



How to Become a Chef

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Introduction

So you want to be a chef! The culinary arts are a great choice for a career. It helps if you have a previous interest in cooking.

Most people that decide that they would like to explore the great field of the culinary arts already seem to have the pre-disposition for it. Of course, that is not always the case.

Some chefs come into the profession later on in life. Of course, if you want to be at the top of your field, you should at least know that there are quite a few things that you should ask yourself first.

What it comes down to is that not everyone can be a chef. Before you even consider going any further, you should ask yourself the following questions first.

- **Am I creative?**

Creativity is necessary if you want to stand out as a chef. Often a meal is made all the more interesting by the way it is presented on the plate.

Creativity will also be necessary in dealing with your staff's problems. One thing a chef is responsible for is coming up with new and exotic dishes. A great sense of creativity can help with this and also with finding new ways to prepare old dishes.

When the average person goes to a fine restaurant, it is rare that they consider the amount of work that goes into the preparation of a meal. A good chef is good at making everything look easy and keep things running smoothly.

It takes a great deal of creativity to give everything the appearance of being unaffected.

- **Am I prepared to study the craft?**

The only real way that you can become a good chef is to put a great deal of effort into improving yourself; not only as a cook, but as a person as well. To do this, you must study the craft.

You must be willing to study the art of cooking, preparation, and presentation. For all of the studies that will be done in books, you need to also practice these things in a hands-on manner to get the full effect of the study.

No matter what anybody says, no chef has ever mastered any dish without constant study and practice. As a budding chef yourself, you need to be prepared to put a great of effort into learning the craft, as well as spending a great deal of time doing so.

If you want to make the kind of money that goes with any successful profession, you will need to log in the hours and experience, and you must be willing to start small.

- **Do I have the motivation and desire to learn to be a chef?**

Being aware of the amount of time and study that it takes to become a chef, you need to keep yourself motivated if you are to complete your study with the credentials that you are hoping for.

As with all things that require so much effort, sometimes you really have to talk yourself into continuing. If you can stick with it, you will be happy in the end. And you will be a chef.

- **Can I multi-task?**

You will often be required to do many things at once, so be prepared. As you will learn, working in a kitchen is a fast paced environment. It helps if you can keep up.

You will soon realize that working in a kitchen requires you to do many things at once, and it also requires you to be able to do this with a clear head and decisive manner.

Most jobs require you to be able to do more than one thing at a time, but none so much as working as a chef. It can be quite frustrating at times, but very rewarding at others.

Multi-tasking is never more important than to those that wish to run their own establishment and kitchen. Keep reading if you really want to know what it takes to be a chef.

- **Am I good at making split second decisions?**

When cooking more than one thing at once there is always room for a disaster. You need to be able to think quickly in order to avoid any complications.

Thinking on your feet is a necessity in working in a kitchen as there is always something going on around you. In order to be fully functional, you will need to be able to make decisions at the drop of a dime, and they will have to be the right ones.

This may not sound very difficult, but you must consider that a kitchen is almost always filled with people and many things are cooking at the same time.

In this case, there is always a chance that something on the stove can go overlooked and begin to burn, a fire could break out with the simple misplacement of a dish towel, and confusion can easily break out among the staff.

A quick decisive chef will try to keep everything running smoothly.

Think of it this way; unless restaurant serves only one dish, you can have a great many items cooking at the same time, especially on a busy day.

As a chef, you will need to monitor everything that is being prepared and still keep up with your various other duties. To do this, you will need to be a split second decision maker.

- **Do I handle criticism well?**

Unfortunately you will encounter some people who will not like your cooking for any reason and they will likely send their food back. It helps if you can take the criticism in stride.

Food critics will also have opinions so be prepared for that as well. If you are not able to handle the criticism of others, it will not leave you much room to improve.

A good chef will always know that improvement begins with criticism. In this profession the old adage is definitely true; “The customer is always right”.

- **How is my business sense?**

Cooking is a business; you will need to know the basics of business in order to run a kitchen on your own. It really doesn't matter if you are running your own kitchen or someone else's.

To be a good chef, you must be able to handle the business aspect of a restaurant; especially if you are planning to be an executive chef or run your own place someday.

By the business aspect I mean that you will often be expected to handle everything in the kitchen. That includes dealing with shipments and stocking

of food items, the management of other employees, and the direct correspondence with the head honcho or proprietor of the establishment.

- **Am I a people person?**

Being a chef requires you to be in touch with many people during the day, you will need the ability to deal with them in a diplomatic fashion.

Many people think that being holed up in a kitchen all day doesn't really require you to be in much contact with the public, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

As the chef, you will encounter many people during the course of your day. You will be talking to delivery personnel, other employees, and often customers will wish to speak to you either in a congratulatory fashion or for criticism.

It's all a part of being a head chef and you will do this every single day, so be prepared for it.

What Is A Chef?

A chef is a person that has studied for many years in the culinary arts to learn how to run a successful kitchen and properly prepare meals in a professional environment.

There are quite a few places that a chef can choose to work in. Some of these include:

- Restaurants
- Hospitals
- Hotels
- Cruise ships
- Rest Homes
- Diners

These aren't all of the places that a chef can work in, but you get the general idea.

There are also many choices that can be made in regard to the position a chef may take in their work space. To be a chef, you must first study in a culinary school, or apprentice first.

You can't get to the level of head chef and to running a kitchen without first knowing the basics. That will be covered in the next section.

In a kitchen environment, you are required to lift heavy pots and stirring sauces constantly is also very common. It can be a very stressful job.

Being able to handle stresses calmly will be a great help to you in this profession. This is just for starters.

With all of the things that you will need to know before choosing to be a chef, this manual will be your comprehensive guide to knowing if this profession is right for you.

This, like every other professional choice, should be made with the right knowledge behind you. This guide is the best place for you to start in making your choice to being a chef.

Is it right for me?

Before you can decide whether or not you should become a chef, you should first consider the demands that are placed on a chef's shoulder.

It can be a very stressful situation for someone that doesn't already know what it is like to be under such working conditions.

A chef is responsible for many other staff members in the kitchen as well. You need to know what is going on around you at all times, and have great organizational skills to boot.

Deciding to be a chef is a difficult choice, but if you are reading this manual, you must have a genuine love of cooking, a creative mind, and a good temperament.

Chefs spend a great deal of time with people and should have a desire to work with people as fully functional team.

A good chef knows that for a kitchen to run smoothly, you must offer staff members a forum for their stresses as well. A chef must be the glue that holds the kitchen staff together.

There is no room for conceit and showing off in a kitchen environment. All members of the “team” must be able to work well together.

As a head or executive chef, you must be in charge of the kitchen staff and its goings on. That means that in the kitchen, you are the boss. You need to be able to handle a leadership role.

There is a great deal that needs to be done in a kitchen environment and the next section will give you a full explanation of what to expect.

What do I have to do?

Being a chef is a very physical profession. You are required to remain on your feet almost constantly. Along with that, you must also be stirring, kneading, and chopping your foods.

Many times, you will have to do all of this while also having to ordering foods for hungry customers and critical customers.

A kitchen is almost scorching hot year round so you should be quite prepared for that. Even in the best conditioned areas, a kitchen is often as hot as 95 degrees or higher.

If that doesn't sound like enough to do, try doing it while you are also maintaining all of the rest of the kitchen staff. Choosing to be a chef for a living is a very rewarding and time consuming job.

Now do you see why being able to multi-task is so important? The road to becoming a chef requires much training and hands on experience.

Here's what you need to do to be a good chef.

A strong desire to be a chef is a good place to start. Having a good sense of smell, and taste will be necessary also. It would very difficult to prepare a

good meal if you can't decipher the differences from one spice to another; or if you do not know which spices go well together and which ones don't.

Cooking is a lot different than being a chef is. If you are just cooking for yourself you have room for errors.

If you are cooking for a stranger, you will want to cook your food to perfection. Of course, you will also want to present the food in an enticing manner as well.

There are stages to becoming a chef. You have to start at the bottom, but becoming a chef is one of few occupations where you can get most of your training on the job. You do have to go to school and train as well, but much of the training is done in a working environment.

The Apprentice

It takes many years to become a chef, and much schooling to get to the position of head chef.

Most chefs begin by becoming apprentices for a few years so that they can get the necessary experience of working in a kitchen. Being a chef often requires you to stand on your feet for hours at a time and you are rarely able to relax for very long.

Most chefs start out helping out kitchen staff in urban restaurant environments because they are the most busy and offer a great deal of experience.

You will begin by helping the sous chefs, cooks, and prep cooks with their daily work like cutting vegetables, stocking shelves, or ordering food as per your instructions from the sous chef. This position is called an apprentice.

You may not necessarily be paid for your work depending on whether or not you are taking your position through a school's curriculum requirements.

Some apprenticeships do pay you for the chance to train, but it really depends on your location. Trained apprenticeships that are required for your certification, and if they do pay; they pay little.

Of course, it is worth it because in the end, you can qualify for your certification. And the experience is invaluable to you when looking for a better and higher paying opportunity.

You can also choose to work in more than one restaurant so that you can associate under more than one mentor and get a better idea of what you want to specialize in.

If you can handle the stressful environment of working in a restaurant or whatever you decide on, then you can work your way into high chef relatively quickly.

For some people it can take as long as ten years to get to that position. In the culinary industry that's considered fast. Here is a list of some of the jobs that you can get in the culinary industry while trying to work into head chef position.

- Line cook
- Line or station cook
- Garde manger cook
- Sous chef
- Chef's apprentice
- Prep cook

- Front of house Operator

All of these positions are great for the chef in training, and all can get you the experience that you will need in order to gain the ability to become the head chef some day.

If you are looking to set your sights a little higher once you have garnered the experience in the culinary industry, you will next look to better positions like:

- Head line cook
- Executive chef
- Kitchen manager
- Restaurant manager/owner
- Food service supervisor
- Caterer
- Restaurants
- Cruise lines
- Resorts or hotels
- Private club or spas
- Contract food services

Truthfully, the possibilities are endless in the culinary field of work. Once you have garnered all of your training, you can pretty much chose any job you'd like to have.

This job requires that you work to satisfy the public, but it also guarantees you much freedom.

Choosing a specialty

Most chefs have to first choose a specialty before going to culinary school so that they can specifically study that art in general.

Each specific culinary specialty has their own level of study, and all have their own rewards to offer.

To be a successful chef you need to know how to supervise a variety of kitchen staff, create a nice food display, know how to properly garnish a meal, plan menus, and order, stock and store food supplies.

This may not sound like much, but try having to do them all at once.

When choosing a specialty, it is basically about your own preference. These are some of the specialties that you may wish to get into.

Commis

A commis is an entry level position in the culinary industry. It is basically an apprenticeship position.

You will have to do this at some point if you ever plan to run your own kitchen. For this, you will have to work under the line cook.

In this position, you will be learning how to work effectively in a kitchen environment. You will also be learning how to prep, using your knife, and how to present a plate properly.

In addition, you will learn exactly how stressful working in a kitchen will be.

Every person that wants to be a head chef of some sort will be required to give the commis position a try for at least a year.

At least 72% of employees are looking for chefs that have apprenticeship experience. In some states, you are required to do at least a year as a commis before you can get your certification. This is true particularly if you are interested in specializing.

Most employers believe that you just can't beat the experience you can receive during an apprenticeship. Many employers will not hire you without it.

If your business sense is good you will realize that time is money to an employer. It is rare that they have the time to train a new employee to run a kitchen. And often times, they simply won't.

Some commis positions are paid training opportunities, which is nice. Many of the commis positions that you will receive do not pay you; especially if it is a course requirement.

To find one that pays, you will simply have to speak to your course manager and see if there are any paid apprenticeships available in your community. Be prepared to hear a no.

Pastry Chef

A pastry chef needs to know how to create baked goods, confections and specialty items. Pastry chefs generally specialize in deserts.

This is a specialty that requires much creativity and a great sense of taste for deserts. If you chose to work in a hotel environment, you will likely have to report to an executive pastry chef.

To be a good pastry chef you need to be able to manage people. It is a must. You must also be able to coordinate staffing with production requirements.

You must be in charge of ordering your ingredients as well. It is a very specific specialization that requires a great sense of business sense. You will

also have little room for error in this specialization as many of your dishes are lengthy to prepare.

Saucier

This is just as it appears. This chef specializes in making sauces, and sometimes meats that are cooked in sauces.

This type of specialty is actually quite prestigious among the chefs out there. Since sauces are often the basis of French haute cuisine, the saucier chef is considered a very necessary person in the kitchen.

The best trained saucier's know that the five basis of all sauces rest behind the five mother sauces first.

These sauces are:

Espagnole (brown sauce): This is made of dark roux of cooked flour and butter as well as brown stock made from roasted bones and vegetables.

Veloute: (white sauce) is made of a pale roux and a light stock.

Béchamel: a basic white sauce that is made of milk, butter and flour. Sometimes cheese is also added to it.

Vinaigrette: simple oil and vinegar mix. Sometimes other ingredients are added, such as garlic, shallots and herbs.

Hollandaise: a mixture of egg, oil or butter, and mayonnaise.

Of course, this is just the basics of the training that a saucier has to know. You must have a great sense of taste to be a successful saucier, and it helps to be creative in your mixes. Knowing what sauces would taste best with what foods is essential in being a good saucier.

The saucier is the most important person in the room for many gourmet dishes. A meal can be prepared to perfection, but if the sauce is bad, there goes the meal.

Sous Chef

The sous chef is the second in command after the executive chef. The word “sous” means “under.” That is exactly what you are in the kitchen.

You are just under the executive chef; basically, a sous chef is the most important person in the kitchen. The sous chef is the person that keeps the

kitchen running. The executive chef often gets the credit, but it is the sous chef that deserves it.

The sous chef must be in charge of the specialty chefs, the chefs, cooks, and other kitchen staff as well.

Sous chefs must also be the person that demonstrates the new equipment, and cooking techniques to the rest of the kitchen. They order kitchen supplies, plan menus, prepare the food and specialty items as well.

In essence, with apologies to the females in the profession, the sous chef is “the man”.

Executive chef

An executive is the person that is in charge of the sous chef. They are the head of the kitchen and supervise the goings on in the kitchen.

The executive chef plans the menus, ensures that the food quality meets the establishment’s standards, estimates the food requirements, and may be involved in estimating the food and labor costs. The executive chef is also in charge of hiring kitchen staff.

The executive chef also cooks food daily. In this position you can be very hands on, meaning that you are there cooking with the sous chef every day and making sure that all plates are made and garnished to perfection, or you can make your rounds and focus on other aspects of being a chef.

In the beginning you are required to be hands on. As you have established yourself in the field, you can let the sous chef handle the day to day cooking while you do other things.

Garde Manger

The garde Manger chef is a specialized cook that is responsible for cold food presentations. The cold foods included in this specialization are salads, pates, canapes, and hors d'oeuvres.

You will also be responsible for all of the cold sauces like vinaigrettes, dressings, pickles, aspics, chutneys, and relishes. You are also responsible for buffet table settings for large gatherings such as corporate events i.e., ice sculptures etc.

Personal Chef

A personal chef is a chef that prefers to work in a family setting. This type of chef generally works in the employer's home and prepares meals for the family.

In this position, you are basically responsible for all aspects of the meal including the ordering of the food. It is a relatively rare specialty that is reserved for those that really enjoy bringing families together for meal time.

For this type of work, you will have to check about allergies, personal likes and expectations of your employers. In a sense you get to interview them for the job. You have a lot of freedom in this type of work and in some cases, less hours. A personal chef gets to work in a home environment. It is like cooking for your own family and can be very rewarding.

Gourmet Chef

The gourmet chef specializes in specialty cuisine, often foreign dishes. This type of chef is generally very skilled in foreign delicacies and what is often seen as "fancy foods".

A gourmet chef generally works in upper class establishments or for those that can afford the expensive dishes that prepared. As a gourmet chef,

you will need to know even the often ignored things such as wines so as to better complement your cuisine.

Gourmet chefs are often schooled overseas locations, but not exclusively to. It is an asset as a gourmet chef to understand the basics of culture, biological sciences, and art. It is a very prestigious field to begin study in, and can be quite lucrative as well.

Qualifications & Advancement

Once you have started at a beginning level as a cook or apprentice, you will want to move ahead and into an assistant cook position. This doesn't sound like much, but it will be necessary when looking to advance to an executive chef level.

You must train and go to school for a few years to be able to work your way into a fine restaurant or a head chef position. You will also need a few years of experience.

That is why many people begin to work in restaurants when they are in high school. You can also work while taking your scholastic training in the culinary industry. The most popular methods of training are as follows:

	2-4 year college	Vocational/trade school	Apprenticeship for Culinary institute	Apprenticeship for employer
Length of training	Anywhere from 2-4 years, depending	6mths-2 years. Depending on how fast you complete your	Can last anywhere from 1-4 years, depending on	It truly depends on how long the employer prefers you to

	on the type of chef you want to be.	training. You often move at your own pace.	the amount of advancement you are hoping for.	continue training. You are often training to head kitchen.
Type of training	Hands on training and many other courses accompany college training to attain certification	Almost all is hands on, but condensed version of certification requirements.	Also hands on, with training for certification required and also specialized training courses available.	All of this is hands on experience that the employers specifically needs.
Benefits	You will earn your full certification and diploma to work	You will gain basic certification to work in your State.	Can attain certification in any country if you like	You often get paid while training, and land a full time job immediately afterward.

	anywhere in the country.			
Cons	Training is lengthy and doesn't offer workplace experience	Doesn't offer workplace experience. Can be Pricey. Certification is only recognized in your state.	Expenses can be costly depending on where it is and what type of certification you want.	You do not receive certification in this type of work.
Cost of tuition	Anywhere from \$5000-15,000 per year	\$3000-5000 per course program	From \$5000-20,000 per year, depending on location, certification, and expenses	Generally free

This is just a quick breakdown of what to expect from each of these types of training.

All formal schooling that you take requires that you cover your expenses such as:

- Training
- Travel
- Books
- Tools etc.

Training in an employer's establishment is generally covered since you are often training to be a full time employee for them.

Keep in mind that you do not receive any certifications for training with an employer because you are only training to meet their specific requirements.

Formal schooling will train you to work almost anywhere, but may be limited to a particular state or country.

Culinary schools can train you to work in any locale, which is their best benefit. Of course, they are also much more expensive as well and are often located outside of the United States, and require that you cover your room and board at their institutions.

Colleges and Universities offer the most extensive training out there. They will get you a level III certification and will let you meet AQF in commercial cookery. It is the best method next to culinary institutes.

In colleges you can expect to study any or all of these subjects:

- Business: you need to know business as you will be responsible for the ordering of foods, and supplies. It is also good if you plan to someday run a restaurant of your own someday)
- History, cultural studies, and Sciences: The study of the social sciences is a necessity when becoming a chef, because you will often be cooking foods from a different culture. Knowing the history of a country is an asset when trying to duplicate their foods.
- Economics and even politics: Understanding economics is needed in every profession as you will have to keep up with economic trends in the locale that you are working in. You can't expect an expensive restaurant to thrive in an area that is generally poor.
- Math: As a chef, you will often be required to estimate pricing for foods that balances out with the cost of preparing it. You will also be required to estimate the cost of supplies and ingredients, and must remain on or below your budget.

- Biological sciences: Knowing biology will help you to steer away from poisoning your clientele. It will help you to identify any poisonous or harmful food stuffs.
- Human relations: You must be able to relate to other people on their level if you are a chef because you will be dealing with quite a few of them daily, and none of them will be the same.
- Art and communications: Art will help you to present a nice plate and will help you to effectively blend the right foods together in a way that will be more appealing to the customer.
- Foreign Languages: Knowledge of foreign languages is an asset to a chef. It is quite common for a chef to travel to foreign locations when looking for inspiration for a new dish. It helps to speak the native language.

You will have to study a great deal but it will be worth it.

You need to study all of these subjects so that you can effectively learn to calculate, estimate and organize food stuffs; communicate effectively with your clients and other kitchen staff; know what foods are eaten in what cultures, and how to effectively duplicate the taste.

Advancement as a chef is easier than in most jobs, and can happen relatively quickly as you are always proving yourself. This is the one job where you moving from job to job will actually benefit you.

The reason for this is because you can transfer to a higher paying job, or simply to a better position. Being able to minimize waste and monitor other employees that are working under you can help you advance quickly.

Your ability to accurately estimate how many perishable foods you need is also a good way to start. Many cooks advance to managers, supervisors, and executive chefs that way.

What about the money?

There is plenty of money to be made in the culinary industry. Of course, much of this depends on the area, and the type of establishment that you work in.

Naturally a busier area will bring in pretty good money.

The best places to work in are expensive hotels and restaurants. Here is a quick breakdown of the money that you can make that depends on your position.

Head chefs and cooks: You can make anywhere from \$7.39-\$22.77 hourly to start.

To be more specific; if you are working in recreation services you can make \$16.50 an hour; hotels and motels are \$15.78 per hour, and eating and drinking places around \$11.03 an hour to start.

Restaurant cooks: You can make anywhere from \$8.33-\$13.43 an hour to start.

If you work in recreational services you can make \$9.65 an hour, hotels and motels; \$9.97 hourly; eating and drinking places; \$8.57 hourly to start.

Short order cooks: You can make anywhere from \$6.32-\$10.83 hourly to start.

If you work in Hotels and Motels; \$8.44, recreation services and other miscellaneous places; \$7.94, eating and drinking places; \$7.57, Gas stations etc; \$6.87, and grocery stores; \$6.60 hourly to start.

Cafeteria Cooks: you can make anywhere from \$6.70-\$12.53 hourly to start.

In schools you can make \$7.65; Nursing homes; \$8.50; Hospitals \$9.37; child care services \$7.52 hourly to start.

Please Note that these are the starting hourly rates for the cook that is trying to get their experience. Naturally your pay will increase as your experience grows.

How do I Start?

As I stated before, you must go to school if you are hoping to be head chef or executive chef.

There are many avenues that you could chose when deciding where or how you would like to get your training. It really just depends on what kind of credentials you are hoping to get.

There are a few places that you can go to get your training. You can choose Colleges or universities, trade or vocational schools and an apprenticeship.

To become an executive chef that can work anywhere in the world you generally need an apprenticeship and some credited work behind you.

There are the real differences from all of these choices so that you can make the best one for you.

Accredited Colleges, Universities & Culinary Academies

Going to a 2-4 year college in order to become a certified chef is the best place to start if you are hoping to be accredited nationwide.

College courses offer you a more rounded view of the culinary industry and give you much of the skills that you will need in order to excel at your field.

Employers at finer restaurants are more eager to hire an accredited chef that has a college degree in the field than a graduate from a trade school. This is also a great way to know that you are accredited all over the world as well.

Trade schools may not necessarily grant you the same promise. Naturally, there are some pros and cons to choosing to get your certification from a College or University. Let's take a look at them.

Pros	Cons
2-4 year College or University: You are accredited worldwide	It takes 2-4 years of study to get your certification
You will receive your post secondary	The cost is much higher than any

diploma	other method of training
You can often start in a head position in the kitchen	It saves you little time to get your hands on experience working in a kitchen
You are eligible for a higher starting wage	You may not be eligible for an apprenticeship
You can make invaluable connections in the business	The competition is fierce for graduating with honors
You are recognized in the field as a chef once completed	Not all colleges offer chef training
You get hands on personal help	You are still required to apprentice somewhere (time consuming)

As you can see the benefits of choosing to get your training in a college or university can have it drawbacks as well as its good points.

The best reasons to choose a college is that you will be accredited worldwide which is not possible with other methods. As a college graduate in this field you are recognized in the field as a chef for a lifetime, whereas a trade school will not let you be recognized until you are hired as a chef.

Tuition can also be an issue although many colleges and universities offer financial aid if you qualify for it.

Most schools that offer you the chance to become a chef can have their tuition range anywhere from \$5000 to \$15,000 per year. That is quite a bit of money, but the benefits are well worth it. Here is a list of Colleges that do offer Chef training.

Le Cordon Bleu at Brown College (Minneapolis Minnesota)

Westwood College (Denver, Colorado)

Sullivan University (Kentucky)

California Culinary College

Gibbs College (New Jersey)

Kirtland Community College (Michigan)

There are many more colleges that can train you to become a chef, but you get the idea. Many culinary institutes are just as good as colleges and Universities, and in some cases better.

In addition, Le Cordon Bleu is located in many States and is nationally a recognized school.

Culinary academies are basically the same as colleges and universities. The cost is about the same, but you can get your credentials in less time at some of them.

Some culinary academies can even get you credited in as little as 9 months.

Culinary Academies often let you live on campus as part of your tuition, and cover your food costs. They actually train you while you cook all of your meals. That's helpful and practical!

Trade or Vocational Schools

A trade school offers you the chance to get you accredited in a shorter time period than colleges can. You will still learn much about the culinary industry but your classes are condensed so as to suit a certain time frame.

Trade schools are becoming more and more popular among those that wish to begin a career as quickly as possible, but there are pros and cons to choosing a trade school as your means to getting your credentials. Let's take a quick look at them.

Pros	Cons
It is much cheaper than college or	You are only accredited in the State in

culinary institutes	which you trained
You can be certified in less time	You still must apprentice somewhere
Condensed classes leave more free time	Condensed classes neglect some necessary courses
You can work at your own pace	You can work at your own pace (you may rush yourself)
You get some hands-on experience	You have to buy your own equipment separately

As you can see, trade schools can help you get your certification, but it leaves out a bit of stuff too.

All in all, trade schools are great for some people as not everyone can afford to invest the money or the time to a full-time college, university or culinary academy.

On-Site Training

On-site training is basically when an employer trains you to be a chef in their establishment. The best thing about this type of training is that you generally get paid to do it.

The down side to this is that you are only trained to work for them and you are not accredited. This means that you are not a certified chef. You will not be recognized in the field as a chef either.

Another bad point to this type of training is that if you lose your job, you are back where you started.

Training on-site doesn't make you a chef, it makes you a cook. Without your chef certification, you are not eligible for a chef's wages either. As a cook, you will earn a cook's salary.

A benefit to this type of training is that you will already have a job waiting for you that could elevate you to the pay of a head chef eventually, without having to do all of the studying for it.

Just know that trying to change locations will not be a good idea unless you already have a position lined up.

Training on-site can give you plenty of hours in the culinary field if you happen to live in a state that requires a certain number of hours of experience before starting the certification process.

Online Training

These days, just about every profession on the market has courses that you can take online. Some of the courses claim to make you accredited, but be very careful and research it thoroughly before parting with any money.

Some of these courses can be as cheap as \$19.99, which is an obvious bargain.

Of course you must consider that the courses can't really be of any use. You simply can't use an online course manual to learn how to be a chef. You don't get the obvious benefits of hands on learning, and there is no one available to help you if you have any problems.

You don't really have a way to know if you're even preparing meals properly, or if they've turned out right. You might have better luck just reading a cookbook for your qualifications.

Online courses just don't cut the mustard insofar as teaching you to become a real chef. Without a real teacher there to help you along the way, you will not learn anything that you can really use in the work force.

All an online course can do is to give you the basics. It can't really help you get your credentials and certainly not the kind of credentials that will be nationally accredited.

All in all, this is a case where you will get exactly what you pay for so let the buyer beware.

What Equipment do I need?

As in every area of life, you need to have the right equipment when you are trying to become a chef. Most schools require that you purchase your own tools and equipment.

Have you ever heard the old saying “A movie star is only as good as his next movie”? The same is true if you are a chef.

A chef is only as good as his next dish. The best way to start you on the road to making great cuisine is by using the right tools and always having them handy.

Your tools will be different depending on what type of chef you are planning to be. There are of course, the regular tools of the trade, but some chefs prefer to use specialty items as well.

Here are some of the tools you will need to get started.

- Full set of good and sharp knives, including butcher knife, paring knife, and de-boning knife.
- Comfortable pair of shoes. You will be on your feet most of the day
- Smock or apron
- Hair net or hat

- Pots and pans (This is not necessary. It is more of a specialty item. Many cooks prefer to use their own pots etc as it makes cooking more dependable)
- Knife sharpener
- Reliable books that can help you in a pinch such as cookbooks etc.
- Spot towels

I'm Interested! What Next?

Getting started in your quest to become a chef isn't as hard as you might think. The first thing that you need to do is research.

You should:

- Research any schools in your area that train chefs
- See that the tuition is affordable
- Ensure that there is financial aid available if you need it
- Determine what transportation you will need
- Find out how much it will cost to commute.

You will want to make sure that the school or training facility will give you the kind of training and/or credentials that you are looking for as well.

You need to check enrollment dates and requirements as well as a list of equipments needed. You can get a lot of this information at <http://www.cooking-schools.us>

Next you will have to enroll at the training facility of your choice, and brush up on your cooking skills. You will want to check out your local restaurants, hotels etc. for future employments opportunities and apprenticeship programs. You can never be too prepared.

It would also be an asset if you learned the nature of fine wines, and cheeses.

It may seem like a trivial thing right now, but a good chef always knows which wines to recommend with a meal, and a simple white or red doesn't really work.

As with all foods, wines are made with special ingredients and flavors. Some wines have a distinct hazel flavor in them and some don't. A good chef always knows the basics of wine.

Summary

By now, you should know all that you need to know in order to make the culinary industry your chosen profession. In this guide you have learned:

- What it takes to be a chef
- What type of training you need
- What the working conditions are like
- What equipment that you will need
- The different specialties there are as a chef
- What you will study in college or university
- How much money you can expect to pay for tuition
- How much money you can make as a chef
- Why you should become an apprentice first.

With this comprehensive guide to becoming a chef, you should by now realize whether or not if it's right for you.

You have learned what it takes to be a chef, how much work it takes to become a certified chef, and what the benefits of being a chef are.

You have also learned what it's like working in a kitchen environment. If all of this sounds good to you, then all you need is to choose from any of these resources to help you get started.

I have listed Schools, online research links, and more books to help you along the way to becoming the next "Wolfgang Puck". Happy cooking!

Resources

Online resources

<http://www.cooking-schools.us>

<http://www.educationdirect.com>

<http://www.ichef.com>

<http://www.chefassociation.com>

<http://www.personalchefnetwork.com>

<http://www.culinaryed.com>

<http://www.culinarybusiness.com>

<http://www.yourcollegelife.com/Articles/4.php>

Books

**The Professional Chef (Author: The Culinary Institute of
America)**

**Professional Chef's Knife Kit (Author: The Culinary
Institute of America)**

**The professional Pastry Chef: The Fundamentals of baking
and Pastry (Author: Bo Friberg, with Amy Kemp Friberg)**

**Soul of a chef: The Journey toward Perfection (Author:
Michael Ruhlman)**

**Culinary Artistry (Author: Andrew Dornenburg & Karen
Page)**

**Garde Manger: The arts and craft of the Cold Kitchen
(Author: The Culinary Institute of America)**

**On Becoming a Professional Chef (Author: Michael
Baskette)**

Culinary Schools

Atlantic Culinary Academy, New Hampshire

California Culinary Academy

Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Academy, Nationwide
Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago, Illinois
Pennsylvania Culinary Institute
Sullivan University, Louisville
Western Culinary Institute, Oregon
Texas Culinary Academy
Kendall College
Orlando Culinary Academy, Florida

Please note: The schools mentioned here are some of the best schools in the United States. They are by no means the only culinary schools nationwide, but they are the best. All of the information that you will require from these institutes can be found online just by typing their names. By searching online you will learn the tuition costs, the level of degree that can be attained, and enrollment opportunities. One site you may search is <http://www.culinary-art.org> to help you get started. Bon Appetite!

Isaac's Enterprises, Ltd
8 Vermont Square
Edgewater Park NJ 08010
extramon@extra-money-making-ideas.com
609-835-4566

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