
Food Service Managers

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Significant Points

- Experience in food and beverage preparation and serving jobs is necessary for most food service manager positions.
- Food service managers coordinate a wide range of activities, but their most difficult task may be dealing with irate customers and uncooperative employees.
- Job opportunities for food service managers should be good as the number of outlets of restaurant chains increases to meet customer demand for convenience and value.

Nature of the Work

Food service managers are responsible for the daily operations of restaurants and other establishments that prepare and serve meals and beverages to customers. Besides coordinating activities among various departments, such as kitchen, dining room, and banquet operations, food service managers ensure that customers are satisfied with their dining experience. In addition, they oversee the inventory and ordering of food, equipment, and supplies and arrange for the routine maintenance and upkeep of the restaurant's equipment and facilities. Managers generally are responsible for all of the administrative and human-resource functions of running the business, including recruiting new employees and monitoring employee performance and training.

Managers interview, hire, train, and when necessary, fire employees. Retaining good employees is a major challenge facing food service managers. Managers recruit employees at career fairs, contact schools that offer academic programs in hospitality or culinary arts, and arrange for newspaper advertising to attract additional applicants. Managers oversee the training of new employees and explain the establishment's policies and practices. They schedule work hours, making sure that enough workers are present to cover each shift. If employees are unable to work, managers may have to call in alternates to cover for them or fill in themselves when needed. Some managers may help with cooking, clearing tables, or other tasks when the restaurant becomes extremely busy.

Food service managers ensure that diners are served properly and in a timely manner. They investigate and resolve customers' complaints about food quality or service. They monitor orders in the kitchen to determine where backups may occur, and they work with the chef to remedy any delays in service. Managers direct the cleaning of the dining areas and the washing of tableware, kitchen utensils, and equipment to comply with company and government sanitation standards. Managers also monitor the actions of their employees and patrons on a continual basis to ensure the personal safety of everyone. They make sure that health and safety standards and local liquor regulations are obeyed.

In addition to their regular duties, food service managers perform a variety of administrative assignments, such as keeping employee work records, preparing the payroll, and completing paperwork to comply with licensing laws and tax, wage and hour, unemployment compensation, and Social Security laws.

Some of this work may be delegated to an assistant manager or bookkeeper, or it may be contracted out, but most general managers retain responsibility for the accuracy of business records. Managers also maintain records of supply and equipment purchases and ensure that accounts with suppliers are paid.

Managers tally the cash and charge receipts received and balance them against the record of sales. They are responsible for depositing the day's receipts at the bank or securing them in a safe place. Finally, managers are responsible for locking up the establishment, checking that ovens, grills, and lights are off, and switching on alarm systems.

Technology influences the jobs of food service managers in many ways, enhancing efficiency and productivity. Many restaurants use computers to track orders, inventory, and the seating of patrons. Point-of-service (POS) systems allow servers to key in a customer's order, either at the table using a hand-held device, or from a computer terminal in the dining room, and send the order to the kitchen instantaneously so preparation can begin. The same system totals and prints checks, functions like a cash register, connects to credit card authorizers, and tracks sales. To minimize food costs and spoilage, many managers use inventory-tracking software to compare sales records with a record of the current inventory. Some establishments enter an inventory of standard ingredients and suppliers into their POS system. When supplies of particular ingredients run low, they can be ordered directly from the supplier using preprogrammed information. Computers also allow restaurant and food service managers to keep track of employee schedules and paychecks more efficiently.

Food service managers use the Internet to track industry news, find recipes, conduct market research, purchase supplies or equipment, recruit employees, and train staff. Internet access also makes service to customers more efficient. Many restaurants maintain Web sites that include menus and online promotions, provide information about the restaurant's location, and offer patrons the option of making a reservation.

In most full-service restaurants and institutional food service facilities, the management team consists of a *general manager*, one or more *assistant managers*, and an *executive chef*. The executive chef is responsible for all food preparation activities, including running kitchen operations, planning menus, and maintaining quality standards for food service. In limited-service eating places, such as sandwich shops, coffee bars, or fast-food establishments, managers, not executive chefs, are responsible for supervising routine food preparation operations. Assistant managers in full-service facilities generally oversee service in the dining rooms and banquet areas. In larger restaurants and fast-food or other food service facilities that serve meals daily and maintain longer business hours, individual assistant managers may supervise different shifts of workers. In smaller restaurants, formal titles may be less important, and one person may undertake the work of one or more food service positions. For example, the executive chef also may be the general manager or even sometimes an owner. (For additional information on these other workers, see material on top executives and chefs, cooks, and food preparation workers elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

In restaurants where there are both food service managers and executive chefs, the managers often help the chefs select successful menu items. This task varies by establishment depending on the seasonality of menu items, the frequency with which restaurants change their menus, and the introduction of daily,

weekly, or seasonal specials. Many restaurants rarely change their menus while others make frequent alterations. Managers or executive chefs select menu items, taking into account the likely number of customers and the past popularity of dishes. Other issues considered when planning a menu include whether there was any food left over from prior meals that should not be wasted, the need for variety, and the seasonal availability of foods. Managers or executive chefs analyze the recipes of the dishes to determine food, labor, and overhead costs, work out the portion size and nutritional content of each plate, and assign prices to various menu items. Menus must be developed far enough in advance that supplies can be ordered and received in time.

Managers or executive chefs estimate food needs, place orders with distributors, and schedule the delivery of fresh food and supplies. They plan for routine services or deliveries, such as linen services or the heavy cleaning of dining rooms or kitchen equipment, to occur during slow times or when the dining room is closed. Managers also arrange for equipment maintenance and repairs, and coordinate a variety of services such as waste removal and pest control. Managers or executive chefs receive deliveries and check the contents against order records. They inspect the quality of fresh meats, poultry, fish, fruits, vegetables, and baked goods to ensure that expectations



Food service managers keep an inventory of food and supplies and perform other bookkeeping functions.

are met. They meet with representatives from restaurant supply companies and place orders to replenish stocks of tableware, linens, paper products, cleaning supplies, cooking utensils, and furniture and fixtures.

Work environment. Food service managers are among the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave at night. Long hours—12 to 15 per day, 50 or more per week, and sometimes 7 days a week—are common. Managers of institutional food service facilities, such as school, factory, or office cafeterias, work more regular hours because the operating hours of these establishments usually conform to the operating hours of the business or facility they serve. However, hours for many managers are unpredictable.

Managers should be calm, flexible, and able to work through emergencies, such as a fire or flood, to ensure everyone's safety. They also should be able to fill in for absent workers on short notice. Managers often experience the pressures of simultaneously coordinating a wide range of activities. When problems occur, it is the manager's responsibility to resolve them with minimal disruption to customers. The job can be hectic, and dealing with irate customers or uncooperative employees can be stressful.

Managers also may experience the typical minor injuries of other restaurant workers, such as muscle aches, cuts, or burns. They might endure physical discomfort from moving tables or chairs to accommodate large parties, receiving and storing daily supplies from vendors, or making minor repairs to furniture or equipment.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Experience in the food services industry, whether as a cook, waiter or waitress, or counter attendant, is the most common training for food service managers. Many restaurant and food service manager positions, particularly self-service and fast-food, are filled by promoting experienced food and beverage preparation and service workers.

Education and training. Experience as a waiter or waitress, cook, or counter help is the most common way to enter the occupation. Executive chefs, in particular, need extensive experience working as chefs. Many food service management companies and national or regional restaurant chains recruit management trainees from 2- and 4-year college hospitality management programs, which require internships and real-life experience to graduate. Some restaurant chains prefer to hire people with degrees in restaurant and institutional food service management, but they often hire graduates with degrees in other fields who have demonstrated experience, interest, and aptitude.

Postsecondary education is preferred for many food service manager positions, but it is not a significant qualification for many others: More than 40 percent of food service managers have a high school diploma or less; less than one-quarter have a bachelor's or graduate degree. However, a postsecondary degree is preferred by higher end full-service restaurants and for many corporate positions, such as managing a regional or national restaurant chain or franchise or overseeing contract food service operations at sports and entertainment complexes, school campuses, and institutional facilities. A college degree

also is beneficial for those who want to own or manage their own restaurant.

Almost 1,000 colleges and universities offer 4-year programs in restaurant and hospitality management or institutional food service management; a growing number of university programs offer graduate degrees in hospitality management or similar fields. For those not interested in pursuing a 4-year degree, community and junior colleges, technical institutes, and other institutions offer programs in the field leading to an associate degree or other formal certification.

Both 2- and 4-year programs provide instruction in subjects such as nutrition, sanitation, and food planning and preparation, as well as accounting, business law and management, and computer science. Some programs combine classroom and laboratory study with internships providing on-the-job experience. In addition, many educational institutions offer culinary programs in food preparation. Such training can lead to careers as cooks or chefs and provide a foundation for advancement to executive chef positions.

Many larger food service operations will provide, or offer to pay for, technical training, such as computer or business courses, so that employees can acquire the business skills necessary to read spreadsheets or understand the concepts and practices of running a business. Generally, this requires a long-term commitment on the employee's part to both the employer and to the profession.

Most restaurant chains and food service management companies have rigorous training programs for management positions. Through a combination of classroom and on-the-job training, trainees receive instruction and gain work experience in all aspects of the operation of a restaurant or institutional food service facility. Areas include food preparation, nutrition, sanitation, security, company policies and procedures, personnel management, recordkeeping, and preparation of reports. Training on use of the restaurant's computer system is increasingly important as well. Usually, after 6 months or a year, trainees receive their first permanent assignment as an assistant manager.

Other qualifications. Most employers emphasize personal qualities when hiring managers. Workers who are reliable, show initiative, and have leadership qualities are highly sought after for promotion. Other qualities that managers look for are good problem-solving skills and the ability to concentrate on details. A neat and clean appearance is important, because food service managers must convey self-confidence and show respect in dealing with the public. Because food service management can be physically demanding, good health and stamina are important.

Managers must be good communicators as they deal with customers, employees, and suppliers for most of the day. They must be able to motivate employees to work as a team, to ensure

that food and service meet appropriate standards. Additionally, the ability to speak multiple languages is helpful to communicate with staff and patrons.

Certification and advancement. The certified Foodservice Management Professional (FMP) designation is a measure of professional achievement for food service managers, and although not a requirement for employment or necessary for advancement, voluntary certification can provide recognition of professional competence, particularly for managers who acquired their skills largely on the job. The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation awards the FMP designation to managers who achieve a qualifying score on a written examination, complete a series of courses that cover a range of food service management topics, and meet standards of work experience in the field.

Willingness to relocate often is essential for advancement to positions with greater responsibility. Managers typically advance to larger or more prominent establishments or regional management positions within restaurant chains. Some may open their own food service establishments or franchise operation.

Employment

Food service managers held about 350,000 jobs in 2006. The majority of managers are salaried, but 45 percent are self-employed as owners of independent restaurants or other small food service establishments. Thirty-eight percent of all salaried jobs for food service managers are in full-service restaurants or limited-service eating places, such as fast-food restaurants and cafeterias. Other salaried jobs are in special food services—an industry that includes food service contractors who supply food services at institutional, governmental, commercial, or industrial locations, and educational services, primarily in elementary and secondary schools. A smaller number of salaried jobs are in hotels; amusement, gambling, and recreation industries; nursing care facilities; and hospitals. Jobs are located throughout the country, with large cities and resort areas providing more opportunities for full-service dining positions.

Job Outlook

Food service manager jobs are expected to grow 5 percent, or more slowly than the average for all occupations through 2016. However, job opportunities should be good because, in addition to job growth, many more openings will arise from the need to replace managers who leave the occupation.

Employment change. Employment of food service managers is expected to grow 5 percent, or more slowly than the average for all occupations, during the 2006-16 decade. New eating and drinking places will open to meet the growing demand for convenience and value from a growing population, generating new employment opportunities for food service managers. Em-

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Food service managers.....	11-9051	350,000	368,000	18,000	5

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

ployment growth is projected to vary by industry. Most new jobs will be in full-service restaurants, but they are expected to decline among limited service restaurants. Manager jobs will also increase in special food services, an industry that includes food service contractors that provide food for schools, health care facilities, and other commercial businesses and in nursing and residential care for the elderly. Self-employment of these workers will generate nearly 30 percent of new jobs.

Job prospects. In addition to job openings from employment growth, the need to replace managers who transfer to other occupations or stop working will create good job opportunities. Although practical experience is an integral part of finding a food service management position, applicants with a degree in restaurant, hospitality or institutional food service management will have an edge when competing for jobs at upscale restaurants and for advancement in a restaurant chain or into corporate management.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of salaried food service managers were \$43,020 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$34,210 and \$55,100. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$27,400, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$70,810. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of food service managers were as follows:

Traveler accommodation.....	\$48,890
Special food services.....	48,710
Full-service restaurants	45,650
Elementary and secondary schools	39,650
Limited-service eating places	39,070

In addition to receiving typical benefits, most salaried food service managers are provided free meals and the opportunity for additional training, depending on their length of service.

Some food service managers, especially those in full-service restaurants, may earn bonuses depending on sales volume or revenue.

Related Occupations

Food service managers direct the activities of a hospitality-industry business and provide a service to customers. Other managers and supervisors in hospitality-oriented businesses include gaming managers, lodging managers, sales worker supervisors, and first-line supervisors or managers of food preparation and serving workers.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about a career as a food service manager, 2- and 4-year college programs in restaurant and food service management, and certification as a Foodservice Management Professional is available from:

► National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, 175 West Jackson Blvd., Suite 1500, Chicago, IL 60604-2702. Internet: <http://www.nraef.org>

Career information about food service managers, as well as a directory of 2- and 4-year colleges that offer courses or programs that prepare persons for food service careers is available from:

► National Restaurant Association, 1200 17th St.NW., Washington, DC 20036-3097. Internet: <http://www.restaurant.org>

General information on hospitality careers may be obtained from:

► The International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education, 2810 North Parham Rd., Suite 230, Richmond, VA 23294. Internet: <http://www.chrie.org>

Additional information about job opportunities in food service management may be obtained from local employers and from local offices of State employment services agencies.