

Chef or Cook

A chef or cook plans, prepares and cooks food by using a variety of cooking techniques. A chef usually works in a hotel or a restaurant. They may also work for a contract catering company, providing food for events. Cooks are more likely to work in hospitals, schools, works canteens, cafes or fast food outlets.

The Work

You could be:

- planning out a range of meals (a menu), a whole meal or part of a meal
- listing the ingredients, planning the quantities, fitting the costs to the budget, and arranging to buy them
- organising other members of the kitchen staff, making sure that each part of the meal will be ready at the right time
- using a variety of methods for food preparation, cooking and food storage
- preparing and cooking the whole meal or else being part of a team cooking, for example, the vegetables or the puddings
- experimenting with developing new recipes
- specialising in one type of cooking such as Italian or Tandoori
- as a senior chef, recruiting and training staff, planning staff rotas and managing budgets
- keeping up to date with trends in cuisine.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

The salary for a commis chef (entry level after qualifying) or a chef de partie (the head of a kitchen area) varies greatly depending on the size of restaurant but is generally between £18,000 and £25,000. With experience, moving up to sous chef level, salaries can be between £25,000 and £35,000.

Head chefs can earn up to £45,000 a year, sometimes more, depending on the type of establishment.

Conditions

- In many jobs you work split shifts (working the morning and the evening with time off in the afternoon), and also weekends.
- Part time work is common.
- If you are in a school or a works canteen you work regular daytime hours Monday to Friday.
- You work in a kitchen which might be hot, busy and noisy.
- You have to follow health, hygiene and safety rules at all times.
- It is an active job where you are constantly on the go.

- You may have to carry heavy items, including pots with hot food and liquids.
- You will wear a uniform and hat.
- You may have to buy your own set of knives.

Getting In

- You do not need formal qualifications but a good general education is useful.
- Some employers want you to have a basic Food Hygiene Certificate before you start.
- You might get in through a Modern Apprenticeship in Hospitality (Professional Cookery) at SCQF Level 5 or Professional Cookery at SCQF Level 6.
- You could study the Foundation Apprenticeship in Hospitality (SCQF Level 4 or 5) in S3-S6, which can help to get into a relevant Modern Apprenticeship.
- You need to be over 18 to handle certain kitchen equipment, such as meat slicers.
- You might get in after a full time college course leading to a qualification such as an NC or SVQ Professional Cookery at SCQF Level 5 or 6.
- You might get in as an apprentice commis chef and go to college part time while working.
- You must be fit for heavy lifting.

There is a big demand for chefs and cooks all over the country. Look in Jobcentre Plus offices or on the Find a Job service on GOV.UK for current vacancies, as well as trade magazines such as The Caterer.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- a keen interest in food
- excellent hygiene awareness
- excellent organisational and planning skills
- patience to do routine tasks
- a good eye for detail and presentation
- stamina
- maths skills to work out budgets and calculate quantities
- a good understanding of health and safety
- good organising skills to supervise team members.

You need to be:

- creative - to develop new dishes
- accurate - when judging quantities
- flexible and able to multitask
- able to follow written and verbal instructions
- able to give clear instructions if you are supervising staff
- resilient and able to keep calm under pressure.

Training

- Training is generally on the job with day release to college.
- Anyone with a job involving the handling of food must complete a relevant food safety and hygiene course.
- There are many relevant SVQs or City and Guilds. These include Food Preparation and Cooking, Professional Cookery and Hospitality Services.

Getting On

- You can work your way up to chef de partie (leader of a section such as fish or vegetables), sous chef and then head chef, either within the same company or by moving jobs.
- You might move into self-employment and become a 'chef patron', owning your own restaurant.
- You might move into training and education at a college.
- There may be opportunities to work abroad.

Contacts

Springboard

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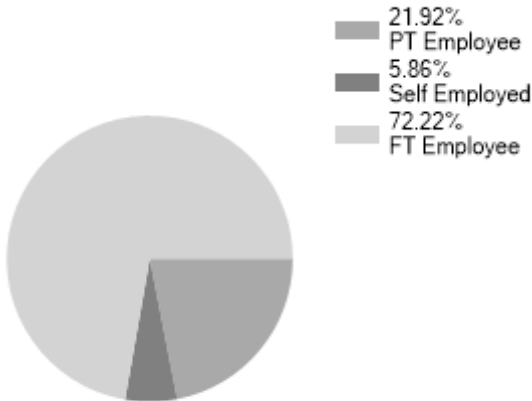
Website (2): springboard.uk.net

Twitter: @Springboard_UK

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

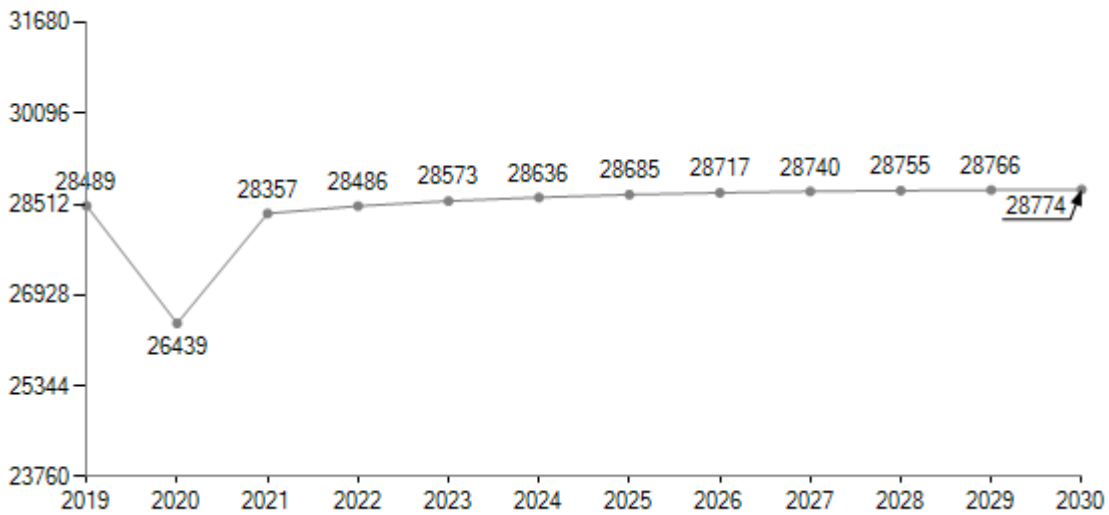


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)