

Meat & Poultry Ontario
2026 Official Competition Rules



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2026 ONTARIO FINEST MEAT COMPETITION™ RULES

- 1) **ELIGIBILITY:** Participants must be a Business Member of Meat & Poultry Ontario with dues in good standing on the date of registering their entry through to **October 3, 2026** when awards are presented. Non-members that wish to enter the Competition may do so by joining the MPO association prior to **June 5, 2026**.
- 2) **ENTRIES:** All products entered into the Competition must be processed by the Business Member unless under contract with another processor with the identity of that processor acknowledged. Each participant may enter two (2) entries of a different item in each product category. The same product may not be entered into another product category (multiple product categories). MPO has the right to move a product into the appropriate category or disqualify any product that does not meet the rules of the Competition.
- 3) **NEW LOWER PRICE!! - REGISTRATION FEE:** A non-refundable entry fee of **\$150.00** plus HST per item must be submitted with the completed registration form **by 4:30 pm (ET) June 5, 2026**. If a category is cancelled the entry fee will be returned to the entrant. **First time entrants into the Competition will be allowed one (1) complimentary entry with the purchase of their first entry.**
- 4) **RECEIPT OF REGISTRATION:** A confirmation will be sent upon the closing of registration and participants will be provided with a Product Entry Detail Form that must be completed in full, ensuring the product registered matches the product name on the label and/or packaging and accompany each entry when delivered.
- 5) **PRODUCT DELIVERY:** Erb Transport, the official carrier for the Competition, will pick up entries at no charge and deliver to the judging location (unless other arrangements have been made with MPO). All entries must be ready for pick up on **June 19 - 23, 2026**. All entries must be accompanied by a completed Product Entry Detail Form. Shipping details will be provided no later than **June 13, 2026**.

Note: MPO, including its agents, representatives and those associated with them, will take measures to safeguard entries, however, MPO is not responsible for any entry, or notification or the like, which is lost, misdirected or which arrives late, as the case may be, whether or not due to the fault of MPO or of any other person or thing. All entries (including the delivered product) become the property of MPO and will not be returned.

- 6) **CATEGORIES:** Eligible business members can enter two (2) entries of a different item in each of the following categories. Category Definitions (Appendix A) form part of these rules and must be adhered to by all entrants.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| • Fresh Sausage – Pork | • Premium Dried or Dry Cured | • Smoked Sausage – Traditional |
| • Fresh Sausage – Other | • Salumi – Charcuterie | • Premium Wiener |
| • Bacon - Traditional Side | • Sausage - Dry/Semi-Dry – large diameter | • Jerky |
| • Bacon “OPEN” | • Sausage - Dry/Semi-Dry – small diameter | |
| • Cold Cuts | • Smoked Sausage – Specialty | |
| • Deli Roasts | | |
| • Kielbasa | | |

- 7) **CATEGORY CANCELLATION:** Each category must have a minimum of **four (4)** companies registered and a minimum of **six (6)** entries in order to be presented for judging. If a category is cancelled, the entry fee will be returned to the entrant.
- 8) **PRODUCT PREPARATION:** All entries must be produced in a facility regulated by the applicable federal, provincial or municipal inspection programs in Ontario using recognized Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and process controls.
- 9) **PRODUCT PACKAGING:** All entries must be properly identified with the product name and company name as provided on the Product Entry Detail Form. Product must be packaged in a manner to maintain the safety and integrity of the product during distribution and handling (i.e. sealed, leak proof bags or liners).
- 10) **PRODUCT NAME:** Company names will be removed from product name prior to presentation for judging (i.e. Smith's Spicy Hot Smoked Sausage will be changed to Spicy Hot Smoked Sausage).
- 11) **JUDGING:** The judging of the entries shall be divided between a panel of judges representing retail buyers, chefs, food writers, and media. Judging will take place **June 24-25, 2026**.
- 12) **SCORING CRITERIA FOR ALL CATEGORIES:** All entries will be scored based on a point system and the product evaluation guidelines provided to the judges by MPO taking into consideration the following:
Judging will include a Technical Evaluation
 - Visual Appearance:** *Good eye appeal*
 - Flavour:** *Pleasing to the palate*
 - Texture:** *Good mouth feel or bite*
 - Aroma:** *A distinctive, pervasive, and pleasant smell consistent with the product*
 - Uniqueness:** *Possesses distinctive, exceptional characteristics*
- 13) **SCORES:** Individual product score results, category ranking and judges' comments will be provided upon request.
- 14) **AWARDS:** Ontario Finest Meat Competition™ award plaques are presented in each product category. Entries scoring the highest number of points in each category receive the Platinum Award; entries scoring the next highest number of points in each category shall receive the Gold Award; and entries scoring the third highest number of points in each category shall receive the Silver Award.
- 15) **AWARDS GALA:** Platinum Awards will be presented on Saturday, October 3, 2026, at the Awards Gala in Mississauga. Plaques will be presented, and professional photographs taken. Gala tickets may be preordered with registration. All other awards will be available for pick up at the Gala.
- 16) **RON USBORNE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE:** A plaque will be presented to the company achieving the highest accumulated score. Accumulated scores will be calculated by assigning three points for every Platinum placing entry, two points for every Gold and one point for each Silver.
- 17) **DIAMOND AWARD:** A plaque will be presented for the product that received the highest overall score in the competition.

- 18) **PROMOTION:** Winners in each product category will receive:
- a) Personalized plaque,
 - b) Press release distributed province-wide to food, lifestyle, business, trade and agricultural media announcing winners,
 - c) Recognition on meatpoultryon.ca, in BLOCKtalk, and,
 - d) Social media announcements on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- 19) **AWARD WINNING PRODUCT (AWP) LOGO:** Winners will be able to use the AWP logo on product packaging and promotion.
- 20) **PUBLICITY RELEASE:** By entering the Competition, and in consideration of being allowed to participate and possibly winning an award, the entrant:
- a) agrees to the Competition rules,
 - b) agrees to the use, without compensation, of photographs and photographic images of themselves (including any and all photographs and photographic images taken of them and/or their submitted product entry), name and city of business operation in all publicity campaigns, whether or not related to the Competition, including in all advertising, media material and on the MPO Website, and
 - c) gives and grants to MPO and MPO's respective licensees, agents, successors and assigns in perpetuity the right to reproduce, use, publish, broadcast, exhibit, distribute, transmit and/or otherwise exploit, as applicable, in all forms of advertising and promotion of MPO's goods, services and/or business including in any and all media now or hereafter known including without limitation by means of newspaper advertising, magazine advertising, television advertising, direct mail advertising, video, electronic mediums including electronic networks such as the "Internet", merchandise, the following (the following being collectively referred to as the "Subject Matter"); photographs submitted or taken as part of the Competition, a description and photo of the product submitted into the Competition (whether or not the product is a winning product); a description, bio and photo of the entrant and the company with which he/she is affiliated with and any photographs taken by sponsor at any stage of the Competition and after the Competition (the copyright in all such photographs shall be and remain exclusively that of MPO, and if any copyright is deemed to be assigned to MPO pursuant to the paragraph then all moral rights relating to such works will be deemed to have been waived by the assignor).
- 21) **LIABILITY FOR PRODUCTS:** While MPO will be undertaking measures to ensure the safety and integrity of all entries, MPO does not assume any responsibility for the protection and safeguarding of any entries for health or any other reasons. Accordingly, all liability for each entered product rests solely with the competitor no matter what the reason for potential or actual liability that might otherwise accrue to MPO (including if MPO has for any reason been negligent in any manner) and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, MPO assumes no responsibility for sickness, illness, disease, infection, malady or other affliction caused by the ingestion, handling or cooking of products entered in the MPO Product Competition, no matter what the cause.
- 22) **MPO PRIVACY POLICY:** Personal information about entrants collected in connection with this Competition is collected solely for the purpose of administering this Competition.
- 23) **COMPETITION RULE CHANGES:** At the sole option of MPO, and without any prior notice, these rules may be modified if, in the sole opinion of MPO, it is necessary or desirable to ensure that the Competition is conducted fairly.



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APPENDIX A - CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

2026 ONTARIO FINEST MEAT COMPETITION™

1. FRESH SAUSAGE - PORK

Raw, uncooked, fresh sausages must be whole and shall not be cut. The product will be made exclusively with pork and may or may not contain specialty non-meat ingredients (e.g. jalapenos, cheese, parsley, basil) and/or flavourings (e.g. maple, brown sugar). Product may be stuffed in natural or collagen casing. This product will be cooked during judging to critique for aroma and taste/flavour.

Product Submission - Entry must consist of **8-12** whole pieces.

2. FRESH SAUSAGE - OTHER

Raw, uncooked, fresh sausages must be whole and shall not be cut. The product can be made from meat from any species except for pork (however can be a pork blend) and may or may not contain specialty non-meat ingredients (e.g. jalapenos, cheese, parsley, basil) and/or flavourings (e.g. maple, brown sugar). Bacon or bacon-like products are considered an acceptable specialty ingredient. Product may be stuffed in natural or collagen casing. This product will be cooked during judging to critique for aroma and taste/flavour.

Product Submission - Entry must consist of **8-12** whole pieces.

3. BACON - TRADITIONAL SIDE

Bacon slices must come from a boneless pork belly with rind on or off. This product must be cured and/or smoked and must be a traditional type bacon and **must not** contain specialty non-meat ingredients (e.g. black pepper, crushed red pepper, ground cinnamon, parsley, fennel) or flavourings (e.g. maple, brown sugar). *Note: Entries will be cooked for presentation to the judges.*

Product Submission – Entry must consist of **16-18 consecutive slices** from the same belly.

4. RE-INTRODUCED FOR 2026 - “BACON” - OPEN

“Bacon” slices may be prepared from meat of any species (e.g. pork, beef, turkey, chicken, veal, duck, etc.) and may or may not contain specialty non-meat ingredients (e.g. black pepper, crushed red pepper, ground cinnamon, parsley, fennel) and/or flavourings (e.g. maple, brown sugar). Topical spices and visual coatings are allowed. This product must be cured and/or smoked. *Note: Entries will be cooked for presentation to the judges.*

Product Submission – Entry must consist of **16-18** slices.

5. COLD CUTS

Product may be prepared from meat of any species or combination and can include additional ingredients. The meat ingredients can be ground, chopped or diced. The product must be presented in a clear, fibrous or coloured casing. The product must be a minimum of 1.6” in

diameter or 40 mm casing. This category **does not** include dry/semi dry sausages, fermented products or any product that fits in a specific category. The product must be ready-to-eat.

Product Submission - Entry may be submitted as a whole piece or a piece representative of the finished product no less than ½ of the whole piece and include one end. *Entries will be sliced for presentation to the judges.*

6. **DELI ROASTS**

Product may be prepared from meat of any species or combination and can include additional ingredients. Product must be a whole muscle that is fully cooked and ready to eat. The product may be made with or without smoke. The product must be fully cooked to 71°C (160°F).

Product Submission - Entry may be submitted as a whole piece or a piece representative of the finished product no less than ½ of the whole piece and include one end. *Entries will be sliced for presentation to the judges.*

7. **KIELBASA**

Product may be prepared from meat of any species and must be ready-to-eat. *Note: Entries will not be heated.*

Product Submission - Entry may be submitted as a whole ring or a piece minimum 10" in length.

8. **PREMIUM DRIED OR DRY CURED**

Product may be prepared from meat of any species. Product must be a whole muscle product (not ground or emulsified). Product may be cold smoked. The product must be ready-to-eat. This category **does not** include products that fit in another category (e.g. jerky or snack sticks). *Note: Entries will not be heated.*

Product Submission - Entry may be submitted as a whole piece(s), or piece(s) representative of the finished product that can be sliced. *Entries will be sliced for presentation to the judges.*

9. **SALUMI - CHARCUTERIE**

Product may be prepared from meat of any species. Product may be cured, cooked, smoked, fermented and/or dried and must be ready-to-eat. This category **does not** include products that fit in another category (e.g. summer sausage). *Note: Entries will not be heated.*

Product Submission – Entry may be submitted as a whole piece(s), or piece(s) representative of the finished product that can be sliced. *Entries will be sliced for presentation to the judges.*

10. **SAUSAGE - DRY/SEMI-DRY – LARGE DIAMETER**

Product may be prepared from meat of any species. A fermented or tangy flavour is expected, which may be achieved using a starter culture, an acidulant, or other methods (such as cooking) to reduce the pH. The product can be in a natural or artificial casing with a minimum diameter of 20mm and must be ready-to-eat. *Note: Entries will not be heated.*

Product Submission - Entry may be submitted as a whole piece, or a piece representative of the finished product and include one end. *Entries will be sliced for presentation to the judges.*

11. SAUSAGE - DRY/SEMI-DRY – SMALL DIAMETER (Snack Sticks)

Product may be prepared from meat of any species. A fermented or tangy flavour is expected, which may be achieved using a starter culture, an acidulant, or other methods (such as cooking) to reduce the pH. The product can be in a natural or artificial casing with a maximum diameter of 20mm and must be ready-to-eat. *Note: Entries will not be heated.*

Product Submission - Entry must consist of a **minimum of 12** whole pieces.

SMOKED & COOKED SAUSAGE - TRADITIONAL

Smoked and cooked sausage must be coarse ground (1/8" minimum) and consist of beef and/or pork. Emulsion type products are not eligible for this class. Sausage must be traditional in nature and **does not** contain any non-meat specialty ingredients (e.g. jalapenos, cheese, fruits, and/or vegetables). Product must be in an edible casing and ready-to-eat. *Note: Entries will be heated for presentation to the judges.*

Product Submission - Entry must consist of **8-12** whole pieces.

12. SMOKED & COOKED SAUSAGE - SPECIALTY

Smoked and cooked sausage must be coarse ground (1/8" minimum) and consist of beef and/or pork. Emulsion type products are not eligible for this class. Sausage must contain non-meat specialty ingredients (e.g. jalapenos, cheese, fruits, and/or vegetables). Product must be in an edible casing and ready-to-eat. *Note: Entries will be heated for presentation to the judges.*

Product Submission - Entry must consist of **8-12** whole pieces.

13. PREMIUM WIENER

Product must be an emulsion product prepared from any meat or meat combination. Product can be in a natural casing or skinless and must be ready-to-eat. *Note: Entries will be heated for presentation to the judges.*

Product Submission – Entry must consist of **8-12** whole pieces.

14. NEW FOR 2026 - JERKY

Jerky is a ready-to-eat dried meat product made from lean meat (beef, pork, or poultry) that is seasoned and dried/dehydrated, with or without smoking. Product may be seasoned according to the discretion of the entrant. Topical spices (*i.e.*, black pepper, etc.) are allowed but are not required.

Product Submission – Entry must consist of minimum ½ (half) pound.