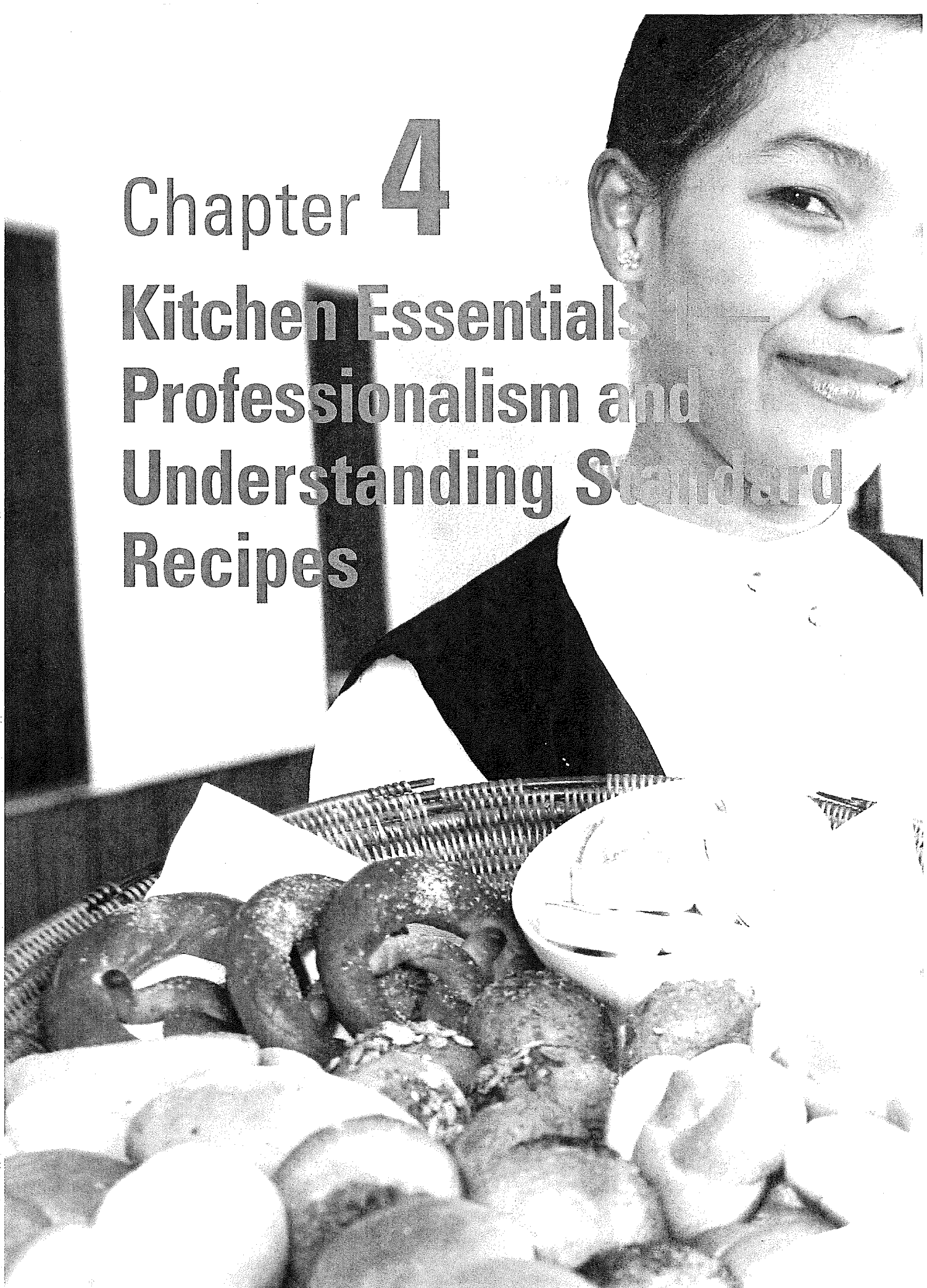


Chapter 4

Kitchen Essentials Professionalism and Understanding Standard Recipes



Case Study *The Art of Professionalism*

Chef Jean hired Alex, a culinary student, for a prep cook position to help with catering jobs. Alex is an aspiring chef. He knows that he will gain invaluable experience as a prep cook and that this will help him move to the next level.

Chef Jean is teaching Alex about professionalism including providing courteous, friendly, and efficient customer service. Chef Jean also stresses the importance of being a team player. Chef Jean says, “A good prep cook is always aware of what is going on in the kitchen and is always willing to help others get the job done.”

Chef Jean is pleased with Alex’s work ethic and his good people skills. He thinks that Alex will progress rapidly. So, he decides to ask Alex to help with menu planning and execution for several functions. Some of the menu items will be the same, but the numbers of people attending ranges from a small dinner party of 18 to large celebrations of 150. Alex will need to understand how to read a recipe, measure ingredients, convert recipes, and calculate yields. However, Alex admits that he is a bit math-phobic and is afraid of making a mistake that will cost the restaurant.

As you read this chapter, think about the following questions:

1. Does Alex appear to be a professional employee?
2. What can be done to address Alex’s math phobia?
3. What skills does Alex need to possess to be able to complete his assignment properly?

Dr. Jerald Chesser, CEC, FMP, CCE, AAC

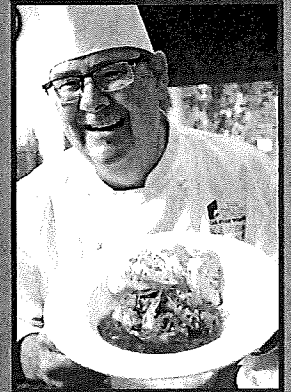
Professor (Educator)

The Collins College of Hospitality Management
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Author of:

The Art and Science of Culinary Preparation

The World of Culinary Supervision, Training and Management



I grew up in the restaurant business, working with my father in the kitchen and my mother in the dining room. I saw the pleasure they created for themselves and others. I wanted to be able to bring that same enjoyment to other people, so going into the restaurant business and becoming both a chef and owner was a natural fit.

When I was in high school and began to think about college, I decided I wanted to become a chef like my father. I can remember telling dad and still recall his answer: "No! You are going to go to college and make something of yourself." My parents were entrepreneurs, accomplished business professionals, and highly successful, but they were not considered to be (and did not perceive themselves to be) at the same level as other professionals—bankers, doctors, professors, or lawyers.

In fact, I still remember the day that my father apologized to me for coming to my school to get me in his chef's uniform because he was afraid he had embarrassed me! I have spent my life working to ensure that no father or mother ever again has to worry about embarrassing his or her child by being seen in a chef's uniform or because they are a restaurateur. And I ask that you carry on this challenge.

After getting a bachelor's and master's degree in history, I got a doctorate in education. I then went into education because I saw an opportunity to impact both individual lives and the industry that is so important to me. The match between the culinary/restaurant industry and education was a natural fit. I think that there is no greater achievement than to assist others in reaching their goals.

So, being able to help people to succeed in the restaurant industry, while helping to generate a sense of pride in what they do—well, it doesn't get any better than that.

The key to quality food and service is a sincere desire to feed both the body and the spirit. This is accomplished by doing everything to the absolute best of your ability.

Constant pursuit of knowledge, training, and experience is necessary to be the best you can be and deliver the best possible product and experience to the guest. Success without personal growth and development is not success—it is resting on your laurels.

Always remember that what we do in the restaurant industry goes beyond just feeding people. We have the opportunity to impact lives in small and large ways, both individually and as an industry.

Remember,

“*We are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.*”

—Hermann G. Rusch

And another favorite quote:

“*If you would not want to eat it, then why would you ask your guest to eat it.*”

—William “Bill” Chesser, CEC, AAC

About Kitchen Essentials 1—Professionalism and Standardized Recipes

Professionalism is defined as the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession. A profession is defined as a calling requiring specialized knowledge. To be a professional is to have more than just the specialized knowledge of the calling. It is to conduct yourself in a manner that always reflects positively on the profession.

Professionalism is not an option; it is a requirement. Integrity, attention to detail, concern for the welfare of others, seeking knowledge, mentoring and working constantly to advance others—all of these are part of being a professional. Your attire should be crisp, your shoes shined, your body clean and well-groomed. Begin to be the model of professionalism now.

Remember, to paraphrase the words of Aristotle, excellence is not an act, it is a habit. You do not get up one day and decide to be excellent...and then take a day off from being excellent. The same is true for professionalism because professionalism is part of being excellent. If you start to make this part of your norm, your standard, you will be successful.

4.1 Professionalism

- What does it mean to be a culinary professional?
- Workstations

4.2 Using Standardized Recipes

- Business math
- U.S. and metric measurement systems
- Standardized recipes
- Converting recipes
- Measuring
- EP/AP amounts
- Costing recipes

SECTION 4.1 PROFESSIONALISM

Wouldn't it be easy if there were a recipe for producing a good culinary professional? Well, at least we know the basic ingredients: knowledge, skill, taste, judgment, dedication, and pride. As you begin your career, these basics are the building blocks that will last throughout your professional life.

Study Questions

After studying Section 4.1, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What is professionalism?
- What does it mean to be a professional culinarian?
- What is the kitchen brigade?
- What is the dining-room brigade?

What Does It Mean To Be a Culinary Professional?

To be professional is to be courteous, honest, and responsible in your dealings with customers and co-workers. Professionals maintain standards for their work and behavior, for instance, by being concerned with the following:

- A working environment that does not discriminate against other coworkers because of the way they look.
- Using products and equipment safely and avoid waste.
- Being fair with others and direct in their communications.

A **culinarian** is one who has studied and continues to study the art of cooking. All professional culinarians must first learn the foundations of their profession—handling ingredients and equipment as well as traditional techniques and recipes. Next, they must apply those skills in order to advance their profession as well as their own careers.

Most professions require a person to have a diverse range of skills and interests, and the culinary vocation is no different. A culinary professional is an artist, a businessperson, a scientist, and a culinary explorer, among other things. Acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in this profession is a lifelong journey.

A professional's responsibility is four-fold: to themselves, to coworkers, to the business, and to the guest. Waste, recklessness, disregard for others, or abuse are unacceptable. Abusive language, harassment, ethnic slurs, and profanity do not have a place in the professional kitchen. Courtesy, respect, discipline, and teamwork build self-esteem and pride. See Figure 4.1 for the Culinarian's Code.

Culinarian's Code

I pledge my professional knowledge and skill to the advancement of our profession, and I pledge to pass it on to those who are to follow.

I shall foster a spirit of courteous consideration and cooperation within our profession.

I shall place honor and the standing of our profession before personal advancement.

I shall not use unfair means to affect my professional advancement or to injure the chances of another colleague to secure and hold employment.

I shall be fair, courteous, and considerate in my dealings with fellow colleagues.

I shall conduct any necessary comment on, or criticism of, the work of a fellow colleague with careful regard to the good name and dignity of the culinary profession, and will scrupulously refrain from using criticism to gain personal advantage.

I shall never expect anyone to subject themselves to risks which I would not be willing to assume myself.

I shall help to protect all members against one another from within our profession.

I shall be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as I am about my own.

I shall be too big for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit pressure of business to hurt anyone, within or without the profession.

Adopted by the American Culinary Federation, Inc., at its Convention in Chicago, August 1957

Figure 4.1: The Culinarian's Code.

Professionals are committed to providing excellent service. Service implies more than bringing food to a paying customer. Everyone, from the executive chef to the dishwasher, has a stake in keeping the customer happy. Open communication between the chef and staff, as shown in Figure 4.2, is an important aspect of good service. Good service includes (but is not limited to) providing the following:



Figure 4.2: Open communication among staff is an important aspect of good service.

- Quality items that are properly and safely prepared
- Food that is appropriately flavored
- Foods that is attractively presented

Attributes of a Culinary Professional

Knowledge

Culinary professionals have to identify, purchase, utilize, and prepare a wide variety of foods. They are required to train and supervise a safe, skilled, efficient staff. In order to do this successfully, culinarians need to understand and apply certain scientific and business principles. A professional culinary program provides the culinary student with a basic knowledge of foods, food styles, and the methods used to prepare foods. In addition, students will learn about sanitation, nutrition, and business procedures, such as food costing.

As with any profession, an education does not stop at commencement. After culinary students join the ranks of the employed, they will continue to learn and grow. The culinary profession is constantly evolving, and additional classes, workshops, and seminars help culinarians perfect skills in specialized areas and keep up with new methods and styles of cooking. Culinary professionals should do the following:

- Regularly review periodicals and books devoted to cooking
- Travel as much as possible
- Try new dishes

It is also helpful to become involved in professional organizations in order to meet peers, gain insight, and exchange ideas. There are a number of professional organizations a culinarian can join:

- **National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation:** www.nraef.org
- **National Restaurant Association:** www.restaurant.org
- **American Culinary Federation (ACF):** www.acfchefs.org
- **International Council of Hotel, Restaurant & Institutional Educators (I-CHRIE):** www.chrie.org
- **Research Chefs Association (RCA):** www.culinology.com
- **American Hotel Motel Association (AHMA):** www.ahma.com

Figure 4.3 shows a chef giving a demonstration to students.

Skill

Culinary schooling alone does not make a student a culinary professional. Practice and hands-on experience provide the skills necessary to produce quality foods consistently and efficiently, to organize, train, motivate, and supervise a staff.

Almost all foodservice operations recognize that new workers, even those who have graduated from culinary programs, need time and experience to develop and improve their skills. Most graduates start in entry-level positions. Don't be discouraged; advancements will come, and the training pays off in the long run. Today, culinary styles and fashions change frequently. What does not go out of fashion are well-trained, skilled, and knowledgeable culinary professionals.

Flavor, Aroma, and Taste

Culinary professionals must produce foods that taste great, or the customer will not return. Professional chefs are judged on the ability to produce the finest flavors, manipulating tastes and aromas to achieve the desired results. It is critical that culinary professionals understand how flavor, aroma, and taste work. Figure 4.4 shows a culinary professional tasting a dish.

Flavor refers to all the sensations produced by whatever is in the mouth, but mostly the food's aroma and taste. Think about the last time you had a stuffy nose and nothing seemed to taste right. When people lose the ability to smell, they lose the ability to perceive flavors, even though the foods themselves don't



Figure 4.3: Demonstrations help culinary professionals perfect their skills and learn new methods or styles of cooking.

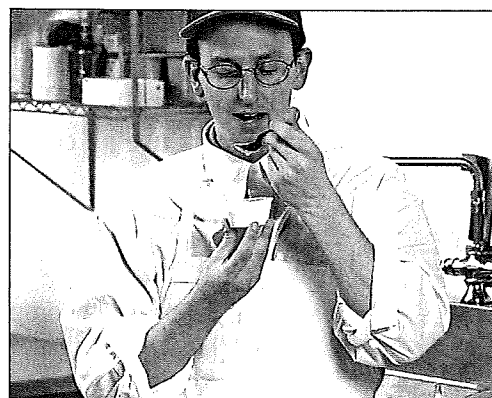


Figure 4.4: Before a dish is sent out of the kitchen, a culinary professional tastes the dish to check the flavor.

change. The relationship between aroma and taste is so strong that if a cook changes how a food smells, but *doesn't* change how it tastes, then the food's flavor changes.

Many things create aroma: fermentation, the ripening process, other chemical reactions. People perceive aromas, or smells, when they trigger the receptors in the nose. These receptors then send messages to the part of the brain responsible for emotional responses. For many people, smells connect to emotions. For example, most people don't notice all the ingredients in a pot of spaghetti sauce, but a lot of people might remember the way they felt when they sat down to a home-style dinner with families and friends. This is why aromatherapy has become so popular. Humans can pick up very tiny amounts of the chemical compounds that make up smells and identify thousands of aromas. In fact, people can even recognize their blood relatives just by smelling them. Building on this ability, some fine-dining chefs now include elements in their tasting menus, such as smoking wood or fragrant blossoms, that contribute aroma, not taste, to a particular course.

Taste refers to our ability to identify substances like foods, minerals, and even poisons. Some bad-tasting substances are commonly added to dangerous chemicals to warn people away. There are five basic tastes: salt, sour, bitter, sweet, and **umami** (or savory). Educators used to believe there was a "tongue map" that could show where on the tongue each type of taste is experienced. That map is no longer used. Now researchers recognize that a single human taste bud can identify a number of different tastes. The tongue and mouth can also recognize other sensations besides taste: fattiness, astringency, calcium, metal, spicy-hot, minty-cool, numbness, mouthfeel, and temperature. While none of these is actually a taste, they affect people's perceptions of what they do taste, and experienced chefs use all of these effects to create specific dishes.

[on the job]

Testing Tastes

Most food or beverage companies use professional taste-testers to get feedback on their developing products. Other associations, such as the American Academy of Taste, conduct taste tests to decide which products to endorse. The tasting conditions must be as neutral as possible. For example, there should be no external odors in the tasting area, and the cups, plates, and cooking utensils must not have any odors or tastes of their own. Professional taste-testers evaluate products by using "taste memory," which is the ability to recognize and categorize flavors that they have previously experienced. They also rely on a prearranged set of standards and vocabulary so that when one taste-tester uses a word, the others all know exactly what that person means. Chefs often hold "cuttings" with their staff to decide which product—olive oil or hamburgers, for example—are best for their kitchens. These don't involve professional taste-testers, but these opportunities help young cooks develop their own taste memories.

Taste, however, is highly subjective: everyone's physical and cultural characteristics are different, so everyone has different personal preferences. Age, vitamin deficiencies, and genetic variations are just some of the reasons why a food won't taste the same to any two eaters. Although diners and circumstances can affect the way tastes are perceived, foods do have essential, characteristic tastes regardless of the situation. That is, if two people are eating bananas, and one person likes the taste and the other doesn't, well, the banana still tastes like a banana.

Flavor and its different components can remind people of loved ones, warn them away from poisons, help determine the best possible recipe—it's a long list. Professional chefs use all the tools in their arsenals to create the ideal experience for their guests, whether it's a quick burger and fries or an 18-course tasting menu.

The total perception of eating is a complex combination of smell, taste, sight, sound, and texture. Humans involve all senses in the pleasure of eating; therefore, all senses must be considered in creating and preparing a dish. Culinary professionals have to develop a taste memory by sampling foods, both familiar and unfamiliar. They think about what they taste, making notes and experimenting with flavor combinations and cooking methods. Culinarians are not inventive simply for the sake of invention. Rather, they consider how the flavors, appearances, textures, and aromas of various foods will interact to create a total taste experience.

Judgment

Culinary professionals must use discretion and appropriate behavior with coworkers, supervisors, and employees. Selecting menu items, determining how much of what item to order, deciding whether and how to combine ingredients, and approving finished items for service are all matters of judgment. Although knowledge and skill play a role in developing judgment, sound judgment comes only with experience. Of course, real experience is often accompanied by failure. Do not be upset or surprised if a dish does not turn out as expected. Learn from mistakes as well as from successes. That is how everyone develops sound judgment.

Dedication

Becoming a culinary professional is hard work. The work is physically and mentally taxing, the hours are usually long, and the pace is frequently hectic. Despite these pressures, the culinarian is expected to efficiently produce consistently fine foods that are properly prepared, seasoned, garnished, and presented. To do so, he or she must be dedicated.

The foodservice industry is competitive and depends on the continuing goodwill of a demanding public. One bad dish or one off night can result in a disgruntled diner and lost business. The culinary professional is always mindful of the food prepared and the customer served.

The culinarian is also dedicated to his or her staff and coworkers. Virtually all foodservice operations rely on teamwork to get the job done well. Teamwork requires a positive attitude and dedication to a shared goal. These are as impressive to a prospective employer as well-polished technical skills. Teamwork is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8: *Management Essentials*.

Pride

It is important to have a sense of pride about a job well done. Pride extends to personal appearance and behavior in and around the kitchen. Professionals are well-groomed and dress in clean, well-maintained, ironed uniforms when working.

For example, the traditional professional chef's uniform consists of the following:

- Comfortable leather shoes that are polished and kitchen safe (with nonskid soles and closed toes)
- Trousers (either solid white, solid black, black-and-white checked, or black-and-white striped) that are hemmed and fit appropriately, possibly with a belt
- Clean, pressed, white double-breasted jacket
- Clean, ironed apron
- Clean neckerchief, usually knotted or tied cravat style
- Hat or toque

The uniform reflects the clothing worn by professional cooks and chefs and provides some operational advantages:

- Checked trousers disguise stains.
- The double-breasted white jacket can be rebuttoned to hide dirt, and the double layer of fabric protects from scalds and burns.
- The neckerchief absorbs facial perspiration.
- The apron protects the uniform and insulates the body.
- The toque's wide brim absorbs perspiration, and the high hat lets the chef be easily spotted.

Wear this uniform with pride. Keep shoes polished, and trousers and jacket pressed as shown in Figure 4.5.

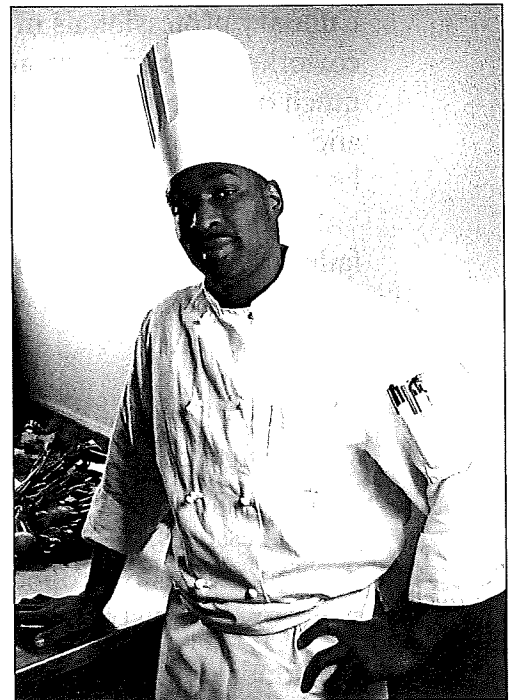


Figure 4.5: Culinary professionals must be well-groomed and professional.

The crowning element of the uniform is the toque. A toque is the tall, white hat traditionally worn by chefs. Most chefs now wear a standard 6- or 9-inch high toque, but as you learned in *Chapter 1: Welcome to the Restaurant and Foodservice Industry*, a cook's rank in the kitchen often dictates the type of hat he or she wears. Beginners wear flat-topped calottes; cooks with more advanced skills wear low toques; and the master chefs wear high toques.

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

The 101 pleats on a traditional hat represent the number of ways the wearer of the toque should be able to use eggs in a preparation.

Respect

Respect is having consideration for oneself and others. In order to respect others, a person must first respect him- or herself. Respect includes consideration of other people's privacy, their physical space and belongings, and different viewpoints, abilities, and beliefs. Disrespect hurts people. It devalues the person and their ideas, excludes them from the team, lowers morale, and creates an atmosphere of negativity.

Respect in a foodservice operation is threefold:

- **Respecting ingredients:** Be sure to use as much of an ingredient as possible (minimizing waste), and paying careful attention to product (don't let it burn or rot).
- **Respecting guests:** Make sure every plate maintains a consistently high standard, not being offended or angered by special requests, and accepting criticism of a dish or experience with grace.
- **Respecting coworkers:** Treat people with dignity, honoring their personal lives, and offering constructive criticism.

Remember the Golden Rule: Treat others as you want to be treated.

Personal Responsibility

Personal responsibility means that a person is responsible for the choices he or she makes. People are responsible for the way they think and feel. Personal responsibility means that a person accepts accountability and is in control.

Examples of personal responsibility in a foodservice operation include the following:

- Doing the work without making excuses for why it's not being done more quickly or better
- Taking responsibility for your mistakes and being willing to correct them and learn from them
- Asking for help if it's necessary
- Being punctual for work
- Taking extra steps to learn and see what needs to be done, so you can be as big an asset to the kitchen as possible

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

The National Restaurant Association reports that the restaurant and foodservice industry employs an estimated 12.8 million people, making it the second largest employer in the U.S. after the government. By 2019, an estimated 14.8 million will be employed by the restaurant and foodservice industry.

Education and the Culinary Professional

In the past years, there has been an increasing trend toward employers valuing a formal culinary education over on-the-job training. On-the-job training only exposes a student to one type of cuisine—the cuisine offered at the restaurant. It is also slower; it will take the student much longer to learn various techniques.

A formal culinary education allows the student to learn varieties of cuisine, theories, and techniques about food. Increasingly, employers are looking for applicants who have culinary degrees. There are more than 800 schools in the United States that offer some form of postsecondary culinary education. These schools offer programs that can result in an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or a certificate that says you attended the program. The best culinary schools incorporate plenty of hands-on application in their curriculum, as shown in Figure 4.6 on the following page.