

Food Service Manager

Snapshot

Career Cluster(s): Business, Management & Administration; Hospitality & Tourism; Human Services

Interests: Food; hospitality; business; consumer services

Earnings (Yearly Average): \$55,320

Employment & Outlook: Slower Than Average Growth Expected

OVERVIEW

Sphere of Work

Food service managers are responsible for the daily operation of restaurants or other establishments that prepare and serve food and beverages. They direct staff to ensure that customers are satisfied with their dining experience, and they manage the business to ensure that it is profitable. In an entrepreneurial context, food service managers may also own the restaurant or business in question, such as a food truck or food cart, possibly with other partners in the business.

Work Environment

Full-service restaurants (those with table service) may have a management team that includes a general manager, one or more assistant managers, and an executive chef. Other food-related businesses, such as mobile food trucks, may have minimal staff, meaning the manager may also serve as executive chef. Many food service managers work long shifts, and the job is often hectic. Moreover, dealing with dissatisfied customers can sometimes be stressful.



A restaurant manager oversees her staff. Photo via iStock.com/stockstudioX. [Used under license.]

Occupation Interest

Food service managers must thrive in a fast-paced and customer-oriented environment, and likely have a passion for food and hospitality, in general, as well as good business sense. They strive to give customers the best experience possible, thereby increasing their restaurant's stature and, hopefully, profits. Restaurants are often reviewed, both in established publications and by patrons on the Internet, so successful managers must be able to use these critiques to better their business, or risk losing customers. Manager owners are faced with increased risk, as their personal success and the success of their staff depend on the success of the restaurant in the public eye. Their role may also entail a strong sales and marketing component.

A Day in the Life—Duties and Responsibilities

Managers coordinate activities of the kitchen and dining room staff to ensure that customers are served properly and in a timely manner. They oversee orders in the kitchen, and, if needed, they work with the chef to remedy any delays in service.

Food service managers are responsible for all functions of the business related to employees. For example, most managers interview, hire, train, oversee, appraise,

Duties and Responsibilities

- Hiring, training, overseeing, and sometimes firing employees
- Ordering food and beverages, equipment, and supplies
- Overseeing food preparation, portion sizes, and the overall presentation of food
- Inspecting supplies, equipment, and work areas
- Ensuring that employees comply with health and food safety standards
- Addressing complaints regarding food quality or service
- Scheduling staff hours and assigning duties
- Managing budgets and payroll records
- Establishing standards for personnel performance and customer service

Profile

Interests: Things, People, Data

Working Conditions: Both Inside and Outside

Physical Strength: Medium Work

Education Needs: On-the-Job Training, High School Diploma, Junior/Technical/Community College

Licensure/Certification: Optional

Opportunities for Experience: Part-Time Work, Internships

Interest Score: ECR

discipline, and sometimes fire employees. Managers also schedule work hours, making sure that enough workers are present to cover each shift. During busy periods, they may expedite service by helping to serve customers, processing payments, or cleaning tables.

Managers also arrange for cleaning and maintenance services for the equipment and facility in order to comply with health and sanitary regulations. For example, they may arrange for trash removal, pest control, and heavy cleaning when the dining room and kitchen are not in use.

Most managers prepare the payroll and manage employee records. They also may review or complete paperwork related to licensing, taxes and wages, and unemployment compensation. Although they sometimes assign these tasks to an assistant manager or a bookkeeper, most managers are responsible for the accuracy of business records.

Some managers add up the cash and charge slips and secure them in a safe place. They also may check that ovens, grills, and other equipment are thoroughly cleaned and secured, and that the establishment is locked at the close of business.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Immediate Physical Environment

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. Managers of alternative food businesses such as food trucks must go where their customers are, such as fairs, concerts, expos, and other public events. This often requires travel and uneven working hours and conditions.

Kitchens are usually crowded and filled with dangerous objects and areas, such as hot ovens and slippery floors. As a result, injuries are a risk for food service managers, who spend some of their time helping in the kitchen. Common hazards include slips, falls, and cuts that are seldom serious. To reduce these risks, managers often wear nonslip shoes when in the kitchen.

Human Environment

Food service managers deal with people daily throughout their shifts. They oversee the actions of their employees and must be able to adequately discipline when needed. They also oversee shift schedules, which require organization and communication with a sometimes-large team of employees. Further, they deal with other key people in the restaurant, such as executive chefs, to keep operations flowing smoothly. In manager-owner situations, they may also deal with financial backers and others on a business level, which are crucial to the continued operation of the restaurant as a business. Managers also regularly deal with customers, both satisfied and unsatisfied. In the latter case, they must be able to oversee all manner of disputes to both satisfy the customer and protect the business.

Technological Environment

From a business standpoint, food service managers must be adept at using accounting and inventory software, as well as other database systems, and any other programs or systems the restaurant utilizes in its day-to-day operations. Manager-owners may also benefit from experience utilizing social media and other digital avenues for promotion.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ADVANCEMENT

High School/Secondary

Most applicants qualify with a high school diploma and several years of work experience in the food service industry as a cook, waiter or waitress, or counter attendant. Some applicants have received additional training at a community college, technical or vocational school, culinary school, or 4-year college. High school students thinking of a career in food service should start by getting a part-time job in a restaurant to gain experience in the industry and expanding education to include business or culinary courses in college.

Suggested High School Subjects

- Algebra
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Civics
- Earth or Life or Physical Sciences
- Economics
- English
- Entrepreneurship
- Finance/Accounting
- Geography
- Geometry
- History
- Psychology
- Statistics

Related Career Pathways/Majors

Business, Management & Administration Career Cluster

- Business Information Management Pathway
- General Management Pathway

- Human Resources Management Pathway
 - Operations Management Pathway
- Hospitality & Tourism Administration Career Cluster*
- Restaurants & Food/Beverage Services Pathway
- Human Services Career Cluster*
- Consumer Services Pathway

Postsecondary

Although a bachelor's degree is not required, some postsecondary education is increasingly preferred for many manager positions, especially at upscale restaurants and hotels. Some food service companies, hotels, and restaurant chains recruit management trainees from college hospitality or food service management programs. These programs may require the participants to work in internships and to have food-industry-related experiences to graduate.

Many colleges and universities offer bachelor's degree programs in restaurant and hospitality management or institutional food service management. In addition, numerous community colleges, technical institutes, and other institutions offer associate degree programs in the field. Some culinary schools offer programs in restaurant management with courses designed for those who want to start and run their own restaurant.

Most programs provide instruction in nutrition, sanitation, and food preparation, as well as courses in accounting, business law, and management. Some programs combine classroom and practical study with internships.

Transferable Skills and Abilities

Business Skills

- Understanding all aspects of the restaurant business
- Budgeting for supplies, setting prices, and managing workers to ensure that the restaurant is profitable

Communication Skills

- Giving clear orders to staff and being able to communicate effectively with employees and customers

Customer-service Skills

- Being courteous and attentive when dealing with patrons
- Satisfying customers' dining needs is critical to business success and ensuring customer loyalty

Detail-oriented

- Ensuring that there is enough food to serve to customers
- Maintaining financial records
- Ensuring that the food meets health and safety standards

Leadership Skills

- Establishing good working relationships to maintain a productive work environment
- Motivating workers and leading by example

Organizational Skills

- Keeping track of many different schedules, budgets, and staff; this becomes more complex as the size of the restaurant or food service facility increases

Physical Stamina

- Working long shifts and sometimes spending entire evenings on one's feet helping to serve customers

Problem-solving Skills

- Resolving personnel issues and customer-related problems.

Fast Fact

Americans gobble one billion pounds of shrimp every year, and that's out of the five billion pounds produced. The world is home to 2,000 different shrimp species! Source: southfloridareporter.com



Shrimp makes a delicious seafood treat. Photo via iStock.com/grandriver. [Used under license.]

Related College Majors

- Culinary Science
- Foodservice Systems Administration
- Hospitality Administration
- Hotel, Motel, & Restaurant Management
- Wine Steward/Sommelier

Adult Job Seekers

Most food service managers start working in industry-related jobs, such as cooks, waiters and waitresses, or hosts and hostesses. They often spend years working under the direction of an experienced worker, learning the necessary skills before they are promoted to manager positions.

Professional Certification and Licensure

Although certification is not required, managers may obtain the Food Protection Manager Certification (FPMC) by passing a food safety exam. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredits institutions that offer the FPMC.

In addition, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) awards the Foodservice Management Professional (FMP) designation, a voluntary certification to managers who typically meet the following criteria:

- Have supervisory experience in food service
- Have specialized training in food safety
- Pass a multiple-choice exam

The certification attests to professional competence, particularly for managers who learned their skills on the job.

Additional Requirements

Managers who work for restaurant chains and food service management companies may be required to complete programs that combine classroom instruction

and on-the-job training. Topics may include food preparation, sanitation, security, company policies, personnel management, and recordkeeping.

EARNINGS AND ADVANCEMENT

Earnings depend on the size and caliber of the restaurant, whether the manager oversees more than one location, and whether the manager also owns all or part of the business. Median annual earnings of food service managers were \$55,320 in 2019. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$33,210, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$93,040.

Food service managers may receive paid vacations, holidays, and sick days; life and health insurance; and retirement benefits. These are usually paid by the employer if the business is not self-owned.

EMPLOYMENT AND OUTLOOK

Food service managers held 352,600 jobs in 2019. Thirty-two percent were self-employed. Employment is expected to grow slower than the average for all occupations through the year 2029, at a rate of 1 percent, due to more dining establishments relying on chefs and head cooks instead of hiring additional food service managers. Food service managers will still be needed to oversee food preparation and service as people continue to dine out, purchase takeout meals, and have food delivered to their homes or workplaces.

Although job opportunities should be good overall, they should be best for food service managers with several years of work experience in a restaurant or food service establishment. Most job openings will result from the need to replace managers who leave the occupation.

Jobseekers with a combination of work experience in food service and a bachelor's degree in hospitality, restaurant, or food service management should have an edge when competing for jobs at upscale hotels and restaurants.

Related Occupations

- Bartender
- Chef/Head Cook
- Lodging Manager

- Sales Manager
- Waiter/Waitress

MORE INFORMATION

American Culinary Federation (ACF)

180 Center Place Way
St. Augustine, FL 32095
904.824.4468
acf@acfchefs.net
www.acfchefs.org

American National Standards Institute (ANSI)

330 E. Kilbourn Avenue, Suite 925
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414.501.5494
anabpd.ansi.org

Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals (ANFP)

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

International Foodservice Distributors Association (IFDA)

1660 International Drive, Suite 550
McLean, VA 22102
703.532.9400
www.ifdaonline.org

International Foodservice Manufacturers Association (IFMA)

Two Prudential Plaza
180 N. Stetson Ave., Suite 850
Chicago, IL 60601
312.540.4400
www.ifmaworld.com

National Restaurant Association

2055 L Street NW, Suite 700

Washington, DC 20036

202.331.5900

askus@restaurant.org

www.restaurant.org

National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation: chooserestaurants.orgRestaurant Law Center: restaurantlawcenter.orgServSafe Accreditation: www.servsafe.com**Society for Hospitality and Foodservice Management (SHFM)**

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Stuart Paterson



Conversation With...

DJENABA JOHNSON-JONES

Founder & CEO
Hudson Kitchen, Kearny, NJ
Entrepreneur, 6 years

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

I stumbled upon a career in food by accident. Growing up in Arlington, Texas, I wanted to work in fashion and earned my degree in Fashion Merchandising at the University of North Texas. I minored in business and had various internships including at Ann Taylor in New York City. After I graduated, I worked in product development for County Seat stores in Dallas for three years—at the time, a competitor to the Gap—then went to graduate school at Clark Atlanta University for an MBA in marketing. I wanted to transition to magazine publishing, but an MBA doesn't translate well to publishing. I ended up getting on a plane and moving to New York City, where I found an apartment and started looking for work. Six months later, I started as Assistant Manager of Corporate Marketing at *Essence Magazine*. I moved on to Condé Nast to work at *Brides Magazine* and focused on digital marketing. At the time, the question was: how do you create websites for magazines and sell advertising to support them? After I had my second child, I freelanced for three or four years at various magazine publishers, then returned to Condé Nast for five years. I was Digital Brand Development Director for *W* magazine, which was the liaison between editorial and advertising, when I was laid off as often happens in the corporate world.

I'd always wanted to own my own business and at that point I decided I wanted to launch a company doing something that did not feel like work. I enjoyed exercising, particularly lifting weights. So, I pursued a personal training certification with plans to launch a high-end concierge business around helping executives get healthy through fitness and eating nutritious meals. I started working with a chef to create recipes for a meal delivery service and began searching for a commercial kitchen to rent in my area. I was surprised to find that most small food businesses rented church kitchens and restaurants after hours.

Over time, I abandoned my plans to open a personal training and meal delivery business and pivoted to helping aspiring and established food business owners through commercial kitchen and storage space and food business education.

My market research study showed an overwhelming need: there were only six 24-hour commercial kitchens in New Jersey. At first, I was thinking in terms of a small property but after attending conferences and talking to people, a shared kitchen owner from Virginia recommended that I lease a warehouse space. She was right; I rented an empty white box and was able to build it out for my specific business needs.

I spent five years in business development and opened in December 2019. I started with two businesses as clients and have grown to twenty. I sell kitchen memberships. Members sign a short-term contract and can use the facility 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

During the time I was looking for a location, I launched an education program. What started as continuing education at a community college—workshops such as “The First 10 Steps to Starting a Food Business”—turned into a course called the Food Business Bootcamp®, complete with an 80-page handbook. COVID-19 halted those courses for a year, but I am in the process of re-launching on a virtual platform.

My clients' businesses are growing. Most are consumer-packed goods that sell direct to consumer through their websites. I also work with meal prep companies and food trucks. Hudson Kitchen also creates the benefit of being part of a community. Members seek each other out for business advice and benefit from cooperative purchasing to secure lower prices for ingredients and packaging.

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

You need to be able to step out there and take a risk. I started cold emailing and asking people to teach at my Bootcamp course or sit on a panel for a networking event and they would say, “yes.”

Also, when running a shared space, you encounter people from all walks of life so it's important to have the ability to deal with different personalities. And, you need the ability to switch tasks quickly—one minute you're giving a tour to a prospective client or being interviewed on a podcast and the next you are taking out the garbage.

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

I think the fact that I did not have specific food experience or experience running a kitchen facility has helped me. I was not caught up in how things should be and focused on how I wanted them to be. Even in the financing process, I worked with small nonprofit organizations that read my business plan and made introductions, so I got offers from multiple banks. I didn't know how many small business resources were available, and there are many—a lot for free or nominal costs.

I also realized along the way that businesses need more than just a place to cook. They need support—coaching, access to tools and resources that aid in business growth and most importantly, a community. That's why I created a model, so my clients not only have access to a commercial kitchen, they also receive mentorship and training through our Food Business Bootcamp® course. Also, with the architect plans, city permitting process, and construction build-out, it took longer than I anticipated to get the kitchen open.

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

Yes! It takes a lot of manpower to run a commercial kitchen. Specifically, operations, facilities management, and marketing are areas of opportunity.

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

My job is so much fun! I enjoy helping people start their own food ventures because their backstories are so interesting. Having a human connection to my clients is very important—their families; what are their goals; do they want to grow into a national business. As my business grows, I plan to delegate more of the day-to-day kitchen management duties to other employees so that I can focus on the thing that I love most, developing educational programming for members and the community at large.

Can you suggest a valuable “try this” for students considering a career in your profession?

In order to understand the ins and outs of running a shared kitchen business, I recommend that students shadow a kitchen manager for a day. Also, it's important to understand the different types of businesses that work out of a shared kitchen, so consider getting a job on a food truck or working the booth at a farmers' market.

Conversation With...

LUCAS MYERS

Owner & Director of Operations, SoPo Seafood
Owner & Operator, O' Oysters, South Portland, ME
Seafood industry, 20+ years

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

My family moved to Auburn, Maine when I was four. I went to Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, because I am a baseball player, and they really wanted me to play for their baseball team. They gave me my best financial aid package, and I enjoyed the small liberal arts college atmosphere. But going into college, I didn't really know what I was going to do with my life—maybe be an educator. I found my way to the philosophy department and realized it was at the root of history and politics. Throwing any desire for financial security to the wind, I became a philosophy major and earned my BA in the subject.

I graduated, traveled, worked in restaurants, and applied for a job at a wholesale seafood company in Portland simply as a means to pay the bills. I scaled and gutted fish in the production room and very much enjoyed the camaraderie in the packing room. I quickly became fascinated with the product, which included seafood from Europe and Japan and, of course, domestic harvests. I left to teach for a year, then hit the Appalachian Trail. When I returned, I applied again at the seafood company, this time for a job in the sales department and stayed for 16 years. I rose through the ranks until I was pretty much running the show, directing production, purchasing, sales, and dealing with top accounts including chefs at white tablecloth restaurants. My last titles were Senior Account Manager and Wholesale Sales Manager.

About the time I returned to the seafood company, my now-wife and I partnered with a friend to buy a 4-unit apartment building in Portland. We lived in one apartment as we renovated, moving from one apartment to the next as work progressed. That was my first taste of entrepreneurship. Through our sweat equity we were able to pay our bills with the rents and provide housing for three other family units. It was a good feeling. It also led us to buy other units over the next 15 years, and now we operate Myers Property Management. It has created a capital stream, something we can fall back on if one of us loses our job. That has been a big part of me being able to dead focus on my entrepreneurial drive.

In the seafood industry, I saw a niche opportunity. I dealt with a lot of caterers who not only needed 500 oysters but by the way, do you sell oyster knives and know anybody who shucks

oysters? The idea came to me that I could be that person. I could create a mobile oyster bar and subcontract to caterers, and they could deal with the clients and pay me directly. I could still have my foot in the seafood industry, maybe diversify, and eventually sell the carts as units to other people.

This was a low-cost entry into the market. I had the skill set to do it, and it was a wide-open door for me to walk through. At the same time, my children were little, my wife and I were both working, and we basically had a straight hand-off caring for the kids when I got home at 5 or 6 p.m. This situation was another reason pushing me to get out of a job that was demanding 60 or 70 hours a week and put that time toward something that was my own.

The O’Oyster cart is like a rickshaw. I also designed shucking tables that can get to a place the cart can’t go, like the beach. I got licensed as a caterer and mobile food vendor—the cart goes in back of a trailer, I park anywhere and roll the cart to where it needs to be. The cart looks great. I set up at the ferry and cruise ship terminals or the farmer’s market in Portland. I park it at a rural farm wedding. All the sudden, caterers were calling. People hired me for private parties.

COVID shut down those parties, and we backed off oysters. That gave me time to focus on the next stage of my long-term business goal, which was to start a wholesale seafood company. I could buy oysters direct from the harvester and supply my company, increase margins, and reduce costs. If I were to franchise my carts, I could supply the oysters. A colleague who wanted to sell seafood to restaurants joined forces with me, and we formed SoPo Seafood. We sell in our area, and we’ve also developed an online presence so people from all over the country can purchase from us. I can send oysters with an oyster glove and knife, and people can watch my tutorial on how to shuck an oyster.

We are focused on Maine harvest such as finfish like cod, monk, hake, and haddock. We get scallops through divers and dayboat fishermen. We bring in wild Alaskan sockeye salmon and have a caviar line from domestic farm-raised sturgeon.

Now we are aiming to open a brick-and-mortar retail shop in South Portland this spring. This is located on a critical side of a bridge into Portland that gets clogged with traffic in summer. The retail store will include a restaurant with a raw bar and dishes such as crab salads and lobster rolls that are simply presented so people get the confidence to do something similar at home.

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

A sense of calm under pressure, ability to multitask, determination, a commitment to professionalism, “people skills,” and adept mathematics.

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

I wish I had known a benevolent, wealthy, silent, angel investor.

Right now, I’m self-financed. I’m applying to a bank for a business loan this week and have made a connection to a seafood-focused lender. It’s what I want to be doing but it’s a little nerve-racking.

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

Yes, in sales. People who can sell are the stars of our industry.

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

There's a constant push in the seafood industry to remove the wholesaler from the supply chain. Technology may finally allow this to happen on a macro scale. Online markets will take the place of the wholesaler allowing harvesters to market themselves and direct-ship to end users. Not on the micro scale though, those who maintain a commitment to professionalism and are skilled learners will be able to flourish in niche boutique markets.

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

I enjoy my product most. Oysters are my favorite. Eating an oyster that's really good is just the most satisfying gastronomic experience I can have.

I do not enjoy when variables outside of my control result in a customer's dissatisfaction.

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

Start small. My love for oysters resulted in this goal of having an oyster bar and starting with a cart was an entry into the field of oysters that was very feasible for me to do with little risk. Starting small forces you to think creatively.