# MRE Challenge

(Florida-only; this contest does not advance to the national level)

## PURPOSE

MREs, or Meals Ready to Eat, are the main operational food ration for the United States Armed Forces. It originated from the c-rations and k-rations from World War II and are still the US Army's primary ration. This contest will challenge a team of 2 students to use their culinary experience and creativity to work together and prepare a meal.

## ELIGIBILITY

Open to all active SkillsUSA members enrolled in a high school or post-secondary program with Culinary Arts or Commercial Baking/Pastry Arts as an occupational objective. Middle school competitors must be enrolled in a middle school exploratory course that prepares them for future study in a career and technical education pathway.

Students will compete in teams of 2. Both students must be paid, registered members of SkillsUSA in the same division (middle school, high school or college/post-secondary). Penalties for incomplete teams will be assessed in accordance with the SkillsUSA Championships General Regulations at 50% of the final score. Regional coordinators will make final determination of participating teams.

## CLOTHING REQUIREMENTS

*Class G: Culinary/Commercial Baking Attire:*

- White or black work pants or black-and-white checkered chef's pants
- Plain white or black chef's jacket with no identifying marks (school name, contestant name, etc.). SkillsUSA logo is not required.
- White or black work shoes (non-slip, no sneakers) with black or white socks
- Undershirt, plain white t-shirt (optional)
- White apron with no identifying marks (school name, contestant name, etc.). SkillsUSA logo is not required.
- Hat – chef's toque and hairnet or similar. No baseball caps permitted.
- Neckerchief is optional.

*Uniform Standards:*

1. Uniforms must be clean and free from stains and wrinkles.
2. Teams must wear the same uniform (i.e., both team members wear black chef coat and black work pants).
3. No names or logos may be displayed on uniforms, except for the SkillsUSA logo. Any identifying information must be covered with adhesive tape or other material. Tape or other material must be provided by the contestant.
4. Hair must be restrained, and hats worn properly.
5. Students must be properly groomed and practice good hygiene. Male students must be clean-shaven, or beards and/or mustaches neatly trimmed and covered with a beard guard. Fingernails should be short and clean, and nail polish is not permitted.
6. No jewelry is permitted. Only 1 Plain wedding band (no stones) and 1 watch are allowed.

## WRITTEN EXAM

Each team member will complete a written technical assessment based on general culinary and/or baking knowledge, and a Professional Development Assessment. The test may be completed online in advance, or onsite at the contest. The scores will be averaged for the team members to include in the overall team score.

## SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

### *To be supplied by the Technical Committee/Host Site:*

- One 6-foot table per team for preparation, plus one table for plate presentation
- Community pantry with dried herbs, spices and other pantry items
- 2oz plastic ramekins or similar, for community pantry items
- Access to water and sanitizing solution
- Heavy-duty plastic table covers (for team and presentation tables)
- Plastic silverware for tasting
- Hot and cold cups for beverage presentation
- Judge's packets and scoresheets
- 6-8 MREs per team, plus 2-3 additional for demonstration
- Flameless Ration Heater (FRH)
- Menu planning sheets (4 per team)

### *To be supplied by each team:*

- Hard copy of each team member's resume
- 6 presentation plates (2 per menu item, glass or china, no plastic)
- Two #2 pencils
- 1 cutting board
- Chef's knife
- Sanitizer bucket and towel
- Food service gloves (latex or similar)

### *Additional Approved Items*

Teams may also bring the following items, if desired. No electrical or heating elements are permitted, except for the Flameless Ration Heater provided at the contest site. The Hospitality Committee must approve the use of any hand tools or equipment not on this list in advance. To request an exception, email Jpressinger@acfchefs.org. No other items are allowed in the competition area. Cell phones may not be used at any time during the contest.

- Paring knife
- 1 set stainless steel bowls
- 1 set measuring spoons
- 2 rubber spatulas
- 2 whisks
- Honing steel
- Ounce scale
- 2 slotted spoons
- 2 solid spoons
- 2 ladles – 1oz/2oz
- 2 half sheet pans
- 1 pastry brush
- 1 pastry bag
- Assorted pastry tips
- 1 offset spatula
- 1 instant read thermometer
- 1 cheese grater
- 4 side towels per team
- Small china cap
- Meat mallet
- Canape cutters
- Plastic squeeze bottles

## CONTEST GUIDELINES

1. Please review the contest carefully, study the contest packet in advance. Have a plan and bring any notes you may need to execute your menu.
    - To practice in advance, reach out to your local Army, Navy, Marine, or Coast Guard recruiter's office and see if they are willing to donate MREs, and if they have anyone with experience who could help you learn how to use the FRH and materials.
    - MREs may also be purchased online from sites like Amazon, or from a local military base by a member of the armed services or dependent.
2. During orientation for the contest, the contest committee will review the contest outline and answer questions, demonstrate the FRH, review community pantry items and procedures, and any other important information.
3. Contact a judge to look at your garbage before removing anything from your station.
4. You will present one plate to your assigned section for the public to see and one plate for judges to taste.
5. Raise your hand and ask for assistance if there is anything that you do not understand. There will be a period just before the start of the contest when all questions will be answered for all contestants to hear. Once the competition starts, any questions about technique or definitions, etc. will not be answered.
6. Remember two things – This is about LEARNING, and it should be FUN. If at any time you feel overwhelmed and feel that you cannot continue, speak to a judge. We are here for you!
7. Clean as you go. Sanitation is an evaluative criterion used throughout the competition. Keep your work area and all tools, utensils, and equipment clean and sanitary. Each contestant is expected to assist with the overall clean-up/ breakdown of the competition area at the end of the event or be subject to sanitation score penalties.
8. Observers are allowed to view the competition, provided there is a suitable area separate from the competition. Observers may not talk, gesture, or otherwise communicate with contestants. Contestants who interact with or receive help from observers risk penalties or disqualification. The judges reserve the right to close the contest and/or remove observers to avoid distractions.

## SCOPE OF CONTEST

Contestants will demonstrate their culinary knowledge and sanitation, as well as their ability to utilize and be creative with military issue MREs. Contestants will produce two servings of each item below. One plate will be displayed for public viewing, and one plate will be submitted for judging/tasting.

- Appetizer
- Entrée
- Dessert
- 12oz beverage (hot or cold)

Competitors will be judging on the following criteria:

- Proper use of commercial tools, utensils, and equipment
- Mise en place skills
- Menu planning and preparation
- Proper portioning, plating and garnishing of finished products
- Teamwork
- Safety and Sanitation
- Quality of food items, including taste, texture, flavor, and creative use of ingredients

During the contest orientation, each team member will submit a hard copy of their resume. Failure to submit a resume will result in a penalty of -50 points from the team total. The judges and contest committee will review the schedule and timeline, community pantry, and contest rules. They will also demonstrate how to use the Flameless Ration Heater. Teams may ask questions of the judges during orientation.

Each team will receive 6-8 randomly selected MRE packs. Start times may be staggered, depending on the number of teams entered. A schedule will be posted and discussed during the MRE Flameless Ration Heater (FRH) demonstration and contest orientation meeting. Teams may or may not have the same MREs, but all teams will have the same quantity of materials.

A community pantry is available for use by all teams, including basic dried spices and herbs, salt and pepper, and other general pantry items. During Phase 1 planning, teams may observe the pantry items, but may not remove items until Phase 2 begins. Because these are shared materials, teams may take only what they need using 2oz plastic ramekins or similar vessels provided. Any team collecting or "hoarding" community items risks penalty or disqualification.

Teams will be given 30 minutes for menu planning, 90 minutes for menu preparation, and 5 minutes to present to judges with question-and-answer period. Teams will receive their MREs at the beginning of their planning time. Once the MREs have been received by the team, the 30 minutes for planning will officially begin. Contestants will use the paper provided to plan their menu. Planning sheets should be submitted to the judges during the presentation phase, as well as a one-page, handwritten menu. The menu must be legible, and each menu item should include ingredients or description, as it would appear on a restaurant menu.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

***This is a tentative schedule. Refer to the official contest schedule for reporting times.***

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| 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM | SkillsUSA technical committee and judges arrive, set up stations |
| 8:30 AM – 9:00 AM | SkillsUSA Contestants arrive, stations assigned |
| 9:00 AM – 9:30 AM | Welcome and orientation, instructions, and MRE FRH demonstration |
| 9:30 AM | Phase 1 begins<br>Each team receives 6-8 randomly selected MREs and create a menu and execution plan. A one-page, handwritten menu is prepared to present to the judges during Phase 3. |
| 10:00 AM | Phase 2 begins<br>Each team will prepare 2 plates of the following items:<br>Appetizer<br>Entrée<br>Dessert<br>12oz hot or cold beverage<br>Accompanying items (optional) may be served with or on the menu plates, as desired. |
| 11:30 AM | Phase 3 begins<br>Teams present their items to judges and allow for question-and-answer period. |
| 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM | Lunch for competitors |
| 12:00 PM | Phase 4 begins<br>Judges taste and score all items. Teams clean and sanitize their stations. |
| 1:00 PM – 1:15 PM | Debrief with contest judges |
| 1:15 PM – 2:00 PM | Team pack up and departure |

## SCORING CRITERIA

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| Proper use of tools and equipment | 50 |
| Creative use of ingredients | 50 |
| Mise en Place | 75 |
| Menu planning/preparation | 50 |
| Teamwork | 50 |
| Safety and Sanitation | 75 |
| Appetizer Presentation | 50 |
| Appetizer Taste | 75 |
| Entrée Presentation | 50 |
| Entrée Taste | 75 |
| Dessert Presentation | 50 |
| Dessert Taste | 75 |
| Beverage Presentation | 50 |
| Beverage Taste | 75 |
| Technical Assessment | 100 |
| Professional Development Test | 50 |
| Total possible points | 1000 |
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| PENALTIES | |
| Resume Penalty | -50 |
| Time penalty (per 1 minute) | -10 |