RAHAVARU CHALLENGE

EVENT OVERVIEW

Fishermen's Day is a day of national significance in the Maldives, and has been commemorated for decades, celebrating the essential role that fisheries play in our economy, food security, and culture. For the 2026 celebration, the Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Ocean Resources, is once again organising *Rahavaru*, a cook-off event targeted particularly at amateur cooks and culinary enthusiasts.

The primary objective of *Rahavaru* is to celebrate the contributions of the fisheries sector to food security in the Maldives, while highlighting the need for innovation and diversification in fishing practices and seafood cuisine, especially in the face of global climate change. This event will also provide an exciting opportunity for participants and the public to experience new and innovative culinary recipes, especially those using sustainable, climate-resilient seafood and practices. By focusing on creativity and sustainability, the event aims to galvanize the interest of youth in the fisheries sector and encourage them to explore new ways of engaging with and supporting the future of the sector.

The competition will be staged in a dedicated outdoor tent within the main Fishermen's Day celebration area in Hulhumale', with an open and visible set-up that allows visitors to watch the teams prepare and present their dishes.

The Ministry is opening applications for teams of 2-3 non-professional chefs, on a first-come, first-serve basis. A total of 12 teams will be selected. Applications will be open until 19th November 2026.

THEME

Rahavaru aligns with the Fishermen's Day theme, '*Masverikamuge sinaa'ay sindhafaathu kurumah zuvaanunge baiverivun* – Engaging Youth in Diversifying the Fisheries Sector,' which emphasizes the vital role of youth in driving innovation and sustainable growth within the fisheries sector. In line with this theme, *Rahavaru* aims to celebrate the contributions of the fisheries sector to food

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security in the Maldives, while highlighting the importance of innovation and diversification in fishing practices and seafood cuisine.

In light of this, participants are encouraged to create dishes that not only showcase the rich potential of the fisheries sector but also reflect the spirit of sustainability and climate resilience, inspiring new possibilities for the future of the Maldives' fisheries sector.

TEAM ELIGIBILITY

Professional Experience: Since *Rahavaru* is designed to showcase the talents of amateurs in the culinary field, eligible teams must consist solely of amateur chefs, home cooks, and culinary enthusiasts with less than 3 years of professional culinary experience in a kitchen.

Age Category: Participants must be aged 16 years or older.

EVENT RULES

The full set of rules for the competition is included in Annex I of this document.

SUPPLY OF INGREDIENTS

As outlined in the competition rules in Annex 1, participants should bring their own required ingredients, based on the menus planned by each team. However, the Ministry will provide the designated special ingredients for both the entrée and main course. For the main course, the featured ingredient is wahoo (*kurumas*), while the entrée dishes must utilise squid (*boavadhilamas*). Each participating team will also receive MVR 500 in financial assistance to help cover ingredient expenses.

APPLICATIONS AND DEADLINE

- Applications are now open and must be submitted via the following Google Form link: https://forms.gle/uaYtLy2hbTtmm4zv9
- Applications must be submitted no later than 14:00 hrs on 19th November 2026.

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JUDGING PANEL AND AWARDING OF WINNERS

The judging panel will be composed of three experts. Winners will be selected based on the combined total scores of their entrée and main course dishes. The top three teams will receive cash prize of:

- First place: MVR 15,000/-
- Second place: MVR 10,000/-
- Third place: 7,500/-

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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ANNEX I: RULES FOR *RAHAVARU* COOK-OFF CHALLENGE

There are two categories in this competition. Competitors will prepare two dishes in total: one starter and one main course.

Competition Requirements

- **Dish Requirements**: Each competitor must present:
  - One starter featuring Squid (*Boavadhilamas*).
  - One main course featuring Wahoo (*Kurumas*).
- Each dish must consist of **2 identical portions**.
- **Time Limit**: Participants will have **2 hours** to complete both dishes.

Ingredients and Equipment

- **Mandatory Ingredients**: Squid (*Boavadhilamas*) must be used for the starter, and Wahoo (*Kurumas*) for the main course. The specific cut and preparation method are up to the competitor. Fish will be provided by the organizer.
- **Supplementary Ingredients**: Competitors may bring their own supplementary ingredients.
- Standard kitchen equipment such as stoves will be provided. Competitors may bring specialized tools. Any such additional equipment must be approved by the Ministry.

Hygiene and Safety

- All competitors must adhere to standard kitchen hygiene and safety protocols.
- Competitors must wear appropriate attire, including aprons (provided by the ministry)
- Dishes must be handled with utmost care to avoid contamination.

Dish Presentation

- **Starter Presentation**: The dish should highlight the flavour profile and texture of Squid (*Boavadhilamas*). Creative plating and complementary garnishes are encouraged.
- **Main Course Presentation**: The Wahoo (*Kurumas*) dish should be cooked to perfection, with a balance of protein, starch, and vegetables or accompaniments.
- **Portion Consistency**: Both portions of each dish must be identical in presentation and quality. One dish is for judges to taste, and one dish is to display.

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JUDGING CRITERIA SCORE

MISE EN PLACE	0 -5
CORRECT PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION	0-20
HYGIENE AND FOOD WASTE	0-10
SERVICE	0-5
PRESENTATION AND CREATIVITY	0-20
TASTE & TEXTURE	0-40
TOTAL	100 points

Mise En Place (0 – 5 points)

Planned arrangement of materials for trouble-free working and service. Correct utilization of working time to ensure punctual completion. Clean, proper working methods during will also be judged as well as conditions after leaving the kitchen.

Correct Professional Preparation (0 – 20 points)

Correct basic preparation of food, corresponding to today's modern culinary art. Preparation should be practical, acceptable methods that exclude unnecessary ingredients. Appropriate cooking techniques must be applied to all ingredients, including starches and vegetables. Working skills and kitchen organization.

Hygiene and Food Waste (0 - 10 points)

Practice clean and hygienic work techniques. Follow and adhere to the workflow. Store food items correctly and maintain proper temperature control for hot and cold food items. Control excess food and minimize food waste and limit plastic waste. Keep the workstation clean and uncluttered, including cleanliness after the competition. Wear clean chef attire.

Service (0 – 5 points)

The punctual delivery of each entry at the appointed time is a matter of urgent necessity. The kitchen jury will determine if the fault of the service, if any is the kitchen or service team and recommend any point reductions. The full points will be awarded if service flows smoothly, and dishes come out on time from the kitchen.

Presentation and Creativity (0 – 20 points)

Clean arrangement, with no artificial garnish and no time-consuming arrangements. Exemplary plating to ensure an appetizing appearance. There should be no repetition of ingredients, shapes and colours as well as cooking techniques between the different dishes. Innovative techniques and presentation styles were used to present the dish.

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Taste (0 – 40 points)

The typical taste of the food should be preserved. The dish must have appropriate taste, seasoning, quality, and flavour, the dish should conform to today's standard of nutritional values.

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