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## Food Service Managers

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### Significant Points

- Although most food service managers qualify for their position based on their restaurant-related experience, an increasing number of employers prefer managers with a 2- or 4-year degree in a related field.
- Food service managers coordinate a wide range of activities, but their most difficult tasks may be dealing with irate customers and motivating employees.
- Job opportunities for food service managers should be good, as the number of managers who change jobs or leave this occupation is typically high and, in the long run, as more are hired to meet the growing demand for convenient food service.

### 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 are generally responsible for all administrative and human-resource functions of 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 and at schools that offer academic programs in hospitality management 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. 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 and 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, 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, 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 and business software to place orders and track inventory and sales. They also allow food service managers to monitor expenses, employee schedules, and payroll matters more efficiently.

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 some cases,



*Food service managers ensure that food is in adequate supply and stored at the appropriate temperature.*

the executive chef is also the general manager or owner of the restaurant. General managers may employ several assistant managers that oversee certain areas, such as the dining or banquet rooms, or supervise different shifts of workers. In limited-service eating places, such as sandwich and coffee shops or fast-food restaurants, managers or food preparation or serving supervisors, not executive chefs, are responsible for supervising routine food preparation operations. (For additional information on these other workers, see material on top executives or on chefs, head cooks, and food preparation and serving supervisors elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

In restaurants, mainly full-service independent ones where there are both food service managers and executive chefs, the managers often help the chefs select menu items. Managers or executive chefs at independent restaurants select menu items, taking into account the past popularity of dishes, the ability to reuse any food not served the previous day, 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 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.** Many food service managers work long hours—12 to 15 per day, 50 or more per week, and sometimes 7 days a week. Such schedules are common for fine dining restaurants and those, such as fast-food restaurants, that operate extended hours. 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, many managers oversee multiple locations of a chain or franchise or may be called in on short notice, making hours 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. Al-

though injuries generally do not require prolonged absences from work, the incidence of injuries requiring at least one day's absence from work exceeds that of about 60 percent of all occupations.

### **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.** Most food service managers have less than a bachelor's degree; however, some postsecondary education, including a college degree, is increasingly preferred for many food service manager positions. Many food service management companies and national or regional restaurant chains recruit management trainees from 2- and 4-year college hospitality or food service management programs, which require internships and real-life experience to graduate. While these specialized degrees are often preferred, graduates with degrees in other fields who have demonstrated experience, interest, and aptitude are also recruited.

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 the use of the restaurant's computer system is increasingly important as well. Usually, after several months of training, trainees receive their first permanent assignment as an assistant manager.

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.

**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. 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 is often 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 338,700 jobs in 2008. The majority of managers are salaried, but 42 percent are self-employed as owners of independent restaurants or other small food service establishments. Forty-one 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, which primarily supply 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 2018. However, job opportunities should be good because many 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 2008-18 decade, as the number of eating and drinking establishments opening is expected to decline from the previous decade. Despite these reductions in the number of new eating and drinking places, new employment opportunities for food service managers will emerge in grocery and convenience stores and other retail and recreation industries to meet the growing demand for quick food in a variety of settings. Employment growth is projected to vary by industry. Most new jobs will be in full-service restaurants and limited service eating places. Manager jobs will also increase in healthcare and elder care facilities. Self-employment of these workers will generate nearly 40 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 wages of salaried food service managers were \$46,320 in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between \$36,670 and \$59,580. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$29,450, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$76,940. Median annual wages in the industries employing the largest numbers of food service managers were as follows:

Traveler accommodation .....	\$54,710
Special food services.....	52,680
Full-service restaurants .....	49,420
Limited-service eating places.....	41,320

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.

## Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2008	Projected Employment, 2018	Change, 2008-2018	
				Number	Percent
Food service managers.....	11-9051	338,700	356,700	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*.

## Related Occupations

Other managers and supervisors in hospitality-related businesses include:

- First-line supervisors or managers of food preparation and serving workers
- Gaming services occupations
- Lodging managers
- Sales worker supervisors

## 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.

The Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) provides information on a wide range of occupational characteristics. Links to O\*NET appear at the end of the Internet version of this occupational statement, accessible at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/ocos024.htm>