

Careers in the Culinary Industry

Research and Development Chef \$62,000 - \$114,000 per year

Designs and tests new food products for restaurants, packaged food companies, and retailers. Focuses on innovation, flavor development, and scalability.

Food Scientist \$48,000 - \$105,000 per year

Studies the chemical and biological properties of food to improve safety, quality, and shelf life. Often works with manufacturers to solve technical food challenges.

Culinary Nutritionist \$40,000 - \$70,000 per year

Develops recipes and meal plans that meet specific dietary guidelines. Works with schools, hospitals, athletic programs, and community organizations.

Food Stylist \$30,000 - \$70,000 per year

Prepares and arranges food for photography, commercials, and media. Ensures dishes look visually appealing and camera ready.

Culinary Instructor \$40,000 - \$70,000 per year

Teaches cooking skills, food safety, and kitchen operations to students of various ages in schools, community programs, or culinary institutes.

Product Developer (Food Manufacturing) \$50,000 - \$90,000 per year

Assists in creating new packaged foods, improving existing recipes, and ensuring products meet cost, safety, and taste standards.

Quality Assurance Technician (Food Production) \$30,000 - \$61,000 per year

Ensures food products meet safety regulations and company standards. Conducts inspections, testing, and documentation.

Personal Chef \$40,000 - \$120,000 per year (depending on clientele)

Cooks customized meals for families or individuals, often planning menus, grocery shopping, and preparing weekly meals in clients' homes.

Food Truck Owner/Operator \$40,000 - \$100,000 (depending on sales/market)

Manages a mobile food business, combining culinary skills with entrepreneurship, customer service, and marketing.

Catering Manager \$50,000 - \$75,000 per year

Plans, coordinates, and executes catered events. Oversees menus, logistics, staff, and client relations.

Butcher/Meat Cutter \$30,000 - \$45,000 per year

Specializes in selecting, cutting, and preparing meat. Works in grocer stores, butcher shops, or restaurants.

Pastry Artist/Cake Designer

Creates highly decorative cakes and pastries for events. Requires a mix of baking expertise and artistic skills. A Pastry Artist focuses primarily on the decorative and artistic side of pastries and desserts.

Pastry Chef \$30,000 - \$55,000 per year

Specializes in creating baked goods, desserts, pastries, and specialty items. Responsible for recipe development, decorating, and managing the pastry team within a kitchen or bakery. A Pastry Chef also creates recipes, handles high volume production for restaurants, hotels, or bakeries, and ensures consistency, quality, and food safety.

Line Cook \$28,000 - \$52,000 per year

Works a specific station in the kitchen (such as grill, sauté, or fry). Prepares menu items quickly and consistently during service, following the chef's direction and food safety standards.

Prep Cook \$28,000 - \$39,000 per year

Prepares ingredients before service, including washing, chopping, portioning, and measuring. Ensures the kitchen is ready for the line cooks and chefs during busy hours.

Executive Chef \$58,000 - \$100,000 per year

Leads the entire kitchen. Responsibilities include creating menus, managing kitchen staff, ordering ingredients, controlling costs, and ensuring high quality food production.

Sous Chef \$35,000 - \$60,000

The second-in command in the kitchen. Manages day-to-day operations, supervises line cooks, ensures dishes meet quality standards, and supports the executive chef with menu execution and training.

Sushi Chef \$40,000 - \$46,000 (approx.)

Specializes in preparing sushi and Japanese cuisine. Requires expertise in knife skills, raw fish preparation, rice techniques, and precise artistic presentation.

Sommelier \$40,000 - \$68,000 per year

A trained wine expert who creates wine lists, advises costumers, and trains staff. Works closely with the kitchen to pair wines with menu items to enhance the dining experience.

Restaurant Manager \$56,000 - \$93,000 per year

Oversees daily restaurant operations, including staff scheduling, customer service, budgeting, and problem solving. Ensures that the front and back of house run efficiently and that guests have a positive experience.

Hospitality Manager \$56,000 - \$100,00 + per year

Oversees the guest experience in restaurants or foodservice settings. Manages front of house staff, coordinates with the kitchen, handles scheduling and customer service, and ensures smooth, high quality dining operations.



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating.

University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.