

Head Chef Job Description

A comprehensive job description template
for Australian hospitality businesses

Business Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This template is provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. It is designed to reflect Australian workplace standards and hospitality industry practices at the time of publication. You should review and tailor this template to suit your business, venue type, applicable modern award and specific requirements. For complex situations, independent legal or HR advice should be sought. RosterElf Pty Ltd accepts no liability for any loss arising from reliance on this document.

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1. Position Overview

1.1 Position Title

Head Chef / Chef de Cuisine

1.2 Position Summary

The Head Chef is responsible for leading all kitchen operations, from menu planning and food preparation to staff management and cost control. This senior role requires culinary expertise, strong leadership skills and business acumen to deliver exceptional food quality while maintaining profitability and compliance with food safety standards.

The Head Chef oversees all aspects of the kitchen, including menu development, food costing, supplier relationships, staff training and performance management. This position requires the ability to work under pressure, maintain high standards during busy service periods, and foster a positive, productive kitchen culture.

1.3 Reporting Structure

This position reports to:

- General Manager / Venue Manager / Owner
- Operations Manager (in larger organisations)

This position has direct supervisory responsibility for:

- Sous Chef(s)
- Cooks and Chefs de Partie
- Kitchen Hands and Apprentices
- All other kitchen staff

1.4 Employment Type

This position is offered as:

- Full-time permanent (38 hours per week plus reasonable additional hours)
- Salaried position (above award) or hourly rate at Cook Level 5

2. Key Responsibilities

2.1 Menu Planning and Development

- Design and develop menus that align with venue concept and target market
- Create seasonal menus and daily specials based on availability and trends
- Cost all menu items accurately and ensure profitability
- Develop recipes with precise specifications for consistency

- Update menus based on customer feedback and sales data
- Accommodate dietary requirements and special requests
- Maintain menu balance across flavours, textures and cooking methods

2.2 Kitchen Operations Management

- Oversee all food preparation and cooking operations
- Coordinate kitchen workflow and service timing
- Ensure consistent food quality, presentation and portion control
- Manage mise en place and preparation schedules
- Monitor cooking techniques and plate presentation
- Expedite orders during service periods
- Maintain equipment in good working order
- Implement and maintain kitchen systems and procedures

2.3 Staff Management and Training

- Recruit, train and supervise all kitchen staff
- Create staff rosters that balance skill levels and labour costs
- Conduct performance reviews and provide feedback
- Train staff in cooking techniques, food safety and presentation
- Mentor junior chefs and apprentices in career development
- Address performance issues and conduct disciplinary processes
- Foster a positive, professional kitchen culture
- Conduct team meetings and pre-service briefings

2.4 Cost Control and Financial Management

- Manage food costs within budgeted targets (typically 28-35%)
- Control portion sizes and minimise waste
- Monitor stock levels and implement effective stock rotation (FIFO)
- Order supplies and manage relationships with suppliers
- Negotiate pricing and payment terms with suppliers
- Conduct regular stocktakes and reconcile discrepancies
- Manage kitchen labour costs within budget
- Identify cost-saving opportunities without compromising quality

2.5 Food Safety and Compliance

- Implement and maintain food safety programs
- Ensure compliance with Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) requirements
- Conduct regular kitchen hygiene inspections

- Maintain accurate temperature logs and food safety records
- Train staff in safe food handling practices
- Respond to and document food safety incidents
- Maintain cleaning schedules and kitchen sanitation standards
- Prepare for and respond to health department inspections

2.6 Collaboration and Communication

- Liaise with front-of-house management on menu and service matters
- Communicate menu changes and specials to service staff
- Respond to customer feedback and complaints professionally
- Collaborate with management on business planning and budgets
- Represent the kitchen at management meetings
- Build and maintain positive supplier relationships

3. Required Skills and Attributes

3.1 Essential Skills

Culinary Expertise

Advanced cooking techniques across multiple cuisines. Strong knife skills. Understanding of flavour profiles and ingredient pairings. Ability to create and execute complex dishes consistently.

Leadership and Management

Proven ability to lead and motivate kitchen teams. Strong communication and delegation skills. Conflict resolution and performance management experience. Capacity to maintain composure under pressure.

Business and Financial Acumen

Understanding of food costing, GP calculations and profitability. Budget management and cost control skills. Ability to analyse sales data and adjust operations. Stock management and ordering expertise.

Menu Development

Creativity in menu design and dish creation. Understanding of seasonal ingredients and market trends. Recipe development and standardisation. Balancing innovation with commercial viability.

Organisation and Planning

Strong organisational skills for managing multiple priorities. Ability to plan and coordinate kitchen operations. Rostering and workflow management. Time management during service periods.

3.2 Personal Attributes

- Natural leadership qualities and ability to inspire teams
- High attention to detail in all aspects of food preparation
- Strong work ethic and commitment to excellence
- Adaptability and problem-solving skills
- Passion for food and commitment to continuous learning

- Professional demeanour and positive attitude
- Physical stamina for extended shifts in hot environments
- Resilience and ability to handle stressful situations

4. Qualifications and Requirements

4.1 Mandatory Requirements

- Certificate III or IV in Commercial Cookery (or equivalent trade qualification)
- Food Safety Supervisor certificate (current for your state/territory)
- Minimum 5-7 years experience in commercial kitchens
- Minimum 2-3 years in a senior or supervisory kitchen role (Sous Chef or above)
- Eligibility to work in Australia (citizenship, permanent residency or valid work visa)
- Ability to work flexible hours including early mornings, evenings, weekends and public holidays

4.2 Desirable Qualifications

- Diploma of Hospitality Management or Advanced Diploma in Hospitality
- HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) certification
- Experience with specific cuisine styles relevant to the venue
- Knowledge of food costing and inventory management software
- Experience in venues of similar size and style
- Demonstrated success in menu development and innovation
- Strong references from previous employers in the hospitality industry

4.3 Demonstrated Experience

Candidates should provide evidence of:

- Successful kitchen leadership in a commercial environment
- Menu development and implementation
- Managing food costs within budget parameters
- Staff training and performance management
- Maintaining food safety and hygiene standards

5. Working Conditions

5.1 Hours of Work

- Full-time position: 38 hours per week plus reasonable additional hours
- Early morning starts for preparation and ordering
- Evening work during service periods

- Regular weekend and public holiday work required
- On-call availability for emergencies or critical issues
- Flexibility required for functions, events and busy periods

5.2 Physical Requirements

- Standing for extended periods throughout shifts (6-12 hours)
- Lifting and carrying heavy pots, boxes and equipment (up to 20kg)
- Working in hot, humid kitchen environments
- Repetitive movements including chopping, stirring and plating
- Bending, reaching and stretching frequently
- Manual dexterity for precise knife work and plating

5.3 Work Environment

- Hot kitchen environment with industrial cooking equipment
- Fast-paced, high-pressure atmosphere during service
- Exposure to heat, steam, flames and hot surfaces
- Noise from kitchen equipment and service operations
- Close teamwork with kitchen and front-of-house staff
- Handling sharp knives and kitchen equipment

5.4 Presentation Standards

- Clean, professional chef uniform provided by venue
- Closed-toe, non-slip safety footwear required
- Hair tied back or covered with chef hat
- No jewellery (except plain wedding band)
- Short, clean fingernails
- High standards of personal hygiene at all times

6. Award Information

6.1 Modern Award Coverage

This position is typically covered by the Restaurant Industry Award 2020 (MA000119). Head chefs are usually classified as Cook Level 5 — a trade qualified cook who performs supervisory or managerial duties and is responsible for overseeing kitchen operations, menu planning and staff management.

Many head chef positions are offered as salaried roles above the award rates, reflecting the senior nature of the position and the expectation of extended or irregular hours. When offering an annualised salary, ensure it adequately compensates for all hours worked, including reasonable overtime.

6.2 Classification and Pay Rates

Under the Restaurant Industry Award, the Cook classifications are:

- Level 1: Introductory level (first 3 months)
- Level 2: Basic trade skills
- Level 3: Trade qualified cook
- Level 4: Advanced trade skills with some supervisory duties
- Level 5: Supervisory/managerial role (typically Head Chef)

Head chefs typically fall under Level 5. Refer to the current Restaurant Industry Award for minimum rates.

6.3 Salary Considerations

Head chef salaries in Australia typically range from \$65,000 to \$90,000+ annually, depending on:

- Venue size, type and location
- Cuisine style and complexity
- Level of experience and qualifications
- Number of staff managed
- Expected hours and responsibilities

7. Performance Expectations

7.1 Key Performance Indicators

Success in this role will be measured by:

- Food cost percentage maintained within budget (typically 28-35%)
- Labour cost management within allocated budget
- Customer satisfaction scores and positive feedback
- Food safety audit results and compliance ratings
- Staff retention and team morale
- Menu performance and dish popularity
- Waste reduction and stock management efficiency
- Timely completion of administrative duties (rosters, orders, reports)

7.2 Professional Conduct

- Lead by example in all aspects of kitchen operations
- Maintain confidentiality regarding business information
- Treat all staff with respect and professionalism
- Represent the venue positively to suppliers and stakeholders
- Communicate openly and transparently with management

- Take ownership of problems and implement solutions

7.3 Continuous Improvement

- Stay current with culinary trends and techniques
- Seek opportunities for menu innovation
- Implement process improvements for efficiency
- Invest in personal and professional development
- Accept feedback constructively and apply learnings

8. Application Process

8.1 How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit:

- Comprehensive resume/CV detailing relevant experience
- Cover letter explaining your culinary philosophy and leadership approach
- Copies of relevant qualifications (trade certificates, food safety, etc.)
- Sample menus you have developed (if available)
- Contact details for three professional referees

8.2 Selection Process

Shortlisted candidates will progress through:

- Initial phone interview to discuss experience and expectations
- Face-to-face interview with venue management
- Kitchen tour and discussion of current operations
- Cooking demonstration or tasting (if requested)
- Reference checks with previous employers
- Final offer discussion including salary and conditions

8.3 Equal Opportunity

We are an equal opportunity employer and welcome applications from all qualified candidates regardless of age, gender, cultural background, disability or other characteristics protected by law. Selection will be based on merit, qualifications, experience and demonstrated ability to perform the role.

Position Acknowledgement

I have read and understood this job description. I understand that my duties may be varied from time to time to meet the operational needs of the business.

Employee Name: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

For Manager Use Only

Manager Name: _____

Manager Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____