

Where to Study?

Note: The University of Technology sector is currently developing a 3-year National Diploma in Professional Cookery. This will be offered by various institutions from January 2004. Contact any of the institutions listed in this careers section to find out if they will be presenting this new course.

Appropriate national qualifications and learnerships

These qualifications are offered in industry, by some Technical Colleges, and by private training institutions:

Qualification	Learnership	NQF level
National Certificate in Professional Cookery	National Certificate in Professional Cookery	4
National Diploma in Professional Cookery		5

Selecting a Cookery Training School

Many chefs are opening their own culinary training schools, and the quality (and costs) of these varies widely. We have compiled guidelines to assist you in evaluating what these schools have to offer you. Click [**here**](#) for further details.

Many schools claim to be registered or accredited with a number of bodies – including the SA Chefs Association, THETA, etc. If a school really is accredited, they would have undergone a rigorous accreditation process where their facilities, learning materials, courses and lecturers would have been evaluated on their ability to deliver appropriate training for this field. When selecting a full time study course, it is important to consider the following to ensure that you receive the type and quality of training you want.

- Is the school accredited by a national education and training quality assurance body such as THETA, HEQC, or Umalusi? Can they prove this? Phone THETA on 0860 100 221 to find out.
- Does the course give graduates a certificate from a recognised authority – in this case – THETA, and is this qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework? This means that it is a legitimate, recognised qualification that will ensure that learners will gain employable skills through the course.
- Does the training provider help you find a job when you finish the course?
- How many past students have found jobs?
- Who delivers the practical and theoretical components of the course and are they suitably qualified and experienced to deliver such training?

- Do the lecturers have industry experience and knowledge as well as a teaching background?
- Cross-check any information provided – ask for proof or confirm it yourself with the accreditation body.
- Speak to current or past students to get their feelings about the course or program
- Ask managers of establishments what courses they recommend or approve, or what they look for when hiring somebody.
- What is the duration of the course? Comprehensive training cannot take place over a few weeks. An absolute minimum is at least a year to enquire any professional skills.
- Are the trainers affiliated with the Chefs Association – this does provide evidence of their professionalism, and their contribution to and involvement with their industry.
- Check the facilities to ensure that there is enough working place for each student to learn practical skills. The ratio of trainer to student should not be more than 1 : 15, as cookery training requires a lot of individual attention. What type of facilities is provided? Is there a fully equipped kitchen? Ask to inspect these facilities yourself
- Make sure that the kitchen equipment is similar to what is used in a professional industry setting, and not a domestic setting like a home kitchen.
- Ask how the course is structured, and how the percentage between practical and theory is divided. A good skills course should contain about 60% practical and 40% theory.
- Is the course full-time at the school or is the student sent out into the industry for work experience? If this is done, it should have a training program attached, and should be facilitated, monitored and assessed by the school.
- **Fee Structures:** Cookery training is expensive due to the cost of the facilities and the raw materials that are required and the need for the student to practice constantly.
- Check the cost and find out exactly what it covers. Hidden costs could include knives and equipment, uniforms, books, student parking, industry visits, and so on.

If you prefer to work and study at the same time, then an in-service training programme is what you want. To enrol you need to contact the training manager of an establishment, but first think of the following:

1. Speak to other trainees to see what they think of the programme.
2. Only apply to establishments that offer the services and facilities you need for training. Don't apply for chef training if they don't have a kitchen.
3. Make sure that the establishment has a recognised course for you to follow. Ask to see the programme.

As an in-service trainee you must sign a contract with the employer. Read this carefully and make sure you understand everything.

When considering your choices it is advisable to speak to as many people as possible as the best advice is likely to come from those who have experienced the programme themselves.