Waterford Community Fair – 4th Annual Hottest Pepper Contest

2026 Entry Guidelines and Testing Procedure

The contest date is Tuesday, September 8, starting at 6:00 pm in the Home Show 1 building.

Contest premiums are 1st - $10.00, 2nd - $8.00, 3rd - $6.00, 4th - $4.00

ENTRY GUIDELINES:

1. Only entries received on Registration Day, September 6, are eligible for the contest.
2. Only one entry per exhibitor is allowed.
3. Entry must include three specimens (see following NOTE) of the same variety. Specimens will be used for testing and for display. Entries that do not provide enough specimens for testing and display purposes will be disqualified from the contest.

   NOTE: For smaller sized pepper specimens (1" or less in length or diameter) an additional three specimens (or more depending on the size) will be required to get an adequate testing sample.

4. Entries must have been grown by exhibitor.
5. Variety name/type must be provided to verify pepper is suitable for eating. Pepper varieties that cannot be verified will be disqualified. Seed packets or greenhouse plant tags are acceptable for validation purposes.
6. No market purchased peppers are permitted.

TESTING PROCEDURE STEPS:

1. Entries will be tested separately. Identical testing procedures will be used for each entry.
2. Peppers will be pureed into a pulp. Equal amounts of pulp will be extracted for testing procedures.
3. An initial liquid dilution will be done before testing starts.
4. Heat testers will test diluted pepper pulp. Heat testers will respond "YES" or "NO" to heat being detected.
5. During each round of testing, an entry with at least one "YES" response will continue to the next round of testing. An entry with all "NO" responses will be eliminated from the contest. Results from each round of testing are recorded and used to determine contest results.
6. Heat testers will be given up to a five-minute recovery time between rounds. Heat testers needing to be excused from testing will be replaced with an alternate heat tester.
7. Entries continuing to the next round will be diluted with dilution liquid and the testing will be repeated at step 4 above.
8. Steps 4 through 7 will be repeated for each entry as required.

ADDITIONAL:

1. Dilution rates may be adjusted between rounds to ensure a timely completion to the contest.
2. Spectators are NOT permitted to sample any part of the entries during any part of the contest.
3. In the event of a tie the department 13 – Vegetables – chairperson(s) will select an entry winner for that position.
4. The number of entries included in the testing portion of the contest will be determined by the number and variety of contest entries. Selection criteria will be based on the documented Scoville pepper rating scale, entry quality, and cross section of pepper varieties entered. If more than four entries have been entered the department judges will select entries to be tested.
5. Testing will end with the anticipated hottest pepper entry.
6. Individuals with an interest in being a volunteer heat tester or an alternate heat tester should contact the department chairperson(s) prior to the contest date.