

AMERICAN CURED MEAT CHAMPIONSHIPS

2015 PRODUCT EVALUATION GUIDELINES

TO ASSIST THE AMERICAN CURED MEAT CHAMPIONSHIP (ACMC) JUDGES TO MORE UNIFORMLY EVALUATE PRODUCTS ENTERED, THE ACMC ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAS DEVELOPED THIS PRODUCT EVALUATION GUIDELINE DOCUMENT. THE ACMC ADVISORY COMMITTEE REALIZES THAT EACH JUDGE MAY EVALUATE PRODUCTS DIFFERENTLY. THE MAIN KEY TO EVALUATING ANY CLASS IN THE ACMC IS PRODUCT EVALUATION CONSISTENCY. MAKE SURE TO EVALUATE EACH PRODUCT ENTRY IN A CLASS USING THE SAME METHODOLOGY (I.E., SLICING, HEATING/COOKING, FLAVOR EVALUATION, ETC.). ENTRIES SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED AGAINST EACH OTHER, BUT INSTEAD EACH ENTRY SHOULD BE JUDGED INDIVIDUALLY AND ON ITS OWN MERIT.

THESE GUIDELINES DON'T REVIEW EVERY PRODUCT CLASS REQUIREMENT. FOR FURTHER DETAILED PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS, PLEASE REFER TO THE CURRENT ACMC RULE BOOK.

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Andouille Sausage

Description:

Andouille (pronounced "ahn-DOO-wee") is the Cajun type of smoked sausage generally made with lean pork butt, shank and a small amount of pork fat. Andouille is French in origin and was brought to the United States through Louisiana by French immigrants. In the United States, the sausage is most often associated with Cajun cooking. Traditionally, an andouille sausage is used as a flavoring ingredient in other food products, such as jambalaya, gumbo, and other Cajun rice dishes. Currently, some processors are making an andouille-flavored smoked sausage. These products are intended to be consumed as is typical with other smoked sausage products. Some meat processors prefer to cube the meat rather than coarse grind it. This sausage is seasoned with salt, cracked black pepper, red pepper, and garlic. The product is traditionally stuffed into a larger casing (*i.e.*, minimum of 35 mm), but to accommodate the andouille-flavored smoked sausage, small casings (*i.e.*, 32-35 mm) are allowed.

External Appearance:

Andouille is generally heavily smoked and darker in color if compared to smoked sausage. No colored casings are allowed in this class. This product must be entered in a rope or link form and the product should not be downgraded if ends are cut.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the product in half parallel to the length of the sausage. This will give you a better sense of internal particle definition, spice and fat distribution, lean to fat ratio, and product texture. This product will generally have large particle definition (emulsion type products are not eligible for this class).

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. To heat the product for aroma and flavor evaluation, cut a 4-5 inch piece of sausage or use one link. Wrap the product in a damp paper towel and put it on a paper plate (make sure the paper plate is properly labeled with the entry number). Place the product in the microwave. Since every microwave operates differently, be sure not to overheat the product. Remember, you are not trying to cook the product; you are simply heating the product for evaluation.

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Bacon (Heavyweight)
Bacon (Lightweight)
Bacon (Country Bacon - Dry Cured)

Description:

The term "bacon" is used to describe the cured belly of a swine carcass. While there is not a weight and/or size requirement, bacon must be entered whole and shall not be cut nor sliced. Bacon shall be of standard approved trim and generally should be of typical size.

External Appearance:

The external appearance should be a golden mahogany color. Bacon slabs should not be upgraded or downgraded if the bacon surface appears shiny. Shiny bacon slabs have usually been coated with a thin layer of mineral oil to improve exterior color. Generally the bacon slabs are rectangular shaped and the mammary seed line has been removed. Bacon slabs should not be downgraded due to bacon hanger hook marks. Bacon slabs with excessive trimming should be downgraded. Bacon slabs may be skinned or unskinned.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the bacon slab into 2 pieces approximately 1/3 of the way from shoulder (anterior) end of bacon slab and perpendicular to the length.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should be cooked to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. To cook the bacon slice for aroma and flavor evaluation, cut 2-3 slices of bacon. Place the slices on a paper plate (make sure the paper plate is properly labeled with the entry number). Cover the product with a paper towel to absorb excess grease, and place the product in the microwave. Since every microwave operates differently, be sure not to overcook the product. Cook the bacon slices to the judge's desired final texture.

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Braunschweiger

Description:

According to the Code of Federal Regulations (9 CFR § 319.182) (a) "Braunschweiger" is a cooked sausage made from fresh, cured, and/or frozen pork, beef, and/or veal and at least 30 percent pork, beef, and/or veal livers computed on the weight of the fresh livers. It may also contain pork and/or beef fat. Mechanically separated (species) may be used in accordance with § 319.6. Binders and extenders may be used as permitted in § 319.140. The product may have a smoked taste characteristic, which may be imparted by use of smoked meats (e.g, bacon, etc.), smoke flavoring or smoking. If prepared from components of a single species, the product name may reflect the species, e.g., "Beef Braunschweiger." Braunschweiger may also be labeled as any of the following: "Braunschweiger-A Liver Sausage," "Braunschweiger-A Liverwurst," or "Braunschweiger (Liver Sausage)" or "Braunschweiger (Liverwurst)."

External Appearance:

The external appearance is somewhat difficult to judge because this product must be stuffed in an artificial casing (colored or uncolored). Judges should critically evaluate the exterior workmanship of the product.

Internal Appearance:

Prior to slicing the product for internal appearance evaluation, the judge should wipe the exterior of the product with a damp paper towel. This will help prevent the product casing from splitting once the product is touched with a knife. The internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the product into 2 pieces approximately 1/3 of the way from the end (dependent on the length of the product). Slice the product perpendicular to the length of the product. Entries should be somewhat stiff in texture and must be sliceable and not spreadable (i.e. no paté entries). For a more extensive internal appearance evaluation, slice the casing 3-4 inches parallel to the length of the product and peel the casing back. This will help the judge evaluate if fat pockets are present.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

The braunschweiger slice should be approximately ¼ inch in thickness. The product is evaluated cold without any other foods (i.e., without crackers, etc.). The product may have a smoked taste characteristic.

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Dried Beef

Description:

According to the USDA/FSIS Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book (2005), dried beef (chipped beef) is beef that is dried, chipped, or sliced and may be cured or smoked. It is required to have a moisture-protein ratio (MPR) of 2.04:1 or less; however, no measurement of MPR will be taken at the ACMC. The products entered must be made from a single muscle piece of the beef round or of the beef clod and shall not be a sectional or flaked and formed product.

External Appearance:

Dried beef is generally heavily smoked and dried. The external appearance is usually darker in color if compared to other processed meat products. The surface of the product should be dry and should not have excessive moisture built up under the product as it sits on the table.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the product into two pieces. Due to the variation in product entries, slicing location is at the discretion of the judge. The product should be sliced perpendicular to the muscle fibers. Dried beef is traditionally supposed to be very dry. Therefore if you squeeze the product and excessive moisture escapes the product, the entry should be downgraded. This product is typically very lean (i.e., minimal marbling, surface fat, seam fat etc.), therefore an entry with excessive fat should be downgraded.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should not be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. For best aroma and flavor evaluation, slice the product using an electric slicer. Slice the product perpendicular to the muscle fibers and slice it very thin (approximately 1/16 of an inch).

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Frankfurters/Wieners-Coarse Ground
Frankfurters/Wieners – Emulsified
Small Diameter Smoked and Cooked Sausage
Specialty Flavored Small Diameter Smoked and Cooked Sausage

External Appearance:

Frankfurters/Wieners (Coarse Ground & Emulsified) and Small Diameter Smoked and Cooked Sausage are generally smoked and the external appearance should be a golden mahogany color. The product entry should be judged as a whole and links should be consistent in length and diameter. For natural and collagen casing products, the ends should not be excessively trimmed and/or there should not be excessive casing twists at the ends of the sausage. Smoke streaks and spots should be downgraded. No colored casings are allowed in these classes.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing one link in half parallel to the length of the sausage. This will give you a better sense of internal particle definition, spice and fat distribution, lean to fat ratio, product texture, etc. Each product class may have its own particle definition criteria (coarse ground vs. emulsion type products).

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. To heat the product for aroma and flavor evaluation, use one link. Wrap the link in a damp paper towel and put it on a paper plate (make sure the paper plate is properly labeled with the entry number). Place the product in the microwave. Since every microwave operates differently, be sure not to overheat the product. Remember, you are not trying to cook the product; you are simply heating the product for evaluation.

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Ham - Bone-In (Heavyweight)
Ham - Bone-In (Lightweight)
Ham - Semi-Boneless

Description:

For the Ham - Bone-In (Heavyweight & Lightweight) class, product entries must contain the following bones: aitch bone (ischium), leg bone (femur), and a portion of the shank bones (tibia and fibula).

For the Ham – Semi-Boneless class, product entries must contain the leg bone (femur). The aitch bone (ischium) and the shank bones (tibia and fibula) must be removed.

External Appearance:

Ham entries are smoked and the external appearance should be a golden mahogany color. Hams should not be upgraded or downgraded if the ham surface appears shiny. Shiny hams have usually been coated with a thin layer of mineral oil to improve exterior color. Hams with excessive trimming should be downgraded. Hams may be skinned or unskinned and must be entered whole.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the ham perpendicular to the length of the femur bone. The hams should be sliced approximately 2 inches from the aitch bone perpendicular to the long axis of the ham (towards the shank). Semi-boneless hams should be cut approximately in half, perpendicular to the femur bone. To make the initial slice, use a large knife (a knife with a blade length of approximately 12 inches) to slice the product to the femur bone. Next, use a saw to cut through the femur bone smoothly. Be sure to stop sawing when you get through the femur bone. Finish the slicing with a large knife to separate the ham into two pieces (butt portion and shank portion).

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. Slice an entire ham center slice from the butt portion of the ham. The slice should be approximately ½ inch in thickness. Use a large knife (a knife with a blade length of approximately 12 inches) to slice the product to the femur bone around the entire diameter of the ham. Instead of using the saw to cut through the femur bone, simply cut around the femur bone. This should yield a boneless center slice to evaluate for aroma and flavor. To heat the ham slice for aroma and flavor evaluation, place the slice on a paper plate (make sure the paper plate is properly labeled with the entry number). Cover the product with a paper towel and place the product in the microwave. Since every microwave operates differently, be sure not to overheat the product. Remember, you are not trying to cook the product; you are simply heating the product for evaluation. Be sure to evaluate the color and quality of all muscles (i.e., inside, outside, and sirloin tip) in the ham slice. For flavor evaluation, only evaluate the inside and outside muscles.

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Ham - Boneless (Commercial)
Ham - Boneless (Traditional)

Description:

For the Ham - Boneless (Commercial) class, product entries must be manufactured from whole muscle pieces, chunked pieces, and/or ground or emulsified pieces of the wholesale cut of the ham. Whole muscle pieces are allowed.

For the Ham – Boneless (Traditional) class, product entries must contain whole boneless ham muscles (i.e., hams should not contain ground, chunked, flaked or reconstituted meat). The boneless ham must contain at least three (3) specific muscles (inside cushion, outside cushion, and eye). Use of the knuckle and/or sirloin muscle is optional.

External Appearance:

Ham entries are smoked and the external appearance should be a golden mahogany color. Hams may be shaped, formed or pressed.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the ham perpendicular to the length of the product. Slice the product into 2 pieces approximately 1/3 of the way from the end (dependent on the length of the product). Use a large knife (a knife with a blade length of approximately 12 inches) to slice the product smoothly.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. The slice should be approximately ¼ inch in thickness. Use a large knife (a knife with a blade length of approximately 12 inches) to slice the product. To heat the ham slice for aroma and flavor evaluation, place the slice on a paper plate (make sure the paper plate is properly labeled with the entry number). Cover the product with a paper towel and place the product in the microwave. Since every microwave operates differently, be sure not to overheat the product. Remember, you are not trying to cook the product; you are simply heating the product for evaluation. Be sure to evaluate the interior and the “skin” of the product.

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Jerky - Restructured

Jerky - Whole Muscle

Description:

According to the USDA/FSIS Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book (2005), jerky is required to have a moisture-protein ratio (MPR) of 0.75:1 or less. Since the product must be shelf stable, it should also have a water activity (a_w) of 0.85 or less; however, no measurement of MPR or a_w will be taken at the ACMC. The product may be smoked or unsmoked.

External Appearance:

The external appearance of jerky entries may widely vary from extremely dark to a golden mahogany color. Particular attention should be placed on workmanship, color uniformity, product leanness, spice distribution (if applicable), etc.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance is extremely difficult to judge regarding jerky (restructured and whole muscle) because the product is so thin.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

Since the jerky may be seasoned according to the discretion of the entrant, be sure to read any information written on the scorecard that may identify the type of jerky (e.g., pepper, teriyaki, barbeque, etc.).

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Luncheon Meat - Large Diameter

Description:

Large diameter luncheon meat may be fine ground or emulsified. This class may consist of products such as bologna, turkey breast, mortadella, etc.

External Appearance:

The external appearance of entries should be a golden mahogany color. The product should be stuffed in a clear casing or an uncolored cloth bag. No colored casings are allowed. Casing must be left on the product. The diameter of the casing must be a minimum of four inches (4") in diameter. While the casing must be left on the product, the ends should be neatly trimmed. The casing should be smooth and not wrinkled. Particular attention should be placed on workmanship, color uniformity, etc.

Internal Appearance:

Prior to slicing the product for internal appearance evaluation, the judge may want to wipe the exterior of the product with a damp paper towel. This will help prevent the product casing from splitting once the product is touched with a knife. The internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the product into 2 pieces approximately 1/3 of the way from the end (dependent on the length of the product). Slice the product perpendicular to the length of the product. Use a large knife (a knife with a blade length of approximately 12 inches) to slice the product smoothly.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should not be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. For best aroma and flavor evaluation, slice the product using an electric slicer. Slice the product perpendicular to the length of the sausage and slice it very thin (approximately 1/16 – 1/8 of an inch).

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Meat Snack Sticks

Meat Snack Sticks, Flavored

Description:

According to the ACMC rules, meat snack sticks must meet the labeling requirements: pH of 5.0 or less and a moisture-protein ratio (MPR) of 3.1:1 or less; however, no measurement of MPR will be taken at the ACMC. This product must have been thermally processed so that it does not require refrigeration and is ready to eat.

External Appearance:

Meat snack sticks may be skinless, in clear casing or in colored casing. The external appearance of entries should be a golden mahogany color. Particular attention should be placed on workmanship, color uniformity, uniformity of size and shape, etc. If the product has a wrinkled surface, take into consideration whether the processor wanted to achieve a wrinkled surface or whether it is a workmanship defect.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing one meat stick in half parallel to the length of the stick. This will give you a better sense of internal particle definition, spice and fat distribution, lean to fat ratio, product texture, etc.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should not be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. To evaluate the aroma characteristics, the judge may choose to use the sliced meat stick that was used to evaluate internal appearance. Using the sliced stick may give the judge an overall evaluation of external and internal aroma profile. Cut a portion from another stick (approximately 2 inches in length) for flavor evaluation. Evaluate the flavor and texture characteristics of both the product and the casing.

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Ring Bologna - Cooked

Description:

Typically this product is entered in a ring form, but it may also be entered in a link form. Regardless of the product form, the product must be entered as a complete sausage and shall not be cut nor sliced.

External Appearance:

Ring bologna is smoked and the external appearance should be a golden mahogany color. The casing ends should not be excessively trimmed and/or there should not be excessive casing twists at the ends of the sausage. Smoke streaks and spots should be downgraded. No colored casings are allowed in this class. Particular attention should be placed on workmanship, color uniformity, uniformity of size and shape, etc.

Internal Appearance:

Ring bologna meat may be coarse ground, fine ground, emulsified, or a combination of particle sizes. Internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the ring on the side perpendicular to the length of the ring. Cut a two-inch section from the ring (dependent on the length of the product). Then cut the two-inch section parallel to the length of the section. This will give you a better sense of internal particle definition, spice and fat distribution, lean to fat ratio, product texture, etc.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. Cut another section of product (approximately one inch in length) from the ring. To heat the product for aroma and flavor evaluation, wrap the one-inch section in a damp paper towel and put it on a paper plate (make sure the paper plate is properly labeled with the entry number). Place the product in the microwave. Since every microwave operates differently, be sure not to overheat the product. Remember, you are not trying to cook the product; you are simply heating the product for evaluation.

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Semi-Dried Sausage - Cooked, Non-Fermented

Summer Sausage - Cooked

External Appearance:

The external appearance of entries should be a golden mahogany color. Particular attention should be placed on workmanship, color uniformity, uniformity of size and shape, etc. Casing must be left on the product and the diameter of the casing must be 2" to 4". No colored casings are allowed.

Internal Appearance:

The internal appearance should be evaluated by slicing the product into 2 pieces approximately 1/3 of the way from the end (dependent on the length of the product). Slice the product perpendicular to the length of the product. For a more extensive internal appearance evaluation, cut a two-inch section from the sausage (dependent on the length of the product). Then cut the two-inch section parallel to the length of the section. This will give you a better sense of internal particle definition, spice and fat distribution, lean to fat ratio, product texture, etc.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product should not be heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. To evaluate the aroma characteristics, the judge may choose to use the sliced two-inch section of sausage that was used to evaluate internal appearance. Using the sliced section of sausage may give the judge a better overall evaluation of external and internal aroma profile. For best flavor evaluation, slice the product using an electric slicer. Slice the product perpendicular to the length of the sausage and slice it very thin (approximately 1/16 – 1/8 of an inch). The judge may choose to slice the product with a knife if slice width can be kept consistent. The casings used for this product are not edible, so be sure to peel the casing from the product prior to flavor evaluation.

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Smoked Turkey

Description:

While there is not a weight and/or size requirement, the turkey entered must be entered whole and shall not be cut nor sliced.

External Appearance:

The turkey entries are smoked and the external appearance should be a golden mahogany color. The neck skin is generally used to cover any hole in the neck cavity. The wings should be formed smooth along the surface of the turkey. The legs should be evenly positioned. The pad fat area should be trimmed or removed to increase the overall appearance of the turkey. The surface of the turkey should be somewhat dry and should not have excessive moisture built up under the product as it sits on the table. Smoke streaks and spots should be downgraded. Giblet bags should not be present in the internal cavity. Particular attention should be placed on workmanship, color uniformity, uniformity of shape, etc.

Internal Appearance:

Internal appearance should be evaluated for both white meat (breast meat) and dark meat (leg meat). White should be evaluated by cutting a one-inch sliver or wedge from the breast meat. The one-inch sliver should be taken at the top of the breast muscle and extend parallel to the length of the turkey approximately three inches. Another one-inch sliver should be taken from the leg muscle. The sliver should be taken parallel to the length of the leg bone. A one-inch by three-inch sliver may not be achievable in the leg muscle.

Aroma / Flavor Evaluation:

This product is typically not heated to evaluate aroma and flavor characteristics. Use the sliver pieces excised for internal appearance evaluation for aroma and flavor evaluation. Cut a smaller section from the slivers to evaluate the flavor profile. Be sure to evaluate both the white and the dark meat of the turkey.

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IF A PRODUCT ENTRY FAILS TO COMPLY WITH THE ACMC RULES, THE PRODUCT ENTRY SHOULD BE DISQUALIFIED. PLEASE CONSULT THE ACMC ON-SITE TECHNICAL ADVISOR BEFORE DISQUALIFYING ANY ENTRY. A DISQUALIFIED PRODUCT SHOULD BE MARKED AS SUCH. A DISQUALIFIED ENTRY MAY BE EVALUATED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE JUDGE.

Smoked Poultry Products (2015 Featured Class)
Cured Specialty Meat Products
Specialty Game Meats

Due to the wide variations that exist in product entries, no evaluation guidelines for these classes have been given. If products entered in these classes are similar in product characteristic of other classes within the ACMC, but are excluded from other classes for a particular reason, please refer to the guidelines of that particular class. For example, a judge should use the meat snack stick guidelines to evaluate a buffalo snack stick entered in the Specialty Game Meats class.

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CLARENCE KNEBEL BEST OF SHOW EVALUATION GUIDELINES



DUE TO THE WIDE VARIATIONS THAT EXIST BETWEEN CURED MEAT COMPETITIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY, AAMP HAS DECIDED TO PUBLISH THE FORMAT OF HOW THE AMERICAN CURED MEAT CHAMPIONSHIPS' CLARENCE KNEBEL BEST OF SHOW IS DECIDED. THE BEST OF SHOW IS DECIDED BY ALL AVAILABLE JUDGES AND VOCAL DISCUSSION IS ENCOURAGED.

1. All 1st place products are exhibited on one table.
2. Each judge that evaluated their class(es) may make comments about the product that placed first in the class. At this point, the judge that evaluated the class may either recommend that the exhibit stay in or be removed from the Best of Show evaluation process.
3. After all products have been discussed and some products have been removed from the Best of Show, the process continues. *(At this point the class should be narrowed down to approximately 10 products)*
4. An external and internal evaluation should be done by all available judges on all remaining products.
5. An aroma and flavor evaluation should be done by all available judges on all remaining products.
6. After discussion, a few more products should be removed from the Best of Show.
7. At this point, hopefully there are 3-5 products remaining.
8. A secret ballot is performed, with all ballots given to the ACMC Technical Advisor.
9. If any product receives a majority vote, that product is declared the Best of Show.
10. If no product receives a majority vote, the two products that receive the most votes remain in the Best of Show.
11. Further product evaluation (*i.e.*, external, internal, aroma, and flavor) may be done at this point.
12. A second secret ballot is performed, with all ballots given to the ACMC Technical Advisor.
13. The product with the majority vote is declared the Best of Show.