Official Rules for the 20th Annual Manatee County Fair Fun Charity Barbecue Contest

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www.manateecountyfair.com

1. **CONTESTANT** – A contestant is any individual or group, hereinafter referred to as a team, which will prepare and cook an entry for the purpose of being judged according to Manatee County Fair Barbecue Committee (MCF) rules at a sanctioned contest. Each team will be comprised of a head cook and as many assistants as required. A contest organizer of an MCF sanctioned contest may not cook in any category in that contest. Neither an immediate family member of a competing cook team nor any cook team member of that cook team may enter the judging area at any time during the contest. Violation of these rules may result in disqualification from the contest.

2. **INTERPRETATION of RULES** - The interpretation of the MCF rules and regulations are those of the MCF Representative at the contest and his or her decisions are final. The MCF Representative may not deviate from nor change any MCF rule for any contest for any reason.

3. **EQUIPMENT** – Each team will utilize their own charcoal cooker for the event. The charcoal grill to be used must be no larger than 36 inches in diameter.

4. **MEAT INSPECTION** – All meats supplied to contestants will be USDA inspected and passed. No pre-seasoning, injecting, marinating or cooking of any entry is permitted until after inspection by an MCF representative or the contest organizer. All meat will be inspected at 9 AM on the day of the contest. Prior to cooking, all meat that is resting in preparation for cooking must be covered at all times. All meats must be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees F. After cooking, all meat must be maintained at a minimum temperature of 140 degrees F in a covered container until turned in for judging. All contest meat, once inspected, may not leave the cook team's site until turned in.

5. **COOKING FUELS** – The only approved cooking media are wood, charcoal, or wood pellets. A gas starter (i.e. lighter fluid) may be used to initiate the charcoal fire. A gas starter, gas flame, or electrical heating element may not be used in the cooker after the meat has entered the cooker or during the cooking process. A gas flame or electrical heating element may not be used in the cooker during any part of the cooking process. Charcoal will be supplied by the Manatee County Fair.

6. **CONTESTANT'S SITE** – Each team will be assigned a cook site. All equipment including cooker, canopy, etc. must be contained within this space. If additional space is required, the team should contact the contest organizer and make satisfactory arrangements. Contestants will be set

up on the north end of the fairgrounds. Contestants may drop off equipment at Gate 2 located on 17th St. West at 8 AM on January 24, 2026.

7. **BEHAVIOR** – Every team, including members and guests, are expected and required to exhibit proper and courteous behavior at all times. No alcoholic beverages will be permitted. Failure to abide by these rules of behavior may result in expulsion from the contest and repeat offenders will be barred from competing in the MCF sanctioned contests.

8. **CLEANLINESS AND SANITATION** – All teams are expected to maintain their cook sites in an orderly and clean manner and use good sanitary practices during the preparation, cooking, and judging process. Teams are responsible for cleanup of their site once the competition has ended.

9. **KITCHEN ACCESS** – Contestants will be allowed access to the sink area of an adjacent kitchen during the competition for the purposes of cleaning utensils and vessels only. The kitchen area and the appliances shall not be used for any purposes.

10. **MEAT CATEGORIES** – Meat for each annual contest will be determined by MCF prior to each year's contest.

11. **JUDGING –** MCF sanctioning allows for blind judging only. Entries will be submitted in an MCF supplied turn - in container, with NO garnish, or decorating of any kind. Only the entry to be judged is allowed in the container. Marking of any kind will disqualify the entry. Each entry will be judged on Appearance, Aroma, Texture, Taste / Flavor, and Overall Preparation. Meat may be sauced or un-sauced. A minimum of 4 separate and identifiable portions must be submitted.

12. **SCORING** – Each entry will be scored by a minimum of 3 MCF certified judges in the area of Appearance, Aroma, Texture, Taste / Flavor, and Overall Preparation. Scoring ranges from a low of 0.0 to a high of 10.0 in increments of 0.5 points for each category. Using a weighted average, the maximum score for a category is 50 points. Any entry that is disqualified as per section 12 will receive a zero for all three categories from all three judges at the table.

13. **DISQUALIFICATION** – An entry can be disqualified by an MCF representative only. An entry can be disqualified for any of the following reason:

A: There is evidence of marking or sculpting. Marking is defined as: any handwritten or mechanically made mark inside or outside the turn in box that identifies the submitting team to any judge. Sculpting is defined as: the carving, decorating, forming, or shaping of a meat entry contained in a turn-in box that identifies the submitting team to any judge.
B: There is anything in the box besides the meat.
C: There is less than the minimum of 4 separate and identifiable pieces.
D: The entry is turned in after the officially designated time.
E: Not cooking the meat that was supplied by MCF
F: Violation of any rules described herein.

14. **JUDGING PROCEDURE** – The judging table captain brings all boxes to the table. The table captain announces the number of the box to be judged, opens that box and checks for any rule violations such as marking, insufficient numbers of samples etc. All judges score this box for

presentation. Each judge then takes a sample and scores the box. The table captain makes sure all scores for that box are recorded before moving the box. After the box has been scored the table captain will return the box to a designated area. The table captain will then collect the judging slips and turn them over to the MCF representative.

15. **WINNERS** – The winners will be determined by adding all the scores together and the team with the most points will be 1st place, the team with the next highest total will be 2nd place etc. In the event of a tie the next lowest rank will be omitted and the tied teams will be awarded the same rank.

16. **TURN IN TIMES** – Each contest entry will be turned in by the designated time. Turn-in times will be randomly assigned to each team at the start of the competition. Turn in boxes and their contents become property of the Manatee County Fair Barbecue Committee at the moment they are placed on the turn-in table. Team captain and team members may take any leftover meat.

2027 Annual Charity Fun Barbecue Cook-Off
General Information

1. The barbecue cook-off will take place at the Manatee County Fairgrounds on Saturday, January 23, 2027.

2. A participation fee of $50 is required for each team.

3. The competition is limited to 15 teams and preference will be given to the first 15 teams to submit their completed application and participation fee to the Fair office. Applications and fee may be mailed to the fair office or dropped off at the following addresses:

Mail to: Manatee River Fair Association, Inc. Attn: Cindy Patterson 1402 14th Ave. Palmetto, FL. 34221
Drop Off at: Fair Office - 1303 13th St W, Palmetto

4. Participating teams must commit to providing all winnings to the Manatee County Charity of their choice. Each team must define their participating Charity prior to the day of the competition.

5. This year's meat selection will be Boston Butt. However, be ready for a possible surprise.

6. Participants may select their meat at 9:00 AM on the day of the competition.

7. Submission times for judging will be distributed along with the meat selection.

8. The Manatee County Fair will provide charcoal, starter fluid and lighters.

9. The Charities of the top three winning teams will be awarded in the following amounts: 1st Place- $500, 2nd Place-$250 and 3rd Place- $150.