

THE 2026 NATIONAL GINGERBREAD HOUSE COMPETITION™

YOUTH & CHILD OFFICIAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

Entry Form Deadline:

Monday, November 9, 2026, by 5pm EST

REQUIRED: Entry Description Summary:

Sunday, November 15, 2026

Entry Registration Days:

Saturday, November 14, 2026

Child and Youth | 1pm-5pm EST

Sunday, November 15, 2026

Teen and Adult | 8am-1pm EST

2026 Gingerbread Competition Awards Ceremony:

Monday, November 16, 2026, at 6pm EST
Voting for the People's Choice Award begins promptly at 4:45pm EST.

Gingerbread Display - Public Viewing:

Tuesday, November 17, 2026 – Sunday, January 3, 2027

- Sundays: After 6pm
- Monday – Thursday: Anytime during regular resort hours
- Friday & Saturday: reserved for registered resort guests and those with confirmed dining reservations.
- Closed to the Public: Holidays and the following dates: November 26, December 6, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31 and January 1.



THE 2026 NATIONAL GINGERBREAD HOUSE COMPETITION™

The 2026 National Gingerbread House Competition™ will be held at The Omni Grove Park Inn & Spa on Monday, November 16, 2026, with an Awards Ceremony following in the Grand Ballroom. The Awards Ceremony is reserved for contestants and their families only. Competition judging will be conducted in-person and is closed to the public. Three to five optional supplemental photos can be submitted at the time of registration, printed and in-person only, and are encouraged as they help show off skills or techniques used when crafting your piece. Video content submissions of any kind will not be accepted.

Building upon the incredible energy of our gingerbread community, The Omni Grove Park Inn & Spa is thrilled to welcome two extraordinary culinary masters, Sasha Aleksandra Nary and Rabiha Sami, to the National Gingerbread House Competition judging panel. Sasha Nary, a Le Cordon Bleu Paris certified pastry chef, master confectionary artist, and author of Baking Magic, is globally renowned for seamlessly fusing classic European heritage with modern sugar art. Joining her is Rabiha Sami, an award-winning cookie artist, computer engineer, and former Ivy League professor who shot to national fame on Food Network's Christmas Cookie Challenge. Known for her mind-bending, gravity-defying bespoke cakes and intricate 3D structural cookie designs, Rabiha brings an elite level of mathematical precision to baking. Together, their unique perspectives ensure that every submission—from complex structural engineering to the finest hand-painted details—is evaluated with the highest level of technical appreciation.

The addition of these two phenomenal judges marks a vibrant step forward, ensuring an incredibly inspiring, fair, and elevated experience for everyone involved. This year, the competition will follow in the same classic format as previous years, ensuring a trusted framework where creativity can truly shine. Whether you're a seasoned competitor aiming for the grand prize or a first-time baker stepping onto our national stage, we invite you to be a part of this cherished holiday tradition. We cannot wait to celebrate the magic, structural innovation, and world-class artistry of gingerbread with you and our newly expanded judging panel this holiday season.

JUDGING PROCEDURE

Judging will commence over two days, after each registration period is complete to better accommodate the increasing number of entries. All Gingerbread entries will be judged in-person at The Omni Grove Park Inn & Spa.

WINNER ANNOUNCEMENT

We will celebrate all Competitors with the in-person Awards Ceremony, as well as continue “The 12 Days of Gingerbread” social media tradition started in 2020. The 2026 Grand Prize Winner, 2nd Place Adult, and 3rd Place Adult will be placed on display at the Resort for the year following the Awards Ceremony.

12 DAYS OF GINGERBREAD

For those who may not travel this season, the hotel will continue, “The 12 Days of Gingerbread” showcasing this year’s incredible entries on the hotel’s Facebook (@omnigroveparkinn) and Instagram (@omnigrovepark) channels from December 1 - 12, 2026 to spark Ginger-love for all during the happiest season of the year! This provides an in-person and virtual way for all to enjoy.

OFFICIAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

Please read all information fully and carefully. Requirements have been updated. The following rules and procedures have been set forth and established by The Omni Grove Park Inn & Spa (henceforth referred to as OGPI) for the purpose of The 2026 National Gingerbread House Competition™.

The deadline to submit the Competitor Entry Form is **November 9, 2026, at 5pm ET**. OGPI reserves the right to refuse any entry deemed inappropriate. For additional questions, please contact gpi.events@omnihotels.com.

ENTRY CATEGORY GUIDELINES

INDIVIDUAL ENTRY

To be eligible for the Competition, the Competitor Entry Form must be received by **5pm ET on November 9, 2026**. Additionally, the Entry Description Summary Form and optional three to five photos must be printed and submitted at time of registration on **November 15, 2026**.

The registered Competitor will receive all correspondence, notifications, and updates regarding The National Gingerbread House Competition™ via email. If the individual entering is under 18 years of age by the date of the Competition entry, consent from a parent or legal guardian is required in addition to disclosing the minor’s date of birth. Each participant may only submit one individual entry **or** one team entry. Following receipt of the Competitor Entry Form, the entrant will receive a manual confirmation email providing Entry Number and Competitor room block information.

TEAM ENTRY

To be eligible for the Competition, the Competitor Entry Form must be received by **5pm ET on November 9, 2026**. Additionally, the Entry Description Summary Form and optional three to five photos must be printed and submitted at time of registration on **November 15, 2026**.

Each team entry must designate a Team Captain. The Team Captain will receive all correspondence, notifications, and updates on behalf of the team regarding entry in The National Gingerbread House Competition™ via email. Teams are to submit only one Competitor Entry Form, including only the Team Captain’s contact information. If entering as a school group, the classroom teacher should be listed as the Team Captain and provide their contact information.

If individuals working on a team entry are of varied ages, the team must enter in the appropriate category for the oldest individual in the group. Individuals 18 years of age but still enrolled in high school may compete in the Teen Category as a member of a team entry. If the individual(s) entering is under 18 years of age by the date of the Competition, consent from a parent/legal guardian(s) is required in addition to disclosing the minor’s date of birth. Each participant may only submit one individual entry **or** one team entry. Distribution of ribbon and splitting of any prize will be left to the team captain to determine. We are not able to supply ribbons for each participant. Following receipt of the Competitor Entry Form, the Team Captain will receive a manual confirmation email providing Entry Number and Competitor room block information.

ENTRY CATEGORIES

The following categories are available for entry into The 2026 National Gingerbread House Competition™:

- Adult Category - Individuals 18 years of age and older entering as a single entrant or team.
- Teen Category - Individuals between 13 and 17 years of age entering as a single entrant or team.
- Youth Category - Individuals between 9 and 12 years of age entering as a single entrant or team.
Please see separate rule document.
- Child Category - Individuals between 5 and 8 years of age entering as a single entrant or team.
Please see separate rule document.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ANONYMITY POLICY

1. **Anonymous Judging:** To ensure absolute fairness, The National Gingerbread House Competition utilizes a blind-review process. All entries will be judged anonymously.
 - a. Disclosing a personal or professional relationship (e.g., family member, business associate, or close personal friend) with any member of this year's judging panel does not automatically disqualify your entry, but allows us to assign a different judge to score your piece and avoid any conflict of interest.
2. **Entry Descriptions and Summaries:** The entry description and summary accompanying the gingerbread piece will be provided directly to the judges for review during the evaluation process. To maintain complete compliance with the blind-review policy:
 - a. **No Identifying Factors:** Entrants must not include any competitor names, team names, or organization names anywhere within the text of the description or summary.
 - b. **Anonymity Requirement:** The summary must remain entirely anonymous and free from any identifying factors or personal indicators.
3. **Mandatory Disclosure:** Entrants are strictly required to disclose if they have any personal, familial, or professional relationship (including, but not limited to, immediate family members, business associates, or close personal friends) with any member of the current year's judging panel.
4. **Disclosure Process:** This disclosure must be made directly on the official Competition Entry Form at the time of submission.
5. **Recusal and Fairness:** Disclosing a relationship with a judge will not disqualify an entrant. However, it will allow the competition organizers to proactively recuse that specific judge from scoring the piece, ensuring an unbiased evaluation by alternative panel members. Failure to disclose a known conflict of interest may result in the disqualification of the entry.

ENTRY CRITERIA

APPLIES TO YOUTH & CHILD CATEGORIES ONLY

JUDGING

All entries will be judged on five criteria, and each criterion is given a weight on how they will factor into your overall score:

1. **Overall Design & Appearance, 20%:** The overall appearance score includes scale and proportion, as well as the amount of exposed gingerbread. To respect the core spirit of the competition, the more gingerbread that is used and exposed (not fully covered in icing, candy, or another decorative element) the higher the score. Judges will look for areas of exposed gingerbread in multiple elements of the entry.

***Creating a larger entry does not increase your score. Entries should be represented in an appropriate scale relative to the individual components. Please ensure that no aspects of your piece exceed the size of your base.*
2. **Originality and Creativity, 25%:** Judges will consider how differently an entry is designed and presented relative to work seen in other competitions, online, or in print.
3. **Use of Color, 15%:** Use of color refers not only to the choice of color palette, but to the balance & consistency of the color throughout the entry.
4. **Precision & Neatness, 25%:** A high level of importance is placed on how neatly every detail of each component of your entry is demonstrated. Piping should be even and consistently sized with no smudging, air bubbles or gaps between contiguous design elements. Seams should be camouflaged. Stray spots and streaks of decorative elements should not be visible, etc.
5. **Consistency of Theme, 15%:** When viewing the entry as a whole, there should be continuity of the theme throughout the entire piece.

There is no overall theme for the competition. Although OGPI's holiday competition is titled The National Gingerbread House Competition™, entries are not limited to the structure of a house. Competitors are welcome and encouraged to uniquely design their entry. Theme should be Competitor's own and consistent throughout the entry.

Decorative elements that are handmade will carry more weight than similar prefabricated items. All rulings by the judges are independent and final. They are in no way influenced by OGPI staff/affiliates or Competitors. In the event of a tie, the Competition Call Judge will be asked to break the tie.

SIZE LIMITATIONS

Entry must be placed on a board base. Entries combined with a base must not be larger than 24 inches high, 24 inches wide, and 24 inches long. ½" or ¾" plywood as a base for your entry is recommended. **No element of the entry should extend beyond or hang over the edge of the base.** Decorations must not cause the entry to exceed the required size limitations. Use of pegs/risers/feet on the bottom of the base is preferred but not required. If you wish to install pegs/risers/feet on the underside of your base, they are considered as part of the base and must not cause the entry's overall height to exceed 24 inches. Non-edible materials such as paint and/or ribbon are approved and encouraged to decorate the outer edge of your plywood base only. Weight is not to exceed 50 pounds.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION

Please read carefully.

Everything above the base of your entry must be composed completely of edible materials. Competitors are permitted to use up to 25% mechanically produced components in their entry. Examples include machine design, 3D print, and laser cut components. 75% of each entry must be handcrafted. The main structure of your entry must be constructed of at least 75% gingerbread, which should be exposed where possible.

Edible materials are not limited to candies and icings. Use of gum paste, fondant, pastillage, chocolate, modeling chocolate, royal icing, isomalt, cast sugar, gelatin and pressed sugar is encouraged. Use of "Disco Dust", "Rainbow Dust" or "Hologram Powder" is permitted.

Any entry with non-edible components or using unapproved techniques will be automatically disqualified from placing in the competition. **No** artificial display or structural materials, such as Styrofoam, interior or exterior lighting or other electronic components are to be used in the construction or decoration of the entry. Candies must be unwrapped and free of any non-edible materials, for example: lollipop sticks. Non-edible materials such as paint and/or ribbon are approved and encouraged to decorate the outer edge of your plywood base only. Decorations must not cause the entry to exceed the required size limitations.

Entries must be solely constructed by the individual(s) entering the competition. Teen Competitors may be supervised, for safety precautions, by a parent, legal guardian, or classroom teacher. Example: assistance with operating a stove top or oven.

Adult entries have the potential to be on exhibit for 12 months in a wooden display case and must be built to last. If repairs are needed at any time while on display, the competitor is responsible for addressing in a timely manner and supplying the necessary tools and materials to maintain the piece.

ENTRY IDENTIFICATION

Each entry must be clearly labeled with its OGPI assigned, unique entry number. Number must be visible from a fully seated position for hotel reference and identification. If you do not arrive with your entry number clearly showing, you will be required to add it at entry registration. Examples of successful labeling: small decorative plaques, signposts, banners. If not incorporated into the piece elsewhere, the recommended location is the outer edge of the base.