

CHAPTER

1

Culinary Careers in Restaurants

Introduction

NOT LONG AGO, EATING OUT WAS RESERVED for special occasions and celebrations. Times have changed. With more dual-income families, fast and convenient meals are a must. Restaurants are now an essential part of the American lifestyle, with many Americans spending 47 cents out of every food dollar to dine out. With an annual economic impact of more than \$1.3 trillion in 2007, the restaurant industry is huge, and it employs over 12 million people—more than any other private-sector industry.

The restaurant industry boasts over 900,000 restaurants in large cities, small towns, rural areas, and every place in between, and it presents consumers with more menu choices than ever before. About 45% of restaurants are limited-service eating places, such as fast-food restaurants and cafeterias, which primarily serve guests who select items and pay before eating. Full-service restaurants account for about 39%; these cater to patrons who order and are served while seated, then pay after eating.

National chains are a growing segment of full-service restaurants. These restaurants usually offer efficient table service, well-priced familiar menu items prepared by moderately skilled culinary employees, and a substantially nicer physical setting than limited-service establishments. By contrast, customers at upscale or cutting-edge dining places tend to seek a relaxed and elegant atmosphere in which to enjoy skillfully prepared food and leisurely but professional service. Cost-conscious and time-strapped guests increasingly eat at midscale or family restaurants rather than at elegant dining establishments.

You can categorize restaurants by level of service, such as limited service or full service. You can also use two culinary perspectives to roughly group restaurants. First, you can examine how much cooking is done from scratch and how much cooking utilizes convenience or premade products such as soup bases or frozen prepared foods. Second, you can look at who develops the menu and recipes. Are the menus and recipes mostly the product of corporate decisions, or is a chef solely responsible for menus and recipes?

Using the culinary perspective, most restaurants fall into one of these four categories:

1. **Cutting-edge restaurants:** Also called fine dining, these restaurants feature cooking from scratch almost exclusively, with the chef/owner developing the menus and recipes.
2. **Upscale casual restaurants:** These restaurants make most of their own menu items, and the chefs make most of their own menus and recipes.
3. **Value-driven, multi-unit restaurants:** The food in these restaurants is the result of corporate decision making and recipes, but it is still cooked mostly from scratch and of high quality. Examples include Houston's Restaurants and the Cheesecake Factory.
4. **Chain restaurants:** The restaurants in this category do little cooking from scratch, and most, if not all, of the menu is corporate-driven.

As you can imagine, chefs at cutting-edge, upscale casual, and value-driven restaurants encounter more culinary challenges and tasks on a daily basis. In chain restaurants, chefs are more often used in research and the development of new products, an exciting area discussed in the "Interview" section of this chapter and in chapter 10.

The Feel

OPENING SCENE

The scene is a dust-filled space with raw walls and exposed ceilings. In the middle of the room is a giant unrefined board covered by crisp white architectural plans. The precise tiny blue lines represent the master plan of doorways, kitchen equipment, seating arrangements, and workflow. A voice from across the table interrupts my thinking. "Everything look in order, Chef?" At first glance, these clean, crisp drawings would awe anyone with their professional appearance and military precision, but as I painfully understand each carefully planned line, I find the hidden mistakes most kitchens take to their graves. This is my first newly designed kitchen, and I plan to recognize those flaws from my years of working these disastrous kitchens. "No," I quickly answer, without hesitation. "I need to walk the space and plan each station as if we were cooking our first meal."

THE RESTAURANT SCENE

The opening of a restaurant is like the birth of a child. You have nurtured your dreams, shaped your experience, and perfected your cuisine. Your interest in the project includes the dining room décor, color scheme, carpeting patterns, seating arrangements, bar and lounge atmosphere, not to mention the style of china, silver, and glassware. The list of kitchen smallwares grows with every breath of creativity and menu design. The months before were filled with sleepless nights when you mentally prepared menus over and over again. The final cuts were meticulously executed in a peer's kitchen or your own home, with friends and family as taste testers. Many items are classic dishes you've cooked hundreds of times—with a new twist of excitement, of course. It seemed like a lifetime to get to this point—countless hours, immeasurable months, and vaporizing years—to finally hear the words of stature: "The Chef." I'm only 28, yet I've matured in a practice filled with mistakes and successes. I cooked day and night, weekends and holidays, and, usually, on my days off. If I wasn't cooking, I was talking about cooking. Now, today, I have an owner who believes in my spirit, my style, my ability—and, most important, my food. Every inch of the restaurant must be perfect, the concept exact, and the menu inviting and realistic. We need to please, surprise, and satisfy with every bite. We must create an experience and supply a value so when our clients leave we hear the musical words "We'll definitely be back."

A Day in the Life

8 A.M.: The phone is ringing, and I feel like I'm saying hello, but I'm dreaming. The phone continues to ring. In my half-conscious state, where the mind is willing but the body feels last night's exhausting covers, I grab the phone and say hello, wondering who dared to call this early. Static, and a voice saying, "Yo, Chef, I got the gold." I can't make out who it is or what is being said in my semi-awake state. "Who is this?" I ask. "It's Jimmy from J.J.'s, the winters are in, and you're the first to know." The sleeping chef in me comes to life, wide-eyed and fantasizing about my next creation with these morsels of black magic. "Get me a pound," I eagerly reply. I laugh as I hang up. "Truffles," I sigh, eyes open with anticipation of the day ahead. My husband lies next to me, unaffected by the episode. He is my Sous Chef, equally committed to the passion that drives us in our profession. I'll get up and let him sleep in.

The pitter-patter of little feet comes running across the house. "Mommy, Mommy, are you UP?" It's my five-year-old son, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, getting ready with the housekeeper to go to school. I make it a point to see him off on the bus every day or let him sleep in with us a few times a month. The life of a restaurant chef isn't conducive to the stereotypical American family schedule. You eat dinner many nights at 9:30 or 10 P.M.; you work nights and weekends, and

with luck you grab a slow Sunday off, depending on your restaurant business. You miss many family gatherings unless you can carefully plan with coverage for the Chef, which is difficult. Many restaurants close to give the Chef and crew time off for vacation. The lifestyle is addicting. Your routine, even with children, revolves around your work schedule and allows minimal compromise. So begins another power-filled day. The home is secured, the boy is off to school, and my mind races with newly imagined dishes.

MORNING PRODUCTION

I arrive at the restaurant at 9:15 A.M.; the buzz of the morning's production is well underway. The scent of veal stock fills my nose with the aftertones of lobster bisque. Just then another scent disturbs these priceless aromas. "What's burning?" I blurt out with fear that a hard-earned sauce or soup has been trashed. "Just a burnt pot of coffee," replies a waiter. In a split second, with a dark roast in my hand, I'm creeping through every inch of *mise en place*—or *meeze*, as it's known in the industry—for the lunch menu. I'm called downstairs for every order arriving, to weigh, touch, smell, taste, and return if needed. It's Thursday, and the weekend prep must begin. The setup for lunch is stocked and ready for service to begin. The *maître d'* stops to review the lunch specials, carefully taking notes and asking questions so he can instruct his well-trained staff.

AFTERNOON RECAP

Next, a quick recap of yesterday's sales, purchases, and expenses, together with another flavorful java. Price, cost, waste, utilization, and profitability are real words you must live by daily. Indulging in underutilization, excess, and extravagance doesn't work in our occupation. I love the best—but still we need to make money on every dollar earned. We are here for all the above and more. We are magicians in our field, taking simple goods and creating masterpieces. My train of thought is interrupted by the hum of lunch service. The typical business crowd demands value, quality, and atmosphere. In our 70-seat restaurant, we work diligently to please the masses by constructing cool sandwiches, innovative appetizers, assorted organic greens topped with goodies, entrées with sparkle, and desserts to die for. We want guests in the seats, not dust on the tables. The key is to understand what customers want to eat and then figure out how to entice them in a style that pleases you and suits the kitchen's philosophy. Don't ever make the mistake of thinking this is easy!

The turn from lunch to dinner is quick. There is a mellowing silence before the next meal period hits. The kitchen is madly prepping all the final details of a wonderfully planned day. We are anxious and excited, anticipating the rush of 150 reservations already on the books.

DINNER

Dinner is elegant and trendy yet comfortable, with style and class. The bar will rock with guests dining on a wide range of interesting appetizers that express

the culinary path of their creator. Experience is something a chef can always fall back on, an archive preparation from years past, a specialty from a previous job. Knowledge is the secret that keeps the adrenaline and enthusiasm flowing from day to day, year to year.

The staff prepares a casual and tasty family meal for themselves. All sit and enjoy the last supper before the wave of the evening's reservations. Headwaiter Andy walks around collecting a buck from staff members predicting the evening's covers. One hundred fifty now on the books, a 20-top with a set menu at the same time as the bulk of the reservations. You get used to everyone coming at once. It's important for the staff to keep cool, calm, and collected so the dinner chaos in the back goes unnoticed out front. I review the specials with the waitstaff and do a plate presentation and tasting. The front-of-the-house staff is my link to the customer. They must be educated on my style and philosophy as well as my passion for pleasing.

Just 20 minutes to showtime, you've been cooking and tasting all day. You scan a quick panorama of your kitchen: Production is cooled and put away; cook's mise en place filled, ready, and displaying their magnificent natural colors; the cooks are hanging, telling war stories of other busy nights; sauté pans are neatly stacked like a Doric column only an arm's length away from the stove; refrigerators are stocked with seasoned proteins awaiting the first click of the POS; preparations on the cold station are lined up perfectly like soldiers in battle formation waiting their first command. It's a feeling you must live, a feeling that mixes pride, perfection, obsession, and the need to delight your guests. We strive to be the best we can, and we try damn hard.

EVENING SERVICE

There is a flow through the evening's slam; we work meticulously to expedite each diner's request. Like a conductor in front of an orchestra, the chef controls the tempo, dictates the beat, and balances the rhythm. The line fills with dupes, table 6 appetizers for 7 people, table 8 pick up entrées for 4, table 15 VVIP special amuse, table 5 rush an extra mushroom flan, table 12 steak black and blue, Bar needs 2 appetizer samplers. When it's on, it's on, sending a cool rush of accomplishment through your entire body. The last of the dinner tickets is completed. The cooks' challenge all evening is to keep their station as organized and neat as possible. This shows their skill level and intellectual preparation. When the last ticket is out, we all high-five each other. "That was awesome," I comment. We all feel pretty high from the great success, but there is still dessert and cleanup. The hum of the dining room is still in full swing with last-minute requests, wine service, and chitchat. I make my way among the tables, greeting, smiling, and making small talk with those guests who are looking for my attention. You want to be available, approachable, sincere, but not annoying to your clientele.

It's 10:25 P.M. I wonder how my son is doing. He's at Grandma's tonight, I quickly remember. I make a mental note that on my day off we will take him to the zoo. What a great kid he is. My thinking is interrupted by the maître d'.

“Great job, Chef! All is well!” “Thanks! Why don’t you buy my staff a beer? They deserve it,” I reply. I personally walk around and thank everyone for a great evening. Dishwashers first, for they are my backbone; many of them grow into prep and cook positions. Tools are sharpened and put away, ordering finished and called in, cleanup started, prep sheets put in order for tomorrow’s production. The cooks are organizing, wrapping, labeling, dating, icing fish, and carefully putting away their preparations. All seems calm; I think it’s time to leave. It was a great day, but tomorrow is just around the corner. “Wait, Chef,” calls out Craig, my Sous Chef. “You won the pool with 142 exact. Twenty bucks is yours.” From halfway down the parking lot I yell back, “Keep it, Cheshu [his nickname]! You deserve it! See you tomorrow.”

The Reality

This segment is probably the most fun, at least for this author—a restaurant chef for about 20 years. The level of creativity and thought applied to your cooking is challenging at every turn and drives the energy of the entire staff. You set the rules regarding style, culture, and philosophy. Of course, you need to make money, so there are plenty of business concerns for which you are also responsible. Even so, the ever-present motivator is to create and serve great cutting-edge food to your guests. You are the artist, the mad chemist behind the dishes that fill your customers with pleasure and force all other matters to the back of your mind. The stove is your workshop. Life is good when it is full and the sting of the heat hits your face.

Naturally, the romance is governed by the fact that you are here to make money, and so is everyone else employed by the restaurant. You must constantly keep in mind that if your art does not sell, the people who are your support and co-conspirators will go hungry. In this lies the challenge of being cutting-edge and meeting a need for a share of the market that ultimately must be substantial enough to support your work. All too often, this little detail is overlooked until it is too late and the ship goes down. The people who come through the door do so for many reasons and have any number of expectations; you as a chef must understand this well enough to hit the mark and drive sales through your heartfelt efforts.

THE GRIND

You are in by 9 or 10 A.M., depending on the work and the way you organize the staff to perform your prescribed tasks and make ready for lunch service. You probably chat with the lunch sous chef and the cooks and begin to taste their work—all the sauces, marinades, dressings, and other preparations—to make sure they will represent you in a fashion you are happy with. The mise en place must be inspected, because the freshness and good condition of your groceries are paramount. Today you will work on the stove for six or seven hours, stopping

to review sales reports and the day's purchases, and then glide into the blood pressure-raising rush we call service. There's not much time to waste on rest or breaks. No matter; you probably won't even know when the sun sets. You are happy to be surrounded by the group you know as "the family" and still are not sure why anyone would call this work.

PHYSICAL ISSUES

Steam, hot oil, and particularly bubbling butter are very hot and will instantly create the pain with which you are all too familiar. Your knives are sharp; you wield them quickly, and even with the years of practice, sometimes a julienne goes astray and you slice a digit or two. Between the rush and the nerves, it is bound to happen over and over, especially in the early years. It is part and parcel of your job, and after a couple of hundred burns, they don't really hurt so much (or that part of your brain refuses to feel them anymore!). This is a really physical job. Your hands are in ice-cold meat for 30 minutes, then over the stove in the blazing heat; next, you yank the 40-pound stockpot off the stove and carry it to the sink, then bend too far over and strain your back. The body-wrenching positions never seem to end. This goes on day after day and year after year, until one day you realize you are not so young and invincible anymore, so you decide that maybe the young cook you are so diligently teaching should help you pick up that pot. Understanding the physical strains and urging your staff to pay attention to them are your responsibility. You probably should have gotten smart sooner, but when passion is the force behind what you do, it is easy to be blind.

THE BENEFITS FOR YOUR CAREER

The things you do stimulate all the senses in your body; your work brings pleasure to your customers and satisfaction to your staff. You are the person responsible for this business, this place where people come to nourish themselves and be part of your family for a shift. You set the tone for the staff, who work together as brothers and sisters, forgetting the occasional dispute and keeping in mind the sense of success they feel every night after service, when you, the chef, gather them all, have a cold one or a glass of wine, share some food, and thank them for their attention to the night's work. By the time you all say good night, it is late, and tomorrow will be here soon. The ability to do this type of work day in and day out is a testament to your capabilities and talents, which may take you elsewhere some day.

YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE THE JOB

As in any career, you must build a balance. You have a family outside the restaurant family, and it is important that your management skills be strong enough for you to build a ship that can float without you. It is tough in a restaurant because, to varying degrees, it is built around you, your thoughts, and your abilities. If you spend time creating and teaching the culture while grooming your staff and

sous chef, then you will be able to get away with minimal damage. It is ultimately necessary to focus on this aspect of your work, as the time away from the job is nearly as important as the time on it.

Professional Organizations

Please see Appendix A for more information on each of the following professional organizations for culinary and foodservice professionals working in restaurants.

American Culinary Federation

National Restaurant Association

National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

Women Chefs and Restaurateurs

Interviews

WALDY MALOUF, Chef/Co-owner, Beacon Restaurant

Q / Can you tell me a little bit about the history of Beacon?

A: We opened the first Beacon five years ago in Manhattan. I was the Director of Operations and Executive Chef at The Rainbow Room with the Baum Emil Group at the time when we decided not to renew our lease for various reasons. Mostly it was just too expensive. Joe Baum and the group came to me and I told them I wanted to open two restaurants, a casual one, and then later on, a more formal one.

The first restaurant, Beacon, would be casual and based on the sort of foods that I enjoyed and had experienced in my travels to places in the Mediterranean and South America. I had this concept of high-quality ingredients, simply prepared yet still sophisticated, and cooked with open-fire grills, wood-burning ovens, and rotisseries. At the time, the market seemed to warrant something more like that, as opposed to a more formal, expensive restaurant. The Baum Group agreed, and I became a partner with them. We opened Beacon to excellent reviews. We've enjoyed the good fortune of success. We just got over the five-year hump and I know it will continue to be successful.

Q / I know you're involved in more than Beacon. Tell us what else you do.

A: In addition to operating Beacon, I do a lot of other things. I'm in the process of opening a small pizzeria on Sixth Avenue. This is a prototype pizzeria using a wood-burning oven.

I've written two cookbooks, and I'm in the process of writing a third one. The first cookbook, Hudson River Cookbook, was based on my cuisine at the Hudson River Club, where I used products and produce from the Hudson Valley. High Heat is about grilling and roasting, the common cooking methods at Beacon Restaurant. It is geared toward the home cook more than the first book. The publishers have asked me to do another grill cookbook, in a dictionary format listed by ingredient. Lastly, I am also working on Slow Burn, which is about braising and slow cooking.

I have a consulting company called Waldy Malouf Hospitality Concepts. I work on independent consulting jobs for food companies, restaurants, hotel chains, resorts, airlines, grocery stores, and food production. I am consulting for a wine bar/restaurant in Chicago and for Northwest Airlines. I am involved in numerous organizations, Windows of Hope being one of my personal favorites. I'm involved with a number of schools and charities. I am an advocate of giving back and being part of the community. It's something that you do for more than just the networking or the publicity.

Q / What steered you into this business?

A: When I was 13, I wanted to buy a motorcycle, so I went to work in a pancake house as a dishwasher. I quickly changed positions when I found out I could make \$1.00 more an hour if I worked the pancake grills. I liked working the grill.

I have always been interested in food. I had a Sicilian grandmother and a Lebanese grandmother and grandfather. My mother is a New England farm girl. I grew up on a farm my family owned in Massachusetts. We later moved to Florida. We kept the farm, and visited every summer. I had a natural affinity with the farm, animals, and the food my family cooked there. I enjoyed cooking, but at the time it was not considered a serious profession.

When I was 15, I worked as a dishwasher at a large country club that opened near our home in Florida. The kitchen was run by a French chef and a German chef who had trained in France. They had recently come to the United States, and were looking for an apprentice. They offered me the apprenticeship. It paid more than washing dishes, so I took the job. They took me under their wings, and I enjoyed it. I would work the breakfast shift before school and then I would come back and work an early dinner service after school. I did this all through high school and never thought anything of it. It was a way of earning money. I continued to explore different positions within the kitchen. I enjoyed the camaraderie of the kitchen, the work, and the work ethic.

Although I did well in school, I was never the studious student type. When I was about 17, a new clubhouse at the country club opened up, and I was put in charge of about 30 people. It was only open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the weekend. It was in this position that I realized I was good with people. I had learned from other people how to supervise, work with people, and get people to do what you needed them to do.

Then I graduated high school, and went to college with the idea that I was going to follow in my father's footsteps. I went into pre-law but continued to

work in restaurants. I moved to Tallahassee to attend Florida State for my second year. I went to work for another country club that had a classical chef. One night we hosted a dinner for the Confrérie de la Chaîne des Rôtisseurs (a professional association). A representative of the Culinary Institute of America was there drumming up the students. He came into the kitchen and talked us into coming to visit the school. I visited the school out of curiosity. I loved the facility and program so much that I decided to enroll. My parents basically disowned me because I quit college and went into a career that at the time they did not believe was acceptable. I had a strong attraction to culinary arts. Thinking back now, I believe it was the discipline that attracted me.

Q / What did you do after graduation?

A: I graduated in 1975 and took a temporary job as a Banquet Chef at the St. Regis Hotel in New York City. Then I worked as the Assistant Saucier at the Four Seasons, and became the Saucier a couple of months later after the Saucier quit. That was one of the greatest jobs I ever had. The Four Seasons was a very professionally run restaurant and kitchen. Everything was prepared from scratch, and menus were changed four times a year and were ingredient-driven. The food and service were serious business. I worked with a high-level professional team of people. It was here that I realized that as much as the cooking was important, so was the front of the house, service, marketing, promotion, and advertising. The food is a major part of a restaurant, but it is still just a part of the restaurant. I also saw that anybody that was very successful, no matter what their position was in the restaurant, always acted like they were owners. They didn't treat it as if it were just a job. It was a lifestyle.

After working at the Four Seasons, I was offered a position to open a restaurant in Key West, Florida, as the Executive Chef of a big restaurant at the Pier House Hotel. I put together a kitchen, the menus, and got involved in the design, construction, and marketing. From Florida, I went back to New York to work as the Executive Sous Chef at the newly opened King Cole Room at the St. Regis Hotel.

Q / It's interesting that you haven't said that you ever interviewed for a job. You never had to look for a job. You had a network and connections, so you fell into jobs.

A: I've interviewed but not applied for jobs.

I stayed at the St. Regis for about a year and then became the Chef of a new restaurant, Christopher's on East 63rd Street. From there, I worked as the morning Sous Chef at Le Côte Basque, one of the oldest, best-known, and finest New York City restaurants. It was an extremely competitive work environment.

I took a position as Chef in a small 45-seat restaurant by the United Nations that had no written menu. Basically, the menu changed daily and consisted of four appetizers, main courses, salad, and desserts. We offered a four-course lunch and four-course dinner. The kitchen staff consisted of a

dishwasher and myself. It was truly an interesting experience. I worked there for about a year, basically by myself. It was this solitary time that helped develop my cuisine. There were no menu restrictions other than it had to be good. There was always a fish, bird, and meat on the menu. You did everything yourself including desserts and butchering. There was no one there to help you, so discipline was crucial. I developed my own style and perfected kitchen organization.

A year later, I was offered a position at La Crémallère, a French country restaurant in Banksville, New York. I stayed there for seven years.

Q / Did you wish you had done your bachelor's degree?

A: I still wish today I'd done a bachelor's degree. I have taken business courses at New York University, the New School, and art classes at the Japanese Institute and the Japanese Society. I have educated myself, but I probably would have been able to get into ownership sooner if I had taken the business courses earlier. It has taken me a really long time to get where I am today.

Q / What kind of advice would you give young culinarians?

A: Education is incredibly important, as is your ability to work with other people. As much as the chef is involved in the cooking, he/she also has to acquire the skill of working well with people.

Knowledge of history, finance, cuisines, and people from around the world has to be much more today than in years past. I would get a solid education before venturing on my career path. There are so many things that I never thought would be part of my job, from architectural design to colors to music, finances, and loans. I could not have accomplished anything that I have without the cooperation and assistance of hundreds, if not thousands, of people during my career. The ability to lead people along will get people to work with you. Your success is almost guaranteed because you can count on other people to help you develop a great team. You can't do it by yourself. So develop leadership. Those leadership abilities are something that should be taken seriously as part of your training and part of your education.

Q / What trends do you see developing?

A: I think one of the things that didn't exist that much before was how much the public and consumers look to the food industry to influence what people eat and what they cook and eat at home. The reason we have better restaurants in the United States today is mostly because customers want better restaurants and are demanding better.

There is a thirst for knowledge about food that didn't exist 20 years ago. I think it is ready to blow across the country. Just look at the Food Network, magazines, the higher profile of American chefs. People want to know where their food is coming from, who is cooking it, and why it is being cooked a certain way. People across the board are taking more interest in what they are eating and where it comes from. And I think that is going to overall have an increased impact on how we are eating 10 years from now.

CAMERON MITCHELL, President, Cameron Mitchell Restaurants**Q / Tell me about your company, Cameron Mitchell Restaurants.**

A: We are a \$100,000,000-a-year multiconcept, full-service company that operates in six states in the Midwest. We have 10 different concepts, 27 different restaurants, and a full-service, off-premises catering company. We also manage a small restaurant group including four restaurants.

Q / How did you get started doing this?

A: I was the Director of Operations for a small restaurant company before I started on my own in 1993. I left my operations job in July of 1992. It took 14 months to put the first restaurant together. I was 30 years old at the time when we opened our first one. I started with partners whom I needed to raise capital. Today we have over 180 partners, including 30 operating partners within the company. We raised money on several different occasions throughout the course of the company's history.

Q / How did you get into this business?

A: I've always said I got fired from my first two jobs, which were mowing lawns and delivering newspapers, and I started washing dishes in high school. It was the only job I could hold. So I stuck with it. I came from a traditional suburban high school here in Columbus, where 93% of the kids went off to college. Both my brothers were doctors, but I wasn't ready to go off to a four-year college. So I lived at home with my mom, and I worked for a large regional casual dining chain based here in Columbus, Ohio. I was with them for about a year when I almost got fired. I was put on suspension for three days and probation for 30 days for being late to work. I couldn't get myself out of bed. I was just working for beer money and was kind of a wayward kid at the time.

After my suspension, I came back to work and I was late again. Luckily the manager on duty turned the other cheek. That was a Tuesday and thank goodness he did, because on Friday, I was working a double shift as a line cook during the day and a host at night, and during shift change it was just pandemonium. All of a sudden, time froze, and I had an epiphany. I looked across to the hot line and said, "This is what I want to do with the rest of my life." I went home that night and wrote out my goals. I wanted to go to the Culinary Institute of America, become Executive Chef at 23, General Manager at 24, a Regional Director at 26, Vice President of Operations at 30, and President of a restaurant company at 35. That was it. On Friday, I was just going to work, but the next day I was working for a career. My whole world changed. I went from the bottom of the basement to becoming an Opening Team Coordinator for them until finally I was Kitchen Manager.

Q / What triggered that decision?

A: I love what I am doing. This is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. I had one more epiphany that was kind of fundamental as well. If we fast-forward a few years, I graduated from culinary school, came back to Columbus, and worked for a local restaurant company. We had one restaurant

when I joined the company. I started as a Sous Chef opening up our second restaurant. I became Sous Chef for this company and then six months later I was promoted to executive chef, so I became Executive Chef at 23, just like my goal was. And I became General Manager at 24 and then became their Regional Director at 26, and then Operations Director. We had six restaurants then. As I got closer to the center of the organization, I had some fundamental problems with the company.

I decided then to start my own restaurant company, Cameron Mitchell Restaurants. I wanted to build a special company that had a culture and foundation that was second to none, with people that loved to work there. And that is what we are still doing today.

So I started with a legal pad and pen and really no money. I had a little money to live on, but I had no money to start a business. It was a lot of hard work and perseverance and courage to go through those times. I worked for about six months on a restaurant project downtown in Columbus. I was just getting ready to finalize the lease and the plans for starting construction. I raised all the money through partnerships for this project, and the landlord went bankrupt at the last minute. The bank repossessed the building, so everything fell through. I was totally broke. I sent my partners their checks back. I explained to them what happened and sent them my new business plan for a smaller project. We were finally able to get it financed. It was a long 14 months to get the first one open. It's been a struggle, and it's still a struggle today. Our cost of goods is through the roof right now, and profitability is down from last year. When you build a restaurant you expect to pull a profit, but it doesn't always happen like that.

Q/ Can you talk about the management philosophy of Cameron Mitchell Restaurants?

A: At Cameron Mitchell Restaurants, we believe in our associates. The foundation of our company is based upon integrity—each individual adhering to a code of core values that determines behavior and interactions. Treating one another in accordance with these philosophies establishes strong communication and an enjoyable work environment. Ultimately, we believe we will experience continued success by maintaining this company culture.

We have five questions that we ask ourselves:

- 1. What do we want to be? An extraordinary restaurant company.*
- 2. Who are we? Great people delivering genuine hospitality.*
- 3. What is our role? To make raving fans of our associates, guests, purveyors, partners, and communities.*
- 4. What is our mission? To continue to thrive, driven by our culture and fiscal responsibilities.*
- 5. What is our goal? To be better today than we were yesterday and better tomorrow than we are today.*

Our people are the foundation of this organization. When the company puts its people first, the results are spectacular. The tools we utilize and the theories by which we operate all stem from this belief. Superior service comes from the

heart. We realize that our guests will have a wonderful experience only when our associates are truly happy.

The value of an individual is never held higher than the value of the team. For the team to function at its greatest potential, all individuals on the team must work in harmony. It is important that no individual disrupts the positive chemistry of the team.

To preserve our great work environment, we hire only upbeat and positive people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. A positive attitude is an approach to a way of life. It is a conscious choice and the driving force behind exceptional service. Everyone is responsible for fostering an atmosphere that encourages positive attitudes.

Work should be fun. We have an exciting work environment that is filled with laughter and smiles. Guaranteed fun equals guaranteed success.

Quality is built up front and permeates everything we do. We believe that there is no room for mediocrity. If we are not better than the rest, we become a commodity and are chosen only for price. We measure our quality constantly. What we choose to do, we choose to do best. Our quality is 100% guaranteed. We do it right the first time.

We foster open and honest communication. Communication breaks down the barriers to success. We uphold an open-door policy. Feedback creates learning, understanding, and growth. The only bad idea is the one not communicated. We communicate with respect and eloquent language. When we are all informed, we can move forward together.

We believe in the creative process. There is art in everything that we do, and art is important because some of the most memorable aspects of service are creative ones. Pride should be taken in even the simplest tasks. Time, people, ideas, artistic beauty, and togetherness all define a creative process, which is inherent to our success and to our organization.

We are committed to the growth of all our associates, our company, and our community. We believe that without the growth of our associates, we too will become stagnant. Everything changes around us and we intend to change with it, not to be left behind and forgotten. We are committed to the educational process. We believe that learning should last a lifetime.

Q / What kind of advice would you have for young culinarians?

A: My recipe for success is to get the best education you can. Work for the best company, have the best attitude. Throw in a little luck and hard work, and you are going to be successful. Also, set your goals and aim high. You can change them along the way, but you have to have a map to get started. Seek advice from your elders. I do that all the time. Go and listen to them. My other advice is to work hard when you are 20 or 30 because you just can't do it in your forties. You've got kids, you've got family, you've got other commitments. Sometimes, you don't have the energy. Finally, have integrity and honesty, and manage from your heart. You treat people the way you want to be treated. I always say integrity takes years to build and days to ruin. No one can take that away from you but yourself.

ADVICE FROM A RECENT GRADUATE

Name: Alexis Kaufmann

Education: AOS, Culinary Arts, Culinary Institute of America, 2005

Explore any and all directions—you never know what you will enjoy, dislike, or what will interest you until you try.

Organization

Figure 1-1
Sample Multi-Unit Dining
Organizational Chart

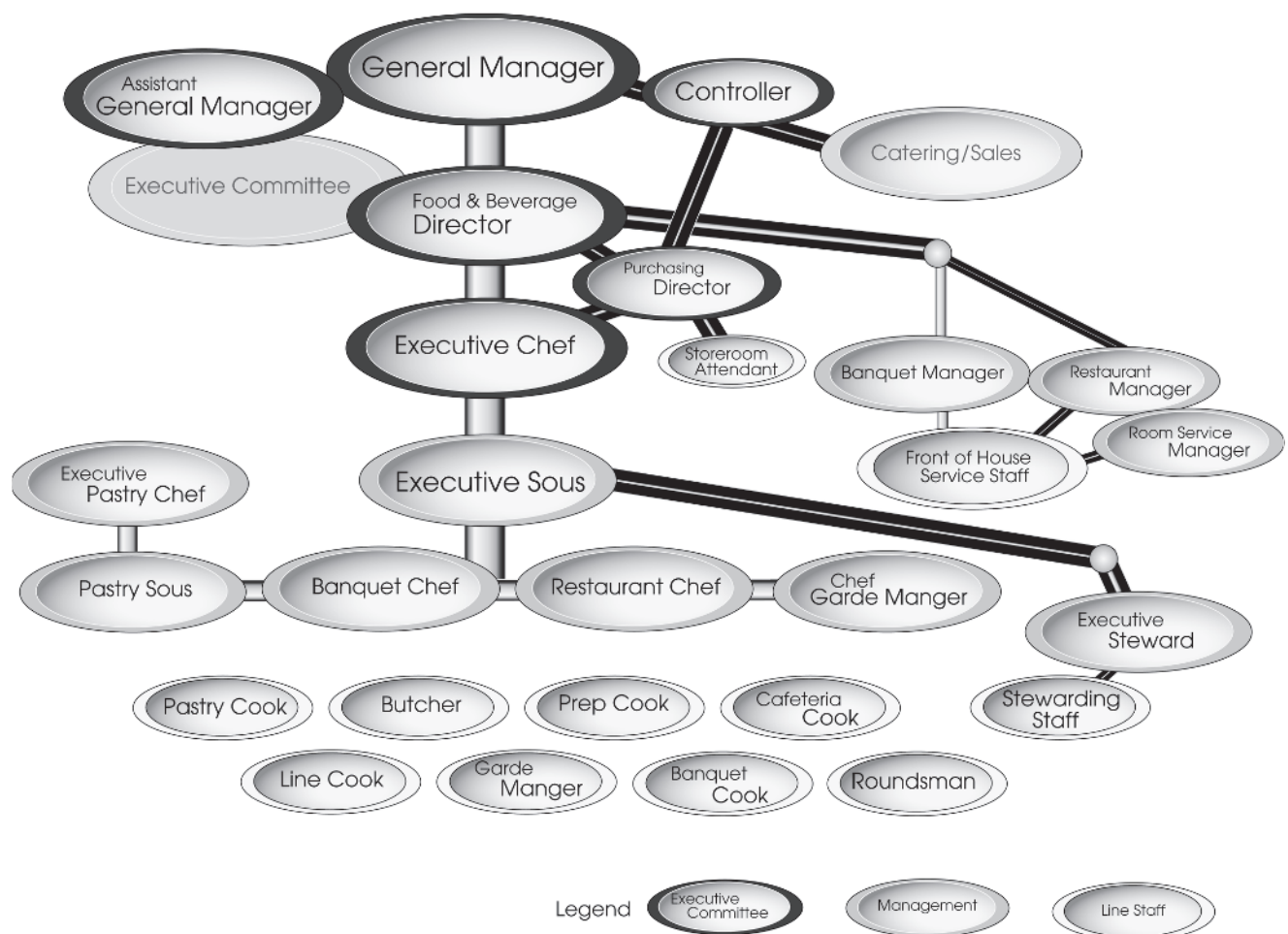
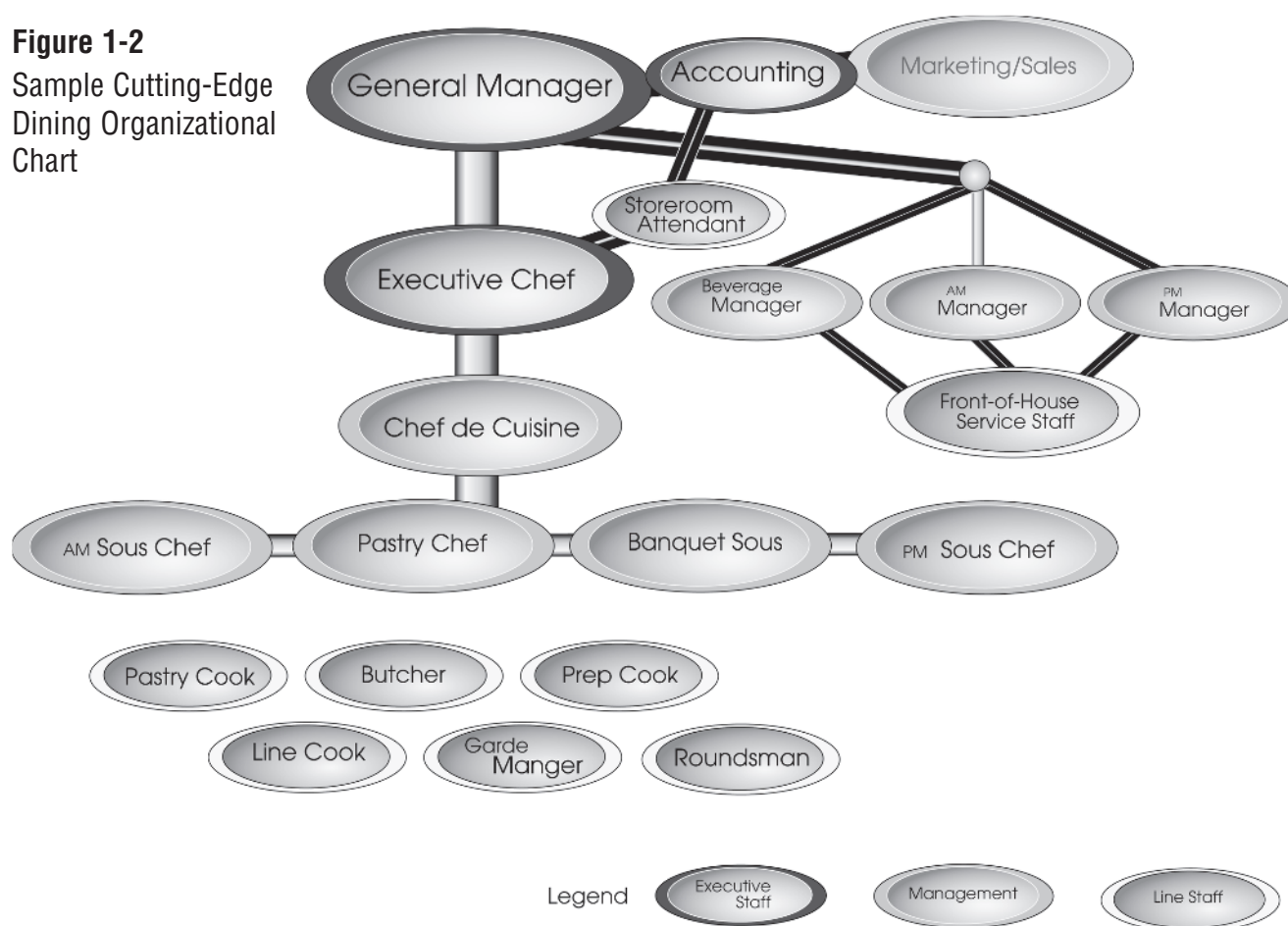
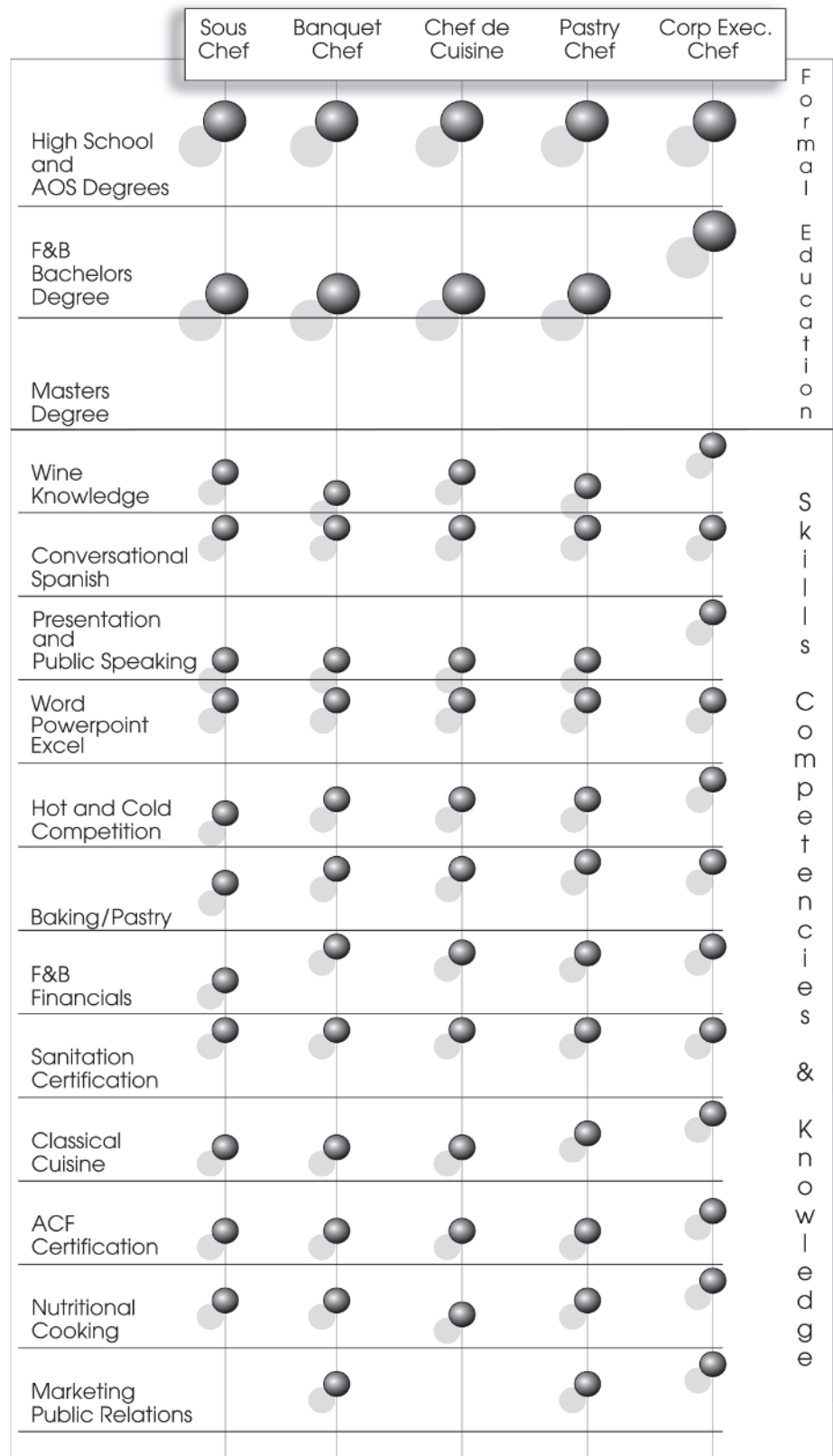


Figure 1-2
Sample Cutting-Edge
Dining Organizational
Chart

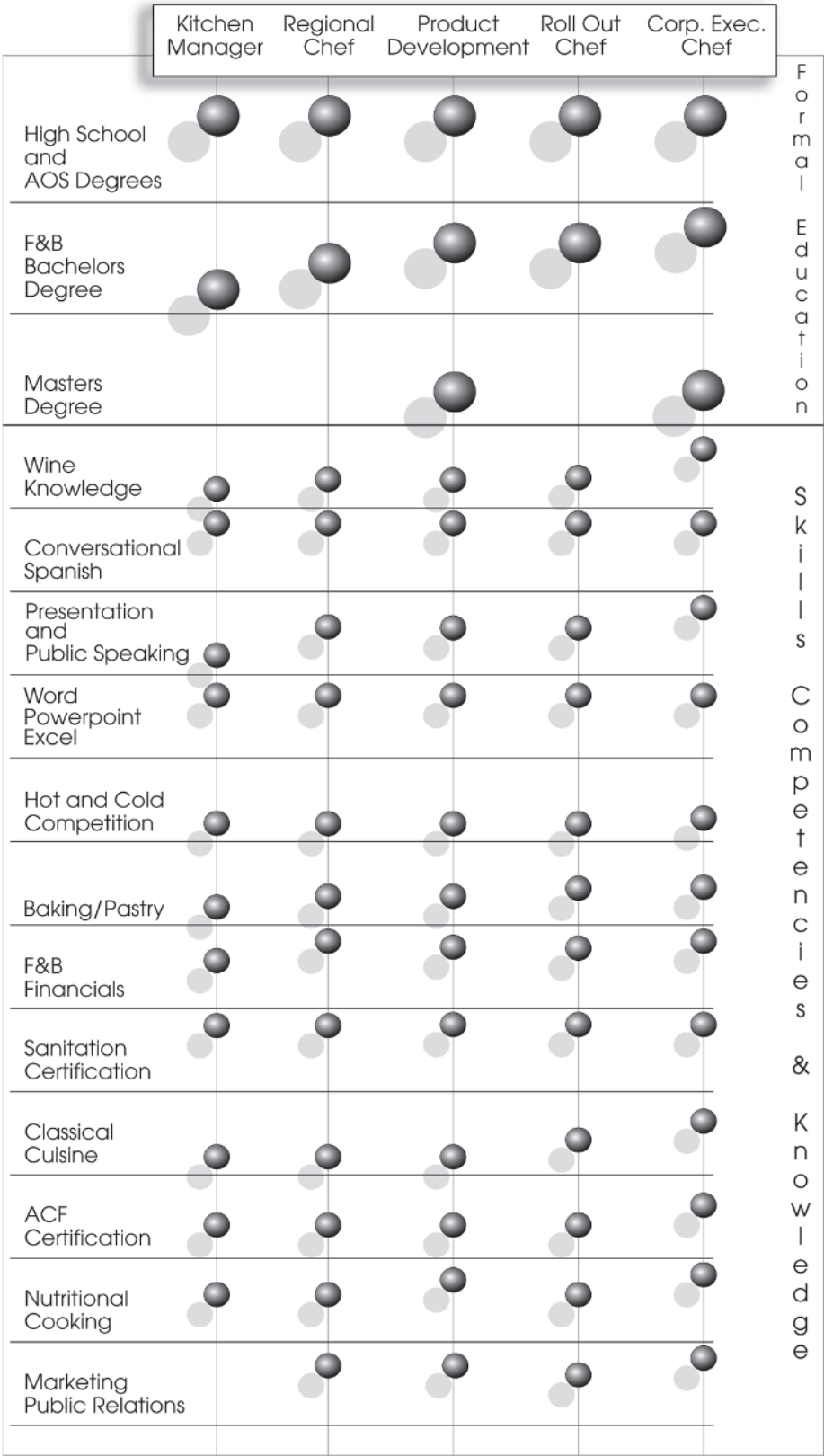


Education Path Advice



Height of ball indicates importance.

Figure 1-3
Cutting-Edge
Dining—Education
Path Advice



Height of ball indicates importance.

Figure 1-4
Multi-Unit—Education
Path Advice

EXERCISES

1. At the website of the National Restaurant Association (www.restaurant.org), click on “Careers and Education,” then on “Get Advice.” Click on “job possibilities” to see a listing of all sorts of restaurant positions. Which position(s) are you most interested in exploring, once you complete culinary school?
2. Using the Career Path Guide (page 2) and Education Path Guides (pages 21–22), map out a possible career and education path for a chef in a cutting-edge restaurant or a corporate chef in a multi-unit restaurant, including:
 - Number of months in each job
 - Each place of employment
 - How and when you would complete your formal education
 - How and when you would complete skills and competencies
3. Find two articles in recent restaurant-oriented publications about culinary trends. Summarize each article in one paragraph.
4. How would you rate the job outlook for culinary jobs in restaurants: excellent, good, fair, or poor? Explain briefly.
5. Would you consider working in restaurants? Why, or why not? If yes, what type of restaurant would you like to work in, and where?
6. Look at the job listings at the National Restaurant Association website (www.restaurant.org). Click on “Careers and Education,” then on “Job Bank”, click “Find a Job.” Print out two job listings that sound exciting to you and that you could interview for while you are in culinary school or once you graduate. Look closely at the Required Skills and Experience section to see if you meet, or will meet, these requirements.
7. Working in restaurants is stressful, the hours are long, and you have to work many nights and weekends when most of the world is off. What would you do to ensure enough personal time to prevent burnout?
8. Go to the library and find five periodicals that relate to restaurants. List the name of each one, and compare and contrast them.

