

Food Service Manager

Snapshot

Career Cluster(s): Business Administration; Hospitality & Tourism

Interests: Restaurants, customer service, managing others

Earnings (Yearly Average): \$54,240 yearly; \$26.08 hourly

Employment & Outlook: Much Faster Than Average Growth

OVERVIEW

Sphere of Work

Food service managers are responsible for overseeing the daily operations of various establishments that serve food and beverages to patrons. They recruit, hire, and train restaurant employees and commonly supervise assistant managers, waitstaff, cooks, and other administrative personnel. They make decisions regarding pricing and selection of menu items, order food and supplies, and ensure the proper upkeep of the establishments they run. In addition to their managerial tasks, food service managers usually handle most administrative and human resource-related activities of the business.



Work Environment

Most food service managers work indoors and spend a good deal of time on their feet, moving from the dining room to the kitchen, the bar, and other areas. They usually have their own office within the establishment. Working environments range from small, independent restaurants to large resorts, country clubs, or nightclubs. Food service managers generally work long and irregular hours that include weekends and holidays, especially those in fine dining, and rarely follow a standard forty-hour work week. Those who work in schools, cafeterias, or hospitals usually hold a more regular schedule.

Profile

Working Conditions: Work Indoors
Physical Strength: Light Work,
Education Needs: High School Diploma
Or G.E.D., Technical/Community
College, Apprenticeship
Licensure/Certification:
Recommended
Physical Abilities Not Required: No
Heavy Labor
Opportunities for Experience:
Apprenticeship, Military Service
Volunteer Work, Part-Time Work
Holland Interest Score*: ESR,

* See Appendix A

well under pressure.

Occupation Interest

Food service managers constantly deal with customers, and therefore must demonstrate a pleasant, positive attitude at all times. Those interested in becoming food service managers must be highly motivated, as the job can be all-consuming, often requiring managers to work seven days a week with little time off. Restaurant environments can be stressful and unpredictable, so potential managers should be calm, resilient, and able to work

A Day in the Life—Duties and Responsibilities

Food service managers rely heavily on their waitstaff to provide excellent service and to present and maintain a satisfactory dining experience for customers. To this end, managers put a significant amount of energy into finding reliable, hardworking waiters and waitresses. They interview and hire dining room staff, whom they then must instruct in their particular establishment's policies and procedures, as well as the fundamentals of working in a restaurant if necessary. Occasionally, food service managers must lay off or fire employees, then replace them on short notice. Managers create work schedules for staff members, plan menus with cooks or chefs, and

prepare the restaurant for service. They also explain performance and customer service standards to the waitstaff and other personnel.

During service, food service managers ensure the satisfaction of patrons and respond to any questions, complaints, or comments customers may have. During busy shifts or special events, managers often take orders, clear tables, serve drinks, and assist in the kitchen. They also review and approve food preparation, portion sizes, and presentation. At the end of service, managers tally and report earnings and often make bank deposits on behalf of the establishment.

During non-service hours or the off season, food service managers handle numerous administrative details. They continuously evaluate the amount and cost of food and beverages needed, calculate budgets and payroll records, monitor inventory, and make equipment and food purchases. They also oversee the cleaning of the kitchen, dining room, and other areas, and report any maintenance problems that arise.

Duties and Responsibilities

- **Estimating food and beverage amounts and costs**
- **Purchasing food, supplies, and equipment**
- **Keeping records of inventory and employees' work schedules**
- **Consulting with the cook or chef to plan and evaluate menus**
- **Inspecting the dining room, the kitchen, and equipment for cleanliness**
- **Interviewing, hiring, training, and discharging employees**
- **Settling customer complaints about food or service**

OCCUPATION SPECIALTIES

Caterers

Caterers plan and supervise the preparation and serving of food and beverages at social affairs, business functions, and other special events.

Liquor Establishment Managers

Liquor Establishment Managers coordinate the activities of workers who sell and serve alcoholic beverages to patrons in taverns, cocktail lounges, and night clubs.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Physical Environment

Food service managers work in both small and large restaurants, usually indoors. Work environments can be noisy and hectic. Dining rooms are normally clean, well lit, and well ventilated, while kitchens and other back-of-house sections can be hot, dark, and cluttered. Catering service managers work in a variety of environments, from private homes and banquet rooms inside hotels to outdoor venues such as tented lawns and urban plazas.

Human Environment

Food service managers work with and supervise a wide array of restaurant personnel, including assistant managers, purchasing agents, cashiers, waitstaff, cooks, bartenders, dishwashers, bus people, and office administrators. They often report to restaurant or club owners, or in some cases a panel of trustees, and regularly interact with customers.

Transferable Skills and Abilities**Communication Skills**

- Speaking and writing effectively

Interpersonal/Social Skills

- Cooperating with others
- Working as a member of a team

Organization & Management Skills

- Coordinating tasks
- Demonstrating leadership
- Managing people/groups
- Paying attention to and handling details
- Performing duties that change frequently

Research & Planning Skills

- Developing evaluation strategies
- Laying out a plan

Technological Environment

Food service managers use computers on a daily basis to place orders, monitor inventory, schedule events, and coordinate staff hours. They commonly handle large- and small-scale kitchen equipment, as well as cash registers and point-of-sale software.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ADVANCEMENT**High School/Secondary**

High school students who are interested in becoming food service managers should begin by taking courses in foods and nutrition, economics, and communications. In addition, they should enroll in classes that focus on business management and administration. During summer and holiday vacations, students can apply for part-time employment at local restaurants, country clubs, or resorts. Students normally start out working as bus people, hosts, dishwashers, or waitstaff, and quickly become familiar with the daily operations of a food and beverage establishment. In this setting, they can observe food service managers in action.

Suggested High School Subjects

- Bookkeeping
- Business
- Business Math
- College Preparatory
- English
- Food Service & Management
- Foods & Nutrition
- Mathematics

Famous First

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (79 P.L. 396, 60 Stat. 230) is a 1946 United States federal law that created the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to provide low-cost or free school lunch meals to qualified students through subsidies to schools. The program was established as a way to prop up food prices by absorbing farm surpluses, while at the same time providing food to school age children. It was named after Richard Russell, Jr., signed into law by President Harry S. Truman in 1946, and entered the federal government into schools dietary programs on June 4, 1946.

Source: www.k12academics.com/Federal%20Education%20Legislation/national-school-lunch-act

**College/Postsecondary**

Many food service managers have a high school diploma or its equivalent, and are not required to possess a bachelor's degree in order to run a restaurant—as long as they have the experience. However, an increasing number of employers expect prospective managers to have some kind of postsecondary training, if not a bachelor's degree. Many colleges and universities across the country offer four-year programs in restaurant or food service management. Alternatively, many community colleges, junior colleges, and technical institutes offer two-year associate's degree programs in hospitality. All postsecondary programs in hospitality teach students the fundamentals of food preparation, nutrition, sanitation, management, computer science, and accounting.

Related College Majors

- Culinary Arts/Chef Training
- Enterprise Management & Operation
- Hospitality & Recreation Marketing Operations
- Hotel/Motel & Restaurant Management
- Institutional Food Workers & Administration

Adult Job Seekers

Restaurant chains and management companies often find new employees through hospitality education programs that offer internships and work-study opportunities. Restaurant owners and managers also attend career fairs and advertise on the Internet and in local newspapers to recruit new workers. Job seekers with experience in the service industry generally have a greater chance of securing assistant manager and food service manager positions. Many managers have a background in cooking and the culinary arts, which can prove helpful when looking to advance.

Professional Certification and Licensure

Though not required for employment, many food service managers voluntarily become certified as Foodservice Management Professionals (FMP), a title awarded by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. This designation is helpful in demonstrating the professional competence of experienced managers. In order to obtain licensure, managers must pass a written examination and complete several courses covering a variety of food service management topics.

**Additional Requirements**

Ultimately, food service managers must demonstrate unquestionable leadership skills, as the successful operation of an establishment depends on their ability to motivate others, solve problems, and communicate well with clientele. Food service managers should also have an eye for detail and great taste, as they are responsible for the general appearance of the restaurant they manage.

Fast Fact

Adam Sandler performed a song on *Saturday Night Live* called “Lunch Lady Land” and accompanying skit with Chris Farley dressed up as a lunch lady. The song appeared on Sandler’s album *They’re All Gonna Laugh at You!*

EARNINGS AND ADVANCEMENT

Earnings of food service managers depend on the type, size, and geographic location of the establishment and the manager’s particular duties. The median annual wage for food service managers was \$54,240 in May 2018. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$31,580, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$92,410.

Median annual wages May 2018

Management occupations: \$104,240

Food service managers: \$54,240

Total, all occupations: \$38,640

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

In May 2018, the median annual wages for food service managers in the top industries in which they worked were as follows:

Accommodation	\$63,780
Special food services	\$61,530
Restaurants and other eating places	\$51,430

Most food service managers work full time. Managers at fine-dining and fast-food restaurants often work long shifts, and some work more than 40 hours per week. Managers of food service facilities or cafeterias in schools, factories, or office buildings usually work traditional business hours. Managers may be called in on short notice, including evenings, weekends, and holidays. Some managers may also manage multiple locations.

EMPLOYMENT AND OUTLOOK

Food service managers held about 356,400 jobs nationally in 2018. Employment of food service managers is projected to grow 11 percent from 2018 to 2028, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Population and income growth are expected to result in greater demand for food at a variety of dining establishments. People will continue to dine out, purchase takeout meals, or have food delivered to their homes or workplaces. In response to increased consumer demand, more restaurants, cafeterias, and catering services are expected to open and serve more meals. Many of these establishments will require food service managers to oversee food preparation and service.

Percent change in employment, Projected 2018–28

Food service managers: 11%

Management occupations: 7%

Total, all occupations: 5%

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Related Occupations

- Cook/Chef
- Hotel/Motel Manager
- Waiter/Waitress

Related Military Occupations

- Food Service Manager
- Food Service Specialist
- Store Manager

Conversation With . . .
ASHLEY K. POWELL, PHD, RDN

Child Nutrition Director
Auburn City Schools, Auburn, Alabama
Dietician, 12 years

1. What was your individual career path in terms of education/training, entry-level job, or other significant opportunity?

I liked the sciences, and I wanted to use them to help people be healthier. I went to Auburn University to get my bachelor of science degree in dietetics so I could become a dietician and help people make healthier food choices. I continued on at Auburn and received my master's degree in education and health promotion.

An internship with Georgia State University exposed me to dietician jobs in different settings—hospitals, dialysis centers and schools. I decided a job with a school district was a good fit for me. I loved working with kids. I loved working with a healthy population.

I got my dietician license and worked as a food services coordinator in Clarke County, Georgia, before moving back to Alabama when I got married.

My first job back in Alabama was in a school cafeteria. Because I had a master's in education, I was able to obtain a teaching certificate by adding a few courses. That made me eligible to teach classes in family and consumer sciences on the high school level.

Since dietician licenses are awarded at the state level, I had to pass the exam in Alabama, too. I furthered my education by getting a PhD in adult education from Auburn.

When the job of child nutrition director for the Auburn schools opened up, I applied and got it.

In the director position, I'm involved in everything from budgeting and menu planning to procuring equipment and designing professional development programs for teachers and other staff in 13 schools with 9,000 students.

My department works with local farmers to develop local farm-to-table meals. We serve breakfast and lunch in the schools and work with the federal government to provide meals at reduced prices for students from economically struggling families.

Our school district is very diverse. Families speak 48 languages.

I also serve as chairman of the national School Nutrition Association's professional development committee, which develops training and continuing education program for nutritionists.

2. What are the most important skills and/or qualities for someone in your profession?

Having good organizational, time management and planning skills is key. We order our food two weeks out and need to know what to order and how much.

You need enough math skills to develop a budget and have a management vision for your district.

Your creative juices will get a workout too. You really have to have a marketing plan to get parents to subscribe to the food program. We promote our food program on social media, through emails and brochures and special giveaways such as placemats for elementary students that emphasize healthy eating.

3. What do you wish you had known going into this profession?

Sometimes you take a job that's not your top priority—and it works out. Working as a cafeteria manager involved serving and cashiering, but it also allowed me to demonstrate my work ethic and gave me an understanding of my future employees' experience of the job. I didn't do that for long, but it paid off. Just because you're doing one job today doesn't mean you have to do it forever.

4. Are there many job opportunities in your profession? In what specific areas?

There's a child nutrition director in every school district, even if it goes by a different name. Depending on the size of the school district, there may be opportunities for supervisors and coordinators as well as directors.

School nutritionists need a degree in nutrition or food services to meet U.S.D.A standards. Some business degree programs with a focus on hospitality meet most of the educational requirements, although people interested in school nutrition might have to take some additional classes to meet state requirements.

5. How do you see your profession changing in the next five years? How will technology impact that change, and what skills will be required?

We use technology for everything—tracking students' food allergies and diabetic students' carbohydrate counts, following federal guidelines, and pricing meals.

Families pay online and can go online to see what meals will be served and the meal components.

We hope in the future to be able to use technology for specialized ordering so it's easier to obtain gluten or nut-free foods. We have lots of ideas. We would like to use purchasing data to improve services.

6. What do you enjoy most about your job? What do you enjoy least about your job?

I love the variety. I love the flexibility. I love being part of the community. It's a job that works well with having three kids and a husband. The school calendar is compatible with family life.

Sometimes it's difficult to deal with situations that are out of your hands. Let's say technology shuts down for the day. We still have to deliver and serve meals to students. We do have hiccups. We learn to work around it.

7. Can you suggest a valuable "try this" for students considering a career in your profession?

Work or volunteer in a commercial kitchen or soup kitchen and get an idea of what it's like to produce meals on an industrial level. Shadow a dietician in your community, even if it's just for a couple of hours. Develop your leadership skills. Enjoy food and the value of food.

SELECTED SCHOOLS

It is not necessary in all cases to have a college degree in order to work as a food services manager. However, in many cases employers do prefer candidates with some college; at large, high-end establishments a college degree is generally expected. Interested students can gain initial training at a community college or vocational school. For those interested in a bachelor's degree, below are listed some of the more prominent institutions in this field.

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Collins College of Hospitality Management
3801 W. Temple Avenue 79B
Pomona, CA 91768
909.869.2275
www.csupomona.edu/~collins

Drexel University

Center for Hospitality and Sport Management
101 N. 33rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215.895.2411
drexel.edu/hsm

Georgia State University

Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality Administration
Robinson College of Business
35 Broad Street, Suite 220
Atlanta, GA 30303
404.413.7615
hospitality.robinson.gsu.edu

Johnson & Wales University

The Hospitality College
8 Abbot Park Place
Providence, RI 02903
401.598.1000
www.jwu.edu/hospitality

Kansas State University

Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics
119 Justin Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
785.532.5500
www.ksu.edu/hmd

Northern Arizona University

W.A. Franke College of Business
Hotel and Restaurant Management
20 W. McConnell Drive
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
928.523.5232
franke.nau.edu/hrm

Oklahoma State University

School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration
210 Human Sciences W
Stillwater, OK 74078
405.744.6713
humansciences.okstate.edu/hrad

University of Denver

Fritz Knoebel School of Hospitality Management
Daniels College of Business
2101 S. University Boulevard
Denver, CO 80208
303.871.3411

University of Houston

Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and
Restaurant Management
4800 Calhoun Road
Houston, TX 77004
713.743.2255
www.hrm.uh.edu

**University of Massachusetts,
Amherst**

Isenberg School of Management
Department of Hospitality and Tourism
Management
121 Presidents Drive
Amherst, MA 01003
413.545.5610
www.isenberg.umass.edu/htm

MORE INFORMATION

**Association of Nutrition and Food
Service Professionals**

406 Surrey Woods Drive
St. Charles, IL 60174
800.323.1908
www.anfponline.org

**International Council on Hotel,
Restaurant, and Institutional
Education**

2810 North Parham Rd.
Suite 230
Richmond, VA 23294
804.346.4800
www.chrie.org

National Restaurant Association

1200 17th St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
202.331.5900
www.restaurant.org

**National Restaurant Association
Educational Foundation**

175 West Jackson Boulevard
Suite 1500
Chicago, IL 60604
800.765.2122
www.nraef.org

**Society for Hospitality and
Foodservice Management**

455 S. 4th Street, Suite 650
Louisville, KY 40202
502.574.9931
www.sfhm-online.org

Briana Nadeau/Editor