges during competition

Significant Points Deductions:

- Mystery ingredient not featured in any dish (-30 points)
- Food not safe to eat (undercooked) (-20 points per item)
- Less than 3 courses presented (-20 points per absent course)

CHALLENGE FORMAT:

1. Arrive **30 minutes prior** to your start time to be fitted for a microphone and to sort out any last-minute details.
2. **Start Time:** The MC will introduce the challenge, competitors and Judges. The mystery ingredient will be revealed, then the MC will start the competition.
3. **5 minutes:** to "shop" for food from the kitchen pantry. Chefs may access pantry behind throughout the competition.
4. **5 minutes:** to prep and set up kitchens: preheat ovens, boil water, organize equipment, etc. No cooking or food prep is allowed at this time.
5. **50 minutes:** to cook and plate your meal, which is immediately presented to Judges upon completion.
6. **Judges Evaluate** the dishes behind the scenes while teams clear-down kitchens and fair staff distribute any remaining food as samples (Fair staff will also help clean).
7. **Judges Announce the Winners** and ribbons will be presented.

ADDITIONAL RULES & REGULATIONS:

- **Contestants may not be inebriated, and no alcoholic beverages may be consumed** either in front or back of the set; however, it may be used as an ingredient. Failure to follow this rule may lead to disqualification and prizes will be forfeit.
- Kitchens will be assigned randomly before challenge begins.
- No open flame is allowed, including torches and lighters (CA Fire Marshall Regulations).
- "3 Courses" consists of an appetizer, main dish and a dessert.
- Plate one of each course for judges to share. Please prepare enough food for roughly 4 standard servings so that food will be available for fair guests to sample.
- Only participating teams may be backstage (space limitations and food safety).
- Teams are encouraged to wear department t-shirts, aprons, or other department/profession paraphernalia.
- Remember the goal of this program is to highlight our hometown heroes, YOU! Please represent yourself and your profession well by being courteous to other teams, demonstrating teamwork and showing good sportsmanship.
- Each participating team member will receive 1 Admission Credential and 1 parking pass to enter the Fair the day of the Challenge. 2 additional credentials will be given to each participating team member for guests.

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APPLICATION DUE DATE: Applications are accepted on a first-come-first-served basis

SUBMIT TO: California's Kitchen, Michelle Johnson email: mejohnson@calexpo.com
P.O. Box 15649 fax: 916.263.7903
Sacramento, CA 95852 phone: 916.263.3189

Contact Name	Rank/Title
Phone Number	Cell phone Number (<i>for day of challenge</i>)
Mailing Address	
City	State, Zip Code
Email Address	

Teammate Name	Rank/Title
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Fire/Police/EMT/etc. Department Represented

I hereby certify that all of the information submitted with my application to compete in the Dinner 911! Cooking Challenge is true and correct.

I hereby certify that I have read the competition information and rules, and I will accept and comply with rules as written, and accept the decision of the Judges as final.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Challenge Accepted!

CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION AND STATE FAIR

California's Kitchen 2026 Letter of Understanding

This Letter of Understanding is between CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION AND STATE FAIR, hereafter referred to as "Cal Expo" and _____ hereinafter referred to as "Demonstrator".
(Demonstrator's full name)

Under this agreement, Demonstrator will participate as a competitor in the **Dinner 911! Cooking Challenge** in the Cooking Theatre, Building B, Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95815 on Wednesday, July 29, 2026 from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm.

Demonstrator will provide all of the following for the above stated demonstration:

1. Demonstrator agrees to arrive for check-in at the backstage area of the classroom 30 minutes before the start of their demonstration(s).
2. Demonstrator will adhere to all food safety standards, which are enforced by the Sacramento County Environmental Health Division.
3. Copies of any distributed materials to be handed out during the fair. Submit to the Program Coordinator.
4. A completed Megan's Law compliance form listing all individuals associated with the activities outlined in this agreement who will be backstage or interacting with fair guests. ****Sworn officers and active military are exempt from this process.****

Cal Expo will provide all of the following for the above stated demonstration:

- 1) Credentials for Fair entry, parking and any delivery appointments for above dates.
- 2) Mystery ingredient, basic pantry ingredients, tools, and demonstration kitchen.

Demonstrator and all participants agree to indemnify, defend and save harmless the State of California, California Exposition & State Fair, its officers, agents and employees from any and all claims and losses accruing or resulting to any and all contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, laborers, and any other person, firm or corporation furnishing or supplying work services, materials, or supplies in connection with the performance of this Agreement, and from any and all claims and losses accruing or resulting to any person, firm or corporation who may be injured or damaged by the Demonstrator and/or the Demonstrator's paid or volunteer assistants in the performance of this Agreement.

Signature: _____
Demonstrator

Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Signature: _____
Contracts Manager
California Exposition & State Fair

Date: _____

Cal Expo Fairgrounds
1600 Exposition Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95815

Mailing Address:
ATTN: CA Kitchen
P.O. Box 15649
Sacramento, CA 95852

CONTACT: Michelle Johnson
mejohanson@calexpo.com
916-263-3189

DO NOT EMAIL THIS FORM**Submit by post mail or submit info online at [Megan's Law](#)***--Sworn Officers & Active Military Are Exempt from This Process--***CALIFORNIA EXPOSITION & STATE FAIR
MEGAN'S LAW
(MULTIPLE APPLICANT)**

One of the fundamental responsibilities of the California Exposition & State Fair (Cal Expo) is to protect the public. In 1998, Cal Expo implemented a policy requiring that all persons conducting business with, employed by, or volunteering at Cal Expo shall provide the necessary personal information to enable their names to be searched through the Department of Justice's Megan's Law files. This file consists of records of individuals convicted of specific sex offenses who are required by Penal Code Section 290 to register as sex offenders.

Requesting Department Information

NAME	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL
Michelle Johnson	916-263-3189	mejohanson@calexpo.com
DEPARTMENT REQUESTING INFORMATION	DATE OF REQUEST	
Culinary Programs – Dept. 420		

MULTIPLE APPLICANT INFORMATION

THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED LEGIBLY, WITH ALL INFORMATION REQUESTED, OR IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

SUBMIT TO THE CAL EXPO PERSONNEL OFFICE PRIOR TO THE EVENT

COMPANY/ORGANIZATION/APPLICANTS NAME SUBMITTING:**PRODUCT/SERVICE PROVIDED:**

Cooking Competition – Dinner 911!

REPRESENTATIVE FULL NAME**PHONE NUMBER**

TYPE OF BUSINESS/GROUP/POSITION (CHECK ONE):

CONTRACTOR CONSULTANT CONCESSIONAIRE ☒ **EXHIBITOR** TENANT VOLUNTEER OTHER:

PRINT CLEARLY. ALL ITEMS MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED OUT AND LEGIBLE.

BY SIGNING BELOW, I CERTIFY THAT THIS IS AN ACCURATE LISTING OF ALL PERSONS SCHEDULED TO WORK/VOLUNTEER FOR LISTED ORGANIZATION WITH CAL EXPO. FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL BE CAUSE FOR REJECTION OF THE ENTIRE APPLICATION.

REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE:

DATE:

____/____/____

APPLICANT FULL NAME:

DATE:

____/____/____

DATE OF BIRTH:

ZIP CODE:

DRIVER'S LICENSE/ID #:

ISSUING STATE:

PHONE NUMBER:

____/____/____

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APPLICANT FULL NAME:

DATE:

____/____/____

DATE OF BIRTH:

ZIP CODE:

DRIVER'S LICENSE/ID #:

ISSUING STATE:

PHONE NUMBER:

____/____/____

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DO NOT EMAIL THIS FORM**Submit by post mail or submit info online at [Megan's Law](#)**