

Chef

Chefs and cooks are key figures in the hospitality industry. They must ensure unity between the menu, and the type of operation being run, usually do menu planning and development, and often all food costing, ordering and stock control. They are also in charge of all the people working in the kitchen (called the kitchen brigade). The caterer or chef has virtually limitless scope for creativity. Tasks may vary from the preparation of traditional French dishes to take-away food; from traditional cooking methods to the use of microwaves and freezing facilities in large-scale kitchens. Cookery is a growing profession in South Africa, and there is great scope for travel to foreign countries to gain further experience. South African Chefs are highly regarded by the international chefs' fraternity, and attend and win prizes regularly at international cookery competitions

Where can I work?

Possible employers in this field include any institution with service and catering facilities, such as hotels, hospitals, schools, restaurants, lodges and contract caterers.

Can I work for myself in this occupation?

A person with the necessary qualifications, skills and experience can start their own business. Many people in the hospitality industry have been very successful in working for themselves. Financial assistance is offered by some organisations (such as the Small Business Development Corporation) to start your own business.

The work

Food preparation is the main type of work in the catering industry. Other than this the work is very varied. Your work might involve working in an exclusive restaurant, or a simple bistro or pub - doing anything from cooking a hamburger to the most elaborate classical dish. Chefs in most establishments work according to a strictly set down hierarchy, each with their own individual duties and responsibilities:

The person

An executive chef needs a strong interest in food and an ability to cook, artistic flair, energy, leadership qualities and good organisational skills. A sense of urgency, and an ability to work under pressure, and in a team, is essential. Physical stamina to cope with long hours in a hot kitchen, while standing, is also essential.

For entry level staff, training may be provided on the job, with the opportunity to obtain national qualifications.

Head Chef:

The head chef runs the kitchen and liaises with the restaurant manager and the hotel manager, if the establishment is in a hotel. Duties include menu planning, staff supervision and training, purchasing, food costing and possibly also finance and budgeting, with only a limited amount of time available for cooking. Few head chefs have less than 10 years' experience and usually have much more before reaching this position.

Sous chef:

The sous chefs are deputy chefs and have an important supervisory and management role, as well as doing some of the cooking. Large kitchens have an executive sous chef, sous chefs and junior sous chefs. A chef requires, on average, at least five years' experience (including two as a chef de partie) before he or she is able to seek promotion to the job of sous chef.

Chef de partie:

The chefs de partie do the bulk of the cooking in every kitchen. Under the partie system each chef de partie specialises in cooking a particular part of the meal. For example:

<i>Chef Entremetier:</i>	<i>Vegetables</i>
<i>Chef Rotisseur:</i>	<i>Roasting</i>
<i>Chef Poissonier:</i>	<i>Fish</i>
<i>Chef Saucier:</i>	<i>Entrees</i>
<i>Chef Pâtissier:</i>	<i>Desserts</i>
<i>Chef Garde-Manger</i>	<i>Cold Kitchen</i>

Commis Chef:

The commis chefs are qualified junior chefs and work under the direction of a chef de partie, usually preparing and cooking the less elaborate dishes. A chef will usually need to have at least three years' experience as a commis chef before moving on to become a chef de partie.

