

IFT Student Food Packaging Development Competition 2026

This is an annual international competition that honors advancements in student food packaging development. Impacts of participating in and/or winning this competition include:

- Participants will solve real-life food problems or needs (e.g., food waste reduction).
- Participants will enhance their knowledge about specific problems that relate to both food and packaging (e.g., development of packaging for a new food product).
- Students will apply the knowledge they have gained within the classroom.
- Participants will improve their teamwork skills.
- Participants will improve presentation skills.
- Participants will gain exposure and prestige.

The Challenge

Develop a packaging solution to address a problem or need related to food packaging from any of the following points of view (not limited to): food science, engineering, chemistry, marketing, design, legal, and education. Examples of possible topics are listed below:

- Packaging design of a new or an existing food product
- Food packaging materials:
 - o Properties
 - o Processing
- Package processing and/or properties
- Food packaging testing
- Food packaging technologies, including modified atmosphere packaging, active and intelligent food packaging
- Nanotechnology in food packaging
- Packaging machinery
- Food packaging and the environment including:
 - o Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of food packaging
 - o Circular Economy in food packaging
 - o Biodegradable and Compostable food packaging
 - o Sustainable packaging solutions
 - o Recycling and reusability of food packages
- Food packaging economics
- Food packaging safety
- Food packaging in supply chain
- Evolving regulations in food packaging
- Consumer perception and preferences about different packaging formats or materials for foods
- Anti-counterfeiting packaging technologies



- Shelf-life extension using innovative packaging technologies or materials
- Artificial intelligence and machine learning in food packaging
- Automation in food packaging

Although it is not required, you or your team are encouraged to ask your professors or industrial professionals for advice on appropriate sources of information (industry practices, publications, and/or videos).

Show us your innovation and creativity based on current or future packaging needs!

Guidelines

- Enter names and other personal information in the designated fields on the Entry Form.
- Optional – Enter project advisor information in the designated field in the Entry Form.
- Enter the title of your concept in the Entry Form box called “Title of Concept.”
- Write a concept that is created exclusively for the IFT Student Food Packaging Development Competition. Essay should include:
 - o Problem or need - define the problem that you are trying to solve or the need that you are trying to address and explain why this relates to food packaging. Please provide supporting documents, which could be in-text literature references, communication with industrial experts, and/or summary notes presented as figures or comparison tables.
 - o Solution(s) to the proposed problem or need. Please provide supporting documents, similar to the examples provided above.
- Only clear and well-organized concepts that cover all the requested fields will be judged.
- Submissions should be minimum 750 words and maximum 1,500 words written in English. Full citations are excluded from the word limit.
- Write your essay using a word processor and upload it during submission.
- Place quotes (e.g., any ideas that are not your own) within the body of the essay. Do not use footnotes or endnotes.
- Include full references within the essay document. Reference style: MLA.
- Upload an illustration, image, or video link of a package prototype, if applicable. You can also upload a roadmap (5 to 10 years) or infographic.
- Your essay will be judged not only on the science, but also on creativity, innovation (avoid plagiarism and think outside the box!) including proposed problem or need and solution, feasibility, implementation, and how well you express yourself (spelling, punctuation, and grammar). Specifically, the following points should be clearly addressed in your essay:
 - o Under “The problem or need”:
 - Problem or need definition and evidence
 - Background of the problem or need
 - Justify why this problem needs to be solved or this need should be addressed
 - o Under “Solution to the proposed problem or need”:

- Propose a solution with evidence (e.g., market data, scientific information) that supports it and its importance to the actual food packaging sector
- Is this solution an original food packaging idea, or is the idea a refinement of an existing one
- Background of the solution
- Feasibility of the solution in context of the current food supply chain
- Thinking outside of the box – tell us why your solution is different
- Implementation plan
- Possible value created by the solution
- Targeted users of your solution

Entry Process

Entry forms will be accepted until April 30, 2026. Winners will be notified via e-mail prior to [IFT FIRST: Annual Event and Expo](#)

Awards

A general certificate along with monetary prizes of \$1,000, \$750, and \$500 will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners, respectively. The Food Packaging Division may also recognize winners in additional ways, such as via newsletters, presentations, or social media.

Judges

A panel of experts in food packaging including academic and industry experts will judge the entries. Judges should be IFT Food Packaging Division members. The submission will be evaluated on the following aspects: writing clarity and organization, ability to address the challenge, feasibility, creativity, implementation plan, value creation, target users and market adoption, spelling and grammar.