

HOW TO PREPARE AN ENTRY FOR THE GRAYSON COUNTY FAIR

Fair competition categories include vegetables, baked and preserved goods, photography, art, flowers, plants, crafts, honey, and quilts. Basic information for entering a successful exhibit is found in the "General Competitions Book". It is located on the website [https://www. https://www.graysoncountyvafair.com/](https://www.graysoncountyvafair.com/). The general rules for entry are above each category with specific information next to the items in the category. Youth and adults are judged separately. You can also find entry forms on the website. Entries will be accepted the Wednesday before the Fair from 3-7pm at Bottomley's Evergreens warehouse in Elk Creek.

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

A great resource is available on the Fair webpage. Click on general entries; then click on fruits and vegetables under resources in the section titled "Contest Categories". The "Kentucky Guide to displaying fruits and vegetables" will appear. It lists the possible entries and how to prepare them for display. Here's a tip; we had almost no fruit entries last year. It could be an easy place to win a blue ribbon! There were also no entries for eggs, onions, mushrooms or turnips. Tomatoes are always well represented so new categories for yellow and black tomatoes have been added.

Uniformity is very important in "blue ribbon" quality exhibits. Specimens should be the same size, shape and color as well as the same texture, quality and degree of maturity. The general condition of your entry should be clean, free of disease or blemishes and not overly ripe or shriveled.

From a judging standpoint, items are considered for general condition 30%, quality-peak condition for eating 25%, Uniformity 20%, typical of the variety 15%, and size. Size should be the typical size unless you are entering a "largest" or "smallest" category, 10%

For example, from the Kentucky guide: Apples and Pears 1. Keep stems attached but clip ends short enough so it cannot puncture other specimens in the display. 2. Uniform in size and shape. 3. Free of disease, insect or other damage. 4. Polish with a dry cloth. 5. Color should be typical of variety; red varieties should be uniformly colored. Then check the general competitions book, it lists that apples are displayed in a group of 4.

As you plan your garden this spring, think about what you may want to enter. It's fun, free, and you don't have to be a Grayson County resident. Next time we'll talk about entering flowers and plants.

FLOWERS AND PLANTS

Flowers are judged not just by the blossom, but also the stem and foliage, the container, the arrangement, and uniformity of the flowers. They are judged on condition, color, size, form, and substance. If 2 or more flowers are required (check the fair book) they should be similar in size, shape and color. What exactly do these terms mean? Color is easy-bright, clear and free from blemishes and typical for the variety. Form should be true to type and petals should be uniform in length and shape. Size is not just about the largest, it's also about the standard size for a particular variety. Often, very large flowers may be floppy or over mature. Condition means that the foliage stem and flower are at the ideal stage of

development and show no signs of wilting. Substance is indicated by thickness and firmness of petals and foliage. Containers should allow the judge to examine all specimens without removing them. Points will be deducted if the container calls attention to itself rather than to the flowers in it. A general rule of thumb is that flowers be approximately 1½ to 2 times the height of their container. In a nutshell, always pick your freshest, prettiest flowers and use a complementary container.

Two types of **potted plants** are usually exhibited—flowering plants and foliage (or green) plants. All potted plants must be grown indoors. Plants that show signs of having been recently dug from the garden and potted prior to the show are disqualified. Flowering plants are judged for their flower display. Foliage plants are judged for their attractive leaves and stems. No extra points are awarded to foliage plants with flowers. Most of the same characteristics are judged in potted plants as in flowers with the addition of distinctiveness. A plant that is above average and has unusual and desirable qualities as well as uniformity of shape is considered distinctive.

Flower arrangements are judged primarily on the composition of the arrangements—only 20 percent of the total points are awarded for condition of flowers and foliage. Most arrangements relate to a specific design form, such as a triangle, S-curve, crescent or sunburst. Good color harmony should also be evident between plant material and container. Avoid gaudy and unusual containers that detract from the arrangement. Arrangements should have a definite design with stems arranged to create an attractive effect. This requires the tasteful use of color, space, texture and plant shapes. A well-balanced arrangement is stable in appearance and does not appear to tilt to either side. Proportion refers to the proper relationship between various parts of the arrangement and between plant materials and the container. Construction means that the container and the items holding the material in place is covered. Foliage should be inserted so the judge cannot see the foam or other material used to hold stems in the container. The containers back also should be finished off with foliage.

FIELD CROPS:

Field crops follow the same basic criteria as vegetables: uniformity, true to type in shape, color and size and in good condition with no insect, disease or mechanical damage. The instructions for display are found in the Fair book. We had 1 entry last year so chances for taking home a blue ribbon are pretty good! You may enter grains, hay, corn, tallest field stalk, largest ear of field corn, best ear of field corn, hemp buds and tobacco.

FOOD PRESERVATION & PREPARATION:

Baked and canned goods, or food preservation and food preparation, the official names for those categories.

Over the years, most county fairs have stopped actually tasting entries in the food preparation and preservation categories. We DO taste baked goods. However, if items are not judged on taste, what makes a winning entry?!

There are several things to consider in the **food preparation** category. These include appearance, smell, texture and tenderness. For items like cupcakes and cookies, where multiple items make up an entry, uniformity is also important.

Appearance includes several things. Is it evenly colored and not burnt? If there are multiple items, are they similar in size and shape? Does it look delicious? Is it neatly presented? This is all judged before slicing into the entry.

Next is smell. Does it smell great and make you want to throw food safety and calories to the wind and take a big bite? If it's a lemon cake, does it smell of lemons? Are there any odd or unexpected aromas or odors?

Then the judge will slice into the entry to observe texture and tenderness. Is it overly dense? If it's a yeasted item, did it rise properly? Does it have the correct texture for the item? Crispy cookies, moist cake. Is it too dry? Does it slice evenly? Is it too dense or have large air bubbles?

All these visual cues, combined with smell, can give a pretty good indication of the quality of the product and the skill of the maker.

Now we'll tackle canned or **preserved foods**.

Canned goods are also generally not tasted and once again appearance is a major factor. First, the judge will look at the jar itself. Jars of food are evaluated for cleanliness (lid, ring, and outside surface), a strong seal, appearance, product consistency, and headspace. The surface, lids, and ring bands of canned food should be cleaned to remove residual food product and hard water scale. Rust should not be present. The seal of a jar should be strong enough that if the jar is lifted with fingertips by the lid, the weight of the jar should not break the seal.

Next the appearance of the product is evaluated. The appearance of canned goods should be appropriate for the product. Light-colored fruit such as pears or applesauce should not be brown on the top. Pickles should not be shriveled or have large seeds. Proper color can also be an indication that safe canning methods were used. For example, sweet corn is a low-acid product and must be processed in a pressure canner to eliminate the risk of botulism toxin. During the intense heat process in a pressure canner, the natural sugar in the corn caramelizes and turns brown. Some entrants will under-process their corn to keep the color bright. While these improperly processed jars of corn look nice, they are unsafe to consume and, therefore, should be disqualified from competition for not following the National Center for Home Food Preservation's method of canning.

Other criteria that are used for judging: Canned food products should have a uniform consistency. Pieces of fruit should not float to the top of jam, and jelly should be uniformly clear. Tomato juice should not separate. Pieces of vegetables should have a uniform shape and whole pickles should be similar in size. Foreign objects should not be present. You do not want a peach pit or the fur from wild game in the jar.

Headspace is a very important factor. The headspace, or blank area on the top of a jar between the product and the lid, should be measured with a ruler and appropriate for the product. Jams and jellies require $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch of headspace. Acidic products like pickles and fruit require $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch of headspace. Low-acid foods such as green beans and corn should have 1-inch of headspace. Improper headspace can result in a weak vacuum seal or premature spoilage.

The entire guide for Home canning is available under the resources section of the fair webpage.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

The basic rules: 1) Photos must be the work of the person listed on the entry.

- 2) All photographs must be taken from August 2022 to August 2023.
- 3) Photos must be on 8 x 10 or 8 ½ x 11 photo paper. No decorative borders, no frames. Photos should be securely mounted on 11 x 14 black foam core. If you need them, they are available in the tourism office in the 1908 Courthouse. Ideally, please bring your photographs ALREADY mounted on the foam core. We do have foam available at the fair.
- 4) Youth and adults are judged separately, however, youth may enter the adult categories, but will be judged as adult.
- 5) Black and White photographs can be entered into any category.
- 6) Entries are judged on technical excellence, creativity, composition and presentation. Be sure to enter your photograph in the correct category. These are: Wildlife, Black and White-any subject, Landscape, People/portrait, Macro, Open subject, Water, Pets/domestic animals, People at play, 2022 Grayson County Fair, Agricultural, Century Farms. Only one entry per competitor per category.

What do the judging categories mean? These explanations are from the Professional Photographers of America's standards of excellence.

Technical excellence is the print quality of the image itself as it is presented for viewing. Retouching, manipulation, sharpness, exposure, printing, mounting, and correct color are some items that speak to the qualities of the physical print.

Creativity is the original, fresh, and external expression of the imagination of the maker by using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought.

Composition is important to the design of an image, bringing all of the visual elements together in concert to express the purpose of the image. Proper composition holds the viewer in the image and prompts the viewer to look where the creator intends. Effective composition can be pleasing or disturbing, depending on the intent of the image maker.

Presentation affects an image by giving it a finished look. The mats and borders used, either physical or digital, should support and enhance the image, not distract from it.

Color balance, center of interest and lighting all add to the appeal of a photograph. Color balance supplies harmony to an image. An image in which the tones work together, effectively supporting the image, can enhance its emotional appeal. Color balance is not always harmonious and can be used to evoke diverse feelings for effect. Center of Interest is the point or points on the image where the maker wants the viewer to stop as they view the image. There can be primary and secondary centers of interest. Occasionally there will be no specific center of interest, when the entire scene collectively serves as the center of interest. Lighting, the use and control of light refers to how dimension, shape and roundness are defined in an image. Whether the light applied to an image is manmade or natural, proper use of it should enhance an image.

Other factors that may affect judging are impact, style and storytelling. Impact is the sense one gets upon viewing an image for the first time. Compelling images evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion. Style is defined in a number of ways as it applies to a creative image. It might be defined by a specific genre or simply be recognizable as the characteristics of how a specific artist applies light to a subject. It can impact an image in a positive manner when the subject matter and the style are appropriate for each other, or it can have a negative effect when they are at odds. Storytelling refers to the image's ability to evoke imagination. One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might collect his own message or read her own story in an image. Enter your photographs and tell your story at the fair this year!

ARTS & CRAFTS:

The basic rules for **Crafts**: 1) Articles entered must be the work of the person whose name they entered and must have been made or completed within the last year. 2) Entries are judged on design, appearance, color, workmanship, and suitability of materials. Well-known characters such as Batman, Snoopy, etc. may not be used due to copyright restrictions.

Crafts is a huge category which is divided into crafts and needle arts. Crafts is then subdivided into baskets, Legos, birdhouses, holiday decorations, jewelry, leather, weaving, woodworking and other. Needlecrafts include crochet, knitted, felted and other. Other includes embroidery, needlepoint, and sewing.

Judging such a range of items is a challenge but the criteria of design, appearance, color, workmanship and suitability of materials can be applied to all of these items. Is the design, creative, uncommon and appealing? Is the appearance neat, attractive and clean? Do the colors complement or enhance each other? Is the workmanship even, skillful, and detailed? Are the materials suitable for the purpose of the object?

Quilts generally fall under needle arts but we have created a separate "People's Choice" Quilt show. The public is invited to vote for their favorite adult and youth quilt. The votes will be tabulated and YOU will decide the winners.

Art categories include acrylic on any surface, oil on canvas, sketching, and watercolor as well as 3 dimensional objects including ceramics, pottery, and sculpture and also stained glass. The saying "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" does come into play, but more specific criteria such as color harmony, design, skill and technique, originality, presentation and composition will be judged.

There is a separate category for **the Youth Poster contest**. The poster contest is sponsored by Grayson LandCare and was originally intended to create a logo for the fair. The Fair committee decided a consistent logo was better for marketing. The youth poster contest encourages younger artist to enter the fair with the added incentive of cash prizes and ribbons.