

29th Annual World-Famous 2026 *Mardi Gras* Gumbo Cook-Off

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Sponsored by: Mardi Gras of Southwest Louisiana, Inc.

Gather your gumbo pots as Mardi Gras of Southwest Louisiana, Inc. invites you to join us for the 29th annual World-Famous Mardi Gras Gumbo Cook-Off to be held **Saturday, February 14, 2026**, at the **Lake Charles Event Center Amphitheater**.

The Cook-Off *set-up* begins at 6:00a.m., *cooking* will begin at **7:30 a.m.** sharp and judging will begin at **11:00 a.m.** The entry fee is \$125.00 per team per category with a maximum of four people per team. We are excited to host the 29th gumbo cook-off on the Amphitheatre grounds in true Margi Gras festival style. We are counting on our Krewees to come out and show their Krewe spirit continuing our tradition to select “Best Decorated Booth and Spirit” in the krewe and non-krewe divisions, while competing for the renowned 2026 Spirit Stick. Bring your own tables, tent 10”x10” size or smaller per cook-off category. There will be three places awarded in each category of Cook-Off.

Prizes

1st Place: 150.00 and a trophy
2nd Place: 100.00 and a trophy
3rd Place: 50.00 and a trophy

\$10.00 presale admission charge per person on Zeffy.com ticket sales, children 5 and under are free. Day of events is \$15.00 per person. QR code will be posted when registration opens

Encourage your Krewe members to attend and non-krewe friends to show off their Mardi Gras spirit with you. This is a public event with true Southwest Louisiana Mardi Gras flair, we will have a band and DJ, things for the kids, arts and craft booths and more, so get your fans there early! We'll have split the pot ticket \$1.00, and door prize raffle tickets for \$1.00.

If your Krewe or business would like to volunteer or donate a door prize, we would love to hear from you.

For more information, please contact the event chairman:

Kristi Folse
(337)- 425-8623 ext. 2
mgswwlagumbocookoff@gmail.com

Important Information AND Rules

1. Teams will consist of 2-4 cookers in your area...this means ***NO more than four people in the cook team area!***

2. There are three categories: Chicken & Sausage, Wild Game (any kind) and Seafood, either professional or amateur. You may cook all or one. If you work or have worked in a kitchen or trained in culinary skills, you are considered a professional. Anyone could enter professionally if they chose.

3. The entry fee is \$125 per team, per category. Teams may enter several categories but must pay the entry fee for each.

4. All entries **must be paid by Friday, February 6, 2026**, to be guaranteed a space. Each registered/paid entry will receive a 10 x 10 space to set up your tent, table, and decorations. You will need to bring your own table decorations for your cooking area.

5. All teams will keep their areas clean and sanitary. Bring garbage bags, etc. for good housekeeping and soap and water to help keep your area as clean as possible.

6. All teams can report to the Event Center Amphitheater to set up between the hours of 12:00 pm – 4:30 pm on Friday, February 13, 2026, or 6:00-7:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 14, 2026. **We will have overnight security for those wanting to set up on Friday. For security reasons, NO TEAMS will be allowed into their cooking space before 6:00 a.m. Cooking begins at 7:30. General admission begins at 9:00**

7. Once your team is set up and checked in with event staff, you may start your preparation for cooking. All cooking must be done within the full view of the public. ***NO LIGHTING BURNERS UNTIL 7:30***

8. There will be no electricity available so all the rice must be cooked in advance. Remember, you are not judged on rice.

9. Clean up will begin promptly at 2:30 p.m. after the award ceremony. All teams: the Amphitheatre grounds must be cleaned and empty by 4:00 p.m.

10. The Spirit Stick will be determined by secret special event judges. Decorate and show your Krewe spirit by displaying your Krewe philanthropy type community involvement and special events promoting the spirit of Mardi Gras for the 2025-2026 season in your booth area for the secret judges to view. The spirit stick will be awarded at the Royal Gala. We are looking forward to “pass’ a good time!”

RULES

All teams must report to the Event Center Amphitheater between **6:00am - 7:00am**. Cooking will begin promptly at 7:30 a.m.

1. What to bring:
 - a. Burners and tanks (Only a standard 20-pound tank will be allowed)
 - b. 40-quart pot (10 gallons), five pounds of rice, cutting board, knives, and cooking utensils. Water, coolers for soft drinks and meat, paper towels, soap, matches and whatever else you may need for preparing your gumbo.
 - c. Meat (already cut), roux, spices and any other ingredients needed.
 - d. You must **bring bowls and utensils for the gumbo to be served to the public** after the judging is complete. **Sample bowls will be provided for judging purposes ONLY.**
2. Gumbo must be prepared from scratch, in a sanitary manner and in full view of the public. No pre-cooked gumbo is allowed. Roux may be pre-cooked.
3. Teams **must** bring pre-cooked rice since there is no access to electricity in the booth. Note - **teams are not being judged on rice but should have for serving the public.**
4. All cooks **must wear hair restraint** (hats, bandanas, hair nets, etc.)
5. All pots must be kept covered except when stirring or serving to minimize contamination. All teams must keep their areas clean, only the 4-member cooking team are allowed in the area during the cooking process.
6. Pets are **not** allowed.
7. No smoking or vaping is allowed in the indoor or outdoor event space cooking area. Use designated smoking area.
8. No other music sources or DJs will be allowed, only ones hired by Mardi Gras Southwest Louisiana. The contracted DJ service provides adequate sound equipment for the outside event space.
9. All gumbo must be ready to start judging at 11:00 a.m. You will be informed of the judging process the morning of the event. Gumbo will be judged on the following criteria:
 - Aroma:** Should smell appetizing
 - Consistency:** Should be smooth
 - Color:** Should look appetizing
 - Taste:** Should taste good, pleasing to the palate
 - Aftertaste:** **Should leave a pleasant taste after swallowing**
 - Presentation:** You will be provided with a tray and 6 bowls to use for judging. It is up to you to plate your samples.***No krewe name or identifying decoration allowed.***
10. Gumbo will be given away to the public in attendance after your gumbo has been taken back for judging, not before.
11. Teams may bring a banner or sign with their team's name or krewe to display in their station. However, ***you must not put banners or decorations in the walking Area. Only booth front decorations are allowed, and all burners must be kept free and clear of decorations.***

2026 - Cook-Off Entry Form

1. Name of Cook-Off team:

2. Names of team members:

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____

3. Team Contact Person:

Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Phone numbers: _____

4. Choose which best describes your team. (Check all that apply)

_____ Amateur

_____ Chicken and Sausage

_____ Professional

_____ Wild Game

_____ Seafood

5. Entry Fee: \$125 per team, per category. Please make checks payable to:
Mardi Gras of Southwest Louisiana, Inc.

6. Mail this form and entry fee(s) to:

Kristi Folse 1101 Laura Circle Sulphur, LA 70663

Or email to mgswwagumbocookoff@gmail.com

** Only paid entries received by Friday, Feb. 6, 2026, will be guaranteed a space. **

Please return this page for registration only

Office Use Only: _____ Date Received _____ Check Number _____ Amount