NEWS RELEASE

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Nebraska Department of Education launches recipe contest: Battle of the Beans

To promote Nebraska-grown, plant-based proteins in schools, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is launching Battle of the Beans, a recipe contest open to Nebraskans of all ages.

Battle of the Beans is an extension of Beanstock, a campaign and curriculum series teaching students about one of Nebraska's healthiest, most important commodities. Beanstock includes free, flexible lessons available to middle and high school educators that explore the history, art, cooking, nutrition, agriculture and economics of dry beans and other specialty crops.

From Oct. 1 through Dec. 1, people can enter their original bean recipes through NDE's online portal. Winning recipes will be converted into school-compliant cafeteria recipes, which will be distributed throughout the state. Winners will be notified in February 2027.

Beanstock and Battle of the Beans are part of NDE's Farm to School program, which enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education settings.

"Dry beans are delicious, affordable and packed with protein and they also have a fascinating story to tell about Nebraska's history and economy," said Jessie Coffey, director of NDE's Whole Child Program. "Nebraska is one of the top producers of beans in the country, so it's important that people across the state know how impactful they are and how easy they are to cook with."

Nebraska is the No. 1 producer of Great Northern beans and No. 2 producer of Pinto beans. Much of the state's dry bean production occurs in western Nebraska, where the climate is arid and warm days and cool nights provide excellent growing conditions for dry edible beans. In

2023, Nebraska's dry edible beans production resulted in $82.4 million from 92,000 acres harvested, according to USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Dry beans are mature seeds which are allowed to dry on the vine and shelled after they reach maturity. They must be rehydrated by soaking prior to being cooked and consumed.

"From research to production to promotion, dry beans in Nebraska are rooted in the foundation of our local economy," said Lynn Reuter, executive director of the Nebraska Dry Bean Commission. "We're thrilled to support the Nebraska Department of Education's Beanstock campaign to help engage and inspire the next generation's interest in this crucial field."

Battle of the Beans is launching during Farm to School month in October to inspire students to learn more about healthy, Nebraska-grown, plant-based proteins

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About the Nebraska Farm to School program:

The Nebraska Department of Education's Nebraska Farm to School program enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education settings. There are three core elements of Farm to School: Procurement, Education, and School Gardens. Farm to School works to provide resources to promote local Nebraska grown and raised products in the classroom, cafeteria and community. Learn more at education.ne.gov/ns/farm-to-school.

About the Nebraska Team Nutrition program:

Team Nutrition is an initiative of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to support the Child Nutrition Programs through training and technical assistance for Child Nutrition Programs, nutrition education for children and their caregivers, and school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity. Learn more and access resources at: https://www.education.ne.gov/ns/team-nutrition/.

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