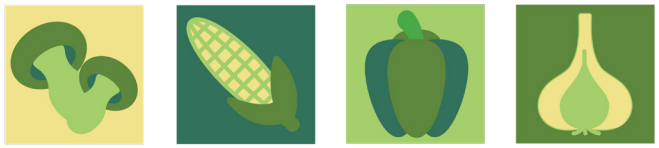
NACUFS NUTRITION AWARDS



2027 Categories

Best Local Foods Recipe

Special Diet Program of the Year

Special Diet Recipe of the Year

Wellness and Nutrition Program of the Year

NACUFS
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Nutrition Awards

The NACUFS Nutrition Awards honor excellence in nutrition and wellness across collegiate dining. They recognize member programs that demonstrate thoughtful, effective approaches to meeting students' dietary needs, developing special diet recipes, and promoting well-being throughout the campus community.

Previous Award Winners

Browse the 2026 Awards Gallery to see the winning submissions from last year and gather inspiration for your award entry. The gallery can be found at www.NACUFS.org/membership/awards-gallery-2026 or by scanning the QR code to the right.

Category Descriptions

1. Best Local Foods Recipe

   In recognition that meeting sustainability is a top priority for collegiate dining operations and utilizing local foods is a sustainable practice, NACUFS is offering an award category within its Nutrition Awards that recognizes programs utilizing local foods in unique and creative ways.

2. Special Diet Program of the Year

   In recognition that meeting students' needs is a top priority for collegiate dining operations, NACUFS is offering an award category within its Nutrition Awards to recognize programs that not only meet but exceed student dietary and nutritional needs (including, but not limited to, religious restrictions, allergens, and lifestyle preferences).

3. Special Diet Recipe of the Year

   This award recognizes institutions who creatively showcase their special diet offerings in one amazing recipe. Whether your program excels at gluten-free, vegan, halal, kosher, or another special diet offering, your recipe can be submitted to this category (including, but not limited to, religious restrictions, allergens, and lifestyle preferences).

4. Wellness and Nutrition Program of the Year

   This award focuses on fun and creative events to get students and guests involved in the experience of nutrition in their dining program. The winner of this award will showcase one initiative taken from the calendar year to engage their guests and provide education on nutrition.

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Best Local Foods Recipe

Description

In recognition that meeting sustainability is a top priority for collegiate dining operations and utilizing local foods is a sustainable practice, NACUFS is offering an award category within its Nutrition Awards that recognizes programs utilizing local foods in unique and creative ways.

Contest Rules:

1. The entry must focus on a recipe that uses at least three local ingredients and that has appeal to your guests that was served during the year beginning January 1, 2026 and ending December 31, 2026.
2. All entries must be submitted by **March 31, 2027**.
3. Each entry requires an essay no more than 500 words in length. The essay should summarize the program and include clearly stated goals and objectives.
4. Up to 20 collateral pieces may be uploaded as support documentation with each entry. They may contain examples of posters, brochures, screenshots of web pages, menus, published articles, white papers, photographs, and links to video/photo sharing websites. Any uploaded documents that contain copyrighted material and/or trademarks of any third parties must first have written permission from each copyright and/or trademark owner for further publication and use by NACUFS. Copyright permission can be emailed to membership@nacufs.org.
5. The contest is open to all NACUFS institutional members in good standing. Each separate foodservice unit at a member institution may enter a program. A separate entry form must be completed for each entry. Entries must be designed and produced by the school entering the contest.
6. Entries may be submitted for judging only once.
7. NACUFS expects that the use of AI will not overshadow a submission's authenticity. Judges evaluate actual outcomes, measurable results, challenges encountered, lessons learned, and institutional impact. The strongest award submissions provide specific examples and evidence rather than generic narratives.
8. Please upload all supporting materials (photos, graphics, videos, other documents) with a file name that clearly describes what part of the submission they refer to (e.g., Marketing-socials-1, or TempLogs-2).
9. Before final submission, organizations should ensure that 1) all links function properly; 2) videos are accessible, 3) attachments are uploaded with a file name that includes the criteria category, and 4) all required materials are included with the submission. Incomplete entries may be disqualified.
10. All winners will be notified by email following the completion of the judging.
11. The decision of the judges is final.
12. All participants will be notified of the results by email following the completion of the judging.
13. All gold, silver, and bronze winners will be displayed at the NACUFS National Conference where the Grand Prize winner will be announced.
14. By entering, permission is thereby given to NACUFS to publish and/or use in any way the material so submitted.
15. All entries must be submitted online via the NACUFS Awards portal.
16. All gold, silver, and bronze winners will be displayed at the NACUFS National Conference.
17. By entering, permission is thereby given to NACUFS to publish and/or use in any way the material so submitted.

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Best Local Foods Recipe

Evaluation structure:

Category	Criteria for Evaluation	Points Possible
Essay	• Describes where the items were grown, raised or produced relative to the institution. • Describes how local ingredients have been promoted to customers. • Describes how the local ingredients are procured, and how logistical challenges to buying local foods have been overcome by the institution. • Demonstrates that the producers of the local ingredients are part of the local food movement, and not conventional corporations. • Demonstrates a strong relationship between the institution and local producers.	30
Recipe	• At least three ingredients are local and has wide appeal to guests. • Productions steps are clear and in logical sequence (mise en place). • All ingredients are listed and instructions are included for all ingredients. • Easy to follow and uses tandard US weights or measures. • HACCP guidelines are included. • Nutrition analysis included and serving size stated.	50
Creativity and Marketing	• Recipe is Creative • Marketing of recipe and other local foods on the menu is demonstrated	15
Customer Feedback	• Customer feedback was solicited, and evalution instrument is included . • Overall customer satisfaction achieved.	5
Total Points Possible		100

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Special Diet Program of the Year

Description

In recognition that meeting students' needs is a top priority for collegiate dining operations, NACUFS is offering an award category within its Nutrition Awards to recognize programs that not only meet but exceed student dietary and nutritional needs (including, but not limited to, religious restrictions, allergens, and lifestyle preferences).

Contest Rules:

1. The entry must focus on the operation's nutrition program during the year beginning January 1, 2026 and ending December 31, 2026.
2. All entries must be submitted online by March 31, 2027.
3. Each entry requires an essay no more than 500 words in length. The essay should summarize the program and include clearly stated goals and objectives.
4. Up to 20 collateral pieces may be uploaded as support documentation with each entry. They may contain examples of posters, brochures, screenshots of web pages, menus, published articles, white papers, photographs, and links to video/photo sharing websites. Any uploaded documents that contain copyrighted material and/or trademarks of any third parties must first have written permission from each copyright and/or trademark owner for further publication and use by NACUFS. Copyright permission can be emailed to membership@nacufs.org.
5. The contest is only open to NACUFS institutional members in good standing. Non-members interested in submitting an entry must first become a member. Each separate foodservice unit at a member institution may enter a program. A separate entry form must be completed for each entry. Entries must be designed and produced by the school entering the contest.
6. NACUFS expects that the use of AI will not overshadow a submission's authenticity. Judges evaluate actual outcomes, measurable results, challenges encountered, lessons learned, and institutional impact. The strongest award submissions provide specific examples and evidence rather than generic narratives.
7. Please upload all supporting materials (photos, graphics, videos, other documents) with a file name that clearly describes what part of the submission they refer to (e.g., Marketing-socials-1, or TempLogs-2).
8. Before final submission, organizations should ensure that 1) all links function properly; 2) videos are accessible, 3) attachments are uploaded with a file name that includes the criteria category, and 4) all required materials are included with the submission. Incomplete entries may be disqualified.
9. Entries may be submitted for judging only once.
10. The judges will review all entries upon receipt for rule adherence.
11. All winners will be notified by email following the completion of the judging.
12. The decision of the judges is final.
13. All gold, silver, and bronze winners will be displayed at the NACUFS National Conference.
11. By entering, permission is thereby given to NACUFS to publish and/or use in any way the material so submitted.

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Special Diet Program of the Year

Evaluation structure:

Category	Criteria for Evaluation	Points Possible
Meeting Customers' Needs	Program is relevant to customers	30
	Theme is evident throughout program	
	Program appeals to target audience	
	A variety of methods are used to achieve stated goals and objectives	
	Program is innovative in terms of delivery to students	
	Information is accessible to customers	
Marketing and Promotion to Customers with Special Diet Needs	Information sharing campaign is effective	30
	Messaging is clear for students to understand how to access the program	
	Variety of information sharing used effectively (how the information is delivered to students)	
Program Content	Program supports the overall objectives	30
	Message is clear, concise, and science based	
	Content is timely and appropriate to target population	
	Educational materials are innovative, professional, clear, and appropriate for target audience	
	Menu offerings are varied throughout the program time frame	
Feedback & Evaluation	Program goals and objectives are clearly stated	10
	Evidence indicates the program reached target audience	
	An overall positive result was achieved	
Total Points Possible		100

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Special Diet Recipe of the Year

Description

This award recognizes institutions who creatively showcase their special diet offerings in one amazing recipe. Whether your program excels at gluten-free, vegan, halal, kosher, or another special diet offering, your recipe can be submitted to this category (including, but not limited to, religious restrictions, allergens, and lifestyle preferences).

Contest Rules:

1. Submit a recipe that meets the requirements of a specific diet and has a wide appeal to your guests. The recipe needs to have been served in your operation between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026.
2. All entries must be submitted online by March 31, 2027.
3. Each entry requires an essay no more than 500 words in length. The essay must include:
    a. Recipe ingredients.
    b. How the recipe/special diet was promoted to customers.
    c. How you are able to meet special dietary needs while keeping costs reasonable.
4. In addition, the entry must include:
    a. The recipe, scaled to make 25 servings, including production steps and HACCP guidelines. Production steps should be simple and clear, numbered, in logical sequence, and should use standard U.S. weights or measures (no metric please).
    b. Photos of the finished recipe (a minimum of two photos) and photos of the process.
    c. Nutritional analysis of recipe. Recipe must be nutritionally balanced.
    d. How you market the recipe and/or other special diets on your menu.
    e. Customer feedback.
5. The contest is only open to NACUFS institutional members in good standing. Non-members interested in submitting an entry must first become a member. Each separate foodservice unit at a member institution may enter a program. A separate entry form must be completed for each entry.
6. All entry materials must be designed and produced by the school entering the contest and cannot be company-wide promotions/menus/concepts that are for use at multiple locations or institutions as a company program.
7. NACUFS expects that the use of AI will not overshadow a submission's authenticity. Judges evaluate actual outcomes, measurable results, challenges encountered, lessons learned, and institutional impact. The strongest award submissions provide specific examples and evidence rather than generic narratives.
8. Please upload all supporting materials (photos, graphics, videos, other documents) with a file name that clearly describes what part of the submission they refer to (e.g., Marketing-socials-1, or TempLogs-2).
9. Before final submission, organizations should ensure that 1) all links function properly; 2) videos are accessible, 3) attachments are uploaded with a file name that includes the criteria category, and 4) all required materials are included with the submission. Incomplete entries may be disqualified.
10. Entries may be submitted for judging only once.
11. The judges will review all entries upon receipt for rule adherence.
12. The decisions of the judges are final.

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Special Diet Program of the Year

Contest Rules Continued

13. All participants will be notified of results by email following the completion of the judging.
14. All gold, silver, and bronze winning entries will be displayed at the NACUFS National Conference.
15. By entering, permission is thereby given to the NACUFS to publish and/or use in any way the material so submitted.
16. If an entry uses materials that could be subject to copyright and/or trademark protections, the entrant institution should consult with the entrant's legal counsel or appropriate institutional office as to whether written permission from each copyright and/or trademark owner is required. If written permission is required for the purposes reflected in the entry, a copy of each such written permission shall be submitted with the entry and such written permission shall also be provided for further publication and use by NACUFS. Copyright permission can be emailed to membership@nacufs.org.

Evaluation structure:

Category	Criteria for Evaluation	Points Possible
Essay	Essay is well-organized	30
	Describes ingredients and health benefits	
	Describes promotion of foods to customers	
	Describes procurement and any financial and/or logistical challenges	
Recipe - Written	Ingredients vary in uniqueness, color and texture	40
	Recipe is properly scaled to 25 servings	
	Production steps are clear and in logical sequence (mise en place)	
	All ingredients are listed and instructions included for all ingredients	
	Easy to follow (even if unfamiliar) and uses standard U.S. weights and/or measures (no metric)	
	HACCP guidelines included	
	Nutrition analysis included and serving size stated	
	Recipe is nutritionally balanced	
Creativity and Marketing	Marketing of recipe and other foods on menu	20
	Color pictures of the finished recipe are included (minimum of two photos)	
Customer Feedback	Customer feedback was solicited and evaluation instrument is included	10
	Overall customer satisfaction achieved	
Total Points Possible		100

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Most Innovative Wellness and Nutrition Program

Description

This award focuses on fun and creative events to get students and guests involved in the experience of nutrition in their dining program. The winner of this award will showcase one initiative taken from the calendar year to engage their guests and provide education on nutrition.

Contest Rules:

1. The entry must focus on the operation's special diet program during the January 1, 2026-December 31, 2026 timeframe. This award focuses on a single program that occurred during a calendar year. Examples include:
    a. National Nutrition Month
    b. Collaborations with recreation departments
2. All entries must be submitted online by March 31, 2027.
3. Each entry requires an essay no more than 500 words in length. The essay should summarize the program and include clearly stated goals and objectives.
4. Up to 20 collateral pieces may be uploaded as support documentation with each entry. They may contain examples of posters, brochures, screenshots of web pages, menus, published articles, white papers, photographs and links to video/photo sharing websites. Any uploaded documents that contain copyrighted material and/or trademarks of third parties must first have written permission from each copyright and/or trademark owner for further publication and use by NACUFS. Copyright permission can be emailed to membership@nacufs.org
5. The contest is only open to NACUFS institutional members in good standing. Non-members interested in submitting an entry must first become a member. Each separate foodservice unit at a member institution may enter a program. A separate entry form must be completed for each entry. Entries must be designed and produced by the school entering the contest.
6. NACUFS expects that the use of AI will not overshadow a submission's authenticity. Judges evaluate actual outcomes, measurable results, challenges encountered, lessons learned, and institutional impact. The strongest award submissions provide specific examples and evidence rather than generic narratives.
7. Please upload all supporting materials (photos, graphics, videos, other documents) with a file name that clearly describes what part of the submission they refer to (e.g., Marketing-socials-1, or TempLogs-2).
8. Before final submission, organizations should ensure that 1) all links function properly; 2) videos are accessible, 3) attachments are uploaded with a file name that includes the criteria category, and 4) all required materials are included with the submission. Incomplete entries may be disqualified.
9. Entries may be submitted for judging only once.
10. The judges will review all entries upon receipt for rule adherence.
11. All winners will be notified by email following the completion of the judging.
12. The decision of the judges is final.
13. All gold, silver, and bronze winners will be displayed at the NACUFS National Conference.

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Most Innovative Wellness and Nutrition Program

Contest Rules Continued

14. By entering, permission is thereby given to NACUFS to publish and/or use in any way the material so submitted.
15. If an entry uses materials that could be subject to copyright and/or trademark protections, the entrant institution should consult with the entrant's legal counsel or appropriate institutional office as to whether written permission from each copyright and/or trademark owner is required. If written permission is required for the purposes reflected in the entry, a copy of each such written permission shall be submitted with the entry and such written permission shall also be provided for further publication and use by NACUFS.

Evaluation structure:

Category	Criteria for Evaluation	Points Possible
Innovation	Program is relevant to customers	35
	Theme is evident throughout program	
	Program appeals to target audience	
	A variety of methods are used to achieve stated goals and objectives	
Marketing & Advertising	Marketing campaign is effective	20
	Marketing message is clear and innovative	
	Variety of advertising media used effectively	
Program Content	Program supports the overall theme, goals, and objectives	35
	Message is clear, concise, and science based	
	Content is timely and appropriate to target population	
	Educational materials are innovative, professional, clear, and appropriate for target audience	
	Curriculum overview is included and is well organized and adequately summarizes the program.	
Feedback & Evaluation	Program goals and objectives are clearly stated	10
	Evidence provided that program reached target audience	
	An overall positive result was achieved	
	Overall customer satisfaction achieved	
Total Points Possible		100

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Grand Prize

Description

Awarded to the overall highest impact nutrition program from the previous categories.

The grand prize recognizes the nutrition program with the greatest overall impact among entries in the preceding award categories. Entries will first be scored against the criteria for their respective categories. The highest-scoring entries will then be evaluated against the following additional criteria to determine the grand prize recipient.

Evaluation Structure

Category	Criteria for Evaluation	Points Possible
Overall Impact	Did the program inspire guests to take on more sustainable initiatives and seek out more information about why it is important?	10
Forward Thinking	Is the program looking to the future and ahead of its time?	10
Achievability	Can other campuses be inspired by this program to create something within their own operation?	10
Affordability	How did this initiative meet its goal while also focusing on keeping food/meal plans affordable for students?	10
Total Points Possible		40

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Nutrition Awards Classification Matrix

NACUFS will categorize your submission based on our current data using the Nutrition Awards Classification Matrix. If you'd like to update your data or ensure its accuracy, please contact membership@NACUFS.org.

