

OFFICIAL COMPETITION GUIDE

FIVE YEARS OF CRAFT. **5** CELEBRATED.



WELCOME TO THE 5TH ANNUAL CALIFORNIA CANNABIS AWARDS!

As we proudly celebrate our **5th Anniversary**, we reflect on how far this competition — and California’s cannabis industry — has come. For 172 years, the California State Fair has recognized the excellence of California’s finest agricultural industries. The inclusion of cannabis in the roster of recognized agricultural industries represents a newfound acceptance and celebration of California’s rich legacy of cannabis cultivation and the cannabis growers, large and small, across the state that produce it. What began as a bold vision to recognize and legitimize excellence has grown into a trusted platform honoring the cultivators, manufacturers, and innovators who continue to raise the bar through craftsmanship, dedication, and an uncompromising commitment to quality.

This year, we are excited to deepen the experience through our continued partnership with **Budist**, whose distinguished judges bring sensory expertise, cultural perspective, and real-world consumer insight to complement our science-based evaluation. Together, analytical precision and human experience create a more complete and meaningful assessment of quality by **SC Labs**.

We are also pleased to introduce the **Home Grow – Personal Use** competition, celebrating the passion, skill, and dedication of California’s individual cultivators. This addition honors the roots of cannabis culture, where innovation and craftsmanship flourish at every level.

Whether you are a returning participant or joining us for the first time, thank you for being part of this journey. The California Cannabis Awards remains grounded in integrity, combining rigorous laboratory testing with thoughtful evaluation to ensure credibility, fairness, and transparency.

Beyond medals and honors, this competition celebrates the artistry, discipline, and progress of an industry that continues to evolve, inspire, and redefine standards of excellence, culminating in the **50,000-square-foot on-site California Cannabis Experience at the Fair**.

Compete proudly. Connect deeply. Celebrate boldly.

Thank you for your participation, your trust, and your commitment to quality.

We look forward to celebrating with you.

James Leitz & Dustin Moore
Co-Executive Producers
Fair Play Ventures, LLC



TABLE OF CONTENTS



The California Cannabis Awards at the California State Fair

4

About

Educational Exhibit

Cannabis Sales & Consumption

Sponsorship Opportunities



Competition Highlights

5

Quick Facts

Key Dates

Contact Information

Award Category Overview

Entrance Fees

The Competition Team



Competition Perks

8

Why Enter the Competition

Award Winners Benefits & Support



Competition Details

9

Awards Descriptions

Testing and Evaluation Methods

Entering the Competition



Home Grow Competition

12

Competition Overview

How to Enter



Rules & Regulations

15



THE CALIFORNIA CANNABIS AWARDS AT THE CALIFORNIA STATE FAIR

ABOUT

The 2026 California Cannabis Awards at the California State Fair will be the 5th annual statewide celebration, featuring an educational exhibit and on-site cannabis sales and consumption. The cannabis exhibit will run the duration of the California State Fair from July 17 through August 2, 2026. Open to all fairgoers (21+).

CALIFORNIA CANNABIS EXPERIENCE

The 50,000 s/f CA Cannabis Experience, curated by Fair Play Ventures, comprises educational displays celebrating the agricultural and cultural heritage of California cannabis, as well as the plant's societal impact on the State over the decades. The Experience will showcase the Award Winners, sponsors, and partners, alongside eye-catching creative that highlights the award winners and products. The exhibit is brought to life by booths and activations hosted by cannabis industry brands, associations, and government partners.

CANNABIS SALES & CONSUMPTION

In 2026, the California Cannabis Awards will build on a historic first by bringing cannabis sales and consumption to the fairgrounds footprint. The California State Fair continues to lead the nation in showcasing the California cannabis industry, its history, culture, and craft farmers through a unique blend of educational exhibits, experiential activations, and commerce.

Award-winning cannabis flower and products will be sold through a centralized sales desk within the CA Cannabis Experience and are allowed for consumption within designated areas.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

2026 Sponsorship Opportunities are available at Premier, Official, and Affiliate tiers for brand positioning and exposure to a diverse, canna-curious audience. Sponsorships provide access to exhibition packages, custom brand activations, product sales, inclusion in publicity campaigns, and placement opportunities throughout the California Cannabis Awards and CA Cannabis Experience at the California State Fair.

For sponsorship-related inquiries, please reach out to gina@calcannabisawards.com



COMPETITION HIGHLIGHTS

QUICK FACTS

The 5th Annual California Cannabis Awards is a first-of-its-kind, state-sanctioned cannabis competition and fairgrounds experience. Celebrating California's rich agricultural history, cannabis has joined the State Fair roster of coveted annual competitions, alongside wine, cheese, olive oil, and craft beer.

The 2026 Awards competition continues to celebrate California's cannabis industry with an expanded format:

- The competition is *open to all licensed California cultivators and brands*.
- There are *10 Award Categories*
- Awarding *29 Chemotypes and Product Types*
- *160+ Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medals*
- *10 Golden Bear "Best of California" Trophies* issued by the California State Fair
- The Flower Awards format is *rooted in quantifiable, science-based criteria* and third-party, trusted laboratory testing partner SC Labs.
- Organizers have partnered with Budist and the *Budist Evaluation Method* that utilizes a *100-point rating scale* to evaluate all Product Categories and determine the Golden Bear winners for all Flower Categories.
- **New for 2026! Home Grow Personal Use Flower Competition**
- *Award winners will be announced in June 2026* and celebrated during the **California State Fair, July 17 - August 2, 2026.**

KEY DATES

February 23, 2026

Submission Window Opens Submission

May 22, 2026

Window Closes

July 1, 2026

Gold, Silver, and Bronze Announcements

July 18, 2026

Golden Bear Awards Celebration

July 25, 2026

Home Grow - Personal Use Awards

Contact Information

Official Website: www.calcannabisawards.com

Official Email: info@calcannabisawards.com



COMPETITION CATEGORY OVERVIEW

Using both science-based testing and expert judging evaluation components, awards are given across the following cannabis product categories and subcategories, with an overall “Best of California” Golden Bear Trophy for each of the ten categories.

FLOWER CATEGORIES

Each Flower category will use scientific testing to award Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals based on cannabinoid and terpene expression. Cannabinoids awarded include CBDa, CBGa, and Total Cannabinoids. Terpenes awarded include Caryophyllene, Limonene, Myrcene, Ocimene, Pinene, and Terpinolene, as well as Co-Dominant and Total Terpenes. A “Unique” award may be designated for any rare terpenes and/or cannabinoids revealed during testing.

- **INDOOR:** For cannabis grown in a permanent structure using at least 25 watts of artificial light per square foot
- **MIXED-LIGHT:** For cannabis grown in a greenhouse, hoophouse, glasshouse, or similar structure
- **OUTDOOR:** For cannabis grown outside without using any artificial lighting or light deprivation techniques on mature plants
- **HOME GROW - PERSONAL USE -** (see page 12)

PRODUCT CATEGORIES

Each Product category will use expert human judging panels to award Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals by product type subcategory.

- **BEVERAGES** Ready-to-Drink, Enhancers & Mixers (Combined)
- **CARTRIDGES** Solvent - Terpenes Added
Solvent - Live Resin / No Added Terpenes
Solventless
- **CONCENTRATES** Solvent
Solventless - Hash
Solventless - Rosin
- **EDIBLES** Baked Goods
Candies
Chocolates
- **PRE-ROLLS** Blunts
Infused - Solvent
Infused - Solventless
Non-Infused
- **WELLNESS** Tablets / Capsules
Tinctures
Topicals



ENTRANCE FEES

1st Product or Cultivar	\$400
2nd Product or Cultivar	\$375
3rd Product or Cultivar	\$350
4 th + Product or Cultivar	\$325

THE COMPETITION TEAM

ORGANIZERS

The California Cannabis Awards is produced in partnership with Cal Expo and Fair Play Ventures, LLC. Fair Play Ventures is an exciting partnership between Cultivar Events, creators and producers of the 2022/2023 competition and exhibit, and Embarc, one of California's leading cannabis retailers and cannabis event specialists.

PARTNERS

Embarc, Official Retail Partner

The California Cannabis Awards proudly welcomes Embarc as our returning strategic marketing and official retail partner. In 2024, Embarc joined us in making history by bringing onsite cannabis retail sales and consumption to the California State Fair. Embarc operates a fleet of cannabis dispensaries across California and has set the gold-standard for cannabis sales and consumption programs inside other large-scale events like "Grasslands" inside Outside Lands.

For more information, visit www.goembarc.com

Expert Human Judging, Budist

Budist is the industry's first social review platform for cannabis products and brands. The Budist community is led by a diverse group of cannabis critics, or "Budists", which includes certified Ganjiers, cup judges, subject matter experts, and connoisseurs. The *Budist Evaluation Method*, a 100-point rating scale, will be used to evaluate all Flower Gold Medalists and determine the Golden Bear winners in the Sun Grown, Mixed Light, and Indoor Categories. Budist will also judge all other Categories and Product Types to determine Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals and Golden Bear winners by Category.

For more information, visit www.budist.com

Trusted Laboratory Partner, SC Labs

The California Cannabis Awards' flower categories will be scored objectively through science-based analysis performed and certified by SC Labs, one of California's premier cannabis testing labs. SC Labs will provide all flower entrants with the required Terpene and Cannabinoid testing required and furnish a PhytoFacts® chemometric report that will identify the unique compounds of the submission to determine the Gold, Silver, and Bronze medal winners.

For more information, visit www.sclabs.com



COMPETITION PERKS

WHY ENTER THE COMPETITION

Beyond the accolades, entering the awards competition is to participate in something greater: the social progress of cannabis, an unparalleled consumer education opportunity, and a recognition of the innovation, diversity, and excellence of California's cannabis community.

AWARD WINNERS BENEFITS & SUPPORT

In addition to honoring the esteemed cultivators and manufacturers and the work that goes into producing the best cannabis products California has to offer, award winners will benefit from full-scale publicity, marketing, and retail opportunities.

- **Publicity Campaign:** A publicity campaign, including press releases, media advisories, and social content promoting the winners, will last from pre-launch through the duration of the fair.
- **Marketing Tools:** In addition to unique PR and publicity opportunities, winners will receive official award-seal digital assets, along with logo usage rights, to digitally market the California State Fair Cannabis Award designation on all award-winning product packaging.¹
- **Medals & Trophies:** Winning submissions will receive award-winning designations, represented by product seals (stickers) and medals, as well as Gold, Silver, Bronze, and the coveted Golden Bear trophies for the “Best of California” winners.
- **On-site State Fair Retail Opportunities:** All award-winning products will be considered for inclusion in on-site sales at the cannabis dispensary during the California State Fair. Considerations include product and shelf availability, as well as limitations to serving sizes sold at the event.
- **Statewide Retail Opportunities:** Golden Bear winners will be welcomed into the inventory assortment and sold at select Embarc dispensary locations across California for a limited time, where Golden Bear winners will enjoy featured displays. Please note that this retail opportunity is contingent upon the timely availability and product quantities of the specific Golden Bear-winning product.
- **Brand Exposure:** Award winners will get the one-of-a-kind brand exposure through media coverage, partnership coverage, physical displays, including an award winner dossier feature wall, seen by thousands of fairgoers, expanded retail opportunities, the industry-attended awards ceremony, and more.
- **Forever a Winner:** The award represents an evergreen achievement, and all California State Fair Cannabis Award winners will be recorded as historical winners on the official site.
- **Fee Waivers:** The Best of California Golden Bear winners will receive a complimentary entry fee waiver for the 2027 competition.

¹ Award seals may be affixed only to packaging of State Fair award-winning cannabis cultivars. Only official State Fair award seals are authorized to designate California State Fair award winners.



COMPETITION DETAILS

AWARDS DESCRIPTION

GOLD, SILVER, AND BRONZE AWARDS

Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals will be awarded across all Flower and Product categories, as listed in the Award Category Overview.

For Flower Categories, Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals will be awarded to competition entrants whose submission achieves the top, second, and third highest terpene or cannabinoid expression as indicated by the scientific testing completed by a trusted third-party scientific testing partner. The terpenes tested for awards include Caryophyllene, Limonene, Myrcene, Ocimene, Pinene, and Terpinolene, as well as additional awards for Co-Dominant and Total Terpenes. Cannabinoid awards include CBDA, CBGa, and Total Cannabinoids.

A “Unique” Gold medal award and designation may be given to an entrant whose product possesses rare terpenes and/or cannabinoids revealed during testing and exists outside the current terpene and cannabinoid awards categories.

Flower product submissions that include terpene additives or other additives will not be considered for evaluation and will be disqualified from the competition.

For Product Categories, Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals will be awarded in each category by an expert panel of human judges using a proprietary, blind 100-point testing methodology.

GOLDEN BEAR "BEST OF CALIFORNIA" AWARDS

A Golden Bear Award, a coveted and historical prize given by the California State Fair across industries, will be awarded for each Flower and Product award category. In the Flower Categories, all Gold, Silver, and Bronze medalists per chemotype will qualify for the subjective judging panel that will determine the Golden Bear winners. For the other Product Categories, only the Gold medalists will be immediately qualified and considered for the Golden Bear designation, determined by an expert human judging process.

TESTING AND EVALUATION METHODS

SAFETY AND SCIENCE-FIRST EVALUATION

All entrants must provide a valid Certificate of Analysis (COA) from a California-licensed cannabis testing laboratory to participate.

To maintain parity and uniformity, all Flower Category submissions must be tested by the same laboratory, using the same methods and technology for cannabinoid and terpene testing. The entrance fee for the flower competition includes third-party laboratory testing by SC Labs. **SC Labs clients who have obtained their COA and requisite testing will not undergo additional testing, as the results of that test will be used for the competition.**



SC Labs will test each cultivar for chemometric data and report results using the innovative cannabinoid and terpene reporting platform PhytoFacts. This easy-to-understand report characterizes the chemical profile of cannabis through intuitive data visualizations. These visualizations identify the chemical profile, dominant and proportional cannabinoids and terpenes, sensory attributes, and potential entourage effects of the submitted sample.

PhytoFacts allows for accurate sorting of samples into major chemometric families and subcategories that highlight similar sensory and physiological properties. Each entry will be tested for moisture content, water activity, pesticide residues, microbiological contaminants, heavy metals, and mycotoxins, and any entry that exceeds the limitations established by the State of California will be disqualified from the competition.

INCENTIVES FOR SC LABS' CURRENT AND NEW CLIENTS ARE AVAILABLE, INCLUDING:

- For the Outdoor Flower Category, submissions that obtained their COA and the proper testing from SC Labs between October 1, 2025, and February 22, 2026, may be eligible.
- All other SC Labs client flower submissions are subject to a retroactive January 1 to February 22, 2026, test allowance.

Please contact your SC Labs representative for inquiries regarding submission through the customer service portal and eligibility for a retroactive test.

EXPERT HUMAN JUDGING

The California Cannabis Awards has identified specific product categories for rating and evaluation by the Budist community, which includes certified Ganjiers, cup judges, subject matter experts, and connoisseurs.

The Product award categories and Golden Bear evaluations will be powered by Budist. Product samples will be allocated to a panel of cannabis judges, selected for their qualifications and areas of expertise, for assessment and scoring. Budists will use a 100-point rating system to objectively evaluate each entry based on attributes such as Aroma, Flavor, Appearance and Effect. Each attribute is assigned point values based on factors such as complexity, intensity, and efficacy, and the total points are averaged to yield the final rating. Judges are required to follow a standardized methodology to ensure that their ratings are fair, honest, and based on their professional assessment of each entry. This 100-point system is on par with internationally-recognized rating systems used by many specialty goods industries, including wine, beer, chocolate, and coffee. This approach will be applied to each Product category to determine Gold, Silver, and Bronze medalists. The gold medalists of each product type within each of the Flower and Product categories will compete for a coveted Golden Bear trophy.



ENTERING THE COMPETITION

REGISTERING

All entrants must register on the Official Competition Registration portal located online at calcannabisawards.com/competition/

The Submission Window will be open from February 23 to May 22, 2026.

The online registration process will require a valid California cannabis license, Metrc Batch Number, and a valid COA from any California-licensed cannabis testing laboratory.

THE CALIFORNIA CANNABIS AWARDS ARE A SANCTIONED COMPETITION OF THE CA STATE FAIR. ALL STATE FAIR COMMERCIAL COMPETITION REQUIRE THAT ALL ENTRANT SUBMISSIONS ARE PRODUCTS COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE TO CONSUMERS. Organizers recognize that some products and batches may sell out in advance of the final Awards public notification in June 2026.

PRODUCT SUBMISSION

10 units of shelf-ready product are required for each submission to enter the competition. These samples will be used in the competition for scientific testing components, evaluation by the expert human judging panel, high-resolution photography for marketing purposes, and evaluation for a Golden Bear for all Gold Medal placements.

PRODUCT DROP OFF

Once the online registration portion is complete, all entrants will receive an invoice to complete payment.

Once payment is received, entrants will receive an email with product drop-off instructions.

Distributor logistics is powered by Nabis and Redwood Roots, with drop-off locations in northern and southern California.



HOME GROW

PERSONAL USE COMPETITION

COMPETITION OVERVIEW

The **Home Grow - Flower** competition recognizes cannabis flowers cultivated by California residents for **personal, non-commercial use**, honoring quality, consistency, and technical execution at the individual hobbyist grower level.

Home Grow entries are evaluated and awarded **Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals** within the **same chemotype-based sub-categories used for Commercial Flower**, ensuring consistency and integrity across the California Cannabis Awards.

Unlike Commercial Flower categories, Home Grow entries are **not separated by cultivation method**. Sungrown, indoor, and mixed-light submissions compete together within each chemotype category.

All entries are judged using a **science-based evaluation process**, including comprehensive laboratory testing conducted by **SC Labs**. Medal placements are determined using objective analytical data derived from laboratory results and **PhytoFacts™ chemometric analysis**.

Gold Medal winners advance to a live, on-site judging final culminating in the award of the **Golden Bear Trophy** and the title of **“Best Home Grow in California.”** The Golden Bear represents the highest honor at the California Cannabis Awards and is the same blue-ribbon trophy awarded across the California State Fair for excellence in agriculture and craft.

Submission Window

The submission window for the **Home Grow - Flower** category is open from **February 23 through May 22, 2026**.

All required entry materials, including the California Cannabis Awards entry form and SC Labs sample submission, must be completed within this time frame to be eligible for judging.



ENTERING THE HOME GROW COMPETITION

To enter the Home Grow category, participants must complete the following steps:

1. Complete the California Cannabis Awards Entry Form

Entrants must first complete the official **California Cannabis Awards entry form** and provide all required information in the designated fields. Entries will not be accepted without a completed form.

2. Entry Fee: \$250 per sample/entry

Entry fees include laboratory testing, chemometric analysis, and eligibility for medal awards.

3. Register at SC Labs and join the CCA Home Grow Portal

After submitting the entry form, entrants will receive an invoice. Upon paying that invoice, entrants will be instructed to contact SC Labs to initiate the testing and pick-up process. There will be a link to SC Labs in the communication to facilitate registering with SC Labs and adding your name, grow, and samples to the CCA Home Grow Portal. There is no charge for the testing or the product pick-up. For more information on SC Labs, visit www.sclabs.com

4. Prepare Your Submission

Each entry must consist of **seven (7) grams of cannabis flower**, properly **sealed and labeled** in accordance with SC Labs submission requirements.

5. Schedule Sample Pickup

Entrants will schedule a **personal pickup** with SC Labs for sample collection.

6. Laboratory Testing & Analysis

SC Labs will conduct laboratory testing for **potency, terpene concentration, and cannabinoid concentration**. Each entry will receive a **PhytoFacts™ chemometric report**, which serves as the basis for competition scoring.

7. Judging & Awards

Medals are awarded based exclusively on laboratory results, including:

- Highest concentration of **six (6) specific terpenes; Limonene, myrcene, beta-caryophyllene, pinene, ocimene, terpinolene**
- **Co-dominant terpene (MCL)**
- **Total terpene concentration**
- Primary cannabinoids **CBG and CBD**
- **Overall cannabinoid concentration**

8. “Best of California” – Golden Bear Trophy & Ceremony – July 25



GOLDEN BEAR TROPHY & HOME GROW FINALS

All Gold Medal Home Grow winners will be contacted by Event Organizers and invited to participate in a **final expert human judging round**.

Gold Medal Home Grow winners will be contacted by the organizers to schedule a pickup of an additional 14 grams of product for Final Judging. Pick up will happen in early July.

Please keep your product properly preserved throughout the submission window while we test for the gold, silver, and bronze early rounds. You never know, you could be a Gold Medalist and qualify for the Golden Bear Award!

The Home Grow Competition's Golden Bear award presentation will take place on **Saturday, July 25**, inside the California Cannabis Experience at the California State Fair in Sacramento.



RULES & REGULATIONS

ENFORCEMENT OF RULES & REGULATIONS:

The entry requirements, as printed herein, will be strictly enforced. Any entries found not to comply with the entry requirements will be rejected. Any entry form found to contain untrue information may result in disqualification from all awards and may also bar the entrant from entering the California Cannabis Awards competition in the future.

1. ADVERTISING

- a. The California State Fair reserves the right to revoke an award or disqualify an entrant from this and future competitions for any misleading advertising or information connected to the California Cannabis Awards or for violating any of the following rules:
 - i. Award seals may be affixed only to packaging of State Fair award-winning cannabis products. Only official State Fair award seals are authorized to designate California State Fair award winners.
 - ii. No awards designation representation or labeling will be made that is misleading or deceptive to the trade or the consuming public.
 - iii. No representation will be made that states, implies, or permits the inference that a product is identical to an award winner unless this is the case.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY PROVISIONS

- a. By entering the competition, entrants agree that Certificate of Analyses and PhytoFacts report(s) will be shared with the Competition Team and the California State Fair.

3. DISQUALIFICATIONS

- a. Any failure to comply with DCC regulations would result in disqualification. This may include, but is not limited to, contamination issues that involve pesticides (herbicides and fungicides), solvents, heavy metals, microbiological contaminants, mycotoxins, and foreign material.
 - i. Entrants will be notified of a failed sample. If your batch fails for compliance, an SC Labs representative will hold a call to review and discuss remediation options. Entrants will have the opportunity to remediate and resubmit before final results are tabulated. No resubmissions will be allowed after May 22, 2026. However, late submissions that have not been tested or failed prior to May 22, 2026, can participate in a Remediation Window from May 22-29, 2026. In the event of disqualification, an entrant must pay for a new COA for re-submission but entry fees for the Awards will be applied to the new sample submitted.
- b. Entrants will be disqualified for misrepresenting the award category, including the light source



4. ENTRY LIMITATIONS

- a. Entrants must be able to provide a valid and current California cultivation or manufacturing license.
- b. There are no limits on the number of individual samples/cultivars that may be submitted.
- c. No entrant will be allowed to submit more than one sample from a particular cultivar from a particular grow unless the samples are from a separate vintage/ grow cycle.
- d. Registration / testing payments must be received for test results to be released and for eligibility to participate in the competition.

5. GENERAL RULES

- a. California State Fair General Rules are subject to any action that may cause revision or curtailment at any time before each competition or judging. Upon submission of online entry and signature on a detailed receipt if applicable, the exhibitor acknowledges that they have read and understood these rules and all others of the competition in which they enter and are further responsible for viewing, reading, and understanding all revisions or curtailments on the State Fair's website before the competition. Exhibitors may request an additional copy of the most current rules by contacting the entry office:
email: entryoffice@calexpo.com.
- b. Awards Organizers may require that any cannabis receiving an award be reviewed and qualified by representatives of the Organizing Committee, who shall verify that all entry requirements have been met.
- c. The testing standards of the competition written herein are subject to change as the State of California's cannabis testing and/or pesticide regulations evolve.
- d. Award Organizers reserve the right to combine award sub-categories.
- e. No entrant or representative may disparage the awards of other cannabis entrants to the trade or public.
- f. Flower award categories are not determined by cultivation license size, type, or mixed light tier license status.

