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## Praise for Culinary Arts Career Starter

"*Culinary Arts Career Starter* is an excellent resource for any person researching a career as a culinarian. It is armed with useful, practical information which will help the prospective culinarian make his/her choice. The text is first-rate and I highly recommend this as a primer for anybody wishing to know how to get started on a culinary career. On behalf of the American Culinary Federation, I offer this text our wholehearted support."

*Noel C. Cullen, Ed.D., CMC, AAC, National ACF President, American Culinary Federation*

"Author Mary Masi has created a thorough resource on the culinary arts field that is sure to help anyone who is thinking of entering the food service profession. Extensive appendices are an invaluable addition to an already strong and well-written guide."

*L. Timothy Ryan, CMC, Executive Vice President, The Culinary Institute of America*

# Culinary Arts Career Starter

by Mary Masi



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## About the Author

Mary Masi, M. A., is the founder of InfoSurge, a company specializing in writing, research, and editorial consulting. Previously, she worked in the editorial division of John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and before that, as a college English instructor.

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Permission to reprint the list of salaries for food service professionals was granted by the National Restaurant Association.

Permission to reprint the list of apprenticeship programs and formal job titles of culinary arts professionals was granted by the American Culinary Federation.

## Introduction

### Why Enter the Culinary Arts Field?

Do you want to have the opportunity to work with food, earn a good living, and meet lots of interesting people? If so, a career in the culinary arts may be just what you are looking for. Whether you are choosing your first career, or are simply considering a career change, this book is for you. It contains all the information you need to break into this exciting and growing field.

The possibilities seem endless when you start looking for career opportunities in the culinary arts field. You might choose to work for a four-star restaurant, become a personal chef, or start your own catering company. This rewarding field is expected to grow steadily through the

year 2006, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Many job openings for cooks and chefs will occur due to people transferring into other occupations or retiring. However, the growth of the industry and the changing demographic makeup of America will create a lot of new jobs as well. Here are several reasons for the growth of jobs in the culinary arts field:

- increase in the population of people over 55, who tend to eat out more
- increase in the number of people in the 16-24 age group, who typically work in the food service industry in large numbers
- increase in average household income, enabling people to eat out more
- a shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based one
- more double-income households

All of these changes point to solid growth in the foodservice industry. Indeed, the career opportunities available in the culinary arts field today are many and varied. This book will show you what those opportunities are and how you can take advantage of them.

In chapter one, you'll get an inside look at the best jobs in culinary arts today from sauté cook to pastry chef to executive chef and more. You'll find practical information such as job descriptions, typical income levels, trends in educational background, fast-growing geographic locations, types of employers, and personality traits and abilities needed for the hottest jobs in the culinary arts. Chefs from across the country give you the inside scoop on how to break into and succeed in this exciting field. Take the quiz included in this chapter to help you decide if a culinary arts career is right for you.

In chapter two, you'll find examples of courses that are taught in actual culinary arts training programs from different colleges, institutes, and universities across the country. These program descriptions will give you an idea of the different types of training programs available and how much time you would have to devote to each one. Tips on how to evaluate the various programs are included.

Chapter three contains a directory of culinary arts training programs, which is a representative listing of schools across the country, alphabetically by state. So if you're considering moving to a new city, you can check out that city's culinary schools too. All training programs include school name, address, phone number and, where available, the fax number and Internet address, so you can contact each school directly to get more information and application forms.



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After selecting a training program, read chapter four to find out how to pay for it. This chapter clearly explains the financial aid process step by step, so you can be prepared and get your financial aid as soon as possible. You'll find a list of scholarships that are specifically aimed at culinary arts students as well as financial aid checklists and handy reference tables.

Chapter five shows you how to land a great culinary arts job. You'll find out how to use the Internet and public library in your job search and how to locate different types of job openings. You'll find tips on writing a great resume and cover letter, as well as how to ace your job interviews. A sample cover letter and a few resumes are included for your reference.

Once you've completed your training program and landed a great job, chapter six shows you how to excel in your new profession. You'll find out how to achieve professional success and what specific advancement opportunities are available within the culinary arts field. You'll also find out what other career options and areas of specialization are available to you as you progress further in your culinary career. So read on to find out how you can enter and succeed in this exciting, demanding, and fulfilling career.

### Job Growth Projection

A 46 percent increase in jobs for Restaurant Chefs is projected from 1992 to 2005. Will you be among the 46 percent?

Projection from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Chapter 1

# The Hottest Culinary Arts Jobs

This chapter shows you what the hottest job opportunities are in culinary arts field, from line cooks to pastry chefs and more. You'll find out the typical responsibilities and average salaries for each job, and you'll see which personal traits and abilities will help you succeed. There's an overview of different types of employers, and finally, a quiz to help you decide if a career in culinary arts is right for you.

So you're interested in working with food! A wealth of opportunities is available in the growing field of culinary arts. Many high school graduates, career-changers, and others are drawn into this multi-billion dollar industry every year. Indeed, the food service industry is the number one retail employer in the United States; it employs more than nine million people. Chefs, cooks, and other kitchen workers make up a large percentage of the food service industry, and the chances for landing a great job in this exciting field are excellent. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that by the year 2005, the demand for trained chefs will exceed the supply. What does that mean? It means that trained

culinary arts professionals will be able to command higher salaries, more benefits, and extra perks from their employers. This field has experienced overwhelming growth in the past decade; the number of job openings for skilled bread and pastry bakers and restaurant chefs and cooks has grown dramatically:

Job Title	Percentage of Growth from 1983 to 1996.
Bread and pastry bakers	92%
Restaurant chefs and cooks	78%

Since continued job growth is expected, now is the time to get the necessary training, break into the field, and advance in your culinary career.

### Why Enter the Culinary Arts Field?

For many people, the decision to enter the culinary arts field stems directly from their love of food. Whether that love of food was created from a happy childhood filled with hours in a warm kitchen surrounded by different delicious smells, from a voracious appetite, or from a love of reading cookbooks, it's a passion that pulls many people into the field. Of course, other people have very practical reasons for entering the field. They want a job with a good future and good prospects for advancement. Perhaps they can't stand working from 9 to 5 in an office. Well, cooking or baking in a professional kitchen definitely offers an unusual work environment.

Read on to find out more about the benefits of having a career in the culinary arts. While not all jobs offer the same working conditions, here are several common reasons that people enter this exciting field.

#### *Love of Working with Food*

People who truly enjoy working with food are drawn to the culinary arts every day. Whether you are a high school student, a community college graduate, or a careerchanger with years of experience in another field, the culinary arts offers you an exciting chance to work with food. If you like to experiment by cooking new dishes, finding new ingredients, and seeking out different spices, you may be a candidate for a culinary career. Many chefs say that their love of food as children was their draw into the field. Perhaps your grandmother let you help bake fresh bread, or you watched with fascination as your father cut and chopped a myriad

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of ingredients before dumping them all into a pot of bubbling soup. The food memories and experiences of successful chefs are many and varied, but a common thread found in many chefs' backgrounds is their respect and appreciation for food.

### *Exciting Work Locations and Travel Opportunities*

If you enjoy learning about new cultures and traveling extensively, a career in the culinary arts can help you do both. People everywhere need to eat, so just think about the wealth of opportunities in other countries to meet new people and experience new cultures. Many chefs recommend that you travel to another country to experience its food firsthand. Working for a year in Europe, Mexico, or the Middle East can help you to understand and learn about another culture's foods and customs. You can also find exciting work locations right here in America. Perhaps you want to ski in Aspen, Colorado. Well, there are several restaurants located there to serve the tourists and skiers who visit each year. You can apply to work in any number of kitchens and spend your free time on the slopes. Or if you love the beach, you can apply for a job at your favorite beach resort. The simple abundance of eating establishments throughout the country, and the world, offer a wealth of opportunities to an enterprising and adventurous person.

### *Chance to Work in a Glamorous Industry*

The field of culinary arts has come a long way. It is no longer considered a trade, but a profession. In the past several years, the role of the chef has been greatly elevated. In fact, many chefs are now becoming celebrities in their own right. Chefs appear on television cooking shows and generate quite a devoted following of fans and supporters. In fact, an entire television network is now devoted to cooking and showcases the work of a great number of chefs every week. Check your local television listings for more information about the Television Food Network.

Many chefs own or work in high-quality upscale restaurants and are written about at great length in prestigious newspapers and magazines. Other chefs enjoy fame by working for Hollywood celebrities and writing cookbooks describing the recipes they create for their particular star. Many chefs command a six-figure income based on their fame, sterling reputation, or power to draw customers into a particular restaurant. Of course, the glamorous jobs are few and far between, but somebody has to get them and it might as well be you.

## *Desire to Open a Restaurant*

Many students entering culinary arts schools today say their dream is to open their own restaurant. They hope to enjoy a certain level of autonomy and to be able to express their creativity and culinary skill in a restaurant of their own making. While the road to becoming a chef/restaurateur is long and arduous, the ones who make it enjoy a special status in the culinary world. See chapter six for more information about opening a restaurant.

Now that you've seen many of the benefits of working in the culinary arts, you need to perform a self-evaluation to see if you have the traits and abilities necessary to succeed in this demanding but satisfying career.

Do you have what it takes?

Perhaps you are interested in getting into the culinary arts field, but you aren't sure what personality traits or personal abilities are needed. Well, wonder no more! You need the ability to work as part of team, discipline, personal cleanliness, organization skills, and a keen sense of taste and smell. Chef Timothy Rodgers, a Team Leader for Curriculum and Instruction in Meat and Garde Manger at the Culinary Institute of America, says, "To succeed and make it to the top in this industry, you need to have several abilities in addition to culinary skills: dexterity, passion, perseverance, patience, and adaptability." Read on to find out what else it takes to make it in the culinary field today.

### *Physical Stamina*

Physical stamina and endurance are the key to success in a professional kitchen. Mary Cannataro, a chef in Chicago, Illinois, tells prospective culinarians, "Working in this field is tougher than most people think it is. It requires a lot of hard work and a great deal of physical stamina." Standing on your feet for long periods of time and lifting heavy pots, bags of supplies, and other heavy kitchen equipment can take its toll. While you may not have considered this point before, the importance of physical stamina cannot be overlooked in your personal assessment. Perhaps you'll need to begin an exercise regime in your spare time to increase your level of physical endurance. Indeed, Chef Cannataro emphasizes:

When I was working from eight to 12 hours a day, I started making time to go to the health club to get into better physical shape to

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handle the long days. It takes a lot out of you, so no matter how busy you are, you still have to take some time out for yourself.

You should be able to withstand the pressure and strain of working in close quarters at a very fast pace, standing for many hours at a time, lifting heavy kettles, and using hot ovens and grills. While injuries are seldom serious, some of the hazards of a culinary career include slips and falls, cuts, blisters, and burns.

### *Humility*

While you may not consider many chefs to be humble, they probably had to start out that way. Since you'll probably be performing all sorts of mundane tasks at the beginning of your culinary career, it's best not to take a haughty attitude or say that any chore is beneath you. The ego of the chef in charge will take up the whole kitchen, so there won't be any room left for yours!

### *Good Communication Skills*

Strong communication skills are needed to succeed in the culinary field because you will be working as part of a team in the kitchen. Additionally, an ability to communicate with your supervisors and peers will set you apart from the crowd and help you move ahead in your career. And if you decide to branch out and become a restaurateur, educator, or public speaker on a cooking show, you'll need well-honed communication skills.

### *Basic Math Skills*

You may be surprised to find out how big a role mathematics plays in a culinary career. Jennifer McAllister, a student in the Pastry and Baking program at Peter Kump's New York Cooking School, offers this advice to prospective professional bakers:

Develop your math skills—they are an important part of baking. You need to know how to convert recipes. For example, can you take a recipe for 20 scones and turn it into a recipe for seven dozen? Or take a recipe that calls for a round pan and convert it to fit a sheet pan? These are things you'll need to know. Practice using your math skills until they become second nature.

While math is especially important in the pastry and baking areas of specialization, basic math skills are used by all culinary professionals, including cooks and chefs. For example, you may need to halve a recipe to make a smaller portion of a particular dish or you may need to expand the recipe to serve 60 people instead of ten. Or, perhaps you'll need to convert a recipe from another country that is written in the metric system of measurement.

### *Attention to Detail*

Taking care of details becomes very important during service, which is the busy rush time in restaurants. Will you be able to sauté five different entrees, create a special garnish, and remember to add the correct amount of salt to a dish all at the same time? Juggling several detail-oriented tasks at once is a skill that successful chefs have learned.

### *Management Skills*

If you want to become a sous chef, chef, executive chef, or restaurateur, you'll need to work on your management skills. You'll want to know how to motivate and inspire the cooks on the hot line, the assistants in the pastry shop, and the servers on the floor. Luckily, there are many ways to obtain these skills. One of the most common is to take courses in restaurant management or business management from a local college or university. Another option is to take continuing education or correspondence courses sponsored by a culinary professional association.

### *Culinary Arts Quiz*

You must be interested in the culinary arts field or you wouldn't be reading this book but are you sure that you'd be suited for it? Here's a quick quiz to help you decide. Jot down your answers to the following questions and then take a look at the paragraph following the test.

- \_\_\_ 1. Do you pay close attention to details?
- \_\_\_ 2. Do you hate shopping for groceries?
- \_\_\_ 3. Do you appreciate having variety in your work day?
- \_\_\_ 4. Do you prefer working alone to working with other people?
- \_\_\_ 5. Are you good at basic math?
- \_\_\_ 6. Do you have trouble working quickly in demanding atmospheres?
- \_\_\_ 7. Do you have strong physical stamina?

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- \_\_\_ 8. Do you want a routine that is the same every day?
  - \_\_\_ 9. Do you have good communication skills?
  - \_\_\_ 10. Do you value a high level of privacy and quiet time when you are at work?
  - \_\_\_ 11. Do you enjoy cooking meals for family or friends?
  - \_\_\_ 12. Do you feel that weekends must be spent with your friends or family?
  - \_\_\_ 13. Do your friends ask you to cook for them?
  - \_\_\_ 14. Do you grow faint and listless when in an excessively hot environment?
  - \_\_\_ 15. Have you ever asked someone for a copy of the recipe for a particular dish you enjoyed?
  - \_\_\_ 16. Do you get extremely nervous when working under tight, stressful deadlines?
  - \_\_\_ 17. Do you often eat out in fancy restaurants?
  - \_\_\_ 18. Do you have a hard time motivating yourself to do things?
  - \_\_\_ 19. Do you watch one or more cooking shows per week on television?

If you answered *yes* to the majority of odd-numbered questions, and *no* to the majority of even-numbered questions, then you'll probably want to go full steam ahead towards a culinary arts career. However, if you answered *yes* to the majority of even-numbered questions, and *no* to the majority of odd-numbered questions, then you may want to consider a job in a field related to the culinary arts but not necessarily in the high-stress world of a professional kitchen. (See chapter six to find out what these jobs are.)

### Job Opportunities in the Culinary Arts field

So you passed the quiz and now want to learn more about what types of jobs are available in the culinary arts field. As you'll see, many people are needed to produce the delicious meal you find placed before you when dining in a restaurant, from the executive chef to the prep cook to the grill cook to the sous chef to the pantry worker and more the list of jobs goes on and on.

To differentiate workers in a restaurant, those who work in the kitchen are known as back-of-the-house staff. The people who serve customers, such as servers, bartenders, bussers, maitre d's, and hostesses, are called front-of-the-house staff.



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## Chef Positions

Landing one of the top back-of-the-house positions in an upscale restaurant often requires several years of experience in addition to formal culinary training. The highest position you can advance to in a culinary career is Master Chef.

### Master Chef

The title of Master Chef or Master Pastry Chef is reserved for chefs who have achieved an impressive place in their career based on significant education, professional experience, and skill. The American Culinary Federation imparts the title of Master Chef only after extremely rigorous conditions are met. Applicants must pass a very difficult written and practical exam that is administered by other chefs and must possess significant skills in cooking, baking, food presentation, garde manger, nutrition, charcuterie, and food service management.

### Executive Chef

Executive chefs hold a higher position in a kitchen than a chef or head chef. Executive chefs may even be responsible for a chain of restaurant kitchens in one region. To become an executive chef, you must have significant experience in the industry and a solid track record of success. The duties of an executive chef often include managing the kitchen staff, preparing work schedules, deciding which ingredients and supplies to order, computing costs, pricing and designing menus, creating dinner specials, hiring and firing staff, finding ways to increase productivity and decrease waste, and ensuring the quality of the food that the restaurant serves.

### Chef

Chefs are recognized as skilled artists and creative craftspeople. It normally takes many long hours and years of experience to become a chef. In establishments that do not have an executive chef, the head chef (sometimes called the *chefde cuisine*) is responsible for managing all aspects of the kitchen. Therefore, chefs often perform many of the duties that an executive chef would perform, even though their title is *chef*. They are often responsible for hiring, firing, and managing the kitchen workers, as well as managing all the kitchen's equipment and supplies. Chefs may create menus and daily specials, cook the most important dishes, and use the most expensive ingredients in the kitchen. Occasionally, chefs are also the owner or part-owner of the restaurant in which they work.

## Pastry Chef

Pastry chefs may specialize in breads, desserts, or other types of baked goods, and they often work in their own kitchen or in a separate part of the kitchen from the hot line and the garde manger or pantry station. Indeed, pastry chefs often have little interaction with other kitchen workers. Pastry chefs are responsible for baking breads and many of the desserts served at restaurants and other eating establishments. While the pace may not seem as hectic for a pastry chef as for a cook on the hot line, the duties are often intense and the hours long. A pastry chef often needs to rise very early in the morning to begin baking all the items that will be served at lunch. In addition to working in restaurants, pastry chefs work in retail bakeries, industrial baking plants, and institutions.

Pastry chefs have to know the math and chemistry needed for reducing, expanding, and experimenting with various recipes for baked goods. Pastry chefs in restaurants or small bakeries normally bake breads, rolls, pastries, pies, and cakes each day, doing most of the work by hand. They measure and mix ingredients, shape and bake the dough, and apply fillings and decorations. On the other hand, industrial bakers rely on sophisticated equipment to bake large quantities of breads and other baked goods. Some pastry chefs specialize in wedding cakes or desserts for banquets. The popularity of fresh baked breads and pastries should ensure continued rapid growth in the employment of bakers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Sous Chef

A sous chef is normally responsible for assisting the head chef or executive chef in running the kitchen. Therefore, sous chef is often considered an administrative as well as a cooking position. In French, *sous* means *under*, so the sous chef is just under the head chef. Sous (pronounced SU) chefs are normally in charge of managing the kitchen when the head chef is not present. Depending on the size and type of the restaurant, there may be more than one sous chef for example, a night sous chef and a day sous chef. In addition to cooking foods on the hot line, they often are responsible for a variety of other duties, such as training new hires, inspecting the work of the cooks, ordering supplies, and picking up slack during rush times if emergencies occur at any particular station. They are often responsible for overseeing and tasting certain foods before the foods are served to patrons. This job is often seen as the last step before becoming a full chef.

## Culinary Scoop



What is charcuterie? *Charcuterie* is cooking or working with pork and other meat items, such as sausages, hams, pâtés, and terrines.

### *Hot Line Positions*

In many professional kitchens, the kitchen staff are referred to as a *brigade*, a French term for a team of kitchen workers. You'll soon find out that many terms in the culinary world have been borrowed from the French language. While some of these terms may be unfamiliar, you'll get accustomed to them fairly quickly. Since every professional kitchen is different, the number of people making up the brigade in each kitchen will vary. A small kitchen may only employ a head chef and an assistant cook while a large kitchen may include 20 or more *chefs de partie*, or cooks who prepare hot foodentrees, soups, pasta, vegetables and so on. Cooking these foods is called working on the *hot line*, and the various people who work on the hot line are referred to as *line cooks*. For example, the sauté cook, the grill cook, and the pasta cook are also known as line cooks. Each line cook has a station, and each station is referred to by the cook's titleso a sauté cook works at the sauté station, the grill cook works at the grill station, and so on. Here are some of the most common positions on the hot line.

### Sauté Cook

The sauté cook is often the lead cook on the *hot line*. Guess what the sauté cook is responsible for? Why, sautéing food, of course. Sautae means to cook quickly in a small amount of oil over high heat. Sauté cooks must have experience in cooking a wide variety of meats, fish, and other foods, and if there isn't a separate sauce cook, they also make sauces to go with each entree. They often cook several different entrees at once, so their timing must be impeccable. The ability to prioritize tasks and maintain an organized flow of events around a hot stove for prolonged periods of time is necessary for sauté cooks. A sauté cook must be experienced enough not to overcook or undercook food and to prepare sauces for each type of meat, fish, poultry, or other food that they sauté. In most kitchens, the sauté cook is the highest position a cook on the hot line can attain.

### Sauce Cook or Saucier

In very large upscale restaurants, you might find a position as a sauce cook, sometimes known as a saucier. These cooks are responsible for creating the sauces for all

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the dishes served on the menu. Nowadays, you won't find a sauce cook in many restaurants because in most cases, sauces are created by the head chef, the sous chef, or by one of the other hot line cooks.

### Grill Cook

As you might imagine, a grill cook is a cook who uses a grill for cooking a variety of foods. Grill cooks may also employ the use of a broiler and an oven either separately or in conjunction with the grill. The job of a grill cook is similar to that of a sauté cook in that the ability to know when foods are cooked to perfection, not overcooked or undercooked, is paramount. In many cases, grill cooks prepare vegetables and other side dishes along with meat and fish entrees. As Americans move more towards healthy eating, the position of the grill cook increases in importance. In fact, some restaurants now feature the grill cook by placing him or her in full view of the public, either behind glass or a short wall. Many people enjoy the sights and sounds of a grill cook's work.

### Fry Cook

Restaurants that serve ample amounts of fried foods usually employ a fry cook. Fry cooks are responsible for cooking all the fried foods in the restaurant, including appetizers such as fried onion rings and fried mozzarella sticks and main courses such as fried chicken or fried eggplant. In restaurants that do not offer a large variety of fried foods, the sauté or grill cook may take on the role of fry cook along with her or his other responsibilities.

### Fish Cook

In some restaurants, usually those found along a water's edge, a fish cook joins the hot line to prepare and cook a wide variety of fish dishes. Where the demand is large enough to warrant a separate cook for fish, the fish cook enjoys a special status and is usually very experienced in a wide variety of fish dishes. Whether or not fish cooks do the actual de-boning and cutting of the fish depends on whether or not there is a separate butcher. If there isn't a separate butcher, the fish cook may need to cut, scale, and dress fish by removing the head, scales, and other inedible portions and cutting the fish into steaks or boneless fillets. Many fish cooks have experience as sauté or grill cooks, since the workload often overlaps, depending on the size and type of eating establishment.

### Vegetable Cook

In restaurants or other establishments that are large enough to warrant it, vegetable cooks are added to the hot line to cook vegetables. Often, they work

alongside the sauté and grill cooks and must employ teamwork skills so their vegetables are ready at the same time as the meat or fish entree. They may also coordinate or prepare various side dishes that are not vegetables along with their other responsibilities.

### Pasta Cook

Cooks who serve up pasta from their own kitchen station have a demanding job. They may be responsible for creating fresh and innovative sauces and accompaniments in addition to pasta for entrees, appetizers, and side dishes. They need to know how long to prepare and cook each different type of pasta for many different dishes. Creating a wide variety of pasta from scratch is often a trademark of fine specialty and Italian restaurants.

### Swing Cook

A swing cook helps out at whichever station needs it during the course of the shift. This position has many different names: roundsman, relief cook, tournant, floater, or kitchen helper. In some restaurants there's more than one person who serves as a swing cook, during especially busy times.

### *Cold Kitchen Positions*

The people who work with cold food are just as important to the overall success of the kitchen as those who work on the hot line. Here's an overview of a few of the cold kitchen positions.

### Garde Manger

You may be wondering what *garde manger* means, although once you begin reading culinary arts literature, you'll come across the term often enough. Garde manger may mean slightly different things to different people, but it is a French term for *pantry* and its classic meaning is *cold foods*. You pronounce it GARD MAWN JAY. Nowadays, those who work in garde manger often create hot and cold appetizers, salads, sandwiches, desserts, and table decorations, such as ice sculptures. Additionally, a chef garde manger may be responsible for creating specialty salads, marinating foods, carving fruits and vegetables, and arranging food on the plate for presentation to the customer. In many kitchens, a chef garde manger is responsible for preparing foods for banquets and receptions. However, many restaurant kitchen staffs do not include a chef garde manger because their menu does not warrant it; a chef garde manger is more often found in hotels, banquet halls, or upscale, fine-dining restaurants. Here are a few traditional items that may be prepared by a chef garde manger, in addition to ice and tallow sculptures:

aspic: a jelly a meat or tomato or other juice molded with a meat or seafood and eaten as a relish

canapé: a small piece of bread, toast, or a cracker spread with spiced meat, fish, cheese, or other item

galatine: a mold of boned, seasoned, boiled with meat, such as chicken or veal, chilled and served in its own jelly

pâté de foie gras: paste made from the livers of fattened geese

## Pantry Cook

The pantry station is considered a subsection of garde manger because the pantry cook also works with cold foods. Depending on the hierarchy of a professional kitchen, a pantry cook may work under the supervision of a chef garde manger. Or, he may be the only person working the cold line and report directly to the head chef in the kitchen. Most pantry cooks spend their time preparing and plating cold foods, such as salads, salad dressings, appetizers, and desserts.

## Butcher or Meat Cutter

In many restaurants, meat cutting is considered a part of garde manger. Meat cutting is a growing area of specialization within the culinary arts field. Meat cutters cut, trim, and prepare a wide variety of meats for use by the various cooks or chefs in their restaurant. Additionally, they may cut meat into steaks and chops, shape and tie roasts, and grind beef for use as chopped meat. Boneless cuts are prepared using knives, slicers, or power cutters, while bandsaws are required to carve bone-in pieces. Meat cutters often work with beef, poultry, pork, veal, lamb, fish, and wild game. They must cut each piece of meat into the correct size for each portion served in the restaurant, trim off the excess fat, and handle the skin. They may also prepare sausage and cure meat.

Meat cutters need manual dexterity, good depth perception, color discrimination, and good hand-eye coordination. Additionally, they need to have the strength to lift and move heavy and cumbersome pieces of meat.

Highly skilled meat cutters can save a great deal of money for their establishment by cutting and trimming the meat in the most cost-effective manner and by using as much of each type of meat as possible, thereby reducing waste. Some experienced meat cutters may also be responsible for buying meat, controlling inventory, and keeping records. Meat cutters often must undergo specific training in food safety and sanitation, due to the possible health hazards of mishandling meat. Meat cutting is also called meat fabrication in several professional kitchens, and most chefs have experience in many different types of meat cutting.

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## *Entry-Level Jobs*

The following two entry-level jobs offer a way to break into the culinary arts field, gain experience, and move ahead to more exciting positions. Don't discount the value of any position; instead, see it as a stepping stone to the job of your dreams.

### Prep Cook or Kitchen Assistant

Prep cooks work under the direction of an experienced cook or chef, and they prepare food by cutting, measuring, cleaning, peeling, or grinding it. For example, they may spend an hour or two washing, peeling, and cutting up potatoes, then move on to measure out several different spices, and then spend several hours cleaning and cutting up vegetables for various dishes. They also may stir and strain soups and sauces. Each laborious task they take on saves the experienced cook time and effort, so this job is important to the success of the food establishment. If you've ever seen a cooking show on television, most likely a prep cook measured and chopped up all those nice little dishes of ingredients that the celebrity chef uses to make the recipe.

In many eating establishments, you can land a position as a prep cook or kitchen assistant without any previous experience. However, in highly selective upscale restaurants, you'll probably need some experience working or studying in a similar establishment or culinary school before you can break in. The type and size of the restaurant or institution makes a big difference in the qualifications needed to land a job. In a majority of restaurants, the job of prep cook is considered an entry-level position. Since many kitchen assistants do not have prior work experience, they normally start out earning minimum wage.

### Pastry Assistant or Baker's Assistant

If baking and working with breads, desserts, and pastries sounds appealing, starting out as a pastry or baker's assistant may be the job for you. As a pastry assistant, you'll learn to measure, mix, and bake ingredients properly under the supervision of a pastry chef or baker. You may assist the pastry chef by preparing dough, either by hand or by using a machine, measuring ingredients, and performing other tasks. Your specific duties will depend on the size and type of establishment in which you find work. For example, if you become a pastry assistant at a four-star restaurant, you may help create the specialty desserts and breads that are served, normally at lunch and dinner.

If you work in a retail bakery that is located in the heart of a commercial district, you'll probably spend much of your time helping to bake bagels, muffins,

croissants, and other breakfast items in the early morning hours. An important point to remember is that people who work in bakeries often have to start their workday in the wee hours. Someone has to be in the kitchen early, so the baked goods can be fresh and piping hot for the 6:00-9:00 morning rush hour.

### *Other Kitchen Positions*

Fast-food restaurants, casual eateries, diners, and restaurants that are open for breakfast often have kitchen workers who do not make up a brigade, but who perform specific tasks that are needed for each type of establishment.

#### Specialty Fast-Food Cook

Specialty fast-food cooks prepare a limited selection of menu items in fast-food restaurants. They cook and package batches of food, such as hamburgers and fried chicken, pizza, and tacos, which are prepared to order or kept warm until sold. They often operate large-volume single-purpose cooking equipment. Employment of specialty fast-food cooks is expected to increase in response to the growth of the 16-24 age group, and the continuing fast-paced lifestyle of many Americans, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

#### Short-Order Cook

Short-order cooks prepare foods in casual restaurants, diners, and coffee shops that emphasize fast service. They grill and garnish hamburgers, prepare sandwiches, fry eggs, and cook french fries, often working on several orders at the same time. Before the busy periods, short-order cooks slice meats and cheeses and prepare coleslaw or potato salad. During slow periods, they may clean the grill, food preparation surfaces, counters, and floors.

#### Breakfast Cook

Obviously not all establishments employ breakfast cooks since many are open only for lunch and dinner. However, the breakfast cook is an important person in many different types of restaurants and institutions. In addition to cooking common breakfast items such as eggs, bacon, and pancakes, many breakfast cooks create beautiful breakfast buffets and other specialty brunches. It is especially important for breakfast cooks to work quickly and efficiently since many people eating breakfast are in a hurry and do not intend to enjoy a leisurely meal especially if they are rushing off to an important business meeting. Breakfast cooks have a range of foods to prepare depending on the menu of their establishment, but they often



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