

Advice: Domestic Section, Summer 2026

Your entries don't need to be perfect. Don't be afraid, just 'have a go'!

The more entries the better the show.

- Check that your entries comply with all the requirements mentioned in the schedule.
- Please don't hesitate to ask the Show Secretary if there is anything that you don't understand.
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- When asked to provide a list of ingredients, quantities are not required.
Your list of ingredients may be typed or clearly handwritten. Please do not include your name.
Please display your ingredients list next to your entry.
- Much of this advice is based upon the recommendations in '*On with the Show: An NFWI Handbook for Exhibitors, Judges and Show Committees*' but with some adaptations. The **BGS Show Schedule**, and the advice notes below, **should always take precedence**.

Baking - General

- Unless specified, bake sizes are at the discretion of the exhibitor.
- Where recipes are provided, direct like-for-like replacements may be used to avoid specific allergens. For example, egg replacer, vegan butter or gluten-free flour.
- Where more than one item is specified, flavour and appearance should be consistent across the set.
- The majority of marks will be awarded for flavour and aroma.
No off-flavours/ odours and no hint of staleness.
The predominant flavour/ aroma should be characteristic of the bake and of any ingredients mentioned in the recipe title.
- Spices, flavourings and seasonings should be balanced for an average palate.
- Evenly baked. No burned edges or uncooked middles.
- Lining papers removed. (Small fancy cakes and muffins may be presented in paper cases.)
- No cooling rack marks on the top of your bake.
- Unless otherwise stated, bakes should be displayed on a plain plate, doily optional.
- Bakes should be protected by a transparent covering, such as a cake dome or clingfilm.
- Entries should be labelled with the recipe title. List the main flavours if these are not apparent from the recipe title.

Yeasted bakes

Gluten-free loaf

- A loaf baked to any gluten-free recipe: white, brown, wholemeal or seeded.
- Please ensure that all ingredients are gluten-free, not just the flour. Be careful of cross-contamination by gluten from other bakes.
- Salt is required to develop a good flavour but the loaf should not be salty.

- The dough should be well kneaded to ensure an even texture with no streaks or large holes inside the loaf.
- Baked in a loaf tin or shaped by hand. Shape neatly to avoid cracks in the base.
- Avoid overproving which may produce a sour yeast flavour.
- No glaze is required but is permitted.
- The loaf should be well risen and baked. Wholemeal and brown loaves will be slightly less well risen.
- Aim for a soft, springy crumb. Wholemeal and brown loaves will be a little denser than white.
- May be displayed on a small platter or board instead of a plate.
- The main ingredients should be listed next to the bake.

Scones and 'quick breads'

Fruit Scones

- Made with your choice of dried or fresh fruit(s). Ideally, your scones should be freshly baked on the day of the Show.
- Avoid a predominant flavour of raising agent!
- Avoid kneading marks.
- Scones should be even in shape and size. A fluted, 5-6cm diameter cutter should be used.
- Avoid twisting the cutter to help the scones to rise straight up.
- The scones may be dusted with flour before baking. No glaze.
- Ideally, the scones should be almost as tall as they are wide, with a flat top and baked to a pale golden colour. The texture should be light and springy - more like bread than cake.
- Avoid burnt fruit on the outside of your scones.

Pastry

Cheese Pastry

- A classic cheese, onion and potato pastry.
- Homemade **puff pastry**: equal amounts of butter and plain flour. Salt to taste.
Or homemade **flaky or rough puff pastry**: three parts fat to one part plain flour. Salt to taste.
- Filling should be in good proportion to the pastry and be well flavoured/seasoned.
- Edges of the pastry case should be well joined.
- The pastry case should be evenly glazed and baked to a golden brown colour, top and bottom.
The pastry should be completely cooked through.
Well risen in flaky layers with a slightly crisp, tender texture.
- May be **garnished** with parsley or to reflect the ingredients of the filling.

Chocolate Éclairs

- **Choux pastries** made from water, butter, salt, eggs, and flour.
 - Use a 1.5 - 2cm nozzle to pipe the dough mixture into éclairs about 10 - 12.5cm long (uncooked).

- Traditionally, a French star nozzle should be used but a round nozzle is acceptable.
- When baked, the pastry should be golden brown, light and well puffed – hollow and dry inside.
- The choux pastries should be neatly covered with chocolate fondant or similar when cool.
- Do not fill your éclairs with a pastry cream; serve a sample in a small bowl alongside instead.
 - Also known as crème pâtissière.
 - A rich custard made from milk, sugar, eggs, starch (usually cornstarch or flour), and vanilla.
 - Rich, creamy, and stable enough to hold its shape. Smooth and silky.
 - While vanilla is the traditional flavor, your pastry cream may be flavoured with chocolate or another complementary flavour if you prefer.

Cakes

- All ingredients should be well mixed and evenly distributed.
- No cooling rack marks on the top of your cake.
- Cakes should be well risen with an even shape and colour.
- The crust should be thin and even.
- No raising agent tunnels. No large air bubbles or crumbling edges.
- Cakes may be rich and moist but should be neither wet, heavy nor soggy.

Floral fancies

- Dainty petit four glacé: bite-sized cakes (approx. 2 - 4cm).
- Usually made with a sponge cake base. Often a Victoria sandwich or Genoese type sponge.
- Covered in fondant or icing. Careful colouring of the fondant/ icing is important.
- Topped with delicate, edible floral decorations.
 - Made in any medium, e.g. crystallised flowers, royal icing, buttercream, fondant, or sugar paste.
 - Each fancy may have a different floral decoration as long as they form a coherent set.
- Uniform size, neat presentation and carefully considered design are all key.
- May be presented in paper cases

Biscuits

Shortbread biscuits - Novice recipe

- Made according to the **set recipe on page 41 in the schedule**.
- The recipe may be adapted to be vegan and/or gluten-free. List recipe changes next to your bake.
- See how to cream together the butter/margarine and caster sugar until it becomes light and fluffy here: www.bbc.co.uk/food/how_to_cook/watch/creaming
- Your biscuits should be evenly baked to a light golden brown. You may need to experiment with the cooking time.
- Present 5 biscuits which are uniform in size, thickness and shape.

Supermarket biscuits

- Traditional or cookie-style sweet biscuits that are reminiscent of a specific type of shop-bought biscuit. For example, custard creams, bourbon creams, chocolate digestives, party rings or jammy dodgers.
- Uniform shape, size, thickness and design according to type. Not too large.
- Baked to an even colour, according to type.

Traditional biscuits should be baked through until crisp and should snap when broken. Cookie-style biscuits may be softer.

- Predominant flavour according to type.
- Sandwich biscuits should not have an excess of filling.
- Fancy biscuits should not be covered by too much icing - the icing should not dominate over the flavour and texture of the biscuit itself.

Preserves - Jams, jellies, marmalades and curds

- **Jars:** standard clear glass. Avoid fingermarks.
- **Labels:** plain, neat, straight and in proportion with the jar. Place the label between any seams on the jar.

Entries should be labelled with the recipe title and the preserving date.

Also labelled with the main flavours if these are not apparent from the recipe title.

- Jars should be shown filled to within 3mm of the brim.
- Sterilised jars should be filled whilst they are still warm and the preserve is hot.

Seal with a wax disc with wax facing down.

To prevent the growth of yeasts and moulds in your preserves, ensure that the temperature of the preserve does not drop below 82°C (180°F) before sealing.

- A cellophane dust cover should be added once the preserve has cooled.

Dampen one side of the cellophane cover before applying it to the jar with the damp side facing up.

Secure with an elastic band.

No additional lids or covers are allowed.

Jam: Soft Fruit

- **Jars: 340-454g** (12-16oz, approx. 300-400ml).
- Made from one or more types of soft fruit. For example, berries, currants or grapes.

Please save stone fruit, hard fruit and vegetable jams for the Autumn Show.
- Additional flavouring ingredients are allowed.
- Made from crushed or chopped fruit.
- **Flavour:** full, fresh and characteristic of the fruit used.
- **Colour:** bright, even and characteristic of the fruit used.
- **Consistency:** uniformly jellified - no loose liquid or syrup. Fruit evenly distributed. Any fruit skins should be tender. No scum, mould, foreign bodies, or sugar crystals.

Jelly: Soft Fruit

- **Jars: 225-454g** (8-16oz, approx. 200-400ml).
- Made from one or more types of soft fruit. For example, berries, currants or grapes.
Please save stone fruit, hard fruit and herb jellies for the Autumn Show.
- Additional flavouring ingredients are allowed.
- Made from only fruit juice - no crushed or chopped fruit.
- **Flavour:** full, well balanced and characteristic of the fruit used.
- **Colour:** even, bright and characteristic of the fruits used.
- **Consistency:** soft enough to tremble but must still hold its shape. Brilliantly clear with no pulp, haze or scum. No air bubbles.

Marmalade: Orange

- **Jars: 340-454g** (12-16oz, approx. 300-400ml).
- Made mainly from Seville or sweet oranges.
Additional flavours may be included but orange should be the predominant flavour.
Save other flavours of marmalade for the Autumn Show.
- **Flavour:** definite orange flavour and slightly bitter.
- **Colour:** characteristic orange colour. Bright, not dull and cloudy.
- **Consistency:** uniformly jellified - not runny or too firm. Peel uniformly cut (sliced not minced), tender and evenly distributed. No air bubbles or scum.

Fruit Curd: Non-citrus

- **Jars: 340-454g** (12-16oz, approx. 300-400ml).
- Made from any non-citrus fruit(s). For example, passion fruit, rhubarb, or raspberry.
May include some citrus juice but this should not be the predominant flavour.
Save citrus curds, such as lemon, for the Autumn Show.
- **Flavour:** well balanced fresh flavour. No greasy aftertaste.
- **Colour:** an even colour that is characteristic of the fruit used.
- **Consistency:** smooth with no egg spots, peel or sugar crystals. No air bubbles nor scum. Spreadable but not runny.
- Should be made within 4 weeks of the show and stored in the refrigerator.

Drinks

Fruit syrup, squash or cordial

- **Bottles:** standard clear glass, any volume. Avoid fingermarks.
- **Labels:** plain, neat, straight and in proportion with the bottle. Place the label between any seams.
Labelled with the recipe title and the preserving date.

Indicate if dilution is required with still or sparkling water.

- Made from one or more types of fruit.
- Bottles should be shown with 12 -25mm headspace.
- Seal with any standard type of cap, flip top, screw lid or cork.

The judge will be supplied with a corkscrew and cap opener.

- Drinks should either be sterilised in the bottle to form a seal, or made within one week of the show and stored in a refrigerator.

Pickles and Ferments

- **Jars:** standard clear glass, **up to 910g** (2lb, approx. 750ml). Avoid fingermarks.

Ensure that the neck of the jar is wide enough for the vegetables to be easily removed from the jar.

- **Labels:** plain, neat, straight and in proportion with the jar. Place the label between any seams.

Labelled with the recipe title and preserving date.

- Jars should be shown with approximately 12mm of vinegar/ brine over the vegetables and 12mm of headspace.
 - Jars should be sealed with a well fitting corrosion-proof lid. (No cellophane cover.)
- Cold vinegar preserves might not have a seal that pops when opened.

Summer Vegetable Pickle

- Made from one or more types of summer vegetable. For example, radishes, fennel, courgettes, green beans, beetroot, carrots, red onion, gherkins, and/or chillies.

No pickled onions/shallots or red cabbage - save these for the Autumn Show.

No mustard pickles; save these for the Autumn Show.

- Apart from beetroot, vegetables should be crisp.
- The bright colour of the vegetables is best displayed in a clear white vinegar.
- The pickle should have a smooth, mature and well balanced flavour that is not too salty.

Fermented vegetables

- Made from any type of fermented vegetable. For example, sauerkraut or kimchi.
- Although salting is an essential part of the fermentation process and is a characteristic component of the flavour, the finished product should not be too salty.
- Sauerkraut should have a smooth, mature, well balanced flavour.
- Kimchi should have a tangy and spicy flavour profile.
- Jars should either be sterilised to form a seal following fermentation, or made within 3 months of the show and stored in a refrigerator.

Eggs

- 6 of one type of eggs in a box. For example, a matching set of chicken, duck, quail, bantam or goose eggs.
- Uniform in size, colour and shape.
- Shells free from stains and dirt. Good texture. No cracks.
- Fresh - should have a small air space when broken.
- **Yolk:** good colour, standing proud, free from blood and meat spots.
- **White:** firm, translucent and free from discolouration.