

Guidance for Home Industries Cookery & Preserves

General

Firstly, good luck as the fun is in taking part and developing your skills.

Practice Makes Perfect

If you have time, practise your recipe before you make your exhibit. This is not always possible with preserves or other more expensive recipes but can pay dividends.

Remember that most ovens vary so a 'practice' run on any given recipe can help.

Our Judges

Hurst Horticultural Show is judged by experienced judges working to the schedule. Their standards are high but they appreciate the effort put into producing a good display and take account of your hard work and attention to detail.

How is Cookery judged?

First of all read the schedule, especially any notes and ensure that the correct number of items are displayed on plates e.g. 6 Anzac Biscuits..... no more, no less! You will lose points for the wrong number.

In the interests of hygiene, all baking entries should be covered with cling film.

Cookery exhibits are marked on a combination of internal and external standards as follows:

1. **External appearance** – do not use ready-made tin liners or allow cooling rack marks.

Top Tips.....

- a. To line a cake or loaf tin, first grease your tin then cut greaseproof paper to size and fit into the tin. Allow cake to cool before removing the greaseproof paper.
- b. Cooling rack marks can be avoided by using a sheet of baking parchment or silicon on your rack before turning out your cake.
- c. Think about the way your exhibit will be displayed and choose a suitable plain plate. You can use a paper or a china plate of a suitable size. Some exhibitors choose to use a doily under sweet entries, such as cakes. This is not essential but does enhance your entry but should only be used for sweet exhibits. Bread is usually presented on a bread board.

2. **Internal appearance** – this includes texture and the even distribution of ingredients.

However marks are awarded for flavour and aroma as entries must be enjoyable to eat. For all entries judges will cut the exhibit to display the inside and will taste to ascertain overall enjoyment.

How are Preserves judged?

Preserves are marked on a combination of internal and external standards as follows:

1. **External standard:** Container, cover, label and appearance.
2. **Internal standard:** which includes colour, clarity, flavour, consistency, texture of fruit and aroma. There should be no air bubbles or scum within the contents. For jellies the brighter the colour the better, and clarity is also essential. For marmalades the jelly part should be clear and the peel well cooked and evenly distributed. To achieve even distribution, allow the mixture to cool slightly before filling the jars, otherwise fruit may rise to the surface.

When there are many entries in a particular class the loss of just one point can make the difference between winning a prize or not. The following will help you to ensure your exhibit has the best possible chance of success:

All preserves should be presented in 450gm/1lb clean, plain, straight-sided jars. Jellies and curds may be presented in a 225gm/ 1/2lb jars. Do not use jars and lids with commercial markings or patterns as your entry will be marked down and possibly eliminated. All lids should be in clean and good condition or brand new. New lids are readily available from many shops and online.

Labels should be on straight and clearly marked with the type of preserve and the full date of making.

Fill a jar as full as possible which is normally to within 3mm to 4mm of the rim.

Sealing Your Jar

Many exhibitors make mistakes with jar sealing. Here are some guidelines:

Jams, Jellies and Marmalades

Should be covered with a wax disc and cellophane top, or a new twist top or pliable press-on cover. If using a waxed disc place it immediately on the hot jam or jelly. This will allow for slight shrinkage as the contents cool and it will enable the disc to form an air-tight seal thereby preventing deterioration. When completely cold, cover the jar with cellophane.

If using a twist or pliable top, there is no need to apply a wax disc as the lid will give the air tight seal if applied whilst the jam is still warm.

Curds

Curds should only be covered with a wax disc and cellophane top.

Chutney

Chutneys should be exhibited in plain glass jars with vinegar resistant lids e.g. plastic lined metal or plastic. Cellophane tops should not be used as the vinegar will evaporate during storage and the chutney may become mouldy or dry out.

Finally, enjoy the show and take time to look carefully at those exhibits which are lucky enough to get an award. You can learn a lot by doing this and reading the judges comments.