Now and Tomorrow Excellence in Everything We Do

Essential Skills and Apprenticeship

Essential Skills for Success as a Cook

Cooks use Essential Skills to complete trade-related tasks. Use this fact sheet to:

- learn how Essential Skills are used on the job;
- find out the skills you need to succeed in your trade; and
- help prepare yourself for your career.



Reading



- Read instructions about operating appliances and equipment, such as dishwashers, deep fryers and ovens.
- Read rules for keeping cooking and preparation areas clean.
- Read and follow recipes to prepare food.
- Read and interpret supplier purchase agreements.

Document Use



- Interpret Occupational Health and Safety hazard symbols.
- Read product labels to identify ingredients that could cause an allergic reaction or that must be excluded from restricted diets.
- Check off items and quantities on delivery checklists.
- Complete reports for the chef on the number of entrées prepared.
- Use supply checklists when placing orders.
- Draw diagrams showing the arrangement of food items on a plate.
- Interpret customer satisfaction ratings displayed on charts.
- Read and prepare customer orders.
- Read event confirmation sheets.
- Refer to market reports regarding the availability and cost of goods in order to make appropriate menu decisions.



Numeracy



- Estimate the amount of food in different sized containers.
- Analyse ordering patterns to determine if customer preferences are changing.
- Measure ingredients according to menu specifications and the number of people to be served.
- Compare quantities of ingredients used in various recipes by converting between metric and imperial measurements.
- Prepare bills for catering functions, including taxes.
- Estimate the quantity of various menu items that will be ordered during a shift.
- Establish catering budgets and weekly budgets that include expenses, such as fresh produce, pantry items and staff salaries.



- Communicate with co-workers, supervisors and management through email.
- Write orders for ingredients and kitchen supplies.
- · Write suggestions for future menus.
- Write short memos to management requesting repair work or suggesting the purchase of new equipment.
- Write a summary after a catered event describing the range of services provided, prices and dates.
- Write accident reports.

Oral Communication



- Place orders by phone.
- Call maintenance to request repair work.
- Talk briefly to customers to determine their level of satisfaction with the food served.
- Interact with servers to clarify orders or to explain how to serve specialty dishes.
- Talk to dishwashers about cleanup or the availability of dishes and cutlery.
- Interact with delivery personnel.
- Discuss work schedules to coordinate the sharing of equipment and work space.

Working with Others



- Coordinate the sharing of work space and equipment with co-workers.
- Offer suggestions for improving work processes during discussion groups.
- Inform or demonstrate how to perform tasks to other workers.
- Orient new employees.

Thinking



- Decide what supplies to order and when.
- Rearrange staff schedules when an employee is late or absent.
- Make adjustments to recipes, such as adding another ingredient and remixing, when the food does not turn out as expected.
- Make menu decisions based on factors such as the seasonal availability of ingredients and marketing trends.
- Refer to various cookbooks and trade magazines to find information on food preparation and presentation.
- Start cooking an order so that it will be ready at the same time as another order.

Computer Use



- Type emails or memos to co-workers to share recipe ideas.
- · Use the Internet to search for recipes.
- Use spreadsheets to track inventory and order information.

Continuous Learning



- Read trade books and magazines, search the Internet and watch cooking programs.
- Learn by watching co-workers on the job.
- · Learn by trying new recipes.
- Attend customer service seminars or demonstrations hosted by food suppliers.
- Attend trade shows, workshops and participate in cooking competitions.

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For more information on the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program, visit

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