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Chef ... 1 ... 2 ... 3 ...

So you want to be a chef! The culinary arts are a great choice for a career. It helps if you have a previous interest in cooking.

Most people that decide that they would like to explore the great field of the culinary arts already seem to have the pre-disposition for it. Of course, that is not always the case.

Some chefs come into the profession later on in life. Of course, if you want to be at the top of your field, you should at least know that there are quite a few things that you should ask yourself first.

What it comes down to is that not everyone can be a chef. Before you even consider going any further, you should ask yourself the following questions first.

Have you been hesitant to put your plans into action?

Am I creative?

Creativity is necessary if you want to stand out as a chef. Often a meal is made all the more interesting by the way it is presented on the plate.

Creativity will also be necessary in dealing with your staff's problems. One thing a chef is responsible for is coming up with new and exotic dishes. A great sense of creativity can help with this and also with finding new ways to prepare old dishes.

When the average person goes to a fine restaurant, it is rare that they consider the amount of work that goes into the preparation of a meal. A good chef is good at making everything look easy and keep things running smoothly.

It takes a great deal of creativity to give everything the appearance of being unaffected.

Am I prepared to study the craft?

The only real way that you can become a good chef is to put a great deal of effort into improving yourself; not only as a cook, but as a person as well. To do this, you must study the craft.

You must be willing to study the art of cooking, preparation, and presentation. For all of the studies that will be done in books, you need to also practice these things in a hands-on manner to get the full effect of the study.

No matter what anybody says, no chef has ever mastered any dish without constant study and practice. As a budding chef yourself, you need to be prepared to put a great of effort into learning the craft, as well as spending a great deal of time doing so.

If you want to make the kind of money that goes with any successful profession, you will need to log in the hours and experience, and you must be willing to start small.

Do I have the motivation and desire to learn to be a chef?

Being aware of the amount of time and study that it takes to become a chef, you need to keep yourself motivated if you are to complete your study with the credentials that you are hoping for.

As with all things that require so much effort, sometimes you really have to talk yourself into continuing. If you can stick with it, you will be happy in the end. And you will be a chef.

Can I multi-task?

You will often be required to do many things at once, so be prepared. As you will learn, working in a kitchen is a fast paced environment. It helps if you can keep up.

You will soon realize that working in a kitchen requires you to do many things at once, and it also requires you to be able to do this with a clear head and decisive manner.

Most jobs require you to be able to do more than one thing at a time, but none so much as working as a chef. It can be quite frustrating at times, but very rewarding at others.

Multi-tasking is never more important than to those that wish to run their own establishment and kitchen. Keep reading if you really want to know what it takes to be a chef.

Am I good at making split second decisions?

When cooking more than one thing at once there is always room for a disaster. You need to be able to think quickly in order to avoid any complications.

Thinking on your feet is a necessity in working in a kitchen as there is always something going on around you. In order to be fully functional, you will need to be able to make decisions at the drop of a dime, and they will have to be the right ones.

This may not sound very difficult, but you must consider that a kitchen is almost always filled with people and many things are cooking at the same time.

In this case, there is always a chance that something on the stove can go overlooked and begin to burn, a fire could break out with the simple misplacement of a dish towel, and confusion can easily break out among the staff.

A quick decisive chef will try to keep everything running smoothly.

Think of it this way; unless restaurant serves only one dish, you can have a great many items cooking at the same time, especially on a busy day.

As a chef, you will need to monitor everything that is being prepared and still keep up with your various other duties. To do this, you will need to be a split second decision maker.

Do I handle criticism well?

Unfortunately you will encounter some people who will not like your cooking for any reason and they will likely send their food back. It helps if you can take the criticism in stride.

Food critics will also have opinions so be prepared for that as well. If you are not able to handle the criticism of others, it will not leave you much room to improve.

A good chef will always know that improvement begins with criticism. In this profession the old adage is definitely true; "The customer is always right".

How is my business sense?

Cooking is a business; you will need to know the basics of business in order to run a kitchen on your own. It really doesn't matter if you are running your own kitchen or someone else's.

To be a good chef, you must be able to handle the business aspect of a restaurant; especially if you are planning to be an executive chef or run your own place someday.

By the business aspect I mean that you will often be expected to handle everything in the kitchen. That includes dealing with shipments and stocking of food items, the management of other employees, and the direct correspondence with the head honcho or proprietor of the establishment.

Am I a people person?

Being a chef requires you to be in touch with many people during the day, you will need the ability to deal with them in a diplomatic fashion.

Many people think that being holed up in a kitchen all day doesn't really require you to be in much contact with the public, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

As the chef, you will encounter many people during the course of your day. You will be talking to delivery personnel, other employees, and often customers will wish to speak to you either in a congratulatory fashion or for criticism.

It's all a part of being a head chef and you will do this every single day, so be prepared for it.

What Is A Chef?

A chef is a person that has studied for many years in the culinary arts to learn how to run a successful kitchen and properly prepare meals in a professional environment.

There are quite a few places that a chef can choose to work in. Some of these include:

- Restaurants
- Hospitals
- Hotels
- Cruise ships
- Rest Homes
- Diners

These aren't all of the places that a chef can work in, but you get the general idea.

There are also many choices that can be made in regard to the position a chef may take in their work space. To be a chef, you must first study in a culinary school, or apprentice first.

You can't get to the level of head chef and to running a kitchen without first knowing the basics. That will be covered in the next section.

In a kitchen environment, you are required to lift heavy pots and stirring sauces constantly is also very common. It can be a very stressful job.

Being able to handle stresses calmly will be a great help to you in this profession. This is just for starters.

With all of the things that you will need to know before choosing to be a chef, this manual will be your comprehensive guide to knowing if this profession is right for you.

This, like every other professional choice, should be made with the right knowledge behind you. This guide is the best place for you to start in making your choice to being a chef.

Is it right for me?

Before you can decide whether or not you should become a chef, you should first consider the demands that are placed on a chef's shoulder.

It can be a very stressful situation for someone that doesn't already know what it is like to be under such working conditions.

A chef is responsible for many other staff members in the kitchen as well. You need to know what is going on around you at all times, and have great organizational skills to boot.

Deciding to be a chef is a difficult choice, but if you are reading this manual, you must have a genuine love of cooking, a creative mind, and a good temperament.

Chefs spend a great deal of time with people and should have a desire to work with people as fully functional team.

A good chef knows that for a kitchen to run smoothly, you must offer staff members a forum for their stresses as well. A chef must be the glue that holds the kitchen staff together.

There is no room for conceit and showing off in a kitchen environment. All members of the "team" must be able to work well together.

As a head or executive chef, you must be in charge of the kitchen staff and its goings on. That means that in the kitchen, you are the boss. You need to be able to handle a leadership role.

There is a great deal that needs to be done in a kitchen environment and the next section will give you a full explanation of what to expect.

What do I have to do?

Being a chef is a very physical profession. You are required to remain on your feet almost constantly. Along with that, you must also be stirring, kneading, and chopping your foods.

Many times, you will have to do all of this while also having to ordering foods for hungry customers and critical customers.

A kitchen is almost scorching hot year round so you should be quite prepared for that. Even in the best conditioned areas, a kitchen is often as hot as 95 degrees or higher.

If that doesn't sound like enough to do, try doing it while you are also maintaining all of the rest of the kitchen staff. Choosing to be a chef for a living is a very rewarding and time consuming job.

Now do you see why being able to multi-task is so important? The road to becoming a chef requires much training and hands on experience.

Here's what you need to do to be a good chef.

A strong desire to be a chef is a good place to start. Having a good sense of smell, and taste will be necessary also. It would very difficult to prepare a good meal if you can't decipher the differences from one spice to another; or if you do not know which spices go well together and which ones don't.

Cooking is a lot different than being a chef is. If you are just cooking for yourself you have room for errors.

If you are cooking for a stranger, you will want to cook your food to perfection. Of course, you will also want to present the food in an enticing manner as well.

There are stages to becoming a chef. You have to start at the bottom, but becoming a chef is one of few occupations where you can get most of your training on the job. You do have to go to school and train as well, but much of the training is done in a working environment.

The Apprentice

It takes many years to become a chef, and much schooling to get to the position of head chef.

Most chefs begin by becoming apprentices for a few years so that they can get the necessary experience of working in a kitchen. Being a chef often requires you to stand on your feet for hours at a time and you are rarely able to relax for very long.

Most chefs start out helping out kitchen staff in urban restaurant environments because they are the most busy and offer a great deal of experience.

You will begin by helping the sous chefs, cooks, and prep cooks with their daily work like cutting vegetables, stocking shelves, or ordering food as per your instructions from the sous chef. This position is called an apprentice.

You may not necessarily be paid for your work depending on whether or not you are taking your position through a school's curriculum requirements.

Some apprenticeships do pay you for the chance to train, but it really depends on your location. Trained apprenticeships that are required for your certification, and if they do pay; they pay little.

Of course, it is worth it because in the end, you can qualify for your certification. And the experience is invaluable to you when looking for a better and higher paying opportunity.

You can also choose to work in more than one restaurant so that you can associate under more than one mentor and get a better idea of what you want to specialize in.

If you can handle the stressful environment of working in a restaurant or whatever you decide on, then you can work your way into high chef relatively quickly.

For some people it can take as long as ten years to get to that position. In the culinary industry that's considered fast. Here is a list of some of the jobs that you can get in the culinary industry while trying to work into head chef position.

- Line or station cook
- Garde manger cook
- Sous chef
- Chef's apprentice
- Prep cook
- Front of house Operator

All of these positions are great for the chef in training, and all can get you the experience that you will need in order to gain the ability to become the head chef some day.

If you are looking to set your sights a little higher once you have garnered the experience in the culinary industry, you will next look to better positions like:

- Head line cook
- Executive chef
- Kitchen manager
- Restaurant manager/owner
- Food service supervisor
- Caterer
- Restaurants
- Cruise lines
- Resorts or hotels
- Private club or spas
- Contract food services

Truthfully, the possibilities are endless in the culinary field of work. Once you have garnered all of your training, you can pretty much chose any job you'd like to have.

This job requires that you work to satisfy the public, but it also guarantees you much freedom ...

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