

Healthy Boxed Lunch or “Bento” Contest

Purpose: The Eat4-Health grant supported by National 4-H and UnitedHealthcare strives to achieve project outcomes of improved dietary choices; improved attitude toward and understanding of healthful foods; increased willingness to try new nutritional foods; and, increased community promotion of healthier food choices. One of the educational efforts offered through the Louisiana 4-H program to achieve these outcomes is a cookery contest.

A bento lunch is a compact, balanced, visually appealing meal packed in a box. “Bento” is Japanese for packed lunch or meal. Each competitor will create a lunch to be eaten at school by a student age 9 to 12. The beverage to accompany the meal will be water (do not need to include).

Examples found on Pinterest



Eligibility: The contestant must be a 4-H club member. Open to any age/grade.

A contestant may enter only ONE entry.

Food Safety: After preparation, the dish must be chilled to 40° F or lower. Dishes must be transported on ice in an ice chest to the contest. **DISHES NOT CHILLED AND TRANSPORTED IN THIS MANNER WILL BE DISQUALIFIED BY CONTEST OFFICIALS.** Plastic containers, insulated cardboard boxes, etc. are not acceptable containers to transport food (**NO EXCEPTIONS**). Insulated pharmaceutical and floral boxes, etc are not considered acceptable for transportation of food. Any insulated container not designed to transport food for human consumption will be disqualified. **No recipe containing raw eggs will be accepted.**

General Requirements:

1. Bring a prepared healthy box or Bento lunch to the contest. It should be representative of “MyPlate” recommendations. www.myplate.gov
2. Each competitor will create a lunch to be eaten at school by a student age 9 to 12. The beverage to accompany the meal will be water (do not need to include).
3. Bring one copy of the recipe/instructions to the contest. This recipe must have your category, division, name, grade and school club on the back of the recipe. The copy of the recipe is to be placed under the dish. Recipes will be evaluated according to the attached Recipe Evaluation
4. Each competitor will transport their Healthy Box or “Bento” Lunch to the contest packed in a portable, lock-top, and leak proof container, chilled and on ice. The competitor will present the box to the judges for sampling. The food should be exhibited in a disposable serving container, not to exceed 18”. To allow adequate space for all entries. You will be asked to remove items not directly related to the dish, such as placemats, flower arrangements, figurines, trays, footed chafing dishes, soup tureens, etc. Non-edible items are not to be used as garnish. No serving utensils will be allowed.
5. Only 4-H members are allowed to set up their dish or someone else’s dish who is not present.

Scoring Factors:

Meal - (100 Points)

- Theme – suitable for age group, creative (5 points)
- Container – portable, reusable, lock-top, and leak proof (5 points)
- Preparation Techniques – neat, interesting, unique (5 points)
- Appearance – colorful, inviting (5 points)
- Texture - chewiness, juiciness, variety (5 points)
- Taste – pleasing, variety (5 points)
- Affordable - \$5.00 or less per serving (5 point)
- Nutrition – (65 points)
 - Half box is fruits and vegetables
 - Lean protein included
 - Low fat dairy included
 - Fruit for dessert
 - Portions correct size

Parish Contest:

THE DISH MUST BE CHILLED TO 40° F OR LOWER AND TRANSPORTED ON ICE IN AN ICE CHEST TO THE CONTEST.