

**What does it  
take to become  
a Chef?**





A chef is someone who is in the profession of preparing, cooking and presenting food. A chef can also be very innovative with food, creating new dishes, deciding what the specials of the day will be, and putting together an exciting menu. Good chefs take what they've learned studying cuisines and recipes in culinary school and apply it in unexpectedly delicious ways. Chefs oversee all of the functions and activities in the kitchen, which includes, all food preparation and of any staff. They make sure the proper seasoning of foods are given and that desserts and other foods are pleasing to the eye and to the palate of the customer. They are also involved in menu planning and pricing and ordering supplies.

### **Skills and Knowledge**

Meeting the requirements to work as a chef depends greatly on the work environment that most interests you. Just as nurses have many different specialties, chefs may also focus in specific areas. Formal training to become a chef typically takes place in a postsecondary institution, but many students begin taking classes in high school followed by on-the-job experience. Educational programs may require students to complete internships or apprenticeships. Some restaurants and hotels offer training and job placement for employees interested in becoming chefs. Skills required to become a professional chef include excellent communication and leadership skills, especially in advanced positions such as executive chef.

The ability to cook well is a major facet of working as a chef but it is necessary to handle the stress of working with multiple recipes simultaneously. Many chefs work very long hours and advanced positions require the ability to keep inventory, order ingredients, evaluate food quality and manage staff members. A chef has to have a sharp mind paired with the ability to work quickly.

### **Training**

A wide variety of formal culinary training exists, ranging from a few months to four years. All programmes have hands-on training, where the students will be in a kitchen and learn cooking and baking techniques, nutrition, preparation, as well as safety and sanitation procedures. Internships may also be required depending on the programme. Nearly all graduates start their careers as an apprentice to a higher-level chef and work their way up, regardless of education. The world of professional cookery offers exciting and challenging job prospects preparing and cooking delicious and nutritious fare in cafés, restaurants, hotels and wineries. If you want to transform your love of food and cooking into a successful career, then this is the place to start.

### **Working Conditions**

This career is a good choice for the very motivated person who enjoys a challenge and an active workplace, day in and day out. Long hours are almost a given for the average chef, and working late hours is very

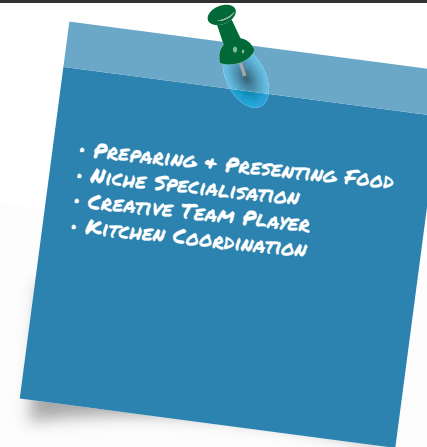
common as well. A great professional chef must be able to withstand the strain and pressure of working in close quarters, standing for hours at a time, lifting heavy kettles and pots and working with hot grills and ovens. Job hazards include falls and slips, cuts and burns, but injuries tend not to be serious. Work hours may include early mornings, late evenings, weekends and holidays. Those who work in factory and school cafeterias may be more regular.

## Job Prospects

The chef's workplace can be very diverse, ranging from high-end restaurant and hotel kitchens to private kitchens, hospital kitchens, retirement centres, cruise ships, weddings and other events, or even providing food for movie sets. Sustained growth in the local tourism and hospitality sector has created a demand for highly skilled chefs who appreciate that customers want fresh, delicious and attractively presented food. Most chefs have some specialty or preferred area of work, though it may take time for a chef to settle into a particular niche. Frequently, the chefs in highest demand are the ones skilled in a great many areas of preparation. Many chefs opt to establish their own catering firms to arrange the delivery, preparation and presentation of food for clients at events such as fundraisers, conferences and weddings. Their responsibilities include not only the food and drinks, but the decorations,

venue, music and lighting. Catering is one of the fastest growing careers in the culinary arts field.

You too can live your passion and become a Chef. If you are driven, creative, a good communicator and have a passion for serving and creating comfort for others, you are a good candidate.



It's all about attitude, I would say. Everyone in this industry starts at the bottom rung of the ladder and work their way up.

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