



REAL FOOD for KIDS

CULINARY CHALLENGE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026
Hayfield Secondary School
Alexandria, Virginia



SPONSOR – EXHIBIT – ADVERTISE

Sign up today to support the
National Capital Region's most exciting
student culinary event of the year!

THE REAL FOOD FOR KIDS CULINARY CHALLENGE

Since 2012, the Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge has given DMV area students a voice in what is served in their school cafeterias. The “challenge” at the heart of this competition is the same one faced by school food professionals every day, to craft healthy and delicious menu items that meet USDA guidelines and adhere to strict per meal budgets.

Student teams research and develop their recipes during the fall and winter in preparation for the capstone event in the spring. Draft recipes are reviewed by School Nutrition Professionals to ensure they meet federal guidelines, and all lunch entries follow the same budgets and regulations used in school meal programs.

At the capstone event, lunch entries are judged by a panel of celebrity chefs, school food leaders, food industry professionals, and students. Judging is followed by a Public Tasting and Exhibition, where attendees sample dishes and vote in the Community Choice Awards. The event concludes with an Awards Ceremony. Prizes are awarded to winning teams, and dishes created for this challenge are adapted by area school cafeterias for service the following fall. Recipes are also adapted by restaurant partners and served to the public.

Thousands of students across the DC region have participated in the Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge, creating innovative recipes for school cafeterias and gaining practical experience in culinary skills and nutrition that can support healthy habits throughout their lives. Some student participants have even gone on to work with participating chef judges, demonstrating the powerful mentorship and career pathways this program creates.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026

Hayfield Secondary School, Alexandria, VA

What are the categories?

School Lunch

School Breakfast

Smart Snack



The 2024 Culinary Challenge 1st place winning dish from the team at Takoma Park Middle School

The 2026 Culinary Challenge competing student teams represent **14 middle and high schools** across the DMV from **five separate districts**.



Chef Kevin Tien

2025 & 2026 CULINARY CHALLENGE
EVENT CHAIR
OWNER/EXECUTIVE CHEF, MOON RABBIT

2026 CULINARY CHALLENGE JUDGE LINEUP INCLUDES:

- Tom Sietsema, Former Food Critic, The Washington Post
- Matt Adler, Chef Owner, Caruso's Grocery and Cucina Morini
- Daniela Moreira, Owner/Executive Chef, Call Your Mother
- Jamie Leeds, Owner, Hanks Oyster Bar
- Paolo Dungca, Chef Owner, Kayu
- Jason Tepper, Executive Chef, Alexandria City Public Schools
- Sidney Ide, Former CC Student Participant and Herndon Team Lead 2025

LIVE CELEBRITY CHEF DEMONSTRATION:

- Isabel Coss, Executive Chef of Pascual & Executive Pastry Chef of Lutèce

MARKETING & AUDIENCE REACH

In addition to the actual event, the Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge is aggressively marketed throughout the DC metro region through local DMV news outlets, community calendars, PTA networks, and participating schools' promotional efforts, as well as through our email and social media channels, reaching a wide and influential audience.

Audience

The Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge continues to grow each year. This year, we anticipate **300 to 350 audience members** at the capstone event on February 28, 2026. Sponsors also have the opportunity to reach over **250,000** local residents through email, social media, and other digital platforms.

The Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge offers a unique opportunity for you to reach an influential local audience during the event including:

- Local and regional elected officials
- School administrators
- Teachers
- Parents
- Press & Media
- Celebrity Culinary Professionals

Each year, the Culinary Challenge has also been covered throughout the day with various television segments on ABC7, FOX and NBC4 news. The event has also been featured in The Washington Post, The Sun Gazette, Eater, Loudoun Now, and FCPS news.

This year, various opportunities to engage with the Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge audience include:

SPONSORSHIP

EVENT EXHIBIT SPACE

PROGRAM ADVERTISING

SPONSORSHIP

Support local students as they engage in this one-of-a-kind learning and leadership experience. Your investment strengthens the health and well being of students throughout the region and helps build a strong foundation for their future.

Sponsorship benefits include being featured prominently on the Real Food for Kids website and Culinary Challenge event registration page, in e-mail newsletters, and across social media, and featured on television and event signage and other print material.

Join a community of chefs, educators, parents, and partners who believe every child deserves real, healthy food.

Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge 2025 Sponsors included:

SILVER DINNER

MOON RABBIT
BY KEVIN TIEN

**CHEF
TIM MA**

**Lucky Danger
ANY DAY NOW
Laoban Dumplings**



Fairfax County, Virginia
Connect with America



VIRGINIA
RESTAURANT • LODGING • TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION

J. HOLLINGER'S
WATERMAN'S CHOPHOUSE



THE RITZ-CARLTON
WASHINGTON, DC



**Kitchen
OF PURPOSE**

RASA

SPONSORSHIP



Sponsors are prominently featured on the Real Food for Kids website, Culinary Challenge event registration page, email newsletters, social media platforms, television segments, event signage, and other printed materials.

Most importantly, your sponsorship of the Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge supports local students as they engage in this one-of-a-kind learning and leadership opportunity. Your investment will have a lasting impact on the health and well-being of students in our region today and for years to come.



Silver Diner's Chef Ype Von Hengst on the Culinary Challenge awards stage

Major sponsors receive prominent recognition and have an on-stage speaking opportunity during the event.



DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS AND CONNECT WITH A UNIQUE AND INFLUENTIAL AUDIENCE.

CONTACT US TO DISCUSS THE SPONSORSHIP PACKAGE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU.

realfoodforkids.org/cc26-getinvolved

CULINARY CHALLENGE SPONSORSHIP AT-A-GLANCE

BENEFITS

SIGNATURE

ENTHUSIAST

SUPPORTER

COMMUNITY

\$10,000

\$5,000

\$2,500

\$500

Opportunity to include Featured Product in other Real Food for Kids programs + promotions (subject to RFFK approval)

Announcement of Sponsorship in a planned Press Release
Mention in any subsequent News Coverage on the event
(whenever possible)

Prominent Mention in Real Food for Kids' Annual Report

Mention in Real Food for Kids' Annual Report

Prominent Listing on the Real Food for Kids Website's
Homepage, including the sponsor's logo + link to website

Premier Recognition on the Culinary Challenge page, with our
gratitude and appreciation, including the sponsor's logo
w/link to website

Mention on the Culinary Challenge Website Page, including
the sponsor's logo and link to the sponsor's website

Premier Listing on the Culinary Challenge's Event Registration
Page

Sponsor Highlight and Ongoing Recognition on Culinary
Challenge Email Outreach and Digital Promotion

Mention on Culinary Challenge Email Outreach and Digital
Promotion

Sponsor Highlight and Recognition on Social Media (including
tagged content to social media pages)

Ongoing Mention in Culinary Challenge Social Media Posts

Re-sharing of Sponsor's Social Media Content

Logo on Event Stage Screen

Sponsorship Recognition on all Event Signage, including at
the reception/registration table, podium sign, and more.

Opportunity to provide free-standing Signage or Banner for
display during the event (to be supplied by Sponsor)

Sponsorship Recognition on select Event Signage

Premier Listing in Event Program with our gratitude and
appreciation, including the sponsor's logo

Sponsor Listing in the Event Program

Event Program Ad

Premier Recognition during Opening Remarks at the event

On-stage Speaking Opportunity during the event

Complimentary 6' x 30" skirted Exhibit Table and two
chairs in Tasting Room, co-located with student teams
(Sponsor is welcome to distribute product samples or literature
to attendees)

Sponsor | Exhibit | Advertise

2026 Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge

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EXHIBIT SPACE

Exhibitors are located in the heart of the Culinary Challenge public space, co-located alongside student teams providing recipe samples. You are guaranteed a constant flow of foot traffic to your table.

Real Food for Kids Culinary Challenge Exhibitors...

- Interact with culinary and health-focused students exploring career paths
- Connect with visionary school nutrition directors reshaping the school food landscape and renowned local chefs
- Meet with educators seeking new and interesting resources and ideas for their classrooms
- Engage with policymakers supporting school wellness
- Increase brand awareness and build customers



Stand-alone Exhibit space is available for \$250 (free for non-profit organizations).

This option is included for free with all Sponsorship levels.

Space is limited. *Register by January 1, 2026.*

INCLUDES:

- One 6'x30" skirted table and two chairs
- Company/Organization recognition in the event program, signage and on event website.

ADVERTISING

Event Program Advertisement Rates

Full Page Color \$200

Half Page Color \$150

One-Fourth Page \$100

CONTACT US TODAY TO SECURE YOUR SPONSORSHIP, INCLUDING EXHIBIT SPACE, AND/OR PROGRAM AD FOR THE **2026 REAL FOOD FOR KIDS CULINARY CHALLENGE!**

CULINARY CHALLENGE SCHEDULE



Saturday, February 28, 2026: Tentative Schedule for Sponsors & Exhibitors

10:15 AM	Sponsors/Exhibitors arrive at Hayfield Secondary School.
10:15 AM – 11:30 AM	Sponsors/Exhibitors set up their table in the Tasting and Exhibition Room.
11:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Live Cooking Demo with award-winning chef Isabel Coss of Pascual DC.
12:00 PM – 1:15 PM	Tasting and Exhibition Room opens to the public <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sponsor/Exhibition Tables open to public• Public Tasting for Showcase dishes (There will be press and VIPs in the Tasting Room throughout the morning.)• Community Choice Awards public voting opens for showcase categories
1:15 PM	Awards Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lunch Competition Winners (1st, 2nd, 3rd), and Smart Snack & Breakfast Community Choice (public voting)
2:00 PM	Exhibitors Tables close / Program Ends

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CULINARY CHALLENGE

realfoodforkids.org/cc26-getinvolved

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