



JCR Newsletter



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Our intention with this newsletter is to inform the new candidates for the next International competition. This newsletter will also be provided to members of Bailliages that are involved in Regional and National competitions and be posted on the JCR Alumni Facebook page. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Lois Gilbert, International JCR Committee Member at

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DESTINATION ISTANBUL 2026

April 15-19, 2026

We are thrilled to announce that the 2026 International Jeunes Chefs Rôtisseurs Competition will return to the magnificent city of Istanbul, Turkey. The competition will be held from April 15-19, 2026, at Le Cordon Bleu Istanbul, located on the campus of Özyeğin University on the Asian side of Istanbul.

This prestigious venue provides an exceptional setting where East meets West, offering competitors the perfect backdrop to showcase their culinary artistry. Le Cordon Bleu Istanbul's state-of-the-art facilities and expert staff will ensure that every participant has the optimal environment to demonstrate their skills and creativity.



The 2026 competition promises to be extraordinary, set against the stunning backdrop of Istanbul's rich culinary heritage. This ancient city, where European and Asian flavors have mingled for centuries, provides the perfect inspiration for innovative cuisine.

We encourage all competitors to:

- Research Turkish cuisine and ingredients.
- Practice with Middle Eastern spices and techniques.
- Understand the cultural significance of hospitality in Turkish tradition.
- Prepare for a truly international field of competitors.
- Practice your work plan by outlining in 5 min increments listing the skills you wish to showcase through your cooking time. (ie. Knowing you are going to poach or pan fry or make a tart at a certain time will remove the pressure during execution as you will have a solid plan)

Black Box Mandatory Items

Istanbul 2023

Whole duck
Eggplant
Persimmon
Fresh figs
Red Mullet

Mexico 2022

Prawn
Oyster
Beef Strip loin and
short ribs
Jerusalem artichoke
Pineapple
Raisins

Paris 2021

Red Scorpion fish
Scallops
Caviar
Snails
Whole duck
Artichokes
Beet root
Mirabella
Quince
Dark and milk
Chocolate
Red rice

THE ULTIMATE CULINARY CHALLENGE: MASTERING THE BLACK BOX

The heart of our competition lies in the "black box" format, where competitors do not know ahead of time the ingredients, they will use except one protein will be revealed one month prior to the competition. Competitors have 30 minutes to write a menu and three and a half hours to prepare a three-course dinner for four people. This format tests not only your technical skills but also your creativity, adaptability, and ability to perform under pressure.

Why Practice for Black Box Competitions?

The black box format is designed to evaluate a chef's true culinary instincts and foundational knowledge. You can find previous black box descriptions in the Competition reports found on the competition website. Here's why dedicated practice is essential:

- **Adaptability:** You must be comfortable working with unfamiliar ingredients and creating cohesive menus on the spot
- **Time Management:** With only 3.5 hours for execution, every minute counts
- **Creative Thinking:** The ability to see connections between disparate ingredients and create harmonious flavor profiles.
- **Technical Proficiency:** Your fundamental cooking techniques must be flawless under pressure.
- **Menu Development:** Quick decision-making skills for creating balanced, restaurant-quality dishes.

Practice Strategy: Work with similar ingredient categories—unusual proteins, regional specialties, seasonal produce, and ancient grains or alternative starches. Focus on understanding how these elements can work together across multiple courses.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCORING SYSTEM

A panel of 12 internationally certified chefs, all members of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs, judge the competition, awarding marks for taste, presentation, originality, and kitchen technique. Here's how to maximize your score in each category:

TASTE (35% of total score)

- **Flavor Balance:** Ensure each dish has a harmonious blend of flavors—sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and umami.
- **Seasoning:** Proper salt levels and spice integration throughout all components
- **Texture Contrast:** Incorporate varied textures within each course (crispy, creamy, tender, etc.)
- **Temperature:** Serve dishes at optimal temperatures
- **Cohesion:** All three courses should work together as a complete dining experience

High-Scoring Tips: Taste your food constantly, understand your ingredients' natural flavors, and create dishes that complement rather than compete with each other.

PRESENTATION (25% of total score)

- **Visual Appeal:** Create dishes that are beautiful and Instagram-worthy.
- **Color Harmony:** Use the natural colors of ingredients to create visual interest.
- **Plating Technique:** Master modern plating styles while maintaining elegance.
- **Consistency:** All four plates must be identical in presentation.
- **Cleanliness:** Pristine plate edges and professional appearance.

High-Scoring Tips: Practice plating the same dish repeatedly until muscle memory takes over. Study contemporary restaurant presentations and adapt techniques to your style.

ORIGINALITY (25% of total score)

- **Creative Combinations:** Innovative use of the black box ingredients.
- **Unique Techniques:** Showcase advanced cooking methods appropriately.
- **Personal Style:** Demonstrate your culinary identity and cultural influences.
- **Menu Concept:** Create a cohesive theme that ties all courses together.
- **Surprise Elements:** Include unexpected but delightful flavor or texture surprises.

High-Scoring Tips: Develop signature techniques and flavor combinations before the competition. Study global cuisines for inspiration, but ensure innovations make culinary sense.

KITCHEN TECHNIQUE (15% of total score)

- **Knife Skills:** Consistent, precise cuts and professional speed.
- **Cooking Methods:** Proper execution of sautéing, roasting, braising, etc.
- **Organization:** Clean, efficient workspace management (mise en place)
- **Time Management:** Completing all tasks within the allotted time.
- **Food Safety:** Proper handling, storage, and cooking temperatures.

High-Scoring Tips: Practice fundamental techniques until they're second nature. Develop a system for organizing your workspace and timing your courses.

PREPARATION STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Mental Preparation:

- Practice creating menus with random ingredients in 30 minutes.
- Develop go-to techniques that work with multiple ingredients.
- Study ingredient pairing principles and flavor profiles.

Physical Preparation:

- Perfect your knife skills and basic techniques
- Practice plating identical dishes quickly and consistently.
- Build stamina for the 4-hour competition duration.

Strategic Preparation:

- Create a repertoire of reliable cooking methods for proteins, vegetables, and starches.
- Develop signature sauces and preparations that showcase skill.
- Practice explaining your dishes clearly and confidently to judges.
- Find time to discuss the competition with your previous National competitor.