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### Startin the Fire George Hensler

A couple of questions we're asked about contest meats.

#### **“Can my meat be out of its original packaging before the meat inspection?”**

The quick answer to this question for a KCBS contest is “yes”. Meat does **not** have to be in its original packaging when arriving at a contest before meat inspection. The only restriction with regard to contest meat noted in the KCBS rules is you can not season or marinate your meat prior to the official meat inspection. I have heard about incidents at contests where reps have required teams to produce original packaging. I have only read about these incidents and have not personally witnessed an occurrence. After consulting with the rulebook, original packaging is not required.

#### **“Are there any specification requirements on the meat?”**

Each of the four KCBS categories has its own set of rules and specifications. The common theme across the board is there must be enough for at least six judges when you prepare your turn-in box. The specifications from the KCBS rules are as follows:

*CHICKEN: Chicken includes Cornish Game Hen and Kosher Chicken.*

*PORK RIBS: Ribs shall include the bone. Country style ribs are prohibited.*

*PORK: Pork is defined as Boston Butt, Picnic and/or whole Shoulder, weighing a minimum of five (5) pounds. Pork shall be cooked (bone in or bone out) and shall not be parted.*

*BEEF BRISKET: May be whole brisket, flat, or point. Corned beef is not allowed.*

*Each contestant must submit at least six (6) separated and identifiable (visible) portions of meat in a container. Chicken, pork and brisket may be submitted chopped, pulled, sliced, or diced as the cook sees fit, as long as there is enough for six (6) judges. Ribs shall be turned in bone-in. Judges may not cut, slice, or shake apart to separate pieces.*

My suggestion to folks that are thinking about becoming involved in KCBS competition cooking would be to sign up and take a judges class. These classes are given all around the Country, many times they are held in conjunction with an already scheduled cooking contest. The cost for the class is minimal and the benefits are many. First, by taking the class, all of the current rules, regulations and specifics are explained in detail by the instructor. You have an opportunity to ask questions and have any issues cleared up that you might have. You will learn what the judges are suppose to be looking for when judging your submission and also how or how not to present your product in the turn in box. You will learn what constitutes a disqualification and how to make your box more pleasing to the judges.

The best part about becoming a KCBS Certified BBQ Judge is you are now eligible to judge at any of the hundreds of contests held around the Country. All you have to do is search the contests on the KCBS site, then apply to the organizer to be considered as a judge. Some contests are very popular and are hard to get into, even as a judge. Yet some contests welcome any and all of the certified judges they can get. As a competitor, judging is a great way to see what others are turning in, what is winning and what is not. Becoming a certified KCBS judge is a good way to sample some good tasting BBQ and also a great way to start to learn what competition BBQ is all about.