

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. They may also work on ships or in the offshore industry.

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 £20,000 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

Email: info@springboarduk.org.uk

Website: careerscope.uk.net

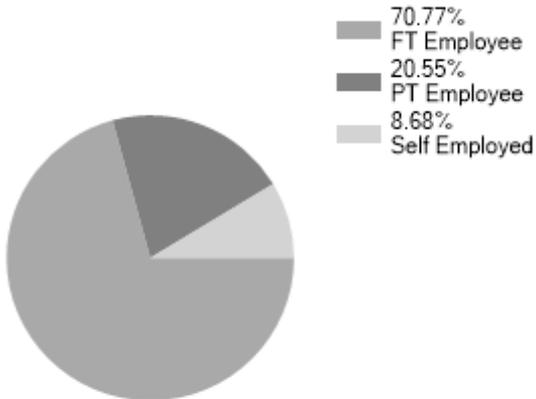
Website (2): springboard.uk.net

X: [@CareerScope_](https://twitter.com/CareerScope)

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Statistics

Employment Status UK %

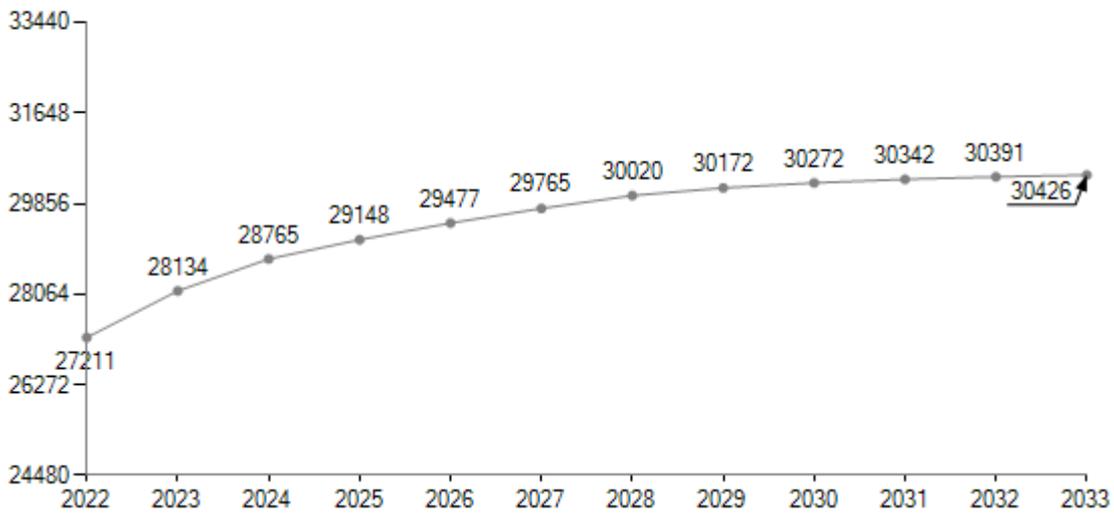


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)