



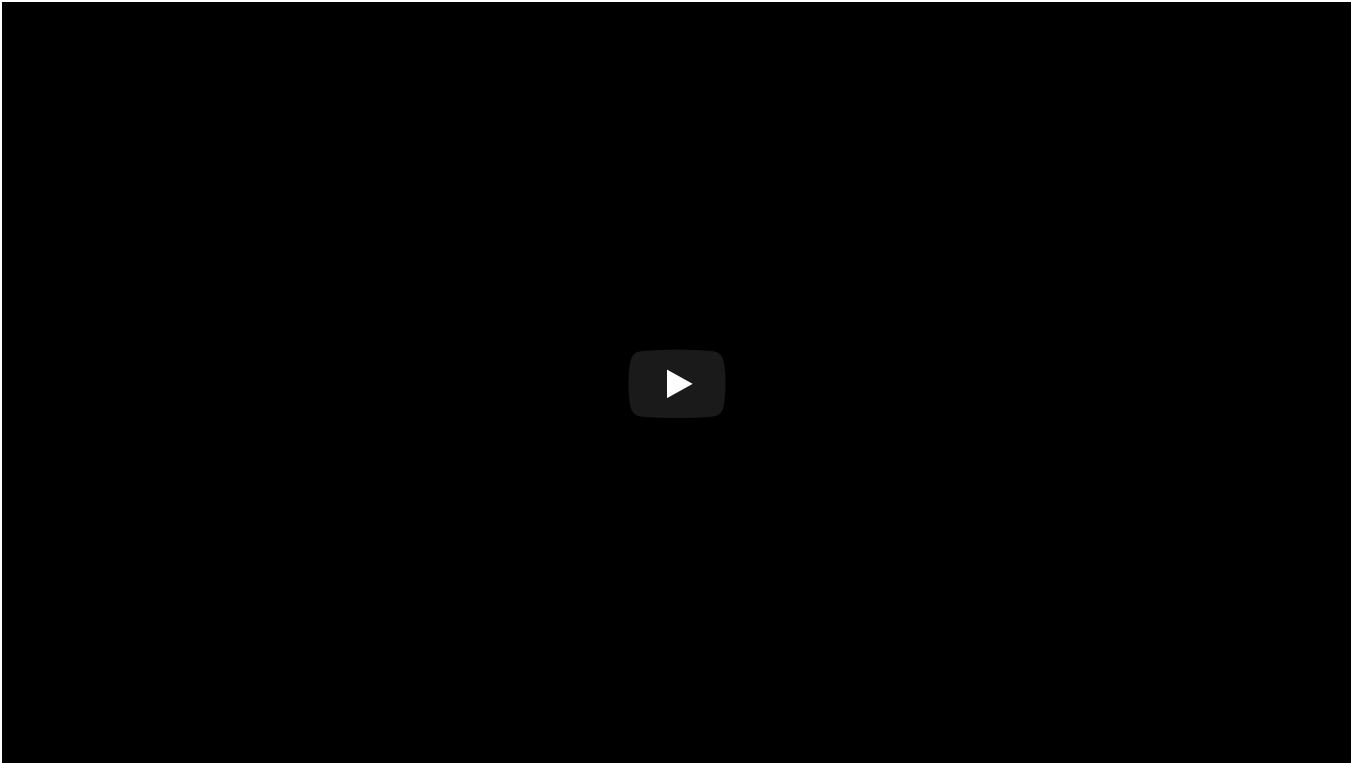
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FINDING A JOB

Top 12 Careers in Food

November 25, 2020



There are many roles available within the food industry, including entry-level positions that allow for career advancement to more veteran leadership roles. Many positions require skills such as creativity, communication and customer service. In this article, we explore some common career paths within the food and restaurant industry.

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Common careers in food

Some roles in the food industry require specialized education and training to learn the skills and techniques frequently used on the job. Here are 12 of the top careers in food, from preparation to management:

1. [Baker](#)

National average salary: [\\$12.14 per hour](#)

Primary duties: Bakers create and follow recipes to make both sweet and savory pastries, cakes, pies, breads and other baked goods. They apply math skills and attention to detail as they measure and mix ingredients and use time management skills when completing each step of a recipe to ensure items are high quality. They can work in a wide variety of food preparation settings, including boutique bakeries, restaurants, grocery stores, hotels, resorts, schools and universities. Some may perform customer service responsibilities, such as taking orders and complete transactions for customers.

Requirements: Many of these professionals pursue formal education and training in pastry arts and cooking science from trade or technical schools that offer these programs. Some earn an associate- or bachelors-level degree, while others complete hands-on training in the form of apprenticeships. Some bakers may even gain years of experience in a home kitchen or take classes on their own.

Companies with this position:

- [Nothing Bundt Cakes](#)
- [Our Daily Bread](#)
- [Marriott International, Inc.](#)

2. [Prep cook](#)

National average salary: [\\$12.23 per hour](#)

Primary duties: These kitchen professionals perform the preparation tasks that help higher-level chefs and cooks quickly complete meals. They wash and chop produce, cut and prepare meat and organize other ingredients. Prep cooks can work in many kitchen settings, including in high-end or family restaurants, chain restaurants and diners.

Requirements: Prep cooks aren't often required to have formal training or education as many of these positions are entry-level positions that provide on-the-job training.

Companies with this position:

- [Outback Steakhouse](#)
- [Brixx Wood Fired Pizza](#)
- [Aspen Skiing Company](#)

3. [Cake decorator](#)

National average salary: [\\$12.51 per hour](#)

Primary duties: Cake decorators are bakery professionals who specialize in designing, shaping, coloring and styling cakes and other pastries. Though some may specialize in a certain type of cake for specific occasions—like weddings and holidays—cake decorators apply icing, flowers, screen-printed images and other decorative elements to personalize customer orders. These professionals typically work in bakeries, especially in boutique or grocery stores, while some may even work from home.

Requirements: Some cake decorators pursue formal training and education through culinary school with a specialization in baking or pastry arts, often in the form of an associate- or bachelors-level degree. Others may gain training as apprentices or through experience as a home baker. Cake decorators need a keen artistic eye for detail, color and symmetry besides time management skills for completing projects on time and with high-quality standards.

Companies with this position:

- [Graul's Market](#)
- [Great American Cookies](#)
- [Shaw's](#)

4. [Line cook](#)

National average salary: [\\$13.38 per hour](#)

Primary duties: Line cooks assist sous chefs, chefs and cooks in prepping ingredients and ensuring all dishes are consistently high quality. They may produce base elements of a recipe in large quantities for chefs to use in individual orders and help plate recipes to the restaurant's standards and customer specifications. Line cooks use a variety of basic techniques and time management, active listening and organization skills to assist chefs and other kitchen personnel create dishes. They can work in many restaurant settings, including fine dining establishments and chain restaurants.

Requirements: Many line cooks pursue formal culinary training and education in the form of two- or four-year degrees from a technical school. Those with informal training may secure employment with a high school diploma or GED.

Companies with this position:

- [Flix Brewhouse](#)
- [Longhorn Steakhouse](#)
- [Olive Garden](#)

5. [Butcher](#)

National average salary: [\\$14.10 per hour](#)

Primary duties: Butchers specialize in cutting meat, fish and poultry to provide customers prime cuts, make sausage and cure meats. They may also assist in inspecting deliveries, prepping and storing products, filling custom orders and providing customers with recommendations. These food professionals often work in local butcher shops, delis, grocery stores or boutique stores like a salumeria, a meat shop that specializes in cured meats and sausages.

Requirements: Butchers are not often required to have a formal education, as many can secure employment with a high school diploma or GED. Many of these professionals complete an apprenticeship at a butcher shop or take entry-level positions that offer on-the-job training.

Companies with this position:

- [Hershey's Entertainment & Resorts Company](#)
- [Brennan's of Houston](#)
- [Wolfgang Puck](#)

6. [Pastry cook](#)

National average salary: [\\$14.41 per hour](#)

Primary duties: A pastry cook, also known as a pastry chef, is a food professional who specializes in creating both sweet and savory pastries, breads, cakes, pies and other baked goods. They are often employed in hotels and resorts, boutique bakeries, bakery departments of grocers and restaurants or cafes.

Requirements: These food professionals typically pursue an associate- or bachelors-level degree in culinary arts, often with a specialty in pastry arts. Some may gain experience in apprenticeships, as home bakers or after completing baking classes on their own that allow them to develop their basic skills and secure entry-level employment.

Companies with this position:

- [Lettuce Entertain You](#)
- [The Plaza Club](#)
- [Tavern on the Green](#)

7. [Banquet cook](#)

National average salary: [\\$14.43 per hour](#)

Primary duties: These professionals help serve and creating large orders for food for special occasions, such as weddings, parties, receptions and other events. Banquet cooks also set up food displays and help with cleaning up after events. They typically work in banquet and reception halls, at hotels and resorts and with companies that offer catering services on location.

Requirements: Depending on the needs of the employer, some candidates may secure employment without specialized education. Many employers do prefer candidates to have an associate-level degree in culinary arts.

Companies with this position:

- [Sheraton](#)
- [Southern Foodservice Management](#)
- [Hilton](#)

8. [Sushi chef](#)

National average salary: [\\$14.69 per hour](#)

Primary duties: A sushi chef specializes in creating both traditional and unique sushi dishes, like maki, handrolls, nigiri and sashimi. These professionals are masters of combining ingredients such as raw and cooked fish, meat, vinegar rice and nori and the inspection and cutting techniques used to create high-quality dishes. They use attention to detail and customer service while working in sushi restaurants.

Requirements: Some culinary training programs offer coursework in sushi techniques, though many are required to complete hands-on apprenticeships that may last a few years. Many employers may require this initial training besides years of experience, especially at fine dining establishments.

Companies with this position:

- [Origami Sushi](#)
- [Rock N Roll Sushi](#)
- [Miyami Japanese Steakhouse](#)

9. [Sous chef](#)

National average salary: [\\$48,327 per year](#)

Primary duties: These food professionals are often known as the “second chef” because they assist the head chef in overseeing other kitchen staff as they prep, cook and plate a variety of dishes. Sous chefs may also contribute to preparation and cooking duties and special meal selection and menu planning. They use their leadership skills to ensure kitchen staff abide by food safety laws, attention to detail to check that all meals pass the restaurant’s quality standards and creative thinking skills to create unique dishes and solve issues in the kitchen as they arise.

Requirements: These professionals are frequently required to have a formal education in culinary arts and years of experience working in the kitchen. Sous chefs typically begin their culinary careers as line cooks and work their way up by completing additional training, specializing in a type of cuisine and taking on leadership positions as they advance.

Companies with this position:

- [Wildfin American Grill](#)
- [Sodexo](#)
- [Catawba Island Club](#)

10. [Sommelier](#)

National average salary: [\\$48,458 per year](#)

Primary duties: Also known as a “wine steward,” a sommelier provides personalized wine recommendations to dining guests based on their preferences, the food they’re eating and other relevant factors. These professionals specialize in understanding how different wines are made and aged, which types and ages are best for certain cuisines and which flavor profiles pair with certain foods, spices and textures. They’ll also collaborate with restaurant owners and managers to create a wine list. They use their customer service skills to communicate with guests and provide the exact wine they should have based on the many factors that influence their decision.

Requirements: Many employers prefer sommeliers to have formal training through the Wine & Spirit Education Trust, International Sommelier Guild or the Court of Master Sommeliers. To complete these programs, candidates often have to have a working knowledge of wine and pairings though more advanced training occurs while studying. Many of these programs end in a series of examinations and sometimes a certificate is awarded. Candidates may consider beginning their career path as a server, bartender or another front-of-house restaurant job to become acquainted with the customer service elements of the job.

Companies with this position:

- [Bouchon Bistro](#)
- [The Clocktower](#)
- [Quince Restaurant](#)

11. [Restaurant manager](#)

National average salary: [\\$49,301 per year](#)

Primary duties: These professionals manage all employees at a restaurant, including kitchen personnel and waitstaff. They frequently collaborate with the restaurant's owner, head chef, sous chef and other specialty cooking professionals to plan menus, select daily specials and develop a wine and spirits list for patrons. Restaurant managers are also responsible for ensuring all restaurant staff abide by food safety rules, that meals are prepared at the highest quality and that patrons are satisfied with their dining experience. They typically work in chain restaurants, fine dining establishments and hotels.

Requirements: Some paths for this role include higher education, often in the form of an Associate or Bachelor's Degree in Business Management, Hospitality or another related discipline and years of experience advancing in the restaurant industry. Another path includes beginning in an entry-level position, advancing through various roles and gaining enough experience to earn the restaurant manager role. Other paths include a mixture of advancing experience and specialized restaurant manager training programs.

Companies with this position:

- [Miller's Ale House](#)
- [Rage Inc](#)
- [The Capital Grille](#)

12. [Executive chef](#)

National average salary: [\\$64,889 per year](#)

Primary duties: Also known as a "chef manager" or "head chef," this professional is the leader in the kitchen who ensures all meals are made of the highest quality. Executive chefs use problem-solving skills to address any issues in the kitchen besides time management and organization to keep the kitchen and staff safe and efficient while preparing meals. These professionals can work in a wide variety of settings, including diners, fine dining restaurants, hotels, resorts and private residences.

Requirements: Executive chefs are often required to have formal education and training in the culinary arts. Many employers prefer them to be specialized in a type of cuisine, have a diverse portfolio of recipes and ideas besides years of relevant experience, especially in leadership roles in the kitchen.

Companies with this position:

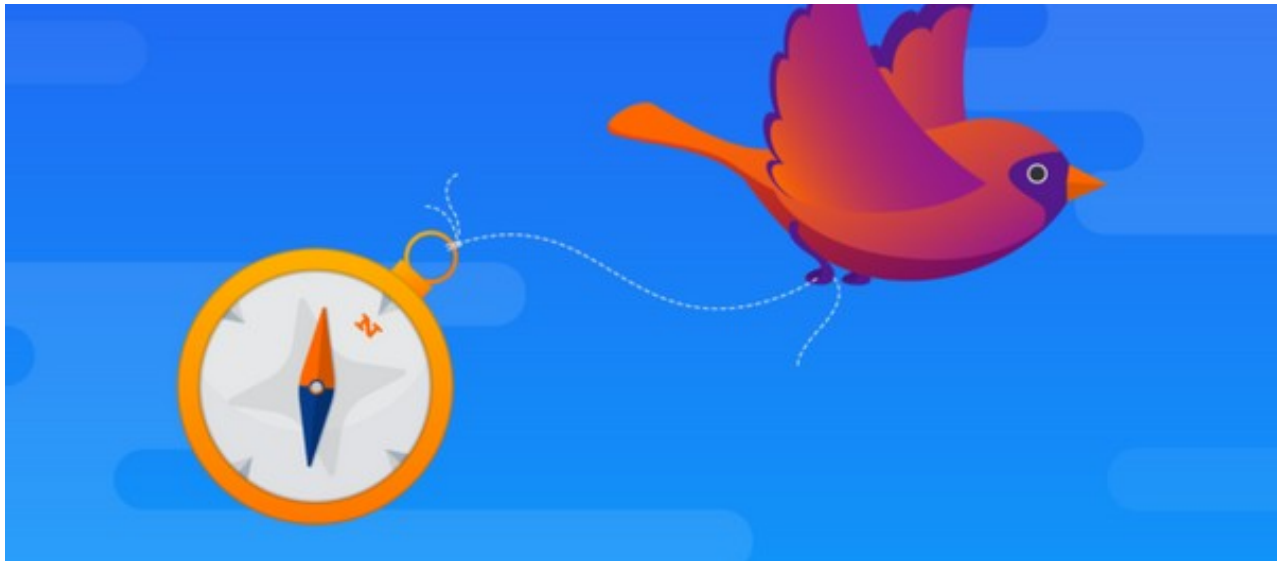
- [Glacier BrewHouse](#)
- [Eddie V's](#)
- [The Lookout Mountain Club](#)

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