

Unit 301: Developing opportunities for progression in the culinary industry

Handout 1: Job roles – kitchen hierarchy, traditional and modern

Kitchen hierarchy, or brigade as it is also commonly known, is steeped in history and goes back many years. Auguste Escoffier (1846–1935), one of the foremost authorities on modern French cooking and cuisine, designed the *partie* system still used in the majority of modern kitchens. Not every restaurant uses exactly the same titles for the different roles in their kitchen, but the most generally accepted titles for leaders in the kitchen are traced primarily to Escoffier kitchen hierarchy, which is why they sound French.

Below is a list of roles you are likely to find in a top-level establishment which employs the traditional kitchen hierarchy.

Executive chef

This is the manager of the kitchen, responsible for supervision, creation of the menu, and the business side of the kitchen. An executive chef obviously is very experienced in cooking, but their day to day work may involve very little hands-on cooking.

Chef de cuisine

This is the hands-on individual in charge of everything going on in the kitchen. Sometimes a chef de cuisine may be the individual in charge of one location of a chain, or a group of restaurants. The titles 'executive chef' and 'chef de cuisine' may sometimes be used interchangeably.

Sous chef

The sous chef is second in line in the kitchen. A sous chef may be in charge of the kitchen when the executive chef or chef de cuisine is absent. The sous chef may take over for any of the line cooks that may be missing.

Aboyeur

This is the individual who serves as liaison between the dining room and the kitchen, announcing orders as well as checking dishes before they are taken into the dining room.

Chef de partie or line cook

Each of these chefs or cooks are in charge of a particular section of the kitchen's service.

Among the line cooks in the traditional French brigade system:

- **Saucier** – responsible for all sauces and sauteed items. This is traditionally the top position among chefs de partie.
- **Fish chef (poissoniere)** – responsible for all of the fish dishes and the butchering and fabrication of the fish as well.
- **Roast chef (rotisseur)** – responsible for all roasted and braised meats.

- **Grill chef (grillardin)** – this role may be combined with the roast chef and is responsible for all grilled foods.
- **Fry chef (friturier)** – as the title implies, this position is responsible for all fried items.
- **Vegetable chef (entremetier)** – this chef is usually responsible for all the vegetables, soups, pastas and starches. This is one of the roles most likely to have other cooks underneath the head chef.
- **Roundsman (tournant)** – a chef who may work in any area and fill in wherever needed.
- **Larder chef (garde-manger)** – this position is sometimes referred to as ‘pantry chef’ and is in charge of cold salads, appetizers, patés, etc.
- **Butcher (boucher)** – responsible for butchering and fabricating meat and poultry, but often leaves fish to the fish chef.
- **Pastry chef or patisserie chef** – responsible for baked goods, pastries and sweets. This is another position that may have several other cooks underneath the head chef.

Commis chef

A commis chef can be an apprentice or someone that has completed an apprenticeship in larger kitchens who works under a chef de partie in order to learn the station's responsibilities and operation. He is a chef who has recently completed formal culinary training or is still undergoing training.

Kitchen assistants

Often known as kitchen porters, these are workers who assist with basic tasks but have had no formal training in cooking. Tasks could include peeling potatoes or washing salad, for example. Smaller kitchens more commonly have kitchen assistants who will be assigned a wide variety of tasks (including washing up) in order to keep costs down.

Communard

Responsible for preparing the meal for the staff during a shift; this meal is often referred to as staff or family meal.

Modern brigade (back of the house/kitchen)

- **Executive chef:** coordinates and directs and plans menus, creates recipes, sets standards for nutrition, safety, sanitation, observes food preparation and presentation, makes purchasing decisions and hiring decisions.
- **Sous chef:** supervises and coordinates preparation of menu items, supervises the kitchen
- **Area chefs:** restaurant, room service, banquet.
- **Pastry chef:** develops recipes, purchases, prepares
- **Line cooks**
- **Commis chefs**
- **Apprentices**
- **Dishwasher**