

Sous 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, kitchen operations, 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

Sous Chef

1.2 Position Summary

The Sous Chef is the second-in-command in the kitchen, working directly under the Head Chef. This senior role involves supervising kitchen staff, managing food preparation, ensuring quality control and maintaining operational standards. The Sous Chef acts as Head Chef in their absence and plays a critical role in kitchen leadership and team development.

The position requires advanced culinary skills, proven supervisory experience, and comprehensive knowledge of food safety, kitchen operations and commercial cookery. The Sous Chef must demonstrate leadership, organisation and the ability to maintain high standards during busy service periods.

1.3 Reporting Structure

This position reports to:

- Head Chef / Executive Chef
- Kitchen Manager (if applicable)
- Food & Beverage Manager (in larger operations)

This position directly supervises:

- Chef de Partie / Line Cooks
- Commis Chefs / Kitchen Hands
- Apprentice Chefs

1.4 Employment Type

This position is available as:

- Full-time (38 hours per week)
- Permanent position with salary package

2. Key Responsibilities

2.1 Kitchen Supervision

- Supervise and coordinate activities of kitchen staff during shifts
- Assign tasks and delegate responsibilities to team members
- Monitor staff performance and provide on-the-spot guidance
- Ensure smooth communication between kitchen sections
- Manage kitchen operations in the absence of the Head Chef

- Conduct daily briefings and coordinate with front-of-house staff
- Address and resolve operational issues during service
- Maintain discipline and professional standards in the kitchen

2.2 Food Preparation and Service

- Prepare complex dishes to specification and standard
- Work across multiple sections as required
- Ensure consistency in portion sizes, presentation and taste
- Monitor cooking methods and temperatures
- Expedite orders during service to ensure timely delivery
- Perform final quality checks before dishes leave the kitchen
- Adjust recipes and techniques based on feedback
- Support menu development with the Head Chef

2.3 Quality Control

- Inspect all ingredients upon delivery for quality and freshness
- Conduct regular taste tests throughout service
- Ensure adherence to recipes and presentation standards
- Monitor temperature control and food safety compliance
- Identify and address quality issues immediately
- Review and approve dishes before service
- Maintain documentation of quality checks

2.4 Stock and Inventory Management

- Assist Head Chef with ordering and procurement decisions
- Receive, check and store deliveries correctly
- Maintain accurate stock records and inventory counts
- Rotate stock using FIFO (first in, first out) principles
- Monitor par levels and advise on reordering requirements
- Identify opportunities to minimise waste
- Manage supplier relationships and resolve delivery issues

2.5 Training and Development

- Train new kitchen staff in recipes, techniques and procedures
- Mentor and develop junior chefs and apprentices
- Demonstrate cooking methods and presentation techniques
- Provide regular feedback on staff performance
- Identify training needs and development opportunities

- Support apprentices with their formal training requirements
- Foster a positive learning environment in the kitchen

2.6 Food Safety and Compliance

- Ensure compliance with food safety regulations and standards
- Implement and monitor HACCP principles
- Conduct regular temperature checks and maintain records
- Ensure proper food storage, labeling and rotation
- Maintain cleanliness and hygiene standards across the kitchen
- Manage allergen information and cross-contamination risks
- Ensure staff follow personal hygiene and uniform requirements
- Report and document any food safety incidents

2.7 Kitchen Operations

- Coordinate kitchen opening and closing procedures
- Ensure equipment is properly maintained and serviced
- Report maintenance issues and equipment faults promptly
- Manage mise en place preparation for upcoming services
- Monitor kitchen costs and identify cost-saving opportunities
- Participate in menu planning and development
- Assist with roster planning and shift allocation

3. Required Skills and Attributes

3.1 Essential Skills

Culinary Expertise

Advanced cooking techniques across multiple cuisines and cooking methods. Comprehensive understanding of ingredients, flavour profiles and food science. Ability to work all sections of the kitchen to a high standard.

Leadership and Supervision

Proven ability to lead, motivate and manage kitchen teams. Strong delegation skills and ability to coordinate multiple staff members. Confidence to make decisions under pressure and resolve conflicts professionally.

Communication

Clear verbal communication with kitchen team, front-of-house staff and suppliers. Ability to give constructive feedback and training instructions. Professional interaction with management and external stakeholders.

Organisation and Time Management

Excellent organisational skills to manage multiple priorities simultaneously. Ability to plan and coordinate prep work, services and administrative tasks. Efficient time management during high-pressure service periods.

Food Safety Knowledge

Comprehensive understanding of HACCP principles, food safety regulations and hygiene standards.

Knowledge of temperature control, allergen management and contamination prevention. Ability to train and monitor staff compliance.

3.2 Personal Attributes

- Professional demeanor and leadership presence
- Calm under pressure and able to handle stressful situations
- Strong work ethic and commitment to excellence
- Attention to detail in all aspects of food preparation
- Team-oriented with collaborative approach
- Flexibility to adapt to changing requirements
- Problem-solving mindset and initiative
- Physical stamina for long shifts in demanding environment
- Passion for food and commitment to culinary standards

4. Qualifications and Requirements

4.1 Mandatory Requirements

- Certificate III or IV in Commercial Cookery (or equivalent trade qualification) - highly preferred
- Food Safety Supervisor certificate (current)
- Minimum 3-5 years experience in commercial kitchens
- Previous supervisory or senior chef experience
- 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

- Previous sous chef or head chef experience
- Specific cuisine expertise relevant to the venue
- Knowledge of dietary requirements, allergens and special diets
- Current first aid certificate
- Experience with stock management and ordering systems
- Understanding of kitchen cost controls and budgeting
- Experience training apprentices or junior staff

4.3 Experience

Candidates should demonstrate a progression of roles in professional kitchens, from junior positions through to senior or supervisory roles. Experience in similar venue types (fine dining, casual dining, hotels, catering) is highly regarded.

5. Working Conditions

5.1 Hours of Work

- Full-time position (38 hours per week) with additional hours as required
- Split shifts common (early morning prep and evening service)
- Weekend work and public holidays required
- Flexibility needed to cover Head Chef absences
- Roster provided in advance as per award requirements

5.2 Physical Requirements

- Standing and moving constantly throughout shifts (8-10+ hours)
- Lifting and carrying heavy equipment, stock and containers (up to 20kg)
- Working in hot kitchen environment with exposure to heat and steam
- Manual dexterity for knife work, plating and equipment operation
- Physical stamina to work multiple services without breaks

5.3 Work Environment

- Commercial kitchen with professional equipment and facilities
- High-temperature environment from ovens, stoves and grills
- Fast-paced, high-pressure environment during peak service
- Exposure to sharp equipment, hot surfaces and potential hazards
- Noise from kitchen equipment and busy service periods
- Close collaboration with kitchen team and front-of-house staff

5.4 Uniform and Presentation

- Chef whites/uniform provided or required (specify)
- Closed-toe, non-slip safety footwear mandatory
- Chef hat or hair covering required at all times
- Clean-shaven or neat facial hair, minimal visible jewellery
- Short, clean fingernails (no nail polish)
- Professional appearance and personal hygiene standards

6. Award Information

6.1 Modern Award Coverage

This position is typically covered by the Restaurant Industry Award 2020 (MA000119). The award sets minimum pay rates, penalty rates, allowances and conditions for employees in restaurants, cafes, catering and similar hospitality businesses.

6.2 Classification Level

Sous chefs are generally classified at Level 4 or Level 5 under the Restaurant Industry Award:

- Level 4: Trade qualified chefs with supervisory responsibilities (Certificate III in Commercial Cookery)
- Level 5: Advanced trade qualified chefs with significant supervisory duties (Certificate IV or extensive experience)

The specific classification level will be determined based on the qualifications held, duties performed, and the number of staff supervised.

6.3 Penalty Rates and Allowances

Permanent employees are entitled to penalty rates for work performed:

- Saturday: Applicable penalty rates (varies by employment type)
- Sunday: Premium rate applies
- Public holidays: Premium rate applies
- Overtime: Rates apply for hours worked beyond ordinary hours

Additional allowances may apply for split shifts and specific duties. Refer to the Restaurant Industry Award for current rates and conditions.

7. Expected Behaviours

7.1 Professional Conduct

- Demonstrate leadership and set positive example for kitchen team
- Treat all staff, colleagues and management with respect and professionalism
- Maintain confidentiality regarding recipes, costs and business information
- Follow all venue policies, procedures and workplace standards
- Arrive punctually for all shifts, ready to commence work
- Notify management immediately of absence or lateness
- Represent the venue and kitchen positively at all times

7.2 Quality and Standards

- Maintain consistently high culinary standards in all dishes
- Ensure adherence to recipes, portions and presentation guidelines
- Never compromise on food safety or quality
- Take personal responsibility for dishes leaving the kitchen
- Continuously seek improvement and innovation
- Address substandard work immediately and constructively

7.3 Leadership Expectations

- Lead by example in work ethic, standards and professionalism
- Provide clear direction and constructive feedback to team members
- Support and develop junior staff through mentoring and training
- Handle conflicts and challenges calmly and professionally
- Communicate effectively with Head Chef regarding kitchen operations
- Foster a positive, collaborative kitchen culture
- Take initiative to solve problems and improve processes

8. Application Process

8.1 How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit:

- Current resume/CV detailing career progression and experience
- Cover letter outlining culinary philosophy and supervisory experience
- Copies of relevant certificates (trade qualification, food safety supervisor)
- Contact details for at least two professional referees (preferably head chefs or kitchen managers)

8.2 Selection Process

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to:

- Initial phone or video interview to discuss experience and expectations
- In-person interview with Head Chef and management
- Practical cooking assessment or trial service shift (paid)
- Reference checks with previous employers

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. We value diversity and the unique perspectives that different backgrounds bring to our kitchen.

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: ____ / ____ / ____