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## **Chefdom: Life of a Chef**

Being a chef today is very different than it was even just a decade ago. Chefs used to be invisible workhorses hiding behind a stove, churning out glorious dish without much recognition from their diners. Today that whole dynamics has changed. Chefs are the reason to go to a restaurant. They are regarded as rock stars. They've even become household names. One thing that hasn't changed in all times is the life of a chef and how very difficult it can be. Chefs work when everyone else is off. On their feet; without breaks; in a hot kitchen. The work is intense, fast-paced and demands perfection every time. Cuts and burns are expected.

### **WHAT A CHEF IS SUPPOSED TO DO EVERYDAY?**

#### **Early Morning**

After first arriving at the restaurant, a chef must immediately begin to take inventory of all food and beverages. Produce deliveries often arrive in the morning, and it's the chef's responsibility to be sure that all fruits and vegetables are fresh. Likewise, the chef should check the rest of the inventory to make sure all food, beverages and condiments are being used before the expiration date.

#### **Midmorning**

Kitchen staff usually begin to arrive a short while after the chef does. This is the time when work should commence on any dishes that take longer to cook or can be prepared ahead of time, such as soups or desserts. Because a chef is usually also the supervisor of all employees who work in the kitchen, she also needs to make sure that every worker arrives on time. If she's short on staff, the chef should immediately begin making arrangements for additional workers to fill in if possible.

#### **Midday**

The lunch crowd typically begins to arrive around 11:30 a.m., and it's then that the chef's full attention must be devoted to how his staff is performing in the kitchen. It may be necessary for the chef to provide advice or instruction to staff members. It's equally common for the chef to pitch in and help in whatever area of the kitchen may be lagging behind.

#### **Early Afternoon**

After the lunch rush is over, a chef and her staff have time to take a lunch break of their own. Kitchen personnel usually stay at the restaurant and eat their midday meal together, often sampling potential new additions to the menu. This is also the time of day when beverage distributors typically make their deliveries. It is the chef's responsibility to make sure that the delivery includes exactly those items that were ordered, in the proper quantities.

#### **Late Afternoon**

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The chef supervises his kitchen staff as they prepare for the dinner crowd. This often involves making sauces, chopping and slicing vegetables and beginning to cook any meats that may take a long period of time to prepare, such as roasts or baked poultry.

## **Early Evening**

The dinner crowd arrives in early evening, and this is most often the busiest time of day. Usually beginning around 6:00 p.m. and lasting until 9:00 or 10:00 that night, the dinner rush involves a great deal of activity in the kitchen, all of which must be supervised and coordinated by the chef. A chef's duties during this time of day can be compared to a conductor leading an orchestra.

## **Late Night**

While kitchen employees are cleaning up, the chef takes the time to plan and review his menu for tomorrow. Now is also often the time for placing beverage and produce orders for the following day.

All that being said, however, the chef profession has many advantages over a 9-to-5 job. For one, you'll never be bored. There is always something going on in a kitchen. You will always be trying to outdo yourself and cook the most memorable meal possible for each of your patrons. Add to this a dash of the good comments of your customers, a sprinkle of the satisfaction that comes with a job well done at the end of the night, the camaraderie and teamwork in the kitchen, the possibility to apply your creativity on a daily basis, the lifelong learning and prospects of advancement, and you have all the ingredients for a successful and satisfying career.