

chapter 1



The Food Service Industry

T

his is an exciting time to begin a career in food service. Interest in dining and curiosity about new foods are greater than ever. More new restaurants open every year. Many restaurants are busy every night, and restaurant chains number among the nation's largest corporations. The chef, once considered a domestic servant, has become respected as an artist and skilled craftsperson.

The growth of the food service industry creates a demand for thousands of skilled people every year. Many people are attracted by a career that is challenging and exciting and, above all, provides the chance to find real satisfaction in doing a job well.

Unfortunately, many people see only the glamorous side of food service and fail to understand that this is a tiny part of the picture. The public does not often see the years of training, the long hours, and the tremendous pressures that lie behind every success.

Before you start your practical studies, covered in later chapters, it is good to know a little about the profession you are entering. This chapter gives you a brief overview of modern food service, including how it got to where it is today and where it is headed.



A Short History of Modern Food Service

The value of history is that it helps us understand the present and the future. In food service, knowledge of our professional heritage helps us see why we do things as we do, how our cooking techniques have been developed and refined, and how we can continue to develop and innovate in the years ahead.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

1. Name and describe four major developments that have significantly changed the food service industry in the twentieth century.
2. Identify seven major stations in a classical kitchen.
3. Explain how the size and type of an operation influence the organization of the modern kitchen.
4. Identify and describe three skill levels of food production personnel.
5. Identify eight behavioral characteristics that food service workers should develop and maintain to achieve the highest standards of professionalism.

THE ORIGINS OF CLASSICAL AND MODERN CUISINE

Quantity cookery has existed for thousands of years, as long as there have been large groups of people to feed, such as armies. But modern food service is said to have begun shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century, when a Parisian named Boulanger began selling dishes that he referred to as "restoratives." (The word *restaurant* comes from the French verb *restaurer*, "to restore.") Before this time, food production in France was controlled by guilds. Caterers, pastry makers, roasters, and pork butchers held licenses to prepare specific items. An innkeeper, in order to serve a meal to guests, had to get the various menu items from those operations that were licensed to provide them. Guests had little or no choice and simply ate what was available for that meal. Boulanger's establishment, on the other hand, provided choices for customers. In challenging the rules of the guilds, Boulanger unwittingly changed the course of food service history.

The changes that had already begun received a great stimulus as a result of the French Revolution in 1793. Before this time, the great chefs were employed in the houses of the French nobility. With the revolution and the end of the monarchy, many chefs, suddenly out of work, opened restaurants in and around Paris to support themselves.

The great chef of this time was *Marie-Antoine Carême* (1784–1833), whose career spanned the first 30 years of the nineteenth century. Carême is credited as the founder of classical cuisine. As a young man, he learned all the branches of cooking, and he dedicated his career to refining and organizing culinary techniques. His many books contain the first really systematic account of cooking principles, recipes, and menu making.

As a chef to kings, heads of state, and wealthy patrons, Carême became famous as the creator of elaborate, elegant display pieces, the ancestors of our modern wedding cakes, sugar sculptures, and ice and tallow carvings. But it was Carême's practical and theoretical work as an author and chef that was responsible, to a large extent, for bringing cooking out of the Middle Ages and into the modern period.

ESCOFFIER

Georges-Auguste Escoffier (1847–1935) was the greatest chef of his time and is revered by chefs and gourmets as the father of twentieth-century cookery. His two main contributions were the simplification of classical cuisine and the classical menu and the reorganization of the kitchen.

It is hard to believe that Escoffier's elaborate multicourse banquets are a simplification of anything. But in the typical banquet menu of the eighteenth century, each course consisted of as many as 20 separate dishes—or more!—mostly a variety of meats and poultry, all placed on the table at once. Guests helped themselves to the few dishes they could reach. Carême began the reform, but Escoffier brought the menu into the twentieth century.

Escoffier rejected what he called the "general confusion" of the old menus, in which sheer quantity seemed to be the most important factor. Instead, he called for order and diversity and emphasized the careful selection of one or two dishes per course, dishes that would follow one another harmoniously and that would delight the taste with their delicacy and simplicity.

Escoffier's books and recipes are still important reference works for professional chefs. The basic cooking methods and preparations we study today are based on Escoffier's work.

Escoffier's second major achievement, the reorganization of the kitchen, resulted in a streamlined workplace that was better suited to turning out the simplified dishes and menus

that he instituted. The system he established is still in use today, especially in large hotels and full-service restaurants, as we discuss later in this chapter.

MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

Today's kitchens look much different from those of Escoffier's day, even though our basic cooking principles are the same. Also, the dishes we eat have gradually changed due to the innovations and creativity of modern chefs. The process of simplification and refinement, to which Carême and Escoffier made monumental contributions, is still going on, adapting classical cooking to modern conditions and tastes.

Many developments in the twentieth century have led to changes in the food service industry.

Development of New Equipment

We take for granted such basic equipment as gas and electric ranges and ovens and electric refrigerators. But even these essential tools did not exist until fairly recently. The easily controlled heat of modern cooking equipment, as well as motorized food cutters, mixers, and other processing equipment, has greatly simplified food production.

Research and technology continue to produce sophisticated tools for the kitchen. Some of these products, such as tilting skillets and steam-jacketed kettles, can do many jobs and are popular in many kitchens. Others can perform specialized tasks rapidly and efficiently, but their usefulness depends on volume because they are designed to do only a few jobs.

Modern equipment has enabled many food service operations to change their production methods. With sophisticated cooling, freezing, and heating equipment, it is possible to prepare some foods further in advance and in larger quantities. Some large multiunit operations prepare food for all their units in a large central commissary. The food is prepared in quantity, packaged, chilled or frozen, then heated or cooked to order in the individual units.

Development and Availability of New Food Products

Modern refrigeration and rapid transportation caused revolutionary changes in eating habits. For the first time, fresh foods of all kinds—meats, fish, vegetables, and fruits—became available all year. Exotic delicacies can now be shipped from anywhere in the world and arrive fresh and in peak condition.

The development of preservation techniques—not just refrigeration but also freezing, canning, freeze-drying, vacuum-packing, and irradiation—increased the availability of most foods and made affordable some foods that were once rare and expensive.

Techniques of food preservation have had another effect. It is now possible to do some or most of the preparation and processing of foods before shipping rather than in the food service operation itself. Thus, convenience foods have come into being. Convenience foods continue to account for an increasing share of the total food market.

Some professional cooks think of new convenience food products and new equipment as a threat to their position. They fear that these products will eliminate the need for skilled chefs because everything will be prepared or done by machine. However, handling convenience products properly still requires skill and knowledge. The quality of the product as served depends on how well the cook handles it. Furthermore, many new food products and new types of equipment are intended to do work that takes little or no skill, such as peeling potatoes and puréeing vegetables. Convenience foods and advanced equipment free cooks from drudgery so that they have more time to spend on those jobs that do require skill and experience.

Sanitary and Nutritional Awareness

The development of the sciences of microbiology and nutrition had a great impact on food service. One hundred years ago, there was little understanding of the causes of food poisoning and food spoilage. Food handling practices have come a long way since Escoffier's day.

Also, little knowledge of nutritional principles was available until fairly recently. Today, nutrition is an important part of a cook's training. Customers are also more knowledgeable and therefore more likely to demand healthful, well-balanced menus.

Modern Cooking Styles

All these developments have helped change cooking styles, menus, and eating habits. The evolution of cuisine that has been going on for hundreds of years continues. Changes occur not only because of technological developments, such as those just described, but also because of our reactions to culinary traditions.

Two opposing forces can be seen at work throughout the history of cooking. One is the urge to simplify, to eliminate complexity and ornamentation, and instead to emphasize the plain, natural tastes of basic, fresh ingredients. The other is the urge to invent, to highlight the creativity of the chef, with an accent on fancier, more complicated presentations and procedures. Both these forces are valid and healthy; they continually refresh and renew the art of cooking.

Recent history provides an example of these trends. Reacting to what they saw as a heavy, stodgy, overly complicated classical cuisine, a number of French chefs in the late 1960s and early 1970s became famous for a style called *nouvelle cuisine* ("new cooking"). They rejected many traditional principles, such as a dependence on flour to thicken sauces, and instead urged simpler, more natural flavors and preparations, with lighter sauces and seasonings and shorter cooking times. Very quickly, however, this "simpler" style became extravagant and complicated, famous for strange combinations of foods and fussy, ornate arrangements and designs. By the 1980s, many people were saying that *nouvelle cuisine* was dead.

It isn't dead, of course, any more than the cuisine of Escoffier is dead. The best achievements of *nouvelle cuisine* have taken a permanent place in the classical tradition. Meanwhile, many of the excesses have been forgotten. It is probably fair to say that most of the best new ideas and the lasting accomplishments were those of classically trained chefs with a solid grounding in the basics.

North American traditional dishes and regional specialties represent the combination of cooking traditions brought by immigrant settlers with the indigenous ingredients of a bountiful land. For many years, critics often argued that menus in most North American restaurants offered the same monotonous, mediocre food. Within the past 20 years, by contrast, North American cooking has become fashionable, and almost any local specialty is declared "classic." The fact is, however, that in any country, one finds both good and bad food. It takes a skilled cook with a knowledge of the basics to prepare exceptional food, whether it is American, Canadian, classical French, or any other.

The growth of food service holds great promise for new cooks and chefs. Technology will continue to make rapid changes in our industry, and men and women are needed who can adapt to these changes and respond to new challenges. Although automation and convenience foods will no doubt grow in importance, imaginative chefs who can create new dishes and develop new techniques and styles will always be needed, as will skilled cooks who can apply both old and new techniques to produce high-quality foods in all kinds of facilities, from restaurants and hotels to schools and hospitals.

The Organization of Modern Kitchens

THE BASIS OF KITCHEN ORGANIZATION

The purpose of kitchen organization is to assign or allocate tasks so that they can be done efficiently and properly and so that all workers know what their responsibilities are.

The way a kitchen is organized depends on several factors.

1. The menu.

The kinds of dishes to be produced obviously determine the jobs that need to be done. The menu is, in fact, the basis for the entire operation. Because of its importance, we devote a whole chapter to a study of the menu (Chapter 6).

2. The type of establishment.

The major types of food service establishments are listed as follows:

- Hotels
- Institutional kitchens
 - Schools
 - Hospitals
 - Employee lunchrooms
 - Airline catering
 - Military food service
 - Correctional institutions
- Catering and banquet services
- Fast-food restaurants
- Carry-out or take-out food facilities
- Full-service restaurants

3. The size of the operation (the number of customers and the volume of food served).

4. The physical facilities, including the equipment in use.

THE CLASSICAL BRIGADE

As you learned earlier in this chapter, one of Escoffier's important achievements was the reorganization of the kitchen. He divided the kitchen into departments, or stations, based on the kinds of foods they produced. A station chef was placed in charge of each department. In a small operation, the station chef may be the only worker in the department. But in a large kitchen, each station chef might have several assistants.

This system, with many variations, is still used today, especially in large hotels with traditional kinds of food service. The major positions are as follows:

1. The *chef* is the person in charge of the kitchen. In large establishments, this person has the title of *executive chef*. The executive chef is a manager who is responsible for all aspects of food production, including menu planning, purchasing, costing, and planning work schedules.
2. The *sous chef* (soo shef) is directly in charge of production. Because the executive chef's responsibilities require a great deal of time in the office, the sous chef takes command of the actual production and the minute-by-minute supervision of the staff.
3. The *station chefs*, or *chefs de partie*, are in charge of particular areas of production. The following are the most important station chefs:
 - The *sauce chef*, or *saucier* (so-see-ay), prepares sauces, stews, and hot hors d'oeuvres, and sautés foods to order. This is usually the highest position of all the stations.
 - The *fish cook*, or *poissonier* (pwah-so-nyay), prepares fish dishes. (This station may be handled by the saucier in some kitchens.)
 - The *vegetable cook*, or *entremetier* (awn-truh-met-yay), prepares vegetables, soups, starches, and eggs. Large kitchens may divide these duties among the *vegetable cook*, the *fry cook*, and the *soup cook*.
 - The *roast cook*, or *rotisseur* (ro-tee-sur), prepares roasted and braised meats and their gravies and broils meats and other items to order. A large kitchen may have a separate *broiler cook*, or *grillardin* (gree-ar-dan), to handle the broiled items. The broiler cook may also prepare deep-fried meats and fish.
 - The *pantry chef*, or *garde manger* (gard-mawn-zhay), is responsible for cold foods, including salads and dressings, pâtés, cold hors d'oeuvres, and buffet items.
 - The *pastry chef*, or *pâtissier* (pa-tees-syay), prepares pastries and desserts.
 - The *relief cook*, *swing cook*, or *tournant* (toor-nawn) replaces other station heads.
4. *Cooks* and *assistants* in each station or department help with the particular duties that are assigned to them. For example, the assistant vegetable cook may wash, peel, and trim vegetables. With experience, assistants may be promoted to station cooks and then to station chefs.

MODERN KITCHEN ORGANIZATION

As you can see, only a large establishment needs a staff like the classical brigade just described. In fact, some large hotels have even larger staffs, with other positions such as separate day and night sous chefs, assistant chef, banquet chef, butcher, baker, and so on.

Most modern operations, on the other hand, are smaller than this. The size of the classical brigade may be reduced simply by combining two or more positions where the workload allows it. For example, the *second cook* may combine the duties of the sauce cook, fish cook, soup cook, and vegetable cook.

A typical medium-size operation may employ a chef, a second cook, a broiler cook, a pantry cook, and a few cooks' helpers.

A *working chef* is in charge of operations that are not large enough to have an executive chef. In addition to being in charge of the kitchen, the working chef also handles one of the production stations. For example, he or she may handle the sauté station, plate foods during service, and help on other stations when needed.

Small kitchens may have only a chef, one or two cooks, and perhaps one or two assistants to handle simple jobs, such as washing and peeling vegetables.

In many small operations, the *short-order cook* is the backbone of the kitchen during service time. This cook may handle the broiler, deep fryer, griddle, sandwich production, and even some sautéed items. In other words, the short-order cook's responsibility is preparation of foods that can be quickly prepared to order.

By contrast, establishments such as school cafeterias may do no cooking to order at all. Stations and assignments are based on the requirements of quantity preparation rather than cooking to order.

SKILL LEVELS

The preceding discussion is necessarily very general because there are so many kinds of kitchen organizations. Titles vary also. The responsibilities of the worker called the *second cook*, for example, are not necessarily the same in every establishment. Escoffier's standardized system has evolved in many directions.

One title that is often misunderstood and much abused is *chef*. The general public tends to refer to anyone with a white hat as a chef, and people who like to cook for guests in their homes refer to themselves as amateur chefs.

Strictly speaking, the name *chef* should be reserved for one who is *in charge of a kitchen* or a part of a kitchen. The word *chef* is French for "chief" or "head." Studying this book will not make you a chef. That title must be earned by experience not only in preparing food but also in managing a staff and in planning production. Use the word *chef* with respect, because when you become a chef, you will want the same respect.

Skills required of food production personnel vary not only with the job level but also with the establishment and the kind of food prepared. The director of a hospital kitchen and the head chef in a French restaurant need different skills. The skills needed by a short-order cook in a coffee shop are not exactly the same as those needed by a production worker in a school cafeteria. Nevertheless, we can group skills into three general categories.

1. Supervisory.

The head of a food service kitchen, whether called executive chef, head chef, working chef, or kitchen director, must have management and supervisory skills as well as a thorough knowledge of food production. Leadership positions require an individual who understands organizing and motivating people, planning menus and production procedures, controlling costs and managing budgets, and purchasing food supplies and equipment. Even if he or she does no cooking at all, the chef must be an experienced cook in order to schedule production, instruct workers, and control quality. Above all, the chef must be able to work well with people, even under extreme pressure.

2. Skilled and technical.

While the chef is the head of an establishment, the cooks are the backbone. These workers carry out the actual food production. Thus, they must have knowledge of and experience in cooking techniques, at least for all the dishes made in their own department. In addition, they must be able to function well with their fellow workers and to coordinate with other departments. Food production is a team activity.

3. Entry level.

Entry-level jobs in food service usually require no particular skills or experience. Workers in these jobs are assigned such work as washing vegetables and preparing salad greens. As their knowledge and experience increase, they may be given more complex tasks and eventually become skilled cooks. Many executive chefs began their careers as pot washers who got a chance to peel potatoes when the pot sink was empty.

Beginning in an entry-level position and working one's way up with experience has been the traditional method of advancing in a food service career. Today, however, many cooks are graduates of one- or two-year cooking schools. But even with such an education, many new graduates begin at entry-level positions. This is as it should be and certainly should not be seen as a discouragement. Schools teach general cooking knowledge, while every food service establishment requires specific skills, according to its own menu and its own procedures. Experience as well as theoretical knowledge is needed to be able to adapt to real-life working situations. However, students who have studied and learned well should be able to work their way up much more rapidly than the beginners with no knowledge at all.

Standards of Professionalism

What does it take to be a good food service worker?

The emphasis of a food service education is on learning a set of skills. But in many ways, *attitudes* are more important than skills because a good attitude will help you not only learn skills but also persevere and overcome the many difficulties you will face in your career.

The successful food service worker follows an unwritten code of behavior and set of attitudes we call *professionalism*. Let's look at some of the qualities that a professional must have.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE JOB

In order to be a good professional cook, you have to like cooking and want to do it well. Being serious about your work doesn't mean you can't enjoy it. But the enjoyment comes from the satisfaction of doing your job well and making everything run smoothly.

Every experienced chef knows the stimulation of the rush. When it's the busiest time of the evening, the orders are coming in so fast you can hardly keep track of them, and every split second counts—then, when everyone digs in and works together and everything clicks, there's real excitement in the air. But this excitement comes only when you work for it.

A cook with a positive attitude works quickly, efficiently, neatly, and safely. Professionals have pride in their work and want to make sure that the work is something to be proud of.

STAYING POWER

Food service requires physical and mental stamina, good health, and a willingness to work hard. It is hard work. The pressures can be intense and the hours long and grueling. You may be working evenings and weekends when everyone else is playing. And the work can be monotonous. You might think it's drudgery to hand-shape two or three dozen dinner rolls for your baking class, but wait until you get that great job in the big hotel and are told to make 3000 canapés for a party.

ABILITY TO WORK WITH PEOPLE

Few of you will work in an establishment so small that you are the only person on the staff. Food service work is teamwork, and it's essential to be able to work well on a team and to cooperate with your fellow workers. You can't afford to let ego problems, petty jealousy, departmental rivalries, or feelings about other people get in the way of doing the job well. In the old days, many chefs were famous for their temper tantrums. Fortunately, self-control is more valued today.

EAGERNESS TO LEARN

There is more to learn about cooking than you will learn in a lifetime. But isn't it great to try? The greatest chefs in the world are the first to admit that they have more to learn, and they keep working, experimenting, and studying.

The food service industry is changing so rapidly that it is vital to be open to new ideas. No matter how good your techniques are, you might learn an even better way.

A FULL RANGE OF SKILLS

Most people who become professional cooks do so because they like to cook. This is an important motivation, but it is also important to develop and maintain other skills that are necessary for the profession. To be successful, a cook must understand and manage food cost and other financial matters, manage and maintain proper inventories, deal with purveyors, and understand personnel management.

EXPERIENCE

One of our most respected chefs has said, "You don't really know how to cook a dish until you have done it a thousand times."

There is no substitute for years of experience. Studying cooking principles in books and in schools can get your career off to a running start. You may learn more about basic cooking theories from your chef instructors than you could in several years of working your way up from washing vegetables. But if you want to become an accomplished cook, you need practice, practice, and more practice. A diploma will not make you a chef.

DEDICATION TO QUALITY

Many people think that only a special category of food can be called *gourmet food*. It's hard to say exactly what that is. Apparently, the only thing so-called gourmet foods have in common is high price.

The only distinction worth making is between well-prepared food and poorly prepared food. There is good roast duckling à l'orange and there is bad roast duckling à l'orange. There are good hamburgers and French fries, and there are bad hamburgers and French fries.

Whether you work in a fancy French restaurant, a fast-food restaurant, a college cafeteria, or a catering house, you can do your job well, or not. The choice is yours.

High quality doesn't necessarily mean high price. It costs no more to cook green beans properly than to overcook them. But in order to produce high-quality food, you must want to. It is not enough to know how.

GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE BASICS

Experimentation and innovation in cooking are the order of the day. Brilliant chefs are breaking old boundaries, inventing dishes that would have been unthinkable years ago. There seems to be no limit to what can be tried.

However, the very chefs who seem to be most revolutionary are the first to insist on the importance of solid grounding in basic techniques and in the classic methods practiced since Escoffier's day. In order to innovate, you have to know where to begin.

For the beginner, knowing the basics will help you take better advantage of your experience. When you watch a practiced cook at work, you will understand better what you are seeing and will know what questions to ask. In order to play great music on the piano, you first have to learn to play scales and exercises.

That's what this book is about. It's not a course in French cooking or American cooking or gourmet cooking or coffee shop cooking. It's a course in the basics. When you finish the book, you will not know everything. But you should be ready to take good advantage of the many rewarding years of food service experience ahead of you.

Terms for Review

Carême	sous chef	rotisseur	working chef
Escoffier	station chef	grillardin	short-order cook
nouvelle cuisine	saucier	garde manger	professionalism
chef	poissonier	pâtissier	
executive chef	entremetier	tournant	

Questions for Discussion

1. Escoffier is sometimes called the father of modern food service. What were his most important accomplishments?
2. Discuss several ways in which modern technology has changed the food service industry.
3. What is the purpose of kitchen organization? Is the classical system of organization developed by Escoffier the best one for all types of kitchens: Why or why not?
4. True or false: A cook in charge of the sauce and sauté station in a large hotel needs to have supervisory skills as well as cooking skills. Explain your answer.
5. True or false: If a culinary arts student in a professional school studies hard, works diligently, gets top grades, and shows real dedication, he or she will be qualified to be a chef upon graduation. Explain your answer.