

## 2026 JUDGING PROCEDURES

KCBS sanctioning allows for blind judging only. Entries will be submitted in an approved KCBS numbered container provided by the contest organizer. The container may be re-numbered by the KCBS Contest Rep or authorized personnel before being presented to the judges.

- 1) Judges may not socialize with teams on turn-in day until conclusion of judging. Judges may walk through the cooking site and exchange pleasantries with cooks, but they may not enter a cook's area or engage in extended conversations. Visiting the day before the contest or after judging is encouraged.
- 2) Judging will be done by a team of 6 persons at each judging table, who are at least 16 years of age. KCBS Reps will determine the optimum number of tables of judges needed to properly judge the contest. Only Judges, Contest Reps and approved support staff are allowed in the judging during the judging process. No other activities are permitted in the judging area during the judging process. Judging area staff (except for approved media or KCBS Contest Representatives) may not take pictures of entries. If a team is cooking at a contest, a team member(s) and/or family member(s) of that team cannot judge or change numbers at that contest. A Family Member is defined as a person living at the same address and/or immediate family which is husband, wife, significant other, and children, father, mother, sister, or brother. The team/family member(s) may work Leftover, Table Captain, or Turn-in (except Number Changer), if assigned by the Rep at that contest. The team/family member will abide by the "Fraternization Rule" concerning being in and around the cook sites, including the team in question. Participating team/family members must advise the Reps/Judge Coordinator of their relationship with the participating team to avoid conflict and disappointment.

- 3) A KCBS Contest Representative assigned to a contest has the authority to remove a judge or table captain at any time. Grounds for removal include, but are not limited to:
  - Not following the rules after being warned
  - Talking during the judging process
  - Sickness
  - Disruptive child
  - Less than 16 years of age
  - Appears intoxicated or under the influence of a mind-altering substance
  - Advising other judges how to score
  - Scoring too high or too low
- 4) Each judge will first score all the samples for appearance of the meat. Once determined legal, garnish is not to be considered in scoring for Appearance. The turn-in containers will then be passed around the table and each judge will place a sample from each of the containers in the appropriate box on the judging plate. Judges shall not lick their fingers while taking these samples; paper towels, non-scented wipes or damp wash cloths are preferred. If serving utensils are provided by the contest organizer to remove samples from entry boxes, these are to remain with the box and cannot be used by judges to sample the meats. Gloves that are provided by the contest organizer or approved in advance by the KCBS Contest Representative may be used when removing samples from the entry boxes. Gloves should be wiped clean of sauce between entries. These are not to be worn during the actual sampling of the meats. The judge will then score each entry for taste and tenderness, before moving on to the next entry. Ranking of entries to determine a score is not allowed. Each entry should be judged on its own merit without comparison of other entries.
- 5) Water, provided by the contest organizer, is the only liquid allowed at the judging table. No personal drinking containers are allowed at the table during the entire judging process.

- 6) The scoring system is all whole numbers inclusive of 9 through 5 and 2: The following whole numbers may be used: 9-excellent, 8-very good, 7-good, 6-fair, 5-poor, and 2-inedible.
- 7) When a judge or table captain finds what is potentially a foreign object in the turn-in container or on a piece of meat from the container, he or she shall immediately call a KCBS Contest Representative to inspect and make a determination of the finding. A hair or brush bristle can be removed by the judge if he/she is willing to continue judging that sample without prejudice; a different sample may be taken if there are enough present in the entry box or a large sample(s) can be divided to assure all judges have enough for judging. If none of these can be done, the table captain or an alternate judge can be used to score the sample from which the hair or bristle was removed.
- 8) A score of one (1) is a penalty or disqualification and requires approval by a Contest Rep. Grounds for penalty/disqualification: All judges will give a one (1) in Appearance for prohibited garnish, pooled sauce, or less than 6 samples of meat. All judges will give a one (1) in all criteria for sculptured meat, a marked turn-in container, foreign object in the container, or incorrect meat. All judges not receiving a sample will give a one (1) in all criteria.

An exception to this rule are small items that are NOT seen at the time of appearance scoring and are inside, underneath, or attached to one judge's sample; for example, a small piece of foil that may be the result of the use of a thermal probe that pushed a piece of foil inside a sample and was not outwardly visible. In this situation, the judge receiving the sample with the foil or foreign object will score the entry with a one (1) in all categories. All other judges will score the entry as though there was no object in the box.

Once the sixth judge has taken his or her sample and the box is closed and released for the leftover table, nothing inside, outside, or underneath can be used to determine that the box has been marked or contained foreign items.

**Dropped box(es):**

- If an entry is dropped before being judged for Appearance, all judges are to give the entry the highest score on that table for Appearance.
- If all pieces in the entry have not touched the floor, salvage any meat not contaminated and divide so every judge can get an ample sample. If it is dropped while the judges are removing their samples, divide the clean samples on previous judges' plates and distribute to remaining judges. If a judge refuses to take a salvaged sample, see if there is an alternate judge willing to do so.
- In the event samples cannot be salvaged and judged, scores from all cards in that category will be averaged and that average will be used as the dropped entry(s) score(s). If the contest has over 30 contestants, an average of at least 5 randomly selected tables will be used to determine an average.

9) For every category, a judge may not leave the table or clear his/her judging plate until the table captain has returned from turning in the score cards to the KCBS Contest Representative and has confirmed they have been cleared to do so.

10) The weighting factors for the point system are:  
Appearance - .5600, Taste – 2.2972,  
Tenderness - 1.1428.

11) The low score will be thrown out. Results will be tallied. If there is a tie in one of the categories, it will be broken by the computer, as follows: The scores will be compared (counting all five judges) for the highest

cumulative scores in taste, then tenderness, then appearance. If still tied, then the low score, which was thrown out, will be compared and the higher of the low scores will break the tie. If still tied, then a computer-generated coin toss will be used.

12) In the event of lost, destroyed, or missing score cards the remaining score cards will be averaged in each category and those averages shall be used as the missing scores on replacement score cards. After there are six total score cards the normal procedure will be followed for dropping the low score. These correct scores will be the official scores for any and all KCBS purposes.

13) Total points per entry will determine the champion within each meat category.

14) Cumulative points for only the four (4) KCBS categories will determine the Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion. No additional cooking responsibility may be required for consideration for Grand Champion or prize monies. No prize monies can be withheld for non-participation in ancillary categories.



## KANSAS CITY BARBEQUE ★ SOCIETY ★

### 2026 Official Judging Procedures

The following rules, regulations, and judging procedures will be used at all KCBS Sanctioned **Master Series** and **Backyard** Contests  
Effective November 10, 2025

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#### **CREED**

Rules are designed to be fair and equal to all cooks. Integrity of the Contestants, Judges, KCBS Contest Representatives, and Organizers is essential.

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*For all contests starting  
11/10/2025 through 12/31/2026*