

BRADENTON HERALD

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T H E J O B C E N T E R

CULINARY ARTS



Cooks and chefs work in kitchen settings at restaurants and institutions, such as schools or hospitals. The field of culinary arts includes food preparation workers, cooks, chefs, and bakers.

Culinary arts is a broad field, encompassing careers in food preparation and presentation. Food preparation workers, cooks, chefs, and bakers create food dishes that help top restaurants and eating facilities establish reputations as outstanding places to enjoy a meal.

Cooks and chefs are generally in charge of preparing meals for an eating establishment. They often serve as managers, supervising the work of assistants and food preparation workers. Preparation specialists assist cooks and chefs by getting ingredients ready to go into a recipe: washing and peeling vegetables, measuring ingredients, and keeping the kitchen's work areas clean.

Large eateries may have an executive chef or head cook that oversees the entire process of food preparation, cooking, and serving. They also plan menus, order food and cooking supplies, and oversee the cooking process. These supervisors also coordinate the efforts of other specialized chefs and cooks, such as fry cooks, pastry chefs, or bakers. One usually obtains the title of chef after first gaining experience and training as a kitchen worker or cook.

There are many types of cooks, such as restaurant cooks, short-order cooks, and fast food cooks. Restaurant cooks have the most flexibility and often have the opportunity to experiment with new recipes. Short-order cooks and fast-food cooks specialize in preparing foods quickly, often making sure that each batch of food matches with an establishment's pre-set criteria for taste and quality.

It often takes years of training and on-the-job experience to become a recognized chef. Some top chefs become famous after first establishing local and regional reputations for creating and preparing extraordinary dishes. The world's top chefs are always in high demand.

Many of the skills needed to work in culinary arts can be learned on the job, but advanced training beyond high school is highly recommended. Community and technical colleges offer a variety of training programs related to culinary arts. The American Culinary Federation also coordinates an apprenticeship program that combines in-class training with on-the-job experience.

Workers in the culinary arts industry often work long hours in warm, crowded kitchens. However, a love for good food and the rewards of creating tasty, inventive meals usually result in long-term careers for professionals in culinary arts.

Q & A

Q: How creative must a cook or chef be?

A: It depends where they work. Finer restaurants expect high levels of inventiveness in creating menu items, while smaller restaurants and fast food chains expect a certain adherence to consistency and familiar, time-tested favorites. Other restaurants and institutional kitchens fall somewhere in between, depending on the demands of those who dine there.

Q: Are business courses necessary for becoming a cook or chef?

A: Because the executive chef, chef, or kitchen manager is required to purchase ingredients and equipment used for food preparation, he or she should have some knowledge of business

transactions. Often food costs are high, and every attempt should be made to purchase the highest quality products at the lowest prices. This requires a basic understanding of the way goods are bought and sold by and for companies.

Q: Can I get a job in a kitchen without prior experience?

A: Usually. Due to high employee turnover in the restaurant industry, food preparation workers are in constant demand. A high school education is often required, but not always. Job duties in low-level positions are basic, and may include cleaning and preparing ingredients for cooks. Some cooks start as dishwashers and work their way up.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Careers in culinary arts require creativity as cooks and chefs invent new recipes or improve existing ones. Attention to detail and good planning skills are also important.

WHERE/HOW TO GET TRAINING

Schooling

It often takes many years of education and experience to attain a management position as a cook, chef, or baker. Those working in culinary arts have several training options from which to choose. Many community and technical colleges offer educational programs leading to diplomas, certificates, or degrees in culinary arts. These programs may take three months to two years to complete, depending on the level of specialization desired. Vocational training programs usually include courses in culinary preparation or cooking, bakery, kitchen sanitation, menu planning, nutrition, cost control, and personnel management. Some four-year colleges and universities offer degree programs in restaurant or food service management, which can help one prepare for a long-term culinary career that includes management responsibilities.

The American Culinary Federation also coordinates an apprenticeship program. These hands-on training programs usually take two to three years to complete and combine classroom learning with on-the-job training under the guidance of experienced culinary professionals. Learn more about these programs at <http://www.acfchefs.org>.

Financial Aid

Grants, scholarships, loans, and work/study programs are available for students. For most of this aid, prospective students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, available from high school guidance offices and post-secondary financial aid offices. For more information on federal financial aid programs, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.



For more information on federal financial aid programs, call (800) 4FEDAID

FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, job openings for chefs, cooks, and food preparation workers are expected to be plentiful

through 2014. Highly skilled cooks, chefs, and bakers with established reputations are always in high demand.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work environments in this field vary greatly. Most kitchens or food preparation areas are loud, noisy, and often crowded. Workers face

hazards from cuts, burns, and other cooking-related injuries. Most cooks, chefs and bakers wear uniforms to work.

RESOURCES - HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

BOOK:

Opportunities in Culinary Careers by Mary Deirdre Donovan

GENERAL:

International Association of Culinary Professionals
 Ste. 201
 304 West Liberty St.
 Louisville, KY 40202
<http://www.iacp.com>

ONLINE:

www.acfchefs.org
 (American Culinary Federation)

LOCAL:

Career Counselor, Terri Parrish
 941-751-7900 ext. 2018
parrishm@manateeschools.net

YOU HAVE THE POWER

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JOB IN THIS FIELD

Job titles	Place of work	Kind of work	Average salary*
Food preparation worker	Restaurant or large institutional kitchen	Assists cooks and chefs by preparing ingredients and maintaining clean work areas.	\$20,908-\$32,541+ (annually)
Head cook or executive chef	Restaurant or large institutional kitchen	Supervises overall food preparation of cooking operation. Also creates new recipes and menus.	\$45,562-\$101,865+ (annually)

*Salaries may vary depending on region and experience. Sources: Chronicle Guidance Publications and Occupational Outlook Handbook.