

Chef

Start tomorrow, no degree. Long hours, low starting pay, and a real path to running your own kitchen.

TYPICAL PAY

\$48,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$34k to \$90k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Restaurants, hotels, catering, institutions

How you get there

- 1 Get a food handler certificate** 1 day
 A short online course. Required in most provinces before you touch food commercially.
- 2 Start in a kitchen** Any time
 Dishwasher, prep cook, then line cook. Many chefs started at 16. This is the real school.
- 3 Culinary program or apprenticeship (optional)** 1 to 3 years
 A 1 or 2 year college diploma (George Brown, SAIT in Calgary, Vancouver Community College, NAIT in Edmonton, Humber) or a 3-year cook apprenticeship where you work full time and attend school in blocks.
- 4 Red Seal Cook (optional)** After 3 years
 Pass the interprovincial exam after about 6,000 hours in Ontario (5,280 on the job and 720 in school). Recognized across Canada and respected in hotels and institutions.
- 5 Move up** Years
 Line cook, then chef de partie, sous chef, then executive chef. Typically 8 to 12 years to run a serious kitchen.

Pros and cons

- + Start immediately with no schooling
- + Creative, hands-on, never a desk
- + Skills work anywhere in the world
- Low pay for years, especially in restaurants
- Nights, weekends and holidays
- Heat, burns, cuts, standing 10 hours

Good to know

Camp cooks earn more than most chefs

Remote work camps in Alberta, BC and the North pay cooks well above restaurant rates, with free room and board, on rotation schedules that leave weeks off at a time.

Cook is a Red Seal trade

Same national program as electricians and plumbers. A Red Seal cook can work in any province without re-testing.

Optional boosts

Red Seal Cook. Baking and pastry certification. Management and food-cost training. Camp and remote work.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Chefs, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Job Bank: Cooks, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Red Seal Program: Cook

Skilled Trades Ontario: Cook

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/chef>



Scan for the full clicker