



GEORGIA BARBECUE ASSOCIATION
2025 CONTEST RULES AND REGULATIONS (Teams)
Revised February 2025

Georgia Barbecue Association Rules for Barbecue Contest Participants. These rules are in effect for all GBA sanctioned contests.

1. **CONTESTANT:** A contestant is any individual, group, restaurant, etc. (hereinafter referred to as a team) that will prepare and cook an entry or entries for the purpose of being judged according to Georgia Barbecue Association (hereafter referred to as GBA) rules at a GBA sanctioned contest. Each team will consist of a head cook and as many assistants as required. At least one member of the contest team must be a current member of the GBA. The contest organizer of a GBA sanctioned contest may not cook in any category in that contest. No competing cook team member, nor immediate family member of a competing cook team, may enter the judging area at any time during the contest unless requested by the lead contest representative. No photos are permitted inside the judging area without the prior permission of the lead GBA representative.
2. **INTERPRETATION OF RULES:** The interpretation of the GBA rules and regulations are those of the GBA Lead Representative at the contest and his or her decisions are final. The GBA Representative may not deviate from nor change any GBA rule for any contest for any reason.
3. **EQUIPMENT:** Each team will supply all the equipment necessary for the preparation and cooking of their entry including a cooker, wood, charcoal, or wood pellets. No team may share a cooker or grill with any other team.
4. **MEAT INSPECTION:** All meats must be USDA or state DA inspected and passed. No Cell Cultured meat is allowed in GBA Sanctioned competitions or GBA In Association With Events. Pre-trimming of competition product is allowed. No pre- seasoning, injecting, marinating, or cooking of any entry is permitted until after inspection by the Official Meat Inspector as appointed by

the GBA Lead Representative. Meat inspection begins at 9 AM on the day prior to the contest. All meat must be maintained at a maximum temperature of 40 degrees F prior to inspection. 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 Fahrenheit. After cooking, all meat must be maintained at a minimum temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit in a covered container until turned in for judging. All contest meat – once inspected – may not leave the cook team’s site until turn in.

5. **COOKING FUELS:** The only approved cooking fuels are wood, charcoal or wood pellets. Gas (any type) or any electrical heating element may be used only to start the initial fire or to start burn barrels, charcoal chimneys, etc. A gas starter or flame or electrical heating element may not enter the cooker after the initial fire is started. Gas bottles must be disconnected from the cooker once the fire has started and must be removed from the immediate cooking area. A gas flame or electrical heating element may not be used as any part of the cooking process.
6. **APPROVED COOKERS:** Any cooker, homemade or commercially manufactured, will be allowed to compete in GBA contest. Only wood, charcoal, or wood pellet fired cookers are permitted. Electric or hand-operated rotisseries or rotating shelves are allowed.
7. **CONTESTANT’S SITE:** Each team will be assigned a cook site. All equipment including cooker, canopy, trailer, etc. must be contained within this space. If additional space is required, the team should contact the contest organizer and make satisfactory arrangements.
8. **BEHAVIOR:** Every team, including members and guests, are expected and required to exhibit proper and courteous behavior at all times. Failure to do so may result in disqualification or expulsion from the contest. Repeat offenders will be barred from competing in future GBA sanctioned contests. No alcoholic beverages will be distributed to the General Public. Teams will be informed of all local laws by the contest organizer and will adhere to same. Pictures of turn in boxes shall not be electronically transmitted until after the contest awards.
9. **CLEANLINESS AND SANITATION:** All teams are expected to maintain their cook sites in an orderly and clean manner and to use good sanitary practices during the preparation, cooking and turn-in preparation process. The use of sanitary gloves is required at all times while handling food. Failure to use sanitary gloves may result in disqualification. Teams are responsible for

cleanup of their site once the competition has ended. All federal, state and local food safety rules and regulations must be adhered to at all times.

10. MEAT CATEGORIES: The following categories are sanctioned by the GBA.

- Pork Ribs: Loin back, baby back or spareribs only. Ribs must be cooked as part of a rack of at least 8 ribs. No country style ribs.
- Pork Loin: A boneless loin of pork that includes no portion of the tenderloin. Loin may be divided into no more than 2 pieces for cooking purposes.
- Pork: whole bone in Shoulder, bone in Boston Butt, bone in Picnic, or whole bone in Ham, to be cooked bone in and may be parted after reaching 145 degrees internal temperature. No Pork Collar allowed.

11. JUDGING: GBA sanctioning allows for blind judging only. Entries will be submitted only in the 9" x 9" container provided by the contest organizer 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, TENDERNESS, TASTE and OVERALL IMPRESSION. Meat may be sauced or un-sauced.

12. SCORING: Each entry will be scored by six (6) GBA certified judges in the areas of APPEARANCE, TENDERNESS, TASTE and OVERALL IMPRESSION. The lowest score for each team in each criteria is dropped, and the remaining five (5) scores for each team in each criteria are then used to determine the overall score. Scoring for Appearance, Tenderness and Taste range from a low of seven (7) to a high of ten (10). The scoring for Overall Impression ranges from 9.1 to 10.0 in 0.1 increments. Using a weighted average, the maximum score for a category is 600 points.

13. DISQUALIFICATION: An entry may be disqualified by the GBA Lead Representative only and may occur at any time during the judging process. An entry may be disqualified for any of the following reasons:

- 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.
- There is anything in the box besides the meat.
- There are not a minimum of six (6) separate and identifiable pieces.
- There is evidence of blood such that the meat is undercooked.
- The entry is turned in after the officially designated time.
- Gloves are not used while handling food products.
- Not cooking any entry as required by the rules.

- Not cooking the meat that was inspected.

14. JUDGING PROCEDURE: The GBA uses comparative judging. All the boxes are grouped randomly, brought to the table, and placed in sequential order. After the judges are seated, the boxes are opened and all judges score the boxes for appearance. When all judges have scored for appearance, judging for tenderness and taste begin. The overall impression is scored after the other three criteria have been scored. A GBA representative will collect the score cards.

15. WINNERS: The entries with the top three scores in each category will be judged again by a panel of six final judges. The lowest score for each team in each criteria is dropped, and the remaining five (5) scores for each team in each criteria are then used to determine the overall score. Each of these teams will be notified of their selection as a finalist as soon as possible. The final judges will compare all finals entries against all other finals entries to determine first, second and third in each category and the GRAND CHAMPION. The Grand Champion is the entry with the highest score in finals. The Reserve Grand Champion is the team with the highest combined scores in the preliminary round.

16. TURN-IN TIMES: Each meat category turn-in time will allow for a 15-minute window for preliminaries and a 5- minute window for finals. The GBA lead representative at a contest may alter these times if circumstances require. If any of the times are modified all teams will be notified as soon as possible.

The standard turn-in times for all contests shall be as follows:

Preliminary Turn-in Times:

PORK LOIN	9:45 – 10:00
PORK	10:45 – 11:00
RIBS	11:45 – 12:00

Finals Turn-in Times:

PORK LOIN	1:25 – 1:30
PORK	1:55 – 2:00
RIBS	2:25 – 2:30