

Distinguish the Duties and Responsibilities of the Kitchen Brigade

THE **KITCHEN BRIGADE SYSTEM** is an established chain of command in the kitchen. Its purpose is to streamline the work in the kitchen, making each worker more efficient. Food production is quicker, with uniform results. In this unit, you will learn about the history of the kitchen brigade system and how it is used today.



Objective:



Describe the kitchen brigade system.

Key Terms:



Careme
chef de partie
classical cuisine
commis
executive chef

Georges Auguste
Escoffier
guild
haute cuisine
hors d'oeuvres
kitchen brigade system

mise en place
organization
resource management
responsibilities
sous chef
workstations

Kitchen Brigades

Restaurants began in France, where recipes, or formulas, first were recorded. The act of writing down the methods and techniques allowed chefs to be trained in ways other than apprenticeship. Culinary schools, for example, became an option (e.g., Le Cordon Bleu and Les Trois Gourmands in Paris).

ORIGIN

The modern day culinary profession began with the formation of a culinary **guild**, or a professional organization, that focused on the craft of food preparation. The guild monitored:

- ◆ Who could perform various types of food preparation
- ◆ Which foods were to be used for typical culinary dishes
- ◆ How the food dishes were to be prepared

A person identified only as “Monsieur Boulanger,” who was originally a vendor of soup in Rue Bailleul, owned a pub and decided to prepare and sell food items in his establishment. The guild sued him on the grounds that only guild-approved individuals should be allowed to sell food products and services to the public.

Boulanger won his case against the guild and re-opened his pub. He is said to have marketed his soup with a sign that read “Boulanger’s soups are restorative.” He is credited with coining the term “restaurant” from “restorative,” which marked the beginning of the restaurant industry.

CAREME

Marie-Antoine **Careme** is the late 19th-century chef who created and institutionalized the cooking methods and standards known as haute cuisine. **Haute cuisine**, or grande or high cuisine, is a style of food preparation that takes many hours to prepare because of the elaborate preparations and principles involved. Grande cuisine style continues in very fine dining establishments and hotels today and includes garnishing and sculpting a customer’s plate, as someone would construct artwork. It may take approximately 12 to 14 hours to prepare a customer-ordered meal.

GEORGES AUGUSTE ESCOFFIER

Georges Auguste Escoffier, a 19th-century French chef, is considered the father of the culinary arts and founder of the kitchen brigade system. The kitchen brigade is comprised of a team of chefs with specific duties that help to simplify food production in contrast to the grande cuisine style of food preparation, which requires more time, ingredients, and labor.

Escoffier made French cuisine world famous and his seminal cookbook, *Le Guide Culinaire*, was first published in 1903. The seemingly simple act of documenting common food preparation methods and techniques has made it possible for the culinary arts to be shared with all who wish to know how to cook.

Prior to the publication of *Le Guide Culinaire*, people were required to apprentice with a pastry chef to learn how to prepare pastry or to apprentice with a garde-manger to learn how to prepare **hors d’oeuvres** or forcemeats. Escoffier developed several other practices that were

very influential in the 19th-century restaurant industry. His **classical cuisine** style of cooking:

- ◆ Uses the freshest and highest quality ingredients
- ◆ Uses refined cooking techniques (in contrast to the laborious Grande Cuisine style)
- ◆ Structured and documented the methods and techniques to create the “Mother Sauces” used by restaurants worldwide

PURPOSE OF THE KITCHEN BRIGADE SYSTEM

The purpose of the kitchen brigade system is to simplify food production by organizing food preparation and sanitation tasks. In addition, the system makes it possible to conserve resources.

Simplify Food Production

Organization is a plan developed to minimize chaos and to produce superior products by assigning people to specific tasks and kitchen areas. Escoffier identified titles for the kitchen brigade positions and helped make food production run like a well-oiled machine.

Chefs who remain focused on one task or menu category rather than being responsible for multiple tasks can repeatedly produce superior products. Focused tasks allow chefs or cooks to become proficient in their duties and to remain in dedicated workstations. **Workstations** are areas of the kitchen dedicated to specific food production tasks. For instance, a kitchen may have a pastry station and a vegetable station. Each workstation should include the equipment (e.g., a refrigerator, oven, or mixer) needed to accomplish the station’s tasks.

Responsibilities are duties chefs or cooks are assigned to complete with accuracy and efficiency; they must meet specified preparation and presentation standards. If one chef fails to complete his or her duties, the entire food production process suffers, and the customer’s meal is delayed.



FIGURE 1. The kitchen brigade system utilizes workstations dedicated to specific food production tasks, such as preparing and chopping vegetables.

Conserve Resources

Resource management is a plan that helps ensure that facility resources are used in the most efficient manner possible. Food production resources are carefully monitored to ensure business prosperity. Each chef or cook is assigned specific food preparation responsibilities for the menu to avoid duplication of effort.

Time

Time is an important economic resource of the restaurant. Chefs utilize **mise en place**, which is a French term for “put in place.” According to *mise en place*, chefs should prepare in advance any ingredients that will be used when the food dishes are ordered. This includes gathering ingredients; chopping vegetables for soups, salads, and stocks; par baking or cooking foods (e.g., spaghetti and vegetables); and preparing the stocks or sauces to add to dishes.

Finances and Energy

Good financial management is just as important as good food to a restaurant’s success. Good food and poor financial management usually result in business failure. Restaurant success depends, in part, on energy conservation. Labor is an example of a human resource that should result in task completion with minimal wasted effort. Utility costs, which represent the amount of energy used to operate the restaurant, are another area in which conservation is critical.

Goods

Food service goods are another restaurant resource and fall into three categories: durable, semi-durable, and non-durable goods. Durable goods are goods that last many years, if not a lifetime. Examples are facilities, equipment, and furniture. Semi-durable goods are goods that may be used several times, but they do not last for extended periods of time. Examples are cloth table covers and napkins, aprons, and towels. Non-durable goods are one-use items, such as food, disposable table service, and centerpiece flowers.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Running a successful restaurant requires hiring excellent employees, such as an executive chef, a sous chef, and a chef de partie.

Executive Chef

The **executive chef** is the first in command of food production and food production employees in a restaurant kitchen. He or she is responsible for menu planning, for the addition of new recipes and dishes to the menu, and for supervising all food production positions. The executive chef is also responsible for the kitchen budget, invoices, inventory, and purchasing.

A chef typically wears a uniform designed to minimize injuries and sanitation risks. The standard daily dress for an executive chef includes a tall chef hat called a toque, a necktie or

neckerchief, a double-breasted chef jacket, trousers, clogs or other shoes, and an apron. Chefs generally wear no jewelry, but a wedding ring may be allowed.

To ensure that food production standards are met, the executive chef must meet educational or training standards. A chef may receive educational training through an accredited culinary school or through an apprenticeship system. Various certifications and degrees are available, such as an associate's degree and a bachelor's degree in culinary arts. A culinary student or intern may use the apprenticeship system to achieve experience in food production. A **commis** is an apprentice cook who job shadows a professional chef. The commis often works in a food production establishment while enrolled in a culinary education program. The apprenticeship system enables a student to gain experience and to improve his or her skills. Generally, a commis position will last for two to four years.

The salary range for an executive chef is typically between \$95,000 and \$150,000, based on experience, degrees or certifications, training, and the size and prominence of the establishment. For instance, an executive chef at Chili's would probably be offered a higher salary than an executive chef at Ponderosa, but a chef at a popular 4-star restaurant in downtown Chicago, Boston, or Los Angeles would likely earn much more.



FIGURE 2. The standard daily dress for a chef includes a toque, a neckerchief, and a double-breasted jacket.

Sous Chef

The **sous chef** is the second in command of the kitchen brigade. He or she assists the executive chef in carrying out the daily duties and orders. He or she is first in command when the executive chef is absent. The sous chef's food production duties may include preparing sauce and assisting and instructing kitchen brigade personnel in food production and presenta-



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Culinary School

Use the Internet to research at least three culinary schools. Try to locate one school in your part of the country, as well as two that are out of state or in another country. Find the admission requirements for each program. Gather information about the culinary education programs. Determine what kinds of classes are offered and how long it typically takes a student to complete the coursework and graduate.

tion. The standard daily dress is the same as that for an executive chef, but the sous chef's toque is sometimes shorter than that of the executive chef.

The education and training requirements are the same as those for an executive chef. The sous chef may have less experience than the executive chef and may be working his or her way up to the executive chef position. The average salary for a sous chef is typically \$45,000 and increases annually, based on experience, education, training, and establishment size.

Chef de Partie

The **chef de partie** is the line cook or the station chef in the kitchen brigade. This chef is responsible for specific food production duties in a workstation. When more than one chef de partie is present, each retains the name of his or her workstation. For example, there may be a chef de partie du pastry or a chef de partie du garde-manger. These positions have a hierarchy in the kitchen brigade command system, and the number of positions depends on the establishment size. A larger establishment will obviously need more positions. The average annual salary ranges from \$25,000 to \$35,000. Again, the type and size of the establishment affect the salary.

Summary:



The kitchen brigade is comprised of a team of chefs with specific duties that help simplify food production by organizing food preparation and sanitation tasks. French chef Georges Auguste Escoffier is credited with creating the kitchen brigade system in the 19th century. Focused tasks allow the chef or cook to become proficient in his or her duties and to remain in a dedicated workstation. Resource management is a plan that helps ensure that facility resources are used in the most efficient manner possible. Resources include time, finances, and goods. The executive chef is responsible for menu planning, for the addition of new dishes to the menu, and for supervising all food production positions, such as the sous chef, commis, and chef de partie.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is the kitchen brigade system?
2. Who is credited with founding the kitchen brigade system?
3. What are a restaurant's main resources?
4. What are the duties of an executive chef?
5. What is a commis?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Arrange to visit a restaurant's kitchen during the mid-afternoon, when the restaurant is less busy. Interview the executive chef and other members of the kitchen brigade. Determine the specific duties for which each person is responsible. What jobs can be completed in advance, and what jobs are done only after a customer places an order in the dining room? Find out if there are any jobs in the kitchen brigade that are not explained in this unit.

Web Links:



Escoffier

<http://www.escoffier.com/index.php/content-categories/escoffier-and-great-chefs/escoffier-articles/george-auguste-escoffier>

Kitchen Brigade

<http://chefsblade.monster.com/benefits/articles/208-guide-to-the-kitchen-brigade-system>

Sous Chef

<http://recipes.howstuffworks.com/food-facts/food-careers/sous-chef.htm>