

General

- Are there any ingredients that shouldn't be used?
As stated in the Show Schedule, please avoid pâté, fish, meat, soft cheese, rice, eggs and yoghurt

Bread

- Should my loaf be freshly made?

It should be baked within 24 hours of judging

- What type of tin should I use for my loaf?

It should be baked in a rectangular bread tin, and should show no residue or marks from the tin; tins used for baking cakes can leave a sugary deposit along edges and discolour loaf

- Can my sourdough loaf contain yeast?

Sourdough loaves must not contain commercial yeast; some packs sold in supermarkets will contain yeast as well as a sourdough starter

- What should my loaf look like?

The exterior of the loaf should be evenly proportioned and well risen. The colour should be even all over the loaf and a golden to dark golden colour. A darker crust will contribute to the overall flavour of the loaf. If baked in a tin, the dough should have filled the tin well. The loaf should be free of any shaping marks, bulges, splits on the sides of the bread and dough that has rolled over the edge of the tin.

- What should my rolls look like?

Rolls should be even in size and weight, well-risen, neat in shape and appearance. Rolls with kissing crusts are acceptable. Batch rolls are acceptable (where rolls are joined together). Glaze if used should be applied evenly and carefully.

- What should my loaf look like internally?

The texture should be even with no obvious denseness at the bottom of the loaf or very large holes, suggesting that the loaf has proved too quickly or is underbaked; the crumb should bounce back when pressed and should be dry or slightly moist; the crust should be even

- How should my loaf taste?

The flavour should be well rounded with the appropriate amount of salt, and flavourings which should be well balanced and not overpowering if required.

- Can I use a bread maker?

Bread makers can be used to make your loaf for the show.

Cakes

- What should my cake look like?

It should be well-risen, even in shape, with smooth sides. The lining paper if used, should be removed. There should be no cooling rack marks on the top of the cake, any fruit should be evenly distributed and the flavour should be balanced. There should be no burnt fruit on the surface. A sponge cake should have a flat or almost flat top. If two halves are requested, they should be the same thickness. A fairy cake can have a slightly peaked top. All cakes should be well-mixed with not pockets of flour. If squares of cake are requested, they should be cut into even pieces. To avoid rack marks on the cake, place a tea towel on the rack before removing the cake from the tin to cool.

- How should I present my cake for showing?

A plate and cover are provided by Grayshott Gardeners; a paper doily should be used under the cake. It would be helpful if you could bring your own doilies.

- What should my Swiss Roll look like?

It should be carefully rolled, twice around the centre, with no cracks and the join should be underneath. It should be a light golden-brown colour with a light layer of caster sugar from the rolling. There should be sufficient jam but not overfilled, its ends and sides should be neatly trimmed. It should have an even spongy texture with a delicate flavour.

- What should American Muffins look like?

Muffins should be baked in deep tins or paper cases of a minimum depth of 4cm (1 ½ inches), should rise above the rim of the tin or paper case and should be peaked with a crack. The texture should be springy and some internal holes are acceptable.

- How does a traybake differ from an ordinary cake?

A traybake uses any base mixture of cake, biscuit and or pastry and should always be baked in/on a tray and cut into evenly sized squares or fingers to serve. As with any cake, it may be topped with chocolate, nuts, fruit, preserves, icings, etc. The schedule will state the number of squares to be shown, which should be cut uniformly. The ingredients should be evenly distributed through the cake and the colour and balance of flavours should reflect the recipe which could be displayed by the exhibitor.

- Have the recipes provided been tried and tested?

Yes, they have and the Show Committee thought they were delicious!

Scones

- What should my scones look like?

The scones should be even in shape, size and colour, kneading marks are to be avoided, they should be flat on top, stand erect and a pale golden colour. The texture should be light and springy, more like a bread than a cake. **Plain scones** should be cut with a plain cutter, without glaze, but may be dusted with flour before baking. A fluted cutter should be used for **fruit or sweet scones**, no glaze but may be dusted with flour before baking. A plain cutter should be used for **savoury scones**, glazed with milk or egg; **cheese scones** should have grated cheese sprinkled on top.

Biscuits

- What should my biscuits look like?

There are several different types of biscuit which should be uniform in size, baked until crisp, snap when broken and should be even in colour. A fluted cutter should be used for sweet and a plain cutter for savoury biscuits. If the biscuits are sandwiched together, the filling should not be excessive.

- What about shortbread?

Shortbread should be shown in the round unless otherwise specified, such as fingers or pieces. It should be approximate 12mm thick and marked into sections before baking. The colour should be a pale golden brown, and the texture crisp, evenly shaped and smooth. It may be lightly sprinkled with caster sugar.

- What is the definition of a biscuit?

A biscuit is rolled, cut and uniform in size, unless asked for assorted, all should be identical in shape and size. It should be baked through until crisp and snap when broken. The biscuit should be 3mm (1/8 inch) thick and a 5-6cm (2-2 ½ inch) cutter should be used. A fluted cutter is used for sweet biscuits and a plain one for savoury. The biscuit should be uniform in colour, according to ingredients. A fancy biscuit offers scope for different decorations. Royal icing is better than water icing and each biscuit can be decorated differently. May include piped biscuits. If using colour, it should be delicate and tasteful. The biscuit should be even in size but not necessarily the same shape. If sandwiched together, the filling should not be excessive.

- How is a cookie different?

A cookie is an American term for a biscuit and is made from a softer mixture, which is rolled in the hands or sliced from a roll. An even softer mixture can be dropped in spoonfuls onto the baking tray which usually results in a thicker item than a biscuit.

Ginger snaps, brandy snaps and Florentines are made by this method and can often be a separate item on the schedule. Brandy snaps and Florentines are not cookies.

Cookies should be uniform in size and not too large. There should be a good balance of flavours, for example a chocolate chip cookie should taste first of chocolate, blending with the other ingredients.

Pastry

- What is pastry?

All pastries contain flour, fat, salt and water but differ in the proportion of ingredients and method of incorporation of the fat. Shortcrust pastry is made with plain flour, using half fat to flour. It should have a light and short texture, not hard and brittle. Sweet pastry is made with plain flour with a higher percentage of fat to flour than shortcrust pastry. Sugar is added to the mixture and mixed with egg and water. Again, the texture should be light and short, not hard and brittle.

- How should pastry be presented?

Pastries should be presented on a plate, with a doily if sweet, and a paper plate if savoury (unless otherwise specified in the schedule). Savoury items may be garnished with parsley, or a garnish reflecting the ingredients, eg a salmon quiche could be garnished with lemon, cucumber or fennel.

- How should the pastry be cooked?

Pastries should be evenly baked and the base should be completely cooked through. To avoid a soggy bottom, try putting the dish on a baking sheet to increase base heat.

For Recipes using Shortcrust Pastry

- What should jam tarts or tartlets look like?

These should be individual tarts, identical in size and shape, filled with the same jam unless the schedule states assorted fillings. The level of the jam should be smooth and cooked in the pastry, not overflowing. Lemon curd and marmalade should not be used as a filling. The pastry should be 4mm (1/6 inch) thick and not too deep, light golden in colour and cooked underneath. A flavoursome jam should be used.

- Which pastry should be used for a mince pie

Use either sweet or shortcrust pastry with a full-size pastry top. The pastry should be 4mm (1/6 inch) thick and not too deep, light golden in colour and cooked underneath. Use a flavoursome mincemeat filling and dust the top lightly with icing sugar.

- What does a savoury tart look like?

A savoury tart is cooked on a plate or in a shallow dish with a lining layer of pastry, filling, and covered by a layer of pastry. The edges should be neatly knocked up or fluted. The pastry should be cooked through, crisp, and slightly domed, and there should be a good proportion of filling to pastry. A hole can be made in the top to allow for the escape of steam. The pastry lid should be glazed with beaten egg with an arrangement of pastry leaves to decorate the top. Serve on the cooking plate.

- How does a quiche differ from a savoury flan?

A quiche is not classed as a savoury flan. It has a pastry flan base, with a savoury egg custard filling, which is cooked together with the pastry base. The pastry for a savoury flan is baked blind (use baking paper and rice and sit it on a baking sheet to increase base heat). The filling is sauce-based, then added to the pastry and finished. The pastry can have added cheese or herbs. For both a flan and a quiche, the pastry should be even at the edges and not too thick. The filling should be adequate without spilling over, uniformly chopped or diced and flavoursome. There should be a good blend and combination of flavours, seasoned carefully.

Confectionery

- What are the guidelines for confectionery?

In an individual class of confection, the schedule will usually state

- Quantity required
- Method of presentation, ie in sweet or petit four cases
- Presented in a box
- Whether cooked or uncooked

If a schedule doesn't state any requirements

- The container should be suitable and well-presented, free from commercial markings
- Sweets uniform in size, approx. 2.5cm (1 inch)
- Shapes may vary but should be neat
- Flavour, texture and consistency are important

Preserves

- What are the guidelines for preserves?

Classification of fruit

- Soft: Blackberries, blackcurrants, elderberries, figs, gooseberries, grapes, loganberries, mulberries, raspberries, rhubarb, strawberries, redcurrants, bilberries, blueberries
- Stone: Apricots, cherries, damsons, peaches, plums, greengages, sloes, nectarines, mangoes
- Hard: Apples, pears, medlars, quinces, crab apples
- Citrus: Seville oranges, sweet oranges, grapefruit, lemons, limes, tangerines, satsumas, etc

Covers for jams, jellies and marmalades

- A wax disc, placed smooth side down, when carefully trimmed to fit the rim of the jar and the surface of the preserve, will cause an airtight seal when cooled, and only needs a cellophane cover to protect from dust. This should never be put on a tepid preserve as the moist air trapped may cause spoilage. Always put on the cellophane cover when the jar is completely cold.
- A twist top or plastic cover will pop when opened, if there is a true seal
- Avoid honey jars with screw tops as the thread does not produce a good seal. Twist tops, however, do give a good seal. A seal can only be achieved by
 - A new twist top
 - A waxed disc with a cellophane cover

Recycled jars and lids

- Plain jars must be used for showing preserves. Jars and lids bearing trade names, eg Lakeland, etc, are discouraged and not recommended for shows. Kilner jars are acceptable
- If twist top lids are used for showing, they must be new and plain, as old lids do not always give a good seal. If no seal of preservation is present, the item is not acceptable (NA) and is not marked further. Don't be tempted to test the seal on your jar before exhibiting as this will destroy it!

Labels

- Labels should be plain, neat and stuck on straight, and of suitable size for the container. The label should state the contents of the jar, the day, month and year of making.

Overall criteria for sweet preserves

- There should be 40% fruit to 60% sugar
- jellies should be sparkling clear and made from fruit juice obtained from cooking fruit
- marmalade based on citrus fruits can be fine cut, chunky or jelly, which should be stated on the label
- Confiture consists of whole fruit preserved in fruit jelly.
- Preserve and Conserve are interchangeable and refer to semi-candied fruit preserved in a heavy sugar syrup
- All sweet preserves should have a bright colour with no scum or foreign bodies, mould, air bubbles or sugar crystals
- The fruit should be evenly distributed and not too many stones
- The contents should be set, not runny or sticky, no loose liquid or syrup
- The jars should be filled to within 3mm (1/4 inch) of the top. Do allow for shrinkage.
- Jams - the skins should be tender
- Jellies - should be brilliantly clear and the consistency should tremble but hold its shape

Home Produce FAQ's taken from Womens' Institute publication, On With The Show

- Citrus Fruit Marmalade - consistency shouldn't be runny or too firm, the peel should be tender, uniformly cut and distributed. Traditionally the peel should be sliced, minced peel will lose marks
- Non-Citrus Fruit/Vegetable Marmalade/Chili Jam - these are based on fruit and vegetables, but other ingredients (eg spices, etc) may be added and should be labelled accordingly. Label should state mild or hot. The fruit and vegetables should be evenly cut.
- Fruit Curd - contains eggs and butter and is cooked at a low temperature so it is not a true preserve. It should be covered with a wax circle and cellophane top; twist tops are not acceptable. The consistency should be spreadable but non runny or rough. Flavour should be fresh and well balanced with no greasy taste.

Overall criteria for Vinegar Preserves

- These should be kept for at least two months before showing
- Covers must prevent evaporation and should not be liable to corrosion due to presence of vinegar
- Do not use a waxed disc and cellophane cover, rather use a twist top with a plastic lining
- Lids must be a good fit but may not always have a seal that pops when opened.