



1. Only ONE team per barbecue pit will be allowed. Multiple entries for contest meats from any one team will not be allowed. Each cooking team will designate one person as head cook. The head cook will be held responsible for the conduct of his/her team & guests. Teams are not allowed to give or sell alcoholic beverages to the public. No items will be sold.
2. Barbecue, for the purpose of this contest, is defined as raw or uncured meat prepared over a wood, charcoal, or propane fire, or with an electric smoker. All meats to be entered into judging will be cooked from scratch within the constraints of the event. All ribs and brisket will be provided to the contestants.
3. Team set-up begins any time after 1pm (noon) Friday, September 18th, 2026. A mandatory head cooks meeting will be Friday, September 18th, at 5:00 pm at the check in area (map to follow). Cooking may begin after the meeting. Any head cook not in attendance at the meeting will forfeit his/her chance at placing in the competition. All equipment shall be removed from the cook-off site no later than noon Sunday, September 20th, 2026.
4. Cooking spaces will be a minimum of 10x20. If you plan to bring a trailer, motor homes, tents and any other equipment that will not fit in this space please let us know. All other vehicles must be out of the cooking area. No four wheelers. No tent stakes can be driven into the asphalt.
5. Each griller will supply all of the equipment necessary for the preparation and cooking of their entry including a cooker. COOKER can ONLY be one of the following: charcoal, wood, propane, or electric fired device. Fires are not to be built on the ground. Holes and pits will not be allowed. Each team must bring a fire extinguisher or have a method to extinguish a fire quickly.
6. In addition to the provided brisket and ribs, each team is asked to provide at least one (1) people's choice item of your choosing. While not all guests will eat your item, please plan to provide for the masses. We estimate 1200-1500 people in attendance.
7. The following cleanliness and safety rules will apply:
 - a. No use of any tobacco products while handling meat.
 - b. Cleanliness of the cook, assistant cooks, cooking device(s) and the team's assigned cooking space is required.

- c. Shirt and shoes are required to be worn.
 - d. Sanitizing of the work area should be implemented with the use of a bleach/water rinse (one cap/gallon of water).
 - e. Each contestant will provide a separate container for washing, rinsing and sanitizing of utensils.
 - f. First aid is not required to be provided by the contest, except at the election of the contest organizer.
 - g. Prior to cooking, meat must be maintained at 40° F or less.
 - h. After cooking, all meat: Must be held at 140° F or above OR Cooked meat shall be cooled as follows: Within 2 hours from 140° F to 70° F and within 4 hours from 70° F to 41° F or less
 - i. Meat that is cooked, properly cooled, and later reheated for hot holding and serving shall be reheated so that all parts of the food reach a temperature of at least 165° F for a minimum of 15 seconds.
8. All applicable local fire department rules and regulations must be complied with. The fire department inspector/fire marshal is regarded as a member of the contest committee.
9. Trash receptacles will be placed throughout the contest area for each contestant to use. It is the responsibility of the BBQ cooking teams to keep their area clean and assist in garbage disposal. Teams that leave their cooking space in disarray will not be allowed to compete in future years.
10. No pets or other animals are allowed in the cook-off area.
11. This is a tailgating event. The official start time of tailgating is 1 p.m. and concludes 30 minutes after the end of the game. You may bring your own coolers with ice and alcohol. No glass is permitted. Please visit http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/administrative_procedures_handbook/tailgate.php for the complete tailgating policy.
12. Absolutely no firearms or explosives will be allowed. The WIU Office of Public Safety and the Concert Safety Corps will be patrolling the grounds throughout the event.
13. Sound amplification is not allowed. You will be given a warning and subject to disqualification on the second complaint.
14. The cook-off goes on rain or shine. No rain out date.
15. The interpretation of the rules and regulations are those of the contest organizer and his or her decisions are final.
16. Space is LIMITED and teams will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. A maximum of 20 teams will be allowed to participate. Your entry must be received no later than September 13th, 2026.

JUDGING

Judging will be conducted by a panel of judges for the following categories:

1. Grand Champion Overall (Top combined scores of ribs and brisket.)
2. Reserve Grand Champion Overall
3. Grand Champion Ribs Overall
4. Reserve Grand Champion Ribs Overall
5. Grand Champion Brisket Overall
6. Reserve Grand Champion Brisket Overall
7. People's Choice

Turn in times: Ribs-12:00 p.m. Brisket-1:00 p.m.

You must provide a runner for your entry. Entries will be taken to the front doors of the Campus Recreation. We will show you where during the cook's meeting.

Winners will be announced roughly around 4:45pm.

Containers for a blind judging will be provided. No greenery or extra sauce is allowed.

The container shall not be marked in any way so as to make the container unique or identifiable. Aluminum foil, toothpicks, skewers, foreign material, and/or stuffing are prohibited in the container. Marked entries or containers with the above listed material will receive a one (1) in all criteria from all Judges and disqualified. Meat shall not be sculptured, branded or presented in a way to make it identifiable. Rosettes of meat slices are not allowed. Violations of this rule will be scored a one (1) on all criteria by all six judges.

Each contestant must submit six (8) portions of meat in the provided container. Brisket should be submitted sliced. Ribs shall be turned in bone-in. Judges may not cut, slice, or shake apart to separate pieces. If there is not enough meat for each judge to sample, the shortened judge(s) will score a one (1) on all criteria, and the judges having samples will change the appearance score to one (1) as a penalty.

A "People's Choice" award will also be given based on the overall votes from the public. Your People's Choice item is your own novelty item. Bring your best recipe to win over the crowd. You may use brisket or ribs for your people's choice item as long as you provide your own meat. All People Choice items must be ready to serve the masses at 2 p.m. You do not need to compete in the People's Choice if you do not wish.

**The committee reserves the right to edit the rules when necessary.*