

The logo features the text "HTX4Ukraine" in blue at the top, with a small Ukrainian flag icon. Below it, "BORSCHT" is written in large, bold, black letters, with a red Ukrainian borscht bowl icon replacing the letter 'O'. Underneath "BORSCHT", the words "Cook-off" are written in a red, cursive script.

HTX4Ukraine BORSCHT Cook-off

Team Rules

REGISTRATION

- Those who have registered to participate **MUST pay their registration fees** in full to [HTX4Ukraine](https://www.htx4ukraine.org) for the registration to be valid.
Participation will not be confirmed until the registration fee has been paid.
- Please note that your registration fee is a donation and is **non-refundable**.

TEAM REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

- All teams must consist of at least two people.
- Each team **MUST be in possession of a valid Food Handlers Permit** for at least one of its members. The permit must be completed by Nov 11th to be valid on Nov 13-14, 2026. If the team fails to present a valid Food Handlers Permit to the cook-off organizers, the team will be automatically disqualified and not permitted to participate in the cookoff.
Please email a copy to htxborschtcookoff@gmail.com by Nov 12th, as well as bring a copy with you to the event.
Permits can be obtained by completing a relevant official training (~\$15) [HERE \(as an example\)](#).
- Your team commits to using the highest quality ingredients. Each team will be given a gift card to help offset cost of ingredients; the amount of the gift card will not completely cover your supplies but will help cover some of the costs.
- We ask that each team take a photo while they shop and prepare for the cook-off. HTX4Ukraine's marketing team will use these photos to promote the cook-off on our social media. please provide these photos by Nov 12th.
- Each team is responsible for all warming & serving utensils, set up and clean up. We will provide tablecloths and table skirts, as well as cups, spoons, and napkins for the service to the public.
- Each team should supply all warming equipment: a single slow cooker/crockpot as a minimum is required to keep Borscht warm throughout the day. Please refrain from using pressure cookers.

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We will assist you in reheating large quantities of your borscht on the day of the cook-off, as well as help you safely move your borscht to your slow cookers for serving to the public. Your borscht is to be kept at a temperature of at least 140°F/60°C during the whole day. A volunteer will be coming by throughout the day to help make sure your borscht stays at a safe temperature for consumption.

- ***Each team commits to cooking their borscht no earlier than the day before the event.*** This is to ensure that it is fresh and safe for consumption by the cook-off attendees. Please plan on a cooling method to help keep the food safe overnight.
- Each team will be asked to cook 40-50 quarts of borscht to ensure that there is enough for both judging and serves to the public. In years past we have had over 700 attendees and hope to have more this year.

ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- The cook-off site will open at 8 a.m. for registration and set up.
- ***Teams MUST be on site by 9:30am.*** A mandatory team meeting with cook-off officials will be held to review the rules.
- Teams will be assigned two 8' x 2.5' tables setup into an L shape and two chairs for your preparation area. You are welcome to bring additional smaller tables but your total footprint must not exceed 10' x 10'.
- ***Borscht samples and table displays must be ready for judging by 11am SHARP.***
- The competition will officially begin at 12:00 p.m.
- Teams are to keep borscht pots/containers tightly covered when not serving and ***all team members serving food must wear gloves and hair coverings (hair nets, scarves, or hats) at all times.***
- Sampling cups & spoons will be provided by HTX4Ukraine Borscht Cook-off organizers to each team.
- ***Sampling serving size for the public is not to exceed ½ cup of borscht.*** This is to prevent waste of product as well as to give people the opportunity to try borscht from all participating teams, instead of getting full on the first few.
- Teams may serve ***only one accompanying baked item of their choice with their borscht.*** This is optional and can be a small slice of bread or pampushky. Teams are welcome to bake or prepare any additional foods for decoration value only. These

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are NOT TO BE SERVED to public. This is to ensure that people are able to taste all competitors' borscht, not filling up on extras prematurely.

- Teams are encouraged, urged and otherwise motivated to decorate their area and themselves. The best decorated and costumed team will win a special prize.

JUDGING

- Each team will be assigned a table number for people's choice, and a color for blind judging for best borscht. At the time of judging, teams will be given a serving tray with cups corresponding with that color. Participating teams will serve the judges their borscht in these cups with any associated extras (sour cream, herbs, pampushky/bread as they see fit for presentation). Only borscht will be judged. An official of the cook-off will deliver the borscht entries to the judges for the blind taste test.
- Winners of the HTX4Ukraine Borscht Cook-off will be announced around 3:00 p.m.
- Awards will be given in the following categories:

THE BEST BORSCHT voted by an esteemed panel of judges. Award will be given to the best tasting borsch, regardless of presentation

BEST PRESENTATION voted by an esteemed panel of judges.

Award will be awarded to the team who was able to best display the unique cultural heritage through both presentation of their dish to the judges but also through decoration and set up of their team's table

PEOPLE'S CHOICE BORSCHT as voted by the public.

Each attendee of the cook-off will be able to pick their favorite borscht/team. The team with the most votes wins. *Teams are prohibited from voting for themselves.*

Judges' decisions will be final.

We are very excited to welcome you to the 2026 HOUSTON
BORSCHT COOK-OFF!

Should you have any questions - please do not hesitate to reach out to Jenny, our Competitor Coordinator, at 713-366-9557 or via email at htxborschtcookoff@gmail.com

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501(c)(3) non-profit public charity.
EIN 92-0823623

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