



2025 Winner: Andre Alto



2025 Winning dish



2025 Runner up dishes

COMPETITION RULES AND ENTRY CRITERIA 2026

PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY

Register here: www.The School Food People.co.uk/grab-go-challenge



The School Food People and SchoolGrid are delighted to be holding this competition, searching for the best Grab 'n' Go recipe for the school meals sector.

Competitors are required to prepare cook and present four portions of a Grab 'n' Go savoury snack with a total cost per head of 85p.

Grab 'n' Go is a fundamental part of the school food service, particularly in secondary schools and academies, so we are delighted that the challenge is returning for 2026.

The School Food People would like to thank SchoolGrid for their continued support of the challenge; the ideas developed by the incredible school chefs who compete are an inspiration and help us all to develop this vital aspect of the service.

Brad Pearce, The School Food People National Chair



Dugald Curtis, CEO at SchoolGrid and sponsor of The School Food People Grab 'n' Go Challenge 2026 said:

"The School Food People's Grab 'n' Go Challenge is a fantastic opportunity for school chefs to showcase their skills. We're delighted to be returning as the sponsor for 2026, and we are looking forward to supporting the competitors throughout the process.

As a proactive supporter of providing good school food for young people, we are excited to see the entries for this year.

We wish all competitors good luck!"

Competition timings

- Registrations of interest open until Friday 27th February 2026.
- Submit your entry form by Friday 27th March 2026.
- Entries will be paper judged with the best eight invited to cook off at a central location in mid-May 2026.
- Three finalists will be invited to the The School Food People School Food Show on Tuesday 7th July 2026 to cook their Grab 'n' Go item in a competition environment to decide the winner.
- The overall winner will be announced at the Informal Dinner on Tuesday 7th July. The winner will demonstrate their winning recipe on the School Food Live demonstration theatre at the School Food Show & Forum on Wednesday 8th July.

Prizes

1st prize

£500 for the winning school chef, plus a £500 set of Wüsthof professional chef's knives donated by SchoolGrid.

2nd prize

£250 for the second place school chef, plus a £100 Amazon voucher donated by SchoolGrid.

3rd prize

£100 for the third place school chef, plus a £100 Amazon voucher donated by SchoolGrid.

ENTRY PROCESS

Register here: www.The School Food People.co.uk/grab-go-challenge

Step 1:

Visit www.theschoolfoodpeople.co.uk/grab-go-challenge to register your interest in taking part in the competition - closing date Friday 27th February 2026.

Step 2:

Download and complete the entry form including costing sheet and method to produce the dishes.

Step 3:

Submit completed forms to organisers along with at least one photograph of the finished dish.

Final deadline for entries is Friday 27th March 2026.

Step 4:

Judges will review all entries to establish a long list of the best eight. These school chefs will be invited to a central location in mid May 2026 to cook their dish to determine the final shortlist of three entries.

NB: competitors will be expected to fund travel to the cook off along with all necessary ingredients to complete four portions of the finished dish for the elimination round.

Step 5:

The final shortlist of three school chefs will be invited to the The School Food People Show & Forum in Birmingham to compete for the overall title on Tuesday 7th July 2026. Competitors would be expected to fund travel to the School Food Show, the competition will fund overnight accommodation and a place at the Informal Dinner where the winner will be announced on Tuesday 7th July 2026.

The overall winner will be given a demonstration slot on the School Food Live feature on Wednesday 8th July to showcase their winning dish.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Marks will be awarded for:

- Originality of the finished dish.
- Ease of eating on the go - see point 5 of the competition rules.
- Practicality of the dish in a school setting - see point 6 of the competition rules.
- How well the flavours and ingredients work together.
- Variety of textures in the finished dish.
- Appealing to look at.
- Appealing taste of the finished dish.



COMPETITION RULES

Register here: www.The School Food People.co.uk/grab-go-challenge



1. The competition is open to all staff that hold a kitchen-based post and who are involved in the daily preparation of students' meals. Contestants may work in more than one kitchen as a mobile chef. Management, area managers, training managers or development chefs are not eligible to enter.

2. Entries may be submitted by any school meal provider.

3. The competition is open to The School Food People members and non-members to enter and submit a recipe. Any non-members chosen to be one of the finalists in July would be required to join The School Food People to be able to take part.

4. You will be required to produce four portions of a Grab 'n' Go savoury snack item. This can be intended as a breaktime snack or more substantial lunchtime offering.

5. The finished dish must be able to be eaten on the go eg held in one hand or held in one hand with a utensil in the other. Dishes that require to be sat at a table with two hands required to eat it are not suitable for the competition.

6. The finished dish should be practical in a school setting eg minimal waste, convenient to prepare and serve.

7. Cost per portion not to exceed 85p for food and serving item. (to include food costs and serving item eg box, cone, paper wrapping).

8. All ingredients/elements to be freshly prepared on the day of the competition.

9. Competition time is 40 minutes to prepare, cook and present four dishes.

10. The entry submitted must include the completed costing sheet, recipe method and at least one photograph of the finished dish.

11. Deep fat frying is not permitted.

12. In line with the new legislation in force, competitors should avoid single use plastics when preparing and presenting their finished dish.

13. Competitors/employers will be required to fund travel to the elimination round cook off and national final of the competition, along with all ingredients required to complete the finished dishes.