

Chef

Chefs prepare, cook and present food.

ANNUAL SALARY

£13,000 to £50,000

Average UK salary in 2019 was £29,588 (source Office for Statistics)

WORKING HOURS

40 to 45

-7%

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

There will be 7% fewer Chef jobs in 2024, [in your local area](#)



What's it all about?

What you'll do

You could work in hotels, restaurants, pubs, schools, colleges, cruise ships, the NHS, private dining or the armed forces.

In a small kitchen you may be a general chef. In a large kitchen you may be a specialist chef, in charge of one area like pastry, fish or vegetables, working under a head chef.

Your day-to-day tasks will vary with your role, but may include:

- preparing attractive menus to nutritional standards
- controlling and ordering stock and inspecting it on delivery
- gutting and preparing animals and fish for cooking
- scraping and washing large quantities of vegetables and salads
- cooking and presenting food creatively
- monitoring production to maintain quality and consistent portion sizes
- working under pressure to make sure food is served on time
- keeping to hygiene, health and safety and licensing rules

Skills and Knowledge

You'll need knowledge of allergens, nutrition and diets. You'll also need:

- to be thorough and pay attention to detail
- knowledge of food production methods
- the ability to accept criticism and work well under pressure
- leadership skills
- the ability to work well with others
- knowledge of manufacturing production and processes
- maths knowledge
- the ability to work well with your hands
- to be able to use a computer and the main software packages competently

Entry requirements

You can get into this job through:

- a university course
- a college course
- an apprenticeship
- working towards this role

University

You could study for a foundation degree, higher national diploma or degree in:

- culinary arts
- professional cookery

You'll usually need:

- 1 or 2 A levels for a foundation degree or higher national diploma
- 2 to 3 A levels for a degree

College

One way into the job is to take a college course, you can start at Level 2 and then progress onto a Level 3 Diploma in Professional Cookery or Level 4 Diploma in Professional Culinary Arts.

You'll usually need:

- 4 GCSE grades at 9 to 3 for a level 2 course
- 4 or 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C) for a level 3 course
- 1 or 2 A levels, a level 3 diploma or relevant experience for a level 4 or level 5 course

Apprenticeship

You can learn while you work by doing an intermediate or advanced level apprenticeship as a chef.

You'll usually need:

- some GCSEs, usually including English and Maths, for an intermediate apprenticeship
- 5 GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A* to C), including English and Maths, for an advanced apprenticeship

Work

You could start work as a kitchen assistant or trainee 'commis' chef and work your way up while learning on the job. You could apply for work with restaurants or catering companies.

Volunteering and experience

If you have no experience, you could volunteer in a community kitchen before applying for a job.

Employment by region

Region	Jobs
East of England	23,549
Scotland	28,449
North East	6,268
East Midlands	10,864
Northern Ireland	3,734
London	62,941
Yorkshire and the Humber	11,857
South West	18,100
Wales	16,473
West Midlands	14,392
South East	36,695
North West	20,179

Salary

£13,000 to £50,000

Starting salary: £13,000 (trainee chef)

Experienced salary: £18,000 to £25,000 (section chef)

These figures are a guide.

Working hours

40 to 45

Your working day may start in the early morning, have split shift or work late at night. You may work weekends and public holidays. You could get seasonal work.

Kitchens are hot, humid and busy and the job is physically demanding.

You'll usually wear chef whites and a hat.

You may need a driving licence if you work unsocial hours or in a remote location.

Career path and progression

With experience, you could progress to section chef (station chef) and look after a particular area like desserts. The next step is sous chef, running an entire kitchen when the head chef is busy.

As head chef (also known as chef de cuisine), you'll run a kitchen, create menus and manage the budget.

You could move into the business side by taking a foundation degree or degree in hospitality management.

Very large establishments have executive chefs, usually in charge of multiple outlets. This is a management role and you would do very little cooking.

Another option is to train as a teacher or assessor working for a college or training provider.