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# Chef

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A **chef** is a person who cooks professionally for other people. Traditionally it refers to a highly skilled professional cook who is proficient in all aspects of food preparation.

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## Etymology

The word "chef" is borrowed (and shortened) from the term *chef de cuisine* (French pronunciation: [ʃɛf.də.kɥi.zin]), the director or head of a kitchen. (The French word comes from Latin *caput* and is cognate with English "chief".) In English, the title "chef" in the culinary profession originated in the *haute cuisine* of the 19th century. Today it is often used to refer to any professional cook, regardless of rank, though in most classically defined kitchens, it refers to the head chef; others, in North American parlance, are "cooks".

## Titles

Below are various titles given to those working in a professional kitchen and each can be considered a title for a type of chef. Many of the titles are based on the *brigade de cuisine* (or brigade system) documented by Auguste Escoffier, while others have a more general meaning depending on the individual kitchen.

### *Chef de cuisine*, executive chef and head chef

## Chef



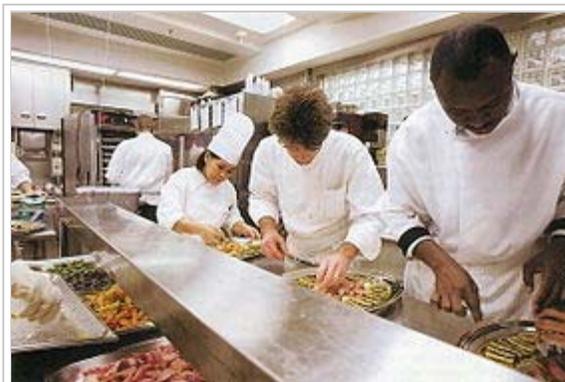
Chefs in training in Paris, France (2005).

### Occupation

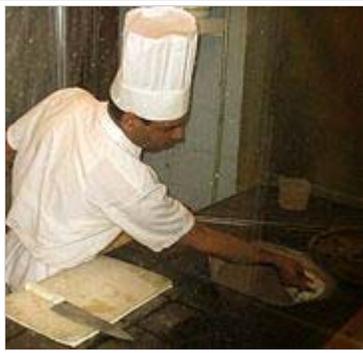
**Activity sectors** Culinary arts

### Description

**Education required** Catering college; see European training



White House chefs preparing the official dinner for the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.



A chef working with a tandoor oven, a cylindrical clay oven used in cooking and baking

This person is in charge of all things related to the kitchen, which usually includes menu creation, management of kitchen staff, ordering and purchasing of inventory, and plating design. *Chef de cuisine* is the traditional French term from which the English word chef is derived. *Head chef* is often used to designate someone with the same duties as an executive chef, but there is usually someone in charge of them, possibly making the larger executive decisions such



Master Pastry Chef O'Sullivan Culinary, Costa Rica.

as direction of menu, final authority in staff management decisions, etc. This is often the case for chefs with multiple restaurants.

### Sous-chef

The *Sous-Chef de Cuisine* (under-chef of the kitchen) is the second in command and direct assistant of the Chef. This person may be responsible for scheduling and substituting when the Chef is off-duty and will also fill in for or assist the *Chef de Partie* (line cook) when needed. This person is responsible for inventory, cleanliness of the kitchen, organization and constant training of all employees. The "Sous-Chef" is responsible for taking commands from the Chef and following through with them. The "Sous-Chef" is responsible for line checks and rotation of all product. Smaller operations may not have a *sous-chef*, while larger operations may have several.<sup>[1]</sup>



Master Executive Chef O'Sullivan Culinary, Costa Rica.

### Chef de partie

A *chef de partie*, also known as a "station chef" or "line cook",<sup>[2]</sup> is in charge of a particular area of production. In large kitchens, each station chef might have several cooks and/or assistants. In most kitchens, however, the station chef is the only worker in that department. Line cooks are often divided into a hierarchy of their own, starting with "first cook", then "second cook", and so on as needed.

### Commis (Chef)

A commis is a basic chef in larger kitchens who works under a *chef de partie* to learn the station's responsibilities and operation.<sup>[3]</sup> This may be a chef who has recently completed formal culinary training or is still undergoing training.<sup>[4]</sup>

Station-chef titles which are part of the brigade system include:<sup>[5]</sup>

English	French	IPA	Description
sauté chef	<i>saucier</i>	[sosje]	Responsible for all sautéed items and their sauce. This is usually the highest stratified position of all the stations.

fish chef	<i>poissonnier</i>	[pwasɔ̃nɛ]	Prepares fish dishes and often does all fish butchering as well as appropriate sauces. This station may be combined with the <i>saucier</i> position.
roast chef	<i>rôtisseur</i>	[ʁɔtisœʁ]	Prepares roasted and braised meats and their appropriate sauce.
grill chef	<i>grillardin</i>	[ɡʁijɑʁdɛ̃]	Prepares all grilled foods; this position may be combined with the <i>rotisseur</i> .
fry chef	<i>friturier</i>	[fʁityʁjɛ]	Prepares all fried items; this position may be combined with the <i>rotisseur</i> position.
vegetable chef	<i>entremetier</i>	[ɑ̃tʁəmetjɛ]	Prepares hot appetizers and often prepares the soups, vegetables, pastas and starches. In a full brigade system a <i>potager</i> would prepare soups and a <i>legumier</i> would prepare vegetables.
roundsman	<i>tournant</i>	[tuʁnɑ̃]	Also referred to as a swing cook, fills in as needed on stations in the kitchen.
pantry chef	<i>garde manger</i>	[ɡaʁd mɑ̃ʒɛ]	Responsible for preparing cold foods, including salads, cold appetizers, <i>pâtés</i> and other <i>charcuterie</i> items.
butcher	<i>boucher</i>	[buʃɛ]	Butchers meats, poultry and sometimes fish. May also be responsible for breading meats and fish.
pastry chef	<i>pâtissier</i>	[patisjɛ]	Is qualified in making baked goods such as pastries, cakes, biscuits, macarons, chocolates, breads and desserts. Pastry Chefs can specialize in cakes in patisseries or bakeries by making wedding, cupcakes, birthday and special occasion cakes. In larger establishments, the pastry chef often supervises a separate team in their own kitchen or separate shop.

## Kitchen assistants

Kitchen assistants are of two types, kitchen-hands and stewards. Kitchen-hands assist with basic food preparation tasks under the chef's direction. They carry out relatively unskilled tasks such as peeling potatoes and washing salad. Stewards are involved in the scullery, washing up and general cleaning duties. In a smaller kitchen, these duties may be incorporated.

A *communard* is in charge of preparing the meal for the staff during a shift. This meal is often referred to as the staff or family meal.<sup>[3]</sup>

The *escuelerie* (from 15th century French and a cognate of the English "scullery"), or the more modern plongeur or dishwasher, is the keeper of dishes, having charge of dishes and keeping the kitchen clean. A common humorous title for this role in some modern kitchens is "*chef de plonge*" or "head dishwasher".<sup>[6]</sup>

## Culinary education

### United States and Canadian training

Culinary education is available from a wide number of institutions offering diploma, associate, and bachelor degree programs in culinary arts. Depending on the level of education, this can take one to four years. An internship is often part of the curriculum. Regardless of the education received, most professional kitchens

follow the apprenticeship system, and most new cooks will start at a lower-level 2nd or 1st cook position and work their way up.

## European training

The training period for a chef is generally four years as an apprentice. A newly qualified chef is advanced or more commonly a *torque* *commis-chef*, consisting of first-year *commis*, second-year *commis*, and so on. The rate of pay is usually in accordance with the training status. *Commis* chefs, like all other chefs except the executive-chef, are placed in sections of the kitchen (e.g., the starter (appetizer) or entrée sections) under the guidance of a *demi-chef de partie* and are given relatively basic tasks. Ideally, over time, a *commis* will spend a certain period in each section of the kitchen to learn the basics. Unaided, a *commis* may work on the vegetable station of a kitchen.<sup>[7]</sup>

The usual formal training period for a chef is two to four years in catering college. They often spend the summer in work placements. In some cases this is modified to 'day-release' courses; a chef will work full-time in a kitchen as an apprentice and then would have allocated days off to attend catering college. These courses can last between one to three years.

## Uniform



Chefs in Mexico wearing standard uniform.

The standard uniform for a chef includes a hat, necktie, double-breasted jacket, apron and shoes with steel or plastic toe-caps. A chef's hat was originally designed as a tall rippled hat called a Dodin Bouffant or more commonly a toque. The Dodin Bouffant had 101 ripples that represent the 101 ways that the chef could prepare eggs. The modern chef's hat is tall to allow for the circulation of air above the head and also provides an outlet for heat. The hat helps to prevent sweat

from dripping down the face. Neckties were originally worn to allow for the mopping of sweat from the face, but as this is now against health regulations, they are largely decorative. The chef's neck tie was originally worn on the inside of the jacket to stop sweat running from face and neck down the body.<sup>[8]</sup> The jacket is usually white to show off the chef's cleanliness and repel heat, and is double-breasted to prevent serious injuries from burns and scalds. The double breast also serves to conceal stains on the jacket as one side can be rebuttoned over the other.

An apron is worn to just below knee-length, also to assist in the prevention of burns because of spillage. If hot liquid is spilled onto it, the apron can be quickly removed to minimize burns and scalds. Shoes and clogs are hard-wearing and with a steel-top cap to prevent injury from falling objects or knives. According to some



White House chefs in 1981, directed by Executive Chef Henry Haller, preparing a state dinner honoring Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser



A chef preparing Peking duck

hygiene regulations, jewelry is not allowed apart from wedding bands and religious jewelry. If wound dressings are required they should be blue—an unusual colour for foodstuffs—so that they are noticeable if they fall into food. Facial hair and longer hair are often required to be netted, or trimmed, for food safety.<sup>[9]</sup> Bandages on the hands are usually covered with rubber gloves.

## See also

- American Culinary Federation
- Auguste Escoffier
- *Brigade de cuisine*
- Culinary art
- Development chef
- *Great Chefs*Head Chefs are in charge
- of most lower ranks of the chef business.
- Marie-Antoine Carême
- International Association of Culinary Professionals
- List of chefs
- Personal Chef
- Tenzo
- The Culinary Institute of America
- World Association of Chefs Societies



French chef painted by Théodule Ribot (1823–1891)

## Notes

- ↑ McBride (2006). p. 8.
- ↑ Sophie Brickman (September 12, 2010). "How French Laundry's chefs reach for the stars" (<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/09/12/FD1F26JG.DTL#ixzz0zTNfXIKk>) . San Francisco Chronicle. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/09/12/FD1F26JG.DTL#ixzz0zTNfXIKk>.
- ↑ <sup>*a*</sup> <sup>*b*</sup> McBride (2006). p. 9.
- ↑ Staff writer (undated). "Becoming a Chef" ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/tv\\_and\\_radio/masterchef/training\\_index1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/tv_and_radio/masterchef/training_index1.shtml)) . *BBC*. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/tv\\_and\\_radio/masterchef/training\\_index1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/tv_and_radio/masterchef/training_index1.shtml). Retrieved January 8, 2010.
- ↑ McBride (2006). pp. 8–9.
- ↑ Amanda Afuya (4 August 2011). "Chef Revelations – Kevin Gratton" (<http://www.caterersearch.com/Articles/04/08/2011/339659/chef-revelations-kevin-gratton.htm>) . *Caterer & Hotelkeeper*. <http://www.caterersearch.com/Articles/04/08/2011/339659/chef-revelations-kevin-gratton.htm>. Retrieved 3 January 2013.
- ↑ learnirect.co.uk (<http://www.learnirect-advice.co.uk/helpwithyourcareer/jobprofiles/profiles/profile151/>) - chef training options
- ↑ Sockrider, Guy D. (July 27, 2005). "History of the Chefs Uniform" (<http://www.chefolio.com/Articles/HistoryoftheChefsuniform.html>) . *Chefolio* (<http://www.chefolio.com>) . Pflugerville, Texas: Escoffier Media. <http://www.chefolio.com/Articles/HistoryoftheChefsuniform.html>. Retrieved June 29, 2009.
- ↑ "My First Blue Band-Aid" (<http://rouxandlament.com/my-first-blue-band-aid/>) . January 15, 2010. <http://rouxandlament.com/my-first-blue-band-aid/>. Retrieved March 29, 2010.

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<http://www.wineloverspage.com/randysworld/miracles.shtml>. Retrieved August 20, 2007.

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- "Stephanie Zonis" (<http://www.sallys-place.com/about/zonis.htm>) . *Sally's Place*. <http://www.sallys-place.com/about/zonis.htm>. Retrieved August 20, 2007.

## External links

- Official certification levels of the American Culinary Federation (<http://www.acfchefs.org/Content/Education/Certification/Levels/default.htm>)
- Chef training and career progression in New Zealand (<http://www.careers.govt.nz/default.aspx?id0=60103&id1=J48534>)
- Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Arts Institute (<http://www.cordonbleu.edu/>)

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