

the culinary profe

PART 1

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

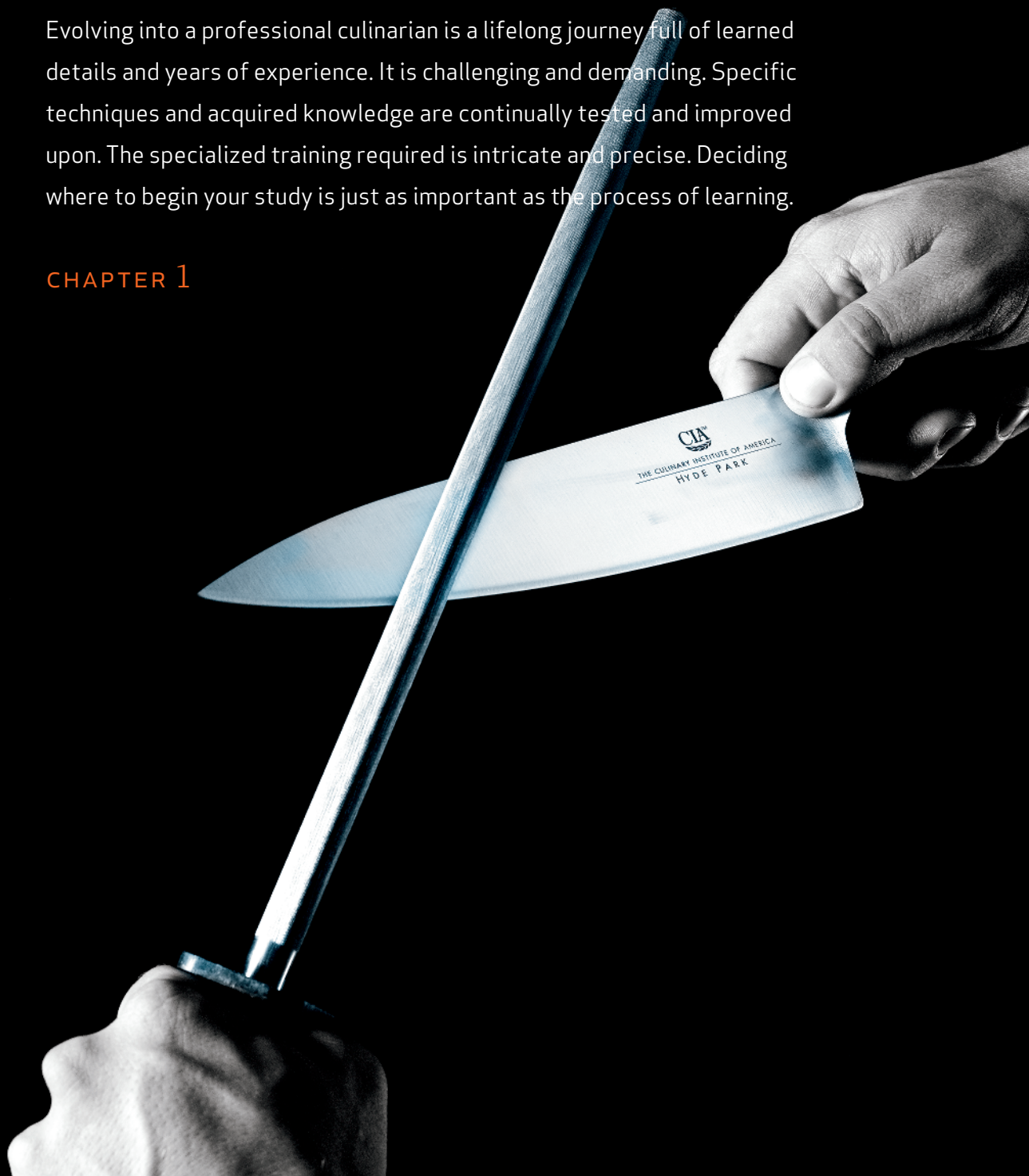
ssional



introduction to the profession

Evolving into a professional culinarian is a lifelong journey full of learned details and years of experience. It is challenging and demanding. Specific techniques and acquired knowledge are continually tested and improved upon. The specialized training required is intricate and precise. Deciding where to begin your study is just as important as the process of learning.

CHAPTER 1



becoming a culinary professional

A sound and thorough education emphasizing the culinary fundamentals is the first step to becoming fluent in the trade. Aspiring professionals will find formal training at an accredited school an excellent beginning. Other training alternatives include taking part in special apprenticeship programs or self-directed courses of study. The process involves advancing from kitchen to kitchen by learning at the side of chefs who are involved in the day-to-day business of running a professional kitchen. The goal is to ensure a thorough understanding of basic and advanced culinary techniques, regardless of the type of training received.

Creating a network of professional colleagues and industry contacts is important for future development. The avenue of growth that includes working with others, sharing information, and communicating regularly will help to keep your own work fresh and contemporary.

An established network also makes it much easier for you to find a new position or qualified employees.

Learning new skills to gain a competitive stance and encourage creativity should be an ongoing part of your career development. Beneficial and rewarding opportunities result from attending continuing education classes, workshops, and seminars. Remain up to date with the following informative resources:

- » **Magazines**
- » **Newsletters**
- » **Instructional videos**
- » **Web sites**
- » **Government publications**
- » **Books**

the attributes of a culinary professional

Each member of a profession is responsible for the profession's image, whether he or she is a teacher, lawyer, doctor, or culinarian. Those who have made the greatest impression know that the cardinal virtues of the culinary profession are an open and inquiring mind, an appreciation of and dedication to quality wherever it is found, and a sense of responsibility. Success also depends on several character traits, some of which are inherent, some of which are diligently cultivated throughout a career. These include:

- » **COMMITMENT TO SERVICE**—The degree to which a foodservice professional can offer a quality product, as well as thorough customer satisfaction, is

the degree to which they will succeed in providing excellent service.

- » **SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY**—The responsibility of a culinary professional includes respecting not just the customer and his or her needs but also the staff, food, equipment, and facility.
- » **SOUND JUDGMENT**—The ability to judge what is right and appropriate in each work situation is acquired throughout a lifetime of experience; good judgment is a prerequisite for becoming and remaining a professional.

the chef as a businessperson

As you continue your career, you will move from positions where your technical prowess is your greatest contribution into those where your skills as an executive, an administrator, and a manager are more clearly in demand. This does not mean that your ability to grill, sauté, or roast foods to the exact point of doneness is less important than it was before. It does mean that you

will be called on to learn and assume tasks and responsibilities that are more managerial, marking a shift in the evolution of your career.

Become a good executive. Executives are the individuals who develop a mission or a plan for a company or organization. They are also the ones responsible for developing a system to allow that plan to come to

fruition. As an executive, you must shoulder a large portion of responsibility for the success or failure of your establishment. Executives don't operate in a vacuum, however. Nor do they emerge full blown one day out of the blue. Even before you wear a jacket embroidered with "Executive Chef," you will have begun to exercise your abilities as an executive.

Become a good administrator. Once an overall goal or plan has been laid down, the next task is to implement and track that plan. Now your hat becomes that of an administrator. Some administrative duties may not sound at all glamorous—preparing schedules, tracking deliveries, computing costs, and so forth. If a restaurant is small, the executive and administrator will be the same person. That same person also might be the one who dons a uniform and works the line. The best administrators are those who can create a feeling throughout the entire staff that each person has a stake in getting things done correctly. When you give people the opportunity to help make decisions and provide them with the tools they need to perform optimally, you will see that it is easier to achieve the goals you have established on an executive level.

Learn to use the important tools of your business; budgets, accounting systems, and inventory control systems all play a role. Many organizations, from the largest chains to the smallest one-person catering company, rely upon software systems that allow them to efficiently administer a number of areas: inventory, purchases, losses, sales, profits, food costs, customer complaints, reservations, payroll, schedules, and budgets. If you are not using a system capable of tracking all this information and more, you cannot be as effective as you need to be.

Become a good manager. Managing a restaurant, or any other business, is a job that requires the ability to handle four areas effectively: physical assets, information, people (human resources), and time. The greater your skills in managing any of these areas, the greater your potential for success. Many management systems today stress the use of quality as a yardstick. Every aspect of your operation needs to be seen as a way to improve the quality of service you provide your customers. As we look at what you might be expected to do in order to manage effectively, the fundamental question you need to ask, over and over, is this: How would a change (or lack of change) in a given area affect the quality of

service or goods that you are offering your customer? Competition continues to increase, and unless your establishment is different, better, faster, or unique in some way, there is every chance that it may not survive, let alone prosper.

MANAGING PHYSICAL ASSETS

Physical assets are the equipment and supplies needed to do business. In the case of a restaurant, these might include food and beverage inventory, tables, chairs, linens, china, flatware, glassware, computers and point of sale systems, cash registers, kitchen equipment, cleaning supplies, and ware-washing machines. When we talk about managing physical assets, we are considering how anything that you must purchase or pay for affects your ability to do business well. The first step in bringing the expenses associated with your physical assets under control is to know what your expenses actually are. Then you can begin the process of making the adjustments and instituting the control systems that will keep your organization operating at maximal efficiency. One of the biggest expenses for any restaurant will always be food and beverage costs. You or your purchasing agent will have to work hard to develop and sustain a good purchasing system. The information found in Part Two of this book can help. Because each operation has different needs, there are no hard-and-fast rules, just principles that you will apply to your own situation.

MANAGING INFORMATION

You may often feel that you can never keep current in all the important areas of your work. Given the sheer volume of information being generated each day, you are probably right. The ability to tap into the information resources you need, using all types of media and technology, has never been more important. Restaurants, menus, and trends in dining room design have all been dramatically impacted by such societal trends as busier, on-the-go lifestyles and increasing interest in world cuisines. Prevailing tastes in politics, art, fashion, movies, and music do have an effect on what people eat and where and how they want to eat it. Information gathering can become a full-time task on its own. To make use of the information available, you must be able to analyze and evaluate carefully to sift out the important material from useless data.

MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES

Restaurant operations rely directly on the work and dedication of a number of people, from executives and administrators to line cooks, wait staff, and maintenance and cleaning staff. No matter how large or small your staff may be, the ability to engage all your workers in a team effort is one of the major factors in determining whether you will succeed or not.

Your goal should be to create an environment in which all staff feel they have a distinct and measurable contribution to make within the organization. The first task is establishing clear criteria, otherwise known as a job description. Training is another key component. If you want someone to do a job well, you first have to both explain and demonstrate the quality standards that you expect to see. You need to continually reinforce those standards with clear, objective evaluation of an employee's work through feedback, constructive criticism, and, when necessary, additional training or disciplinary measures.

The management of human resources includes several legal responsibilities. Everyone has the right to work in an environment that is free from physical hazards. This means that as an employer, you must provide a workspace that is well lit, properly ventilated, and free from obvious dangers such as improperly maintained equipment. Employees must have access to potable water and bathroom facilities. Beyond this bare minimum, you may offer a locker room, a laundry facility that provides clean uniforms and aprons, or other such amenities.

Workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, and disability insurance are also your responsibility. You are required to make all legal deductions from an employee's paycheck and to report all earnings properly to state and federal agencies. Liability insurance (to cover any harm to your facility, employees, or guests) must be kept up to date and at adequate levels.

You may also choose to offer additional forms of assistance as part of an employee benefits package. Life insurance, medical and dental insurance, assistance with such things as dependent care, adult literacy training, and enrollment in and support for those enrolled in substance abuse programs are all items of which you should be aware. In an increasingly tight labor market, a generous benefits package can make the difference in the caliber of employee you are able to attract and retain.

You must keep a properly completed I-9 form on file for every employee, and you should be familiar with the regulations that could affect you or those you employ. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) will provide the necessary information.

MANAGING TIME

It may seem that no matter how hard you work or how much planning you do, the days aren't long enough. Learning new skills so that you can make the best possible use of the time you have certainly ought to be an ongoing part of your career development. If you look over your operation, you will see where time is wasted.

In most operations, the top five time wasters are lack of clear priorities for tasks; poor staff training; poor communication; poor organization; and missing or inadequate tools to accomplish tasks. To combat these time wasters, use the following strategies.

Invest time in reviewing daily operations. Consider the way you, your coworkers, and your staff spend the day. Does everyone have a basic understanding of which tasks are most important? Do they know when to begin a particular task in order to bring it to completion on time? It can be an eye-opening experience to take a hard look at where the workday goes. Once you see that you and your staff need to walk too far to gather basic items or that the person who washes the dishes is sitting idle for the first two hours of the shift, you can take steps to rectify the problem. You can try to reorganize storage space. You may decide to train the dishwasher to do some prep work, or you can rewrite the schedule so that the shift begins two hours later. Until you are objective about what needs to be done and in what order, you can't begin the process of saving time.

Invest time in training others. If you expect someone to do a job properly, take enough time to explain the task carefully. Walk yourself and your staff through the jobs that must be done, and be sure that everyone understands how to do the work, where to find necessary items, how far each person's responsibility extends, and what to do in case a question or emergency comes up. Give your staff the yardsticks they need to evaluate the job and determine if they have done what was requested, in the appropriate fashion, and on time. If you don't invest this time up front, you may find yourself squandering precious time following your workers around, picking up the slack and handling work that shouldn't be taking up your day.

Learn to communicate clearly. Whether you are training a new employee, introducing a new menu item, or ordering a piece of equipment, clear communication is important. Be specific, use the most concise language you can, and be as brief as possible without leaving out necessary information. If tasks are handled by a number of people, be sure to write out each task from the first step to the last. Encourage people to ask questions if they don't understand you. If you need help learning communication skills, consider taking a workshop or seminar to strengthen any weak areas.

Take steps to create an orderly work environment. If you have to dig through five shelves to find the lid to the storage container you just put the stock in, you haven't been using your time wisely. Planning work areas carefully, thinking about all the tools, ingredients, and equipment you need for preparation and throughout service, and grouping like activities together are all techniques that can help you organize your work better. Poor placement of large and small tools is a great time waster. Use

adequate, easy-to-access storage space for common items such as whips, spoons, ladles, and tongs. Electrical outlets for small equipment ought to be within reach of everyone. While you may be forced to work within the limits of your existing floor plan, be on the lookout for products or storage strategies that can turn a bad arrangement into one that works smoothly and evenly.

Purchase, replace, and maintain all necessary tools. A well-equipped kitchen will have enough of all the tools necessary to prepare every item on the menu. If you are missing something as basic as a sieve, your cream soups won't have the right consistency. If you have a menu with several sautéed appetizers, entrées, and side dishes, are you and your line cooks waiting around while the pot washer scrambles to get you restocked with sauté pans? If you can't purchase new equipment, then think about restructuring the menu to even out the workload. If you can't remove a menu item, then invest in the tools you need to prevent a slowdown during service.

planning your career path

Whether you are seeking an extern position or planning your career upon graduation, understanding the various areas within the hospitality industry is important when laying the foundation for your career path. Setting both short- and long-term goals will help you to realize the career that you are seeking. Knowing yourself and recognizing your strengths and weaknesses factor into this equation as well. As a start, here are some general questions to ask yourself as you begin to think about your career:

- » What type of environment (corporate/business, restaurant group/company, chain restaurant, independent restaurant, fine/upscale/casual dining) do you see yourself in?
- » Do you prefer small or large volume?
- » Do you prefer front of the house or back of the house?

- » Are you seeking a management training program, or a direct hire position?
- » What is important to you—the cuisine, management style, geographic location, number of hours required per day/week, or working for a prominent chef?
- » Are medical benefits, stock options, vacation time, predictable schedule, or seasonal employment options prerequisites for your choice?
- » Are additional skill sets or further education required to reach your long-term goals?

Rank the answers to these questions in order of importance to you and keep them in mind as you set goals for your career.

career opportunities for culinary professionals

Culinary professionals are needed not just in hotel dining facilities and traditional restaurants but in a variety of settings—public and private, consumer-oriented and institutional. An increased emphasis on nutrition,

sophistication, and financial and quality control means that all settings, from the white-tablecloth restaurant to the fast-food outlet, offer interesting challenges.

Some examples of career paths that are available to you are listed below, along with some general pros and cons. As you consider a career path, keep growth in mind—you may not be qualified for an executive position immediately after graduation, but thoughtful planning can advance your career quickly.

Resorts, hotels, and spas often have a number of different dining facilities, including fine-dining restaurants, room service, coffee shops, and banquet rooms. The kitchens are large, and there will often be separate butchering, catering, and pastry kitchens on the premises. These establishments often offer a variety of front- and back-of-the-house options, upward and geographic mobility, and a comprehensive benefits package, and many have management training programs.

Independent restaurants, such as bistros, white-tablecloth establishments, and family-style restaurants, feature a full menu, and the patrons are served by trained wait staff. When seeking employment in this realm, select a restaurant based on cuisine type, chef, and size. They are less likely to offer benefits or a set schedule.

Bakeries and cafés offer a smaller environment that may specialize in specific areas (breads, wedding cakes, etc.). They may be less likely to offer benefits.

Restaurant groups/companies often have multiple concepts within the group, and often offer the possibility of a management training program and/or geographic mobility. Most have partial to full benefits packages.

Private clubs generally provide some sort of foodservice. This may be as simple as a small grill featuring sandwiches, or it may be a complete dining room. The difference is that the guests are paying members, and the food costs are typically figured differently than they would be for a public restaurant.

Country club positions may be seasonal, depending on location. Country clubs can range from very upscale facilities to local golf clubs. Many have set hours and provide benefits. You must be very willing to accommodate the members' wants.

With *contract foodservice companies*, many jobs would be considered institutional catering (used in schools, hospitals, colleges, airlines, and correctional institutions). This often demands a single menu and a cafeteria where the guests serve themselves, choosing from the offered foods. Menu selections are based on the needs of the institution's guests, the operating budget, and the administration's expectations. These settings typically offer many front- and back-of-the-house options as well as a comprehensive benefits package, and

generally adhere to a Monday through Friday schedule. Many corporations operate executive dining rooms. The degree of simplicity or elegance demanded in a particular corporation determines what type of food is offered, how it is prepared, and what style of service is appropriate.

Catering companies offer a wide range of possibilities, from upscale event planning companies to smaller, more casual menus. They provide a particular service, often tailored to meet the wishes of a special client for a particular event, such as a wedding, a cocktail reception, or a gallery opening. Caterers may provide on-site services (the client comes to the caterer's premises), off-site services (the caterer comes to the client's premises), or both. The variety of options depends on the size of the company and whether they service on- or off-premises events.

Home meal replacement (carryout) foodservice is growing in importance as more busy couples, single professionals, and families try to enjoy meals at home without having to spend time preparing them. These operations prepare entrées, salads, side dishes, and desserts that are packaged to be taken home. Many supermarkets now offer this service to their customers.

In *sales*, company size ranges from larger, broad-spectrum distributors to smaller, specialized boutiques. Many salespeople work on commission, so wages can fluctuate from pay period to pay period.

ADVANCED OPPORTUNITIES

The following options may require either further education, significant industry experience, or other skill sets. Most of these alternative options provide a more "normal" or "set" work schedule with a comprehensive benefits package.

TEACHING—On a high school/vocational level, a bachelor's degree plus state certification is required. At the college/university level, a minimum of a bachelor's degree in addition to significant industry experience (ACF certification is a plus) is required for hands-on courses. A minimum of a master's degree in addition to industry experience is required to teach liberal arts or business courses.

COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA/MARKETING/WRITING/FOOD STYLING—Most of these options will require other education (a degree in marketing, communications, or journalism) in addition to experience within the industry. Much of this work is freelance. An entrepreneurial mind is an asset.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT—Covers a wide range of employment opportunities that may require other degrees, such as food science, chemistry, nutrition, or engineering, combined with industry experience.

A REAL CHALLENGE

ENTREPRENEUR—This is probably the most difficult and most rewarding path, as you take all the credit in good times and suffer all the losses in hard times. A strong business mind and extensive planning are required to be successful. Many businesses do not turn a profit for several years, so be ready to think long-term.

THE KITCHEN BRIGADE SYSTEM

The brigade system was instituted by Escoffier to streamline and simplify work in hotel kitchens. It served to eliminate the chaos and duplication of effort that could result when workers did not have clear-cut responsibilities. Under this system, each position has a station and defined responsibilities, outlined below. In smaller operations, the classic system is generally abbreviated and responsibilities are organized so as to make the best use of workspace and talents. A shortage of skilled personnel has also made modifications in the brigade system necessary. The introduction of new equipment has helped to alleviate some of the problems associated with smaller kitchen staffs.

The chef is responsible for all kitchen operations, including ordering, supervision of all stations, and development of menu items. He or she also may be known as the *chef de cuisine* or *executive chef*. The *sous chef* is second in command, answers to the chef, may be responsible for scheduling, fills in for the chef, and assists the station chefs (or line cooks) as necessary. Small operations may not have a sous chef. The range of positions in a classic brigade also include the following:

The **SAUTÉ CHEF** (*saucier*) is responsible for all sautéed items and their sauces. This position is often considered the most demanding, responsible, and glamorous on the line.

The **FISH CHEF** (*poissonier*) is responsible for fish items and their sauces, often including fish butchering. This position is sometimes combined with the saucier position.

The **ROAST CHEF** (*rôtisseur*) is responsible for all roasted foods and related jus or other sauces.

The **GRILL CHEF** (*grillardin*) is responsible for all grilled foods. This position may be combined with that of *rôtisseur*.

The **FRY CHEF** (*friturier*) is responsible for all fried foods. This position may be combined with the *rôtisseur* position.

The **VEGETABLE CHEF** (*entremetier*) is responsible for hot appetizers and frequently has responsibility for soups, vegetables, and pastas and other starches. (In a full traditional brigade system, soups are prepared by the soup station or *potager*, and vegetables by the *legumier*.) This station may also be responsible for egg dishes.

The **ROUNDSMAN** (*tournant*) or swing cook works as needed throughout the kitchen.

The **COLD-FOODS CHEF** (*garde manger*), also known as the **PANTRY CHEF**, is responsible for preparation of cold foods including salads, cold appetizers, pâtés, and the like. This is considered a separate category of kitchen work.

The **BUTCHER** (*boucher*) is responsible for butchering meats, poultry, and occasionally fish. The *boucher* may also be responsible for breeding meat and fish items.

The **PASTRY CHEF** (*pâtissier*) is responsible for baked items, pastries, and desserts. The pastry chef frequently supervises a separate kitchen area or a separate shop in larger operations. This position may be further broken down into the following areas of specialization:

CONFISEUR (prepares candies and petits fours),

BOULANGER (prepares unsweetened doughs, as for breads and rolls),

GLACIER (prepares frozen and cold desserts), and

DÉCORATEUR (prepares showpieces and special cakes).

The **EXPEDITER** or **ANNOUNCER** (*aboyeur*) accepts orders from the dining room and relays them to the various station chefs. This individual is the last person to see the plate before it leaves the kitchen. In some operations, this may be either the chef or sous chef.

The COMMUNARD prepares the meal served to staff at some point during the shift (also called the family meal).

The COMMIS or apprentice works under a station chef to learn how the station operates and its responsibilities.

THE DINING ROOM BRIGADE SYSTEM

The dining room, or front-of-the-house, positions also have an established line of authority.

The MAÎTRE D'HÔTEL, known in American service as the dining room manager, is the person who holds the most responsibility for the front-of-the-house operation. The maître d'hôtel trains all service personnel, oversees wine selection, works with the chef to determine the menu, and organizes seating throughout service.

The WINE STEWARD (*chef de vin* or *sommelier*) is responsible for all aspects of restaurant wine service, including purchasing wines, preparing a wine list, assisting guests in wine selection, and serving wine properly. The wine steward may also be responsible for the service of liquors, beers, and other beverages. If there is no wine steward, these responsibilities are generally assumed by the maître d'hôtel.

The HEAD WAITER (*chef de salle*) is generally in charge of the service for an entire dining room. Very often this position is combined with the position of either captain or maître d'hôtel.

The CAPTAIN (*chef d'étage*) deals most directly with the guests once they are seated. The captain explains the menu, answers any questions, and takes the order. The captain generally does any tableside food preparation. If there is no captain, these responsibilities fall to the front waiter.

The FRONT WAITER (*chef de rang*) ensures that the table is properly set for each course, that the food is properly delivered to the table, and that the needs of the guests are promptly and courteously met.

The BACK WAITER or BUSBOY (*demi-chef de rang* or *commis de rang*) is generally the first position assigned to new dining room workers. This person clears plates between courses, fills water glasses and bread baskets, and assists the front waiter and/or captain as needed.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the kitchen and dining room positions, a growing number of less traditional opportunities exist, many of which do not involve the actual production or service of foods.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE MANAGERS oversee all food and beverage outlets in hotels and other large establishments.

CONSULTANTS and DESIGN SPECIALISTS will work with restaurant owners, often before the restaurant is even open, to assist in developing a menu, designing the overall layout and ambience of the dining room, and establishing work patterns for the kitchen.

WELL-INFORMED SALESPEOPLE help chefs determine how best to meet their needs for food and produce, introduce them to new products, and demonstrate the proper use of new equipment.

TEACHERS are essential to the great number of cooking schools nationwide. Most of these teachers are chefs who are sharing the benefit of their experience with students.

FOOD WRITERS and CRITICS discuss food trends, restaurants, and chefs. It will always mean more, of course, if the writer is well versed in the culinary arts. Some prominent members of the food media, such as James Beard, Craig Claiborne, and Julia Child, have been influential teachers and have written landmark cookbooks in addition to contributing to newspapers and magazines and appearing on television.

FOOD STYLISTS and PHOTOGRAPHERS work with a variety of publications, including magazines, books, catalogs, and promotional and advertising pieces.

RESEARCH-AND-DEVELOPMENT KITCHENS employ a great many culinary professionals. These may be run by food manufacturers who are developing new products or food lines, or by advisory boards hoping to promote their products. Test kitchens are also run by a variety of both trade and consumer publications.

Challenges aside, the foodservice industry is rewarding and spontaneous. It requires stamina, drive, and creative influence. Those who have made the greatest impression know that virtues such as open communication, efficient organization, proper management, innovative marketing, and thorough accounting are necessary to prosper. In due time, your knowledge and experience will gain worthy recognition.

the changing industry

TYPES OF AGRICULTURE

Today chefs are more aware of the systems in place for growing and producing the food we eat. It is important to be educated not only to answer questions that may arise from customers and diners, but also to be able to make educated choices for ourselves.

Agriculture is a system involving cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock. There are different ways in which a farmer can approach this system; a few options follow:

conventional agriculture

An industrialized agricultural system characterized by

- » mechanization
- » monocultures (less biodiversity)
- » synthetic inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides
- » maximizing productivity and profitability

organic agriculture

Agriculture involving

- » renewable resources and biological cycles, such as composting
- » no genetically modified organisms
- » no synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers
- » no synthetic feeds, growth hormones, or antibiotics
- » heightened compassion for animal welfare

biodynamic agriculture

Beyond organic, biodynamic agriculture considers the:

- » dynamic, metaphysical, and spiritual aspects of the farm
- » balance between physical and nonphysical realms
- » cosmic events, such as planting according to the phases of the moon

The food industry is intrinsically woven into the fabric of culture. The industry and every profession within it reflect cultural and societal changes, some superficial while others are foundational. These reflections can be seen in almost every aspect of the industry, such as how food is prepared, what kinds and types of food are eaten more readily, and menu and recipe development.

SUSTAINABILITY

One current focus is on sustainability. In the world of food, “sustainability” refers to healthy ways of raising, growing, and harvesting food and ensuring that the land can support both the grower and the crop into the future. It is not simply healthy for consumers, but for plants, animals, and the environment as well. Sustainable farming does not harm the environment through the use of harmful pesticides or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), or through overfarming. Sustainable farms also take care of their workers and are humane toward animals; sustainable agriculture respects the farmers by paying them a fair wage. Sustainability is meant to support and improve the community, especially the rural communities where farms are based.

Consumers, chefs, and restaurateurs are all becoming increasingly aware of the positive effects of sustainability and how to live a sustainable lifestyle. A restaurant can support sustainability in a number of ways:

1. **BUY LOCALLY.** This allows the chef to know the quality and conditions under which the food they are using is raised, grown, or harvested. Buying locally increases awareness of seasonality, and supports the local economy—items that have traveled far have often lost quality and freshness. This concept also appeals to customers who are becoming more aware of the importance of sustainability and use of local products.
2. **USE HEIRLOOM PRODUCTS.** Heirloom products are different from most available commercially. An “heirloom plant” is defined as any garden plant that has been passed down within a food family. Some heirloom seeds are from plants 50 to 100 years old (making them entirely free of GMOs), and have a unique genetic composition compared with their commercial counterparts. They may provide new textures, colors, and flavors that chefs can incorporate into any menu.

Heirloom products are

- » open-pollinated, yielding like offspring
- » a distinct variety of plant
- » generally not commercially grown
- » a product of traditional methods
- » usually grown on a small scale
- » often tied to a particular region
- » often has been in use for 40 to 50 years or more

3. **BUILD A SUSTAINABLE RESTAURANT.** Chefs and restaurateurs can use the concepts of sustainability in other ways in the restaurant—going far beyond simply the food used on the menu. Using solar or wind power, for example, decreases energy costs and the use of fossil fuels. The chef can implement a recycling program that includes not only glass, plastic, or paper but also waste oil that could be converted into biofuel. Check for local and national resources to learn about the many ways to make a restaurant more sustainable.

GLOBALIZATION OF FLAVORS

Another ever-changing aspect of the food industry since the beginning of time is the global sharing and blending of cuisines.

Cuisine, like any cultural element of society, has geographic, religious, and many other influences that shape its development. Conversely, a cuisine—once developed—exerts influence on the culture of its land of origin as well as on any outside cultures with which it may come in contact. Elements of the cuisine may shape events or celebrations that become cultural norms, or may be assimilated into another culture, become intrinsic to it, and then work to shape or drive agricultural demands and practices.

In this context, any meal is more than mere sustenance. For today's chef or student of the culinary arts, this information can be of value; identifying basic foods and preparation techniques that translate across cuisines, cultures, and continents is an important part of the culinary profession. Any cuisine is a reflection of more than just a collection of ingredients, cooking utensils, and dishes from a geographic location. These elements are undoubtedly critical to establishing a culinary identity. But they are not, all on their own, a cuisine.

Shared traditions and beliefs also give a cuisine a particular identity. A cultural cuisine is an important element in developing and maintaining a group's identity. And perhaps most relevant from today's perspective, a system of governance and trade that encourages the "migration" of foods and dishes from one place to another strongly influences cuisine. The presence or absence of a shoreline has a tremendous impact on a developing cooking style. Climate and soil composition, as well as farming techniques, also have a strong influence.

A cuisine also gives us a way to express and establish customs for meals (what is eaten, when, and with whom), from simple meals to celebrations and ritual

meals. By taking a look at some of the world's major religions, it is easy to see their influence on cuisine. Edicts favoring or prohibiting certain foods, as well as a calendar of feasting, fasting, and celebrating rituals, are often widespread enough in an area to color the way that a cuisine evolves and what is widely held to be authentic. For example, with its proscription against eating meat for certain castes, Hinduism has contributed to a cuisine with a strong tradition of meatless dishes.

There has probably never been a time when the migration of foods from one part of the world to another has not been a factor in a developing cuisine. While these exchanges are more rapid and frequent in modern times, they have always been apparent. Sometimes these exchanges had a great deal to do with the conquest of lands by an invading force. Other times, trade and its associated activities played a major role.

Whether benign or aggressive, a system of culinary exchange is part of any cuisine's story. New ingredients find their way into traditional dishes. Over time, the new ingredient becomes so firmly entrenched, we may even forget that the dish would not be recognized as authentic. A clear example of this can be seen with the adoption of many ingredients that were native to the Americas, such as the tomato. Today, who could imagine Italian cuisine without the tomato? It is so embedded in the country's cuisine that anyone could easily mistake Italy as its land of origin.

Techniques are also a window into the cooking of a specific cuisine. As you might expect, a technique can have a different name as you travel from one region to another. Certain cooking styles are popular in a given region of the world because they are suited to the lifestyle and living conditions; others may remain virtually unknown.

The study of any single cuisine is a multifaceted undertaking. Cuisines have never developed in a vacuum. As you probe more deeply into the historical origins of the recipe in your hand today, you may find ingredients that traveled from East to West or from the Old World to the New World in place of an earlier option. Traditional methods of cooking a dish may have changed with the times or to meet the special challenges of cooking for large groups or in a restaurant setting.

Knowing the classic techniques and cuisine of a culture (whether France, India, or beyond) is always helpful when you choose to modernize or change a traditional recipe. Read cookbooks, visit restaurants and other countries, and keep an open mind in order to experience a wide variety of world cuisines.