

Career of the Week



Chef

Chefs prepare, cook and present food in hotels, bars and restaurants.

Average starting salary: £15,000 per year

You could earn up to £30,000 per year when fully trained and experienced

You are likely to work 40-45 hours a week

You could work evenings, weekends and Bank holidays on shifts

You can get into this job through:

College

One way to become a chef is to take a college course, such as:

- Level 3 Diploma in Professional Cookery
- T Level in Catering
- Level 4 Diploma in Professional Culinary Arts

Entry requirements

You'll usually need:

4 or 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), or equivalent, for a level 3 course

- 4 or 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), or equivalent, including English and maths for a T Level

Level 1 and 2 courses are available at local colleges that will prepare you for these higher level courses.

For a Level 2 course, you would need 2 or 3 GCSEs at grades 2 and above.

Apprenticeship

You could also do an apprenticeship to become a chef, including:

- production chef intermediate apprenticeship
- commis chef intermediate apprenticeship
- senior production chef advanced apprenticeship
- chef de partie advanced apprenticeship

You can also train to be a chef through an apprenticeship in [the armed forces](#).

Entry requirements

You'll usually need:

- some GCSEs, usually including English and maths, or equivalent, for an intermediate apprenticeship
- 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), or equivalent, including English and maths, for an advanced apprenticeship

Work

You could start as a kitchen assistant or trainee chef, known as commis chef. You could then work your way up while learning on the job.

Restaurants and catering companies often advertise for kitchen assistants and commis chefs.

Volunteering

If you have no experience, you could volunteer in a community kitchen before applying for a job.

More Information

Career tips

You'll need a food safety certificate for this job. Training courses last 1 to 2 days and are widely available through local authorities, colleges and private training providers.

Further information

You can [find out more about how to become a chef](#) from Caterer.com.

Skills and knowledge

You'll need:

- to be thorough and pay attention to detail
- knowledge of food production methods
- the ability to accept criticism and work well under pressure
- leadership skills
- the ability to work well with others
- knowledge of manufacturing production and processes
- maths knowledge
- the ability to work well with your hands
- to be able to use a computer and the main software packages competently

Day-to-day tasks

Depending on the type of chef you are, you could:

- prepare attractive menus to nutritional standards
- control and order stock and inspect it on delivery
- prepare food for cooking
- cook and present food creatively
- work under pressure so food is served on time
- keep to hygiene, health and safety and licensing rules

Working environment

You could work at a restaurant, in an NHS or private hospital, at a school, at a college or on a cruise ship.

Your working environment may be hot, physically demanding and humid.

You may need to wear a uniform.

Career path and progression

With experience, you could progress through the different levels of chef:

- **station chef:** looking after a particular area, such as desserts
- **sous chef:** running an entire kitchen when the head chef is busy
- **head chef or chef de cuisine:** running a kitchen, creating menus and managing the budget
- **executive chef:** only at very large companies, managing multiple kitchens, doing little cooking

You could also:

- become a specialist chef, such as a pastry chef
- move into the business side of running a restaurant

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/job-profiles/chef>

