

## 9 Career Paths

### CATERING IN THEORY

#### Job description

##### How to become a chef

What does it take to be a good chef?

- You must be a creative innovator who uses new ideas, methods and equipment.
- You need to pay close attention to detail: from the ingredients you use to how you present your dish.
- You should have good business sense in order to understand how to give good value to customers.
- You must be a team player able to work well as a member of a group and able to pull together under pressure.
- You should be a great communicator able to deal with compliments and criticism politely and diplomatically.
- You should be a flexible multitasker who can handle a lot of different things simultaneously.
- You should be a natural problem-solver who finds answers to difficult or complex issues.
- You need to be super organised and a natural leader able to control people or situations.
- You need to be a hard worker.
- You should have a true passion for fine ingredients, good food and great cuisine.

##### How to become a bartender, sommelier or waiting staff

###### Role: bartender

**Duties:** mixing and serving drinks, dealing with customers, handling money and stock, cleaning bar and seating areas, stocking the fridges and shelves, changing barrels, etc.

**Conditions:** long hours, often at weekends and in the evening, low pay supplemented by tips or overtime, varied, sociable work.

**Personal qualities:** over eighteen, outgoing personality, smart appearance, communication and numeracy skills, a team player, calm, tactful, diplomatic, reliable, flexible and responsible

**Training:** apprenticeships, practical experience and professional qualifications.

**Progression:** you can progress to shift supervisor, assistant bar manager, you could become bar or food and beverage manager, sommelier or mixologist.

### **Role: waiting staff**

**Duties:** setting up the restaurant area, seating customers, taking orders, explaining the menu, serving food and drinks, laying and clearing tables, dealing with customers complaints.

**Conditions:** long hours, low pay, but increments for silver-service and tips or overtime.

**Personal qualities:** good literacy, numeracy and memory, customer service skills, calm under pressure, friendly, outgoing personality, good organisation and team work, smart and physically fit.

**Training:** often in-house or via an apprenticeship.

**Progression:** head waiter, captain, even *maître d'hôtel*, or food and beverage manager.

### **Role: (wine) sommelier**

**Duties:** sourcing suppliers, storing wine correctly, creating wine lists, serving and decanting wine, providing information about wine vintage and origin, advice on pairing food and wine.

**Conditions:** salaries reflect experience and location, but can be high, work is varied and interesting.

**Personal qualities:** knowledge of and passion for wine, good communication skills, a keen sense of smell and taste, good memory, organisation and negotiation skills.

**Training:** professional courses and in-house training.

**Progression:** highly professional role which bartenders or waiting staff might progress to.

### **How to become a food and beverage manager**

Food and beverage managers are responsible for making sure that a restaurant runs smoothly at all times.

**Duties:** marketing, accounts, stock and pricing, managing, training, recruiting and disciplining staff, working in cooperation with bar, restaurant and kitchen, organising staff rotas, coordinating bookings, dealing with customers complaints, etc.

**Conditions:** hours are long, overtime or cover for absent staff is often necessary, but the job can be varied and challenging and the pay good.

**Personal qualities:** good communication and interpersonal skills, excellent customer service skills, team-leadership skills, the ability to work independently and to use initiative, good business skills, the ability to remain calm under pressure, tact and diplomacy, literacy and numeracy skills, problem solving skills, organisational and time-management skills, physically fit with good stamina.

**Training:** individuals with degrees or diplomas in catering or hospitality management are trained in-house as trainee managers, but there are some opportunities for bar or waiting staff to be promoted.

## New professional figures

### The water sommelier

A water sommelier is similar to a wine sommelier, except that they recommend, serve and pair mineral water rather than wine with food. They have become increasingly important in recent years as people have turned from wine to water, for reasons such as health and fitness or religion. Waters have no smell and very little taste, but they have mouthfeel, which means you can feel how many bubbles there are and how big they are. This depends partly on how dense the liquid is with minerals such as calcium and magnesium, usually listed as the total dissolved solids (TDS) and partly on PH balance. Slightly alkaline waters taste sweet; acid ones have a tinge of sourness.

### The olive oil sommelier

Being an olive oil sommelier is one of today's most valued professions in Italy and across Europe. Work is available both nationally and internationally across the fine and dining sectors. In order to become an oil sommelier, you need to distinguish between an industrial oil and an excellent regional one. Then you must learn to identify the particular notes of an oil: fruity, bitter, spicy, herby, or nutty and it is not easy as there are over 700 varieties of olive oils species in Italy alone, which can produce fine and protected quality extra-virgin oils. In order to become an oil sommelier, you need to enrol on one of the many recognised oil sommelier courses and participate in documented tastings before being able to register as a national expert at the local chamber of commerce.

Furthermore, three of the most successful latest new professional figures in catering are: **food tasters**, **vegcoaches** and **food designers**.

## Getting a job

### How to write a Curriculum Vitae

A CV is a brief description of a person's education, qualifications and previous occupations.

It should be neat, word-processed, short, no more than two sides of A4 paper, positive, stressing achievements and strengths, and make a good first impression in a clear and striking way.

The basic format for a CV includes:

- **personal details**: name, address, phone number, email address and any professional social media presence;
- a **personal profile** which sells you and your qualities, tailored to the job you are applying for;
- **career history**, starting with your most recent jobs first and including dates and temporary or voluntary jobs or work placements if appropriate;
- **achievements** from previous jobs that are relevant;

- **qualifications** and **training** from previous jobs, with the most recent first;
- **interests**, especially skills or teamwork relevant to the job;
- **additional information**, like reasons for career changes or for gaps in career history;
- **references**, ideally two or more, including a recent employer or a tutor.

## Europass CV

The Europass CV is a standardised curriculum vitae recognised throughout the European Union, which aims to simplify recruitment between EU member states. It can be downloaded and filled in, or completed online in digital form.

## How to write a covering letter

A covering letter is any letter sent and explaining the contents of another document or a package. The covering letter to your CV should complement, not duplicate your CV. It is usually your earliest written contact with a potential employer and creates a critical first impression.

There are three general types of covering letter: the **application letter**, which responds to a known job opening; the **prospecting letter**, which enquires about possible positions; and the **networking letter**, which requests information and assistance in your job search.

A covering letter should be designed specifically for each purpose outlined above as well as for each position you apply for. Effective covering letters explain the reasons for your interest in the organisation and identify your most relevant skills or experiences.

## Getting ready for an interview

It is crucial to properly prepare for an interview if you are to be successful in getting the job. It will also ensure you make a good impression on your future employers.

First you should check what type of interview it will be: it could be an online or a phone interview, a face-to-face interview which can be one-to-one or a group interview with other candidates.

Before the interview, you need to make a list of the questions you might be asked and try to prepare your answers. Punctuality is very important, so plan carefully for the day of the interview in order to arrive 10 minutes early.

Decide what you are going to wear, so that you look smart and business-like. It might be a good idea to role-play an interview with a friend beforehand, especially if you are feeling nervous.

During the interview be polite and enthusiastic, stay calm and focused, smile and shake hands firmly and be as direct and honest as you can. Answer questions as fully as you can, providing relevant examples, do not interrupt and do not criticise your past employers. Do not be big-headed, controversial, critical or confrontational.

## CASE STUDY

### Famous chefs fight poverty

As Italy's exhibition of sustainable cooking **Milan Expo 2015** started, Michelin-starred chef Massimo Bottura opened the doors to Refettorio Ambrosiano, a soup kitchen, whose aim was to feed the city's poorest people. It did so with a certain style as 40 of the world's top chefs dedicated their time and energy to it by transforming food waste from the Expo into culinary alchemy during the first month of the exhibition.