

Chapter 1

A Snapshot of the Culinary Arts Profession

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding what culinary professionals do
 - ▶ Considering whether school or work is better preparation for a culinary career
 - ▶ Finding work in a culinary field
 - ▶ Exploring the outlook for cooking jobs
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If you're reading this book, you must be considering a career in culinary arts. Entering a new career field can be exciting and a little scary, so congratulations on taking the first step! Culinary arts is a challenging, rewarding, and creative field, and the future job outlook is favorable. That's the good news. The bad news? Succeeding in the culinary world takes skill, knowledge, determination, and experience. Depending on the position you hope to land, you may have to go to culinary school. And even if you go to school, restaurant experience may be a requirement. (Think server, dishwasher, or fast-food cook.)

More good news: Culinary professionals enjoy their work. Most can't imagine earning a living any other way. Why? It's all about the food! Culinary professionals eat, sleep, and dream about food. They enjoy preparing it, cooking it, plating it, serving it, and, of course, eating it. If you're reading this, chances are that you're among the food obsessed, and a career in culinary arts may be a good choice for you.

What Does It Mean to Work in the Culinary Arts?

Think about the words *culinary* and *arts*. What do these words mean? Anything related to food is referred to as being *culinary*. Anyone associated with food, from chefs to dishwashers, work in the culinary field. *Arts* is a

whole different matter. Everyone who works in a creative field is an artist. Painter Leonardo da Vinci and poet Emily Dickinson were artists. An executive chef, a pastry chef, and baker are also artists, but of a different kind. Their canvas is a plate and their medium is food.

Culinary arts, then, is the art of food, and culinary artists are people who do creative things with food. Their work goes beyond cooking a tuna casserole for dinner. They create dishes that are a feast for the eyes as well as the palate. And they do this in many different places in many different capacities.



Working in culinary arts is not easy or glamorous, and only the strong survive. Culinary professionals work long hours, often when the rest of us are at home relaxing or asleep. They work weekends and holidays and spend the majority of their time on their feet. They work under pressure in crowded, hot kitchens where tempers fly. The noise in a commercial kitchen may be nerve-racking. Chefs and cooks shout out orders, shout at the staff, and may even cuss. Working in a culinary kitchen is no day at the beach. The thin-skinned need not apply.

Where cooking professionals work

Many culinary professionals work in restaurants, but you find them in other places as well. We give you the lowdown on the variety of establishments that employ culinary pros in Chapter 2, but for now, here's a brief list. You're certain to find culinary professionals that cook in these places:

- ✓ Restaurants, large and small (see Chapter 5)
- ✓ Hotel restaurants and kitchens, which may include banquet halls (see Chapter 6)
- ✓ Resorts and spas (see Chapter 6)
- ✓ Pastry shops and bakeries (see Chapter 8)
- ✓ Catering companies (see Chapter 7)
- ✓ Institutions such as hospitals, airlines, cruise ships, schools, and correctional centers (see Chapter 7)
- ✓ Kitchens in homes as personal and private chefs (see Chapter 9); as artisans (see Chapter 10); or as culinary entrepreneurs (see Chapter 18)
- ✓ Culinary schools (see Chapter 14)
- ✓ Test kitchens (see Chapters 10 and 12)
- ✓ Commissary kitchens (see Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 8)

What non-cooking culinary professionals do

Lots of culinary jobs are available even if you're not interested in actually cooking for a living. Check out these non-cooking culinary professional roles:

- ✓ Food writers, cookbook editors, and television and radio hosts (see Chapter 12)
- ✓ Food photographers and stylists (see Chapters 12 and 14)
- ✓ Food scientists (see Chapter 10)
- ✓ Retail salespeople and purchasers (see Chapter 15)
- ✓ Beverage and wine experts (see Chapter 11)
- ✓ Food-related public relations and marketing professionals (see Chapter 13)

Looking Beyond Food Prep: What Culinary Professionals Do

If you enter a culinary profession that involves cooking, you'll perform other tasks in addition to cooking food for customers. Your specific job duties depend on the place where you work and the position you hold. For example, the executive chef is typically the top dog in a kitchen, and a line cook is much lower in the chain of command, so the duties of those two jobs are different. (To learn more about the kitchen brigade, turn ahead to Chapter 5.)

Most culinary professionals involved in cooking have some or all of these job duties:

- ✓ Prepping food (washing, cutting, chopping, peeling, and pounding)
- ✓ Preparing ingredients (mixing, weighing, and measuring)
- ✓ Lifting heavy items (such as pots and sacks of flour and potatoes)
- ✓ Purchasing supplies and ingredients
- ✓ Baking, roasting, broiling, and steaming meats and fish
- ✓ Baking, steaming, roasting, and sautéing vegetables
- ✓ Frying potatoes and other foods
- ✓ Baking breads, cakes, and pastries
- ✓ Arranging, plating, and garnishing food
- ✓ Estimating costs and maintaining budgets

- ✓ Cleaning and organizing the kitchen
- ✓ Developing recipes and menus
- ✓ Hiring and training new staff
- ✓ Determining production schedules
- ✓ Communicating with other members of the kitchen brigade and front-of-the-house staff

But not all culinary professionals cook. These professionals may have duties similar to those in other non-culinary professions. For example, the duties of a food writer are similar to those of other writers, except that the subject matter and publication they write for are likely different. The same goes for food photographers, restaurant supply salespeople, food scientists, and others. People in these professions are tied together by their love of food and the fact that they work with food — even if they don't cook or work directly with food. For more information on non-cooking professions, as well as their duties, check out the chapters in Part IV.

Asking the Age-Old Question: School or Work?

You may have heard of chefs who began their career as a dishwasher or server and climbed the culinary ladder to earn fame and fortune as an executive chef or the owner of a three-star restaurant. Is this possible? Sure. Is it likely? Nope. Many chefs who have never attended culinary school will not hire you unless you've done so. Deciding whether to go to culinary school or to earn your stripes working is a tough one. A culinary degree or diploma is often a must these days and may give you the edge that you need to land a job. On the other hand, the experience you garner from working in real-life situations is invaluable. Often, the decision depends on what your career goals are and what your circumstances are. Check out Chapter 3 for more on choosing the right path for you.



Even famous chefs must start at the bottom and work their way up the culinary ladder. Emeril Lagasse once worked as a part-time bread baker in a Portuguese bakery and was paid only \$50 for each episode of *Essence of Emeril*, his first television show. Chef and restaurateur Mario Batali worked as a dishwasher in a New Jersey restaurant called Stuff Yer Face. Batali was quickly promoted to pizza maker. TV personality Rachael Ray never attended culinary school and instead honed her skills in her Italian family's kitchen.

Choosing to go to culinary school

Culinary school gives you a broad foundation on which to build your skills. Culinary students work in actual kitchens under the supervision of a chef. Different chefs teach different classes, so students learn many skills. Expect to learn about the following subjects and skills in culinary school:

- ✓ Applying cooking techniques (roasting, baking, grilling, frying, sautéing)
- ✓ Learning knife skills (chopping, slicing, dicing, cutting, julienning —yes, there is a difference!)
- ✓ Operating kitchen equipment (stoves, fryers, mixers, grills, scales)
- ✓ Measuring and weighing ingredients
- ✓ Using kitchen tools (spatulas, whisks, tongs, thermometer)
- ✓ Following food safety procedures (keeping conditions sanitary, avoiding cross contamination, dealing with waste, controlling temperature)
- ✓ Managing (accounting, budgeting, hiring, purchasing)
- ✓ Preparing and planning menus
- ✓ Following nutrition guidelines



Do you think you're too old to carry a book bag and head back to class? Many culinary schools report that the average age of their students is now 30 or older. And culinary students are as diverse as the meals they prepare. They range in age from 18 to more than 60, and more than half are career-changers.

You have many options when choosing a culinary school, from earning a certificate from a community college or technical school to earning a four-year degree from a top-notch establishment such as the Culinary Institute of America or the International Culinary Schools at the Art Institutes. Of course, in a perfect world, everyone could attend the school of his or her choosing, even to study abroad, but our world is far from perfect. Reality demands that you consider these factors when choosing a culinary school:

- ✓ **Your location:** Think about how far you can travel and whether moving is a feasible option.
- ✓ **The time you can devote:** If you're like most people, you're planning to work while attending school, so a part-time program at a community college may be the most flexible option for you.
- ✓ **The amount of money you can spend:** Smaller, local programs cost only a fraction of the tuition charged at major culinary institutes.

You have the following options in terms of the degree you earn at a culinary school:

- ✓ **Diploma or a certificate:** These programs run from several months to a year.
- ✓ **Associate's degree:** Earning an associate's degree takes two years as a full-time student.
- ✓ **Bachelor's degree:** You'll need to be a full-time student for four years to earn a bachelor's degree.

To learn more about culinary schools, flip ahead to Chapter 4.

Landing an apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a great way to gain practical, hands-on experience. What is an apprenticeship, you ask? It's an arrangement in which you volunteer your services without pay, usually, in exchange for instruction. An apprenticeship is a great go-between school and actually working. In the past, many culinary professionals completed an apprenticeship instead of going to culinary school, but it's no longer the norm. Most culinary professionals go to school and may serve an apprenticeship as part of their schooling. In this case, they work for school credit. However, if the culinary school you attend does not include an apprenticeship as part of its curriculum, or if you're opting out of culinary school, you may be able to land one on your own.



Some culinary students or graduates choose to do a *stagiaire*, or stage, to gain employment. A *stagiaire* is nothing more than volunteering your time to prove to a restaurant that you have what it takes to work there. You typically set up a time with an establishment to come in and work. You can also use a *stagiaire* as an opportunity to learn more culinary skills from people already in the profession.

Convincing professionals in any field to give you an apprenticeship is not easy. They may not have the time or the energy to teach you how to do their job. However, if you can devote a significant amount of time, they may find the idea of free labor appealing. Be persistent and humble.

When a chef does agree to give you an apprenticeship, realize that you're at the bottom in terms of experience in the kitchen. Expect to perform bottom-of-the-barrel duties, such as slicing vegetables or even washing dishes. Be grateful for any instruction you're given. Say please and thank you and work hard. Keep in mind that if you prove yourself, your apprenticeship may lead to a job in that same kitchen.

Sizzling hot cooking shows

Today's cooking television shows are a far cry from those of the past, such as Julia Child's *The French Chef*, which attracted millions of viewers in the 1960s. Modern viewers care more about being entertained than being instructed, and reality-cooking shows such as *Hell's Kitchen* and *Top Chef* do not disappoint. *Hell's Kitchen* is a cooking competition hosted by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay in which the final two contestants must design and run their own restaurants. With a goal of winning money to open their own restaurant, the culinary pros on *Top Chef* must make gourmet creations on a shoestring budget while living in the same house. The personality clashes are as much fun as the competition. *Top Chef Masters* is a

spin-off of the *Top Chef* series. In this reality competition, 24 chefs compete in various challenges, with the top chef winning \$100,000 for his or her favorite charity. On *Iron Chef America*, chefs use the same ingredients to see who can create the most delicious gourmet dishes. *Worst Cooks in America* takes 12 of the worst cooks and puts them through culinary boot camp. Whoever can prove that they've learned the most culinary skills receives a cash prize.

Cooking shows have surged in popularity, and TV stations such as the Food Network, Bravo, and the Travel Channel can't create them fast enough, which is why many now say that we are now living in the "age of food TV."

Working from the start

School isn't for everyone. Many people learn better by doing rather than listening or watching. If you're one of those people who feels they'd be better off diving right into the industry — without going to culinary school — you should be prepared to work hard. As long as you're willing to start at the bottom and work your way up the ladder, you may not need to attend culinary school to achieve success. Many famous and renowned chefs, such as Rick Bayless and Mario Batali, never received culinary degrees.

Don't expect to walk into a restaurant and be granted the position of executive chef with no experience or education. Gaining the experience needed to run a kitchen and create menus takes years. If you're willing to take a lower position such as dishwasher and show that you're hard working, you may be able to quickly advance to other kitchen positions, and, with even more hard work, dedication, and perseverance, eventually advance to higher roles such as sous chef, kitchen manager, or executive chef.



You can gain a food education as well as experience in ways other than sitting in a classroom. You can secure an apprenticeship that will teach you skills similar to what you'd learn in a culinary school (see "Landing an apprenticeship" earlier in this chapter). Maybe you come from a family that owns a restaurant and can teach you everything they know about food and cooking. Or perhaps your family just loves to cook, and you can learn recipes and cooking skills that have been passed from generation to generation. You can (and

should) also simply self-teach. If you have an interest in food and cooking, be sure to work on your self-education by reading a ton of cookbooks and manuals and watch numerous cooking programs or instructional videos. And don't be shy about trying new things in the kitchen. Keeping up on the latest food and cooking trends can give you a leg up when you're looking to land a job in the culinary field.

Some cooking jobs don't require education or even experience. Many family-style restaurants and institutions hire new employees with no experience and give them on-the-job training, but others may require at least some experience. It depends on the establishment and their hiring practices. The same goes for non-cooking culinary jobs. Positions such as food writers may not require a culinary degree (although one may be helpful), but they do require degrees in other fields, such as English or communications, as well as excellent writing skills.

Finding the Right Culinary Career

Think about the type of culinary job you would most like to land. Maybe the idea of working in a restaurant that offers customers a fine-dining experience most appeals to you. Perhaps your goal is to one day become head chef in such an establishment, creating menus and overseeing the cooks. The type of food an establishment serves might factor into your decision. If you're fond of Italian or Japanese cuisine, you may see yourself working in such a kitchen. If you bake desserts in your spare time, you may strive to become a pastry chef. Or perhaps you want to take the road less traveled and become a caterer or specialize in volume cooking at a hospital or school. Maybe cooking isn't your thing and you'd rather write about it at a newspaper or online magazine, or perhaps you enjoy photographing food. Whatever type of culinary career you decide you would most like to have, you'll need to try to land a job that will prepare for this career. (And you must realize that wherever you work, you'll start at the bottom.)

In this section, we provide a questionnaire and answer explanations that can help you find your fit in the culinary field.

Culinary career questionnaire

Jot down an answer to each of the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers, but your answers will help you determine what type of culinary job is right for you. Be sure to read the answer explanations in the next section.

1. Do you enjoy cooking? Why or why not?
2. What is your favorite food?
3. Do you prefer to rise early in the morning or work late at night? Or would you rather have normal working hours?
4. Do you like baking and eating desserts?
5. How do you feel about working under pressure?
6. Are you comfortable standing on your feet for hours at a time?
7. Do you like to cook for large groups of people, or do you prefer to cook for only a few people?
8. Do you enjoy preparing healthy meals, and are you concerned with nutrition when you cook?
9. Do you like teaching people new things?
10. Do you like to be in charge, or do you prefer to follow orders?
11. Are you a good writer?
12. Are you a good photographer?
13. Do you enjoy learning about wine or other beverages?
14. Do you dream of owning your own business one day?
15. Would you like to earn a commission instead of earning a flat salary?
16. Do you make a particular recipe that everyone goes crazy for?

Answer explanations

After responding to the questionnaire in the last section, read the following explanations and consider the answers you wrote down.

1. This question is a no-brainer: If you enjoy cooking, then a culinary career may be right for you. Not all culinary careers require cooking, however, so don't rule out a culinary career if you don't like to cook. A career in the culinary field requires a strong interest and knowledge in food, not just cooking skills. For more information on non-cooking professions, check out the chapters in Part IV.
2. Your favorite food may help you determine what type of restaurant you would like to work in. For example, if you wrote down that your favorite food was tacos, you may enjoy working in a Mexican restaurant, or if you wrote down fettuccine Alfredo, you may try to land a job in an Italian restaurant. If you wrote down something more vague, such as chicken, don't be discouraged. Think about some of the other foods and cuisines you enjoy. Many different restaurants exist that serve all types of cuisines to suit any taste.

3. If you prefer to begin your workday in the wee hours of the morning before the rooster crows, consider working as a pastry chef or a baker. These culinary professionals have very early hours. (Read Chapter 8 to learn more about these culinary jobs.) If you're a night owl, you're probably best suited to employment in a restaurant. (Turn ahead to Chapter 5 to learn more.) If you prefer to work typical 9-to-5 hours, consider a career in institutional cooking, such as in a school or hospital cafeteria. (To learn more about volume cooking, read Chapter 7.) Many nontraditional food jobs don't fit into any of these categories and allow you to set your own hours or work a variety of different shifts. For example, a caterer may only work on the weekends during a large event or a food writer may work only a few days a week. (See Chapters 7 and 12 for more information on these professions.)
4. If you like baking and eating desserts, you may enjoy working as a pastry chef or a baker. (To find out the difference between these two professions, see Chapter 8.)
5. Commercial kitchens, such as those in restaurants, are stressful places. If you thrive under pressure, then consider working in a restaurant or hotel. (See Chapters 5 and 6.) If working under pressure is not your thing, consider working in institutions, where the pace is usually slower. (See Chapter 7.) Because some nontraditional food positions allow you to work for yourself, such as food bloggers or food stylists, these positions tend to be less stressful. Not all non-cooking jobs are stress-free, though. Jobs such as those in restaurant supply sales or marketing positions may be just as stressful as working in a fast-paced kitchen.
6. Standing on your feet for many hours at a time is a drawback of many culinary careers — but a few options exist that let you sit down now and then. Turn to Chapter 12 for info on media jobs, Chapter 13 to find out about PR and marketing jobs, Chapter 14 to read about becoming a culinary instructor, food photographer, or food stylist, and Chapter 15 to read up on retail sales jobs.
7. If you like to cook for large groups of people, consider volume cooking such as catering. (Turn to Chapter 7.) If you prefer cooking only for a few people, you may enjoy life as a private or personal chef. (See Chapter 9.)
8. Culinary professionals who work in resorts and spas prepare healthy meals for guests. If you like considering nutrition and making tasty, but healthy meals, you can find out more about your options in Chapter 6.
9. If you like to cook and have the patience to show others, then you may one day choose to become a culinary instructor. (To learn about this career, turn to Chapter 14.)

10. Perhaps your past coworkers always turned to you for advice on how to solve work-related problems. If so, you may be the kind of person who prefers giving orders rather than taking them. Born leaders should strive to one day become executive chefs or managers or open businesses of their own. If you're more comfortable taking orders, you may prefer to be a sous chef, cook, or work in another type of non-cooking profession such as in restaurant supply sales. (To learn about the hierarchy of positions in a restaurant, read Chapter 5; to learn about culinary entrepreneurs, see Chapter 18; and for more information about jobs in sales, flip to Chapter 15.)
11. Great writers and food lovers may choose to write about food instead of cooking it. (Find out about the different food writing jobs in Chapter 12.)
12. Maybe you'd like to take pictures of food for advertisements, product labels, or magazine covers. If this sounds like fun to you, flip ahead to Chapters 12 and 14.
13. Some culinary professionals specialize solely in beverages, such as wine and beer, but these aren't the only beverages someone in this position may work with. Establishments serve an array of alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages to suit everyone's tastes, from cocktails to milkshakes to herbal teas. If a career in beverages interests you, turn to Chapter 11.
14. If you dream of owning your own business one day, you may want to think about getting on track to open a restaurant or start a different type of culinary business. (Turn to Chapter 10 to learn more about the role of artisans or see Chapter 18 for more information about culinary careers.)
15. If you're the kind of person who is motivated by money and also loves food, consider a career in culinary sales. (Read Chapter 13 for information about PR and marketing, see Chapter 11 to find out more about beverage jobs, and see Chapter 15 for the details on retail purchasing and sales jobs.)
16. If you're known for making the best chutney around, maybe you should consider bottling and selling it. Food artisans make and distribute their own hand-crafted products to specialty shops and grocery stores, who in turn sell their products. (For more information about artisans, see Chapter 10.)

Grabbing the Job You Want

A love of food, a culinary degree, and terrific experience don't do you a whole lot of good if you don't have a job in which to strut your hard-earned skills. Part V details how to land a job (maybe even your dream job!), move up the culinary ladder, and perhaps even own your own business one day. Here, we discuss some of the basics of getting you to the job you want.

Seeking out the right job

Thanks to the questionnaire in the previous section, you know what you want to do, right? Well, it should at least have given you an idea. After you know what you want to do, start looking for a job that meets your needs and interests. You may ask yourself, “How do I even begin?” Start with what you know. Visit places that you frequent, such as the sandwich shop around the corner you grab lunch from each day or the bakery where you ordered that heavenly birthday cake last month. Consider whether you’d like to work at these types of places.

If you find that you don’t want to work in any establishments where you live, you may want to consider moving. You should consider factors such as salary and cost of living when determining where you’d like to move, live, and work.

When you’ve determined the location of where you’d like to work, start the job search. Following are some ways to carry out your job hunt:

- ✔ Fill out an applications at establishments you’d like to work.
- ✔ Check the want ads in local publications and websites.
- ✔ Ask family or friends if they know of any opportunities, and tell them to look out for open positions that may suit you.
- ✔ Talk to past instructors about any job connections they may have.
- ✔ Use your school’s career services.
- ✔ Attend a job fair.



Don’t put all your eggs in one basket when looking for a job. The more applications you fill out at more establishments, the better your odds will be of landing a job.

Some jobs may require a cover letter and résumé as part of the application process. We take a more detailed look at writing these documents as well as the interview process in Chapter 16. After you submit this information to a potential employer, start preparing for an interview, which we touch on in the next section.

Preparing for an interview

Imagine that a prospective employer is interviewing you. Which do you think you should stress most: experience, education, or attitude? Most chefs confess that they consider applicants' attitudes more important than their experience and education. Be sure to convey a positive image during a job interview. Be upbeat, humble, and professional. Although discussing your experience and education is fine (and indeed recommended) if you're asked to do so, don't pretend to know more than the person interviewing you. Stress that you really want to work there and that you're willing to work hard to learn the needed skills. Before you leave, shake the interviewer's hand and thank him or her for taking the time to meet with you.



At any interview, be prepared to answer this question: “Why do you want to work here in particular?” Hint: Find out all you can about the restaurant (or store, or catering operation, and so on) beforehand. And eat there (if applicable).

What the heck is a toque, anyway?

Traditional attire for a chef consists of a double-breasted, long-sleeved white jacket, checkered or printed pants, a tall white hat, and, of course, at least one apron. Although such clothing may look strange, it's more practical than you'd think. The white cotton jacket actually repels heat and keeps the chef cooler in a steamy kitchen. The long sleeves protect the chef's arms from burns when reaching across stoves and into ovens. The jacket usually has knotted buttons because they don't fall off or break as easily as metal or plastic buttons. (Customers typically frown upon pieces of buttons in their food.) The double-breasted jacket can be reversed to hide stains. Checkered or patterned pants are practical in a kitchen because they hide stains, too.

The hat that chefs wear is called a *toque* (pronounced *toke*). This type of hat, which dates back to the 16th century, stands high and has

no rim. The many folds in the top of the hat are said to represent the many ways that you can cook an egg. Some toques have exactly 101 folds, which are also called pleats. A toque designates a chef's rank — the higher the toque, the higher the rank. A toque also serves the general purpose of keeping hair and sweat out of food.

Today's chefs and cooks may wear many variations of this traditional attire. Some wear colored jackets and even shorts while they work. And some prefer to wrap a bandanna around their head instead of wearing a toque. Your place of employment will dictate what is acceptable to wear. Some employers may allow you to wear what you want or even provide you with a uniform.

Assessing the Culinary Job Outlook

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the job outlook for culinary professionals who cook is good. The BLS predicts that many new positions will be created over the next decade. Additional job openings will be created by workers leaving the field, either to retire or pursue a different career.

Note that the BLS does not gather data on every culinary position discussed in this book. It only includes data on major categories.

Growth in culinary careers will occur largely because of the following factors:

- ✓ An increase in the population
- ✓ An increase in the demand for convenience
- ✓ An increase in the demand for more options when it comes to dining out

The head honchos

In the culinary world, chefs, head cooks, and supervisors are the cream of the crop. They earn the most money (see Table 1-1) but typically also need to have the most experience and the best education.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) describes the outlook for chefs, head cooks, and supervisors over the next decade as good. (See Table 1-2.) Of the nearly 950,000 individuals in these positions in 2008, most (about 88 percent) were food-preparation and serving supervisors. Only about 12 percent worked as chefs and cooks.

Food-prep supervisors may work in full-service restaurants, which are restaurants offering table service, but they're more likely to work in fast-food and take-out restaurants and catering facilities. According to the BLS, of the individuals employed as food-prep supervisors and serving supervisors in 2008, nearly half worked at fast-food restaurants, cafeterias, and take-out restaurants. Only about 25 percent worked in full-service restaurants. The BLS expects the number of food-prep supervisors and serving supervisors to increase by 6 percent by 2018.

In 2008, most chefs and head cooks worked in full-service restaurants. About 20 percent worked in hotels or for caterers. A very small number worked as entrepreneurs, meaning they owned their own restaurant. The BLS predicts that the number of job openings for chefs and head cooks will increase only slightly by 2018.



If you're looking for a job in an upscale, white-tablecloth restaurant, expect to face the most competition. Why? This type of restaurant pays more than other establishments.

Table 1-1 shows the salary ranges and median salaries for supervisors and chefs and head cooks. Table 1-2 compares their job outlooks.

Table 1-1 Salaries for Chefs/Cooks and Supervisors

<i>Position</i>	<i>Salary Range</i>	<i>Median Salary</i>
Chef, head cook	\$22,120–\$66,680 and up	\$38,770
Food-prep and serving supervisors	\$18,530–\$46,810 and up	\$28,970

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Table 1-2 Job Outlook for Chefs/Cooks and Supervisors

<i>Position</i>	<i>Number of Jobs in 2008</i>	<i>Projected Number of Jobs by 2018</i>	<i>Change from 2008–2018</i>	<i>Percent Increase</i>
Chef, head cook	108,300	108,500	+200	0%
Food-prep and serving supervisors	833,300	888,500	+55,200	7%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The worker bees

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the outlook for culinary “worker bees” is better than for their supervisors. In 2008, about 3 million people in the United States worked as cooks and food-preparation workers in full-service restaurants, fast-food restaurants, institutions (schools, universities, hospitals, nursing homes, and correction centers), diners, private households, and hotels. (See Table 1-3 for the breakdown.)

Two-thirds of all cooks and food-prep workers worked in restaurants and about 16 percent worked in institutions. A smaller number worked in private households or other establishments such as hotels and grocery stores. You can check out salary data for different types of cooks and food-prep workers in Table 1-4.

Table 1-3 Distribution of Cooks and Food-Preparation Workers

<i>Workplace</i>	<i>Number of Cooks and Food-Prep Workers</i>
Full-service restaurants	914,200
Fast-food restaurants	566,000
Cafeterias and institutions	391,800
Diners	171,400
Private households	4,900
Other areas	18,000

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Table 1-4 Salaries for Cooks and Food-Prep Workers

<i>Position</i>	<i>Salary Range</i>	<i>Median Salary</i>
Cooks in private households	\$16,230–\$56,280 and up	\$24,070
Cooks in cafeterias and institutions	\$15,220–\$33,050 and up	\$22,210
Cooks in full-service restaurants	\$15,880–\$31,330 and up	\$21,990
Cooks in diners	\$14,740–\$27,639 and up	\$19,260
Cooks in fast-food restaurants	\$14,090–\$22,080 and up	\$16,880
Food-prep workers	\$14,740–\$27,440 and up	\$18,630

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Over the next few years, the number of jobs for cooks and food-preparation workers combined is predicted to increase by about 6 percent. The number of jobs with caterers and in institutions is expected to grow the fastest by 2018, about 10 percent. Jobs in fast-food restaurants are also expected to increase by about 8 percent. The job outlook is better for cooks than for lower-level food-prep workers. The number of food-prep jobs is expected to increase by only 4 percent. (See Table 1-5.)

<i>Position</i>	<i>Number of Jobs in 2008</i>	<i>Projected Number of Jobs by 2018</i>	<i>Change from 2008–2018</i>	<i>Percent Increase</i>
Cooks in full-service restaurants	914,200	984,400	70,200	8%
Cooks in fast-food restaurants	566,000	608,400	42,400	7%
Cooks in cafeterias and institutions	391,800	429,700	37,900	10%
Cooks in diners	171,400	171,500	100	0%
Cooks in private households	4,900	5,100	200	4%
Cooks in other areas	18,000	20,900	2,900	16%
Food-prep workers	891,900	929,600	37,700	4%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Because people will always need to eat — whether at fast-food or fine-dining restaurants — the number of jobs in the culinary field will continue to grow. And because the culinary industry is filled with many opportunities, this industry is attractive to people with all levels of culinary training and experience.

