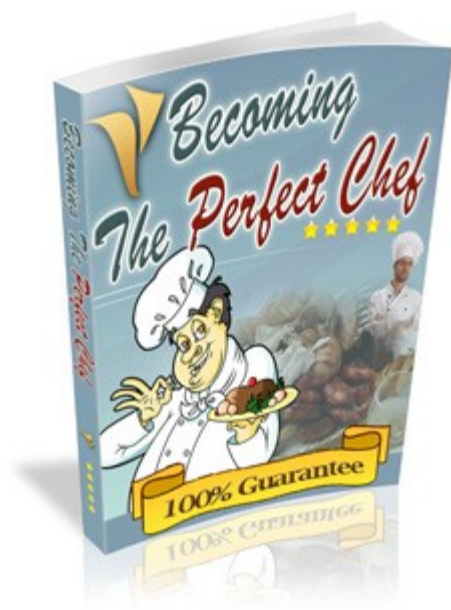


Top Chef Tips and Cooking Information



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Can TV Chefs Teach You?

Television has always been a tool for entertainment, but can it instead be a tool for education? Of course! This has been proven time and time again. But, what about improving your skills in terms of cooking? The good news is that some of those television shows you are watching for entertainment may also be teaching you a great deal at the same time. The fact is, some of today's top television chefs are teaching people skills that are transferring back to the kitchen. Do you notice yourself chopping differently or perhaps trying to dice onions by slicing the onion in two ways first?

It is important to have a good teacher who is following the directions. On cooking television shows, be sure that those you are watching have the credentials to teach you. Have they gone to culinary school or are they at least teaching you the techniques in the proper format? Also, be sure to find someone to watch that you trust and like. These will help you to pay more attention to that chef which translates getting more knowledge from them.

There are a variety of things you can learn from a television chef. You can learn how to properly cook various meals. You learn how to know when food is properly cooked. You also learn methods for cutting foods of all types. You may have learned how to fold in whipped cream so it does not deflate. You may have learned how to make a cheese cake in a water bath without burning yourself. You may love those special views (like peering in from the interior of the oven to the television host.) You can learn to do everything from make a fantastic drink to learning where the dish originated.

The wealth of knowledge available on these programs should not be all you have, especially if you plan to be a professional chef. Still, for many, this is a springboard onto more impressive things. It may help to encourage you to get in the kitchen and try different foods. It may also help you to know how to tell if an avocado is ripe and how to make your own, homemade pesto within minutes. The benefit of television cooking and television chefs is that they are real people who speak to the masses about the skill of cooking. On your path to becoming the perfect chef, you may want to utilize these benefits.

Attempt New Foods To Further Your Skill

Many professional chefs fall in love with one or more specific types of foods. They become passionate about the quality and history of that food. They may spend countless days and nights learning the history, the spices and the overall best way to perfect these recipes. This is great passion. This is something that can help any individual to take their culinary skills to the next level. Are you doing this even within your home? If not, it could help you to explore new areas.

One of the marks of a great chef, as opposed to a good chef, is their understanding of the food. It is of their depth of education and knowledge that they can really do well. The good news is that you can easily get this level of knowledge by simply doing some homework. Take some time to learn about the history and the culture from where your favourite dishes come from. You may find out some pretty amazing facts including what dishes are commonly made with it and why the dish came to be. This is a great way to learn how properly to make the dish too.

One thing you may find along the way is that you will come across foods that you are not familiar with. Perhaps you have never cooked with that type of fish. Perhaps it is a new spice you have never tried and you are worried about ruining a dish from its use. You may find that these new foods are just what can help to set you apart from others. If you do come across an ingredient that is new to you, check out your local, small grocers to get more information about it.

Trying new foods and incorporating them into new dishes can help you to stand alone in the world of cooking. It takes a lot of time to test out new dishes, but when you invest the time in using these new, fresh ingredients, it can be a lot of fun. You may not like them all, but the ones that you do like are definitely going to be well worth it! Take a few minutes to consider the options that you have. Are you ready to try a few new foods and start helping those who you cook for to learn about the history of these dishes? They will be culturally rich from you doing this, too.

Catering To Unique Tastes

How does a great chef handle those picky eaters? It could be your child or even an adult. There is no question that it can be very frustrating to spend hours over the stove preparing a meal only to find out that the individual it is being made for does not like one or more of the ingredients in the meal. The first step is to realize this is not an insult to you, the chef. Rather, it is an opportunity for you to strike out and impress the individual as well as your other guests.

If there are allergies within a family or a group, these need to be adhered to. There is no excuse for a chef not to know about allergies within their guest list. The key instead is to be sure to either inform the guests coming to the home of the menu ahead of time and encourage them to ask questions. Or, if this is not possible, the other option is to ask guests as they arrive if there is anything you should know when preparing their meal. In most cases, there is no problem.

Now, what about that individual that may not like the food you are serving but has no medical reason not to eat it? Let's consider a child, for example, how do you convince them to try the dish even as they push it away? With children a good option is to simply bring them into the kitchen and have them help you to prepare it. When children are involved in even the smallest of tasks in the kitchen, they feel great about themselves and are more willing than ever to try new foods.

For the adult who is being picky, let them know that you have gone to great lengths to try out a new recipe, one you are sure they will enjoy. Encourage them to try the dish, asking them to give your recipe a try. If they simply will not do so, then don't force it on them. Most adults will still consume at least some of the food out of respect.

When it comes to those who have unique tastes in foods or those who are just overly picky, it may be best to find foods that they do enjoy and to have those prepared for them. When you just want everyone to enjoy your meal, encourage him or her to try it.

Characteristics Of A Great Chef

So you love being in the kitchen, but do you have the characteristics to be a great chef? Being a great chef doesn't happen overnight. It takes a lot of time and perseverance to be a chef. There are a few characteristics that are going to make the difference between your being a good chef and a great one.

One of the first things you'll learn is that you need to be good at multi-tasking. There isn't a day that goes by where you won't have to do many things at one time. Most kitchens move at a very fast pace and you'll have to learn to keep up no matter what is happening around you. You'll need to make quick decisions and think things out very clearly. What are you going to do if that lamb you've been cooking can't possibly be ready in ten minutes?

If you want to run your own restaurant and kitchen you'll need to make instant decisions so that everything runs smoothly. The kitchen is a busy and noisy place with lots of people running around trying to get a job done. A great chef has the ability to tune out what isn't significant and focus on what is important at that time.

Successful chefs are able to monitor everything that is being prepared in the kitchen while at the same time staying on top of their own duties. If someone else is having problems, the head chef needs to be able to assist at the drop of a hat without missing a beat. A kitchen runs smoothly when the chef is able to inspire everyone to stay focused even if it seems as though things are falling apart.

No restaurant is going to serve only one dish. This means the chef will need to be cooking many things at one time, especially if the restaurant is a busy and successful one. And no matter how busy the restaurant is, every dish will have to go to the table with perfection or else the reputation of the restaurant as being "superb" will soon falter.

Alongside all the quick thinking and multi-tasking that goes on in the kitchen, a great chef will need to be creative. It's this creativity that is going to make one chef stand out more than another. Diners don't want to choose from the ordinary. They want to eat food that is unique, inspiring, and great tasting. Great chefs have the ability to pull all this together to achieve perfection.

Achieve Perfection As A Saucier

There are many different types of chefs in the kitchen, each with their own tasks, working toward making perfect meals. No matter what specialty you decide to focus on, you want to choose something that inspires you, allowing you to create something you're proud of and that will take you to the top of your profession.

Once such specialty chef in the kitchen is the saucier. This type of chef specializes in preparing sauces that are, in most cases, combined with other foods, such as meats that are cooked in the sauce.

Although it may not seem like an important part of cooking to specialize in, the saucier in fact holds a very prestigious position among chefs, especially when it comes to French haute cuisine, which is all about the sauces. If you want to become a saucier, there are five basic types of sauces that you're going to have to perfect.

The first of these sauces is a brown sauce, also known as espagnole. A brown sauce is made from butter, flour, and stock made from vegetables and roasted bones. This sauce is often the base for many hearty meat and poultry dishes. A good saucier will make sure the stock has simmered long enough to produce good flavour.

A veloute sauce, or white sauce, is made from a light stock, usually vegetables, and a pale roux. This type of sauce is used with milder tasting dishes to add a bit of creaminess.

The third basic sauce a saucier needs to perfect is a bechamel sauce. This is a basic white sauce made from butter, milk, and flour. In some cases, cheese may be added. You'll find this sauce in vegetable, pasta, and egg dishes.

A vinaigrette sauce is the ideal combination of vinegar and oil, with other ingredients added depending on the dish it will be accompanying, in most cases a salad of some kind. Additional ingredients might include herbs, garlic, shallots, or spices.

The last sauce that a saucier needs to make well is a hollandaise sauce, used with many egg and vegetable dishes. Hollandaise sauce is made with butter, egg, and mayonnaise.

Those are just the basic sauces that a saucier needs to know how to cook. They also need to have an exceptional sense of taste, which allows them to be creative in the sauces they prepare. After all, it's often the sauce that makes the dish.

Countdown To Becoming A Great Chef

Becoming a chef in the industry of culinary arts is perfect for anyone who eats, drinks, and lives for food! However, if you want to become a great chef, there are some points you should focus on to ensure your rise to the top. What chef doesn't want to have their name recognizable on the lips of everyone interested in food?

So just how do you make your way up the chef ladder? There are a few things you can do so that you get the experience and exposure you need to cook like a great chef. Perhaps one of the first places to start is by enrolling in a reputable and successful culinary arts school. Cooking schools are one of the best places to acquire the skills and techniques every chef needs to succeed. Graduating from a cooking school increases your chances of getting hired at some of the top restaurants around the country.

Once you've acquired culinary skills and knowledge, you need to practice, practice, and practice some more! The only way you're going to get better is to experiment with different ingredients and tastes. Practice at home by throwing extravagant dinner parties. Or work at a local restaurant so that you gain experience on the job. And remember that you're going to make mistakes along the way, but it's these mistakes that are going to teach you how to recover when things don't always go the way you planned.

Learn as much about the culinary business as you can. When you're working in a restaurant, make note of the way the kitchen is run, even if your duties within the kitchen only encompass a small part of what happens there. A great chef knows every aspect of how a kitchen is managed, all the way from ordering food to preparing the easiest dish on the menu.

Strive for excellence no matter what your role in the kitchen is. Most of the greatest chefs have made it to the top just by persevering even when they were under a lot of pressure. No matter what you're asked to do, no matter how insignificant you may think it is, always do your best. Remember that the more time you invest in your career the better a chef you'll become.

Perhaps the most important part of becoming the perfect chef is your love of food! Great chefs love what they create. It's your enjoyment of food that is going to inspire you to make those awe inspiring signature dishes your fans won't soon forget.

Equipment For Perfect Chefs

The perfect chef needs to have the right equipment in order to stand out from the rest. Although every kitchen will come equipped with equipment, a great chef will have their own equipment and tools that only they work with. There's a saying that a great chef is only as good as their next dish. And the ideal dish starts with the chef having all the necessary tools to work with.

Depending on what type of chef you are, you'll be using different equipment and tools. For instance, a pastry chef will most certainly have their own pastry and garnishing tools, bakeware, and cake decorating supplies. There are, however, some basic pieces of equipment that every chef will want to have beside them in the kitchen.

Perhaps the most important tools for a chef are knives. Every chef, no matter what they are creating, needs a good set of sharp knives. There are many different types of knives but there are three basic ones that every chef needs: a 7 inch butcher knife, a 4 inch utility knife, and a paring knife. This standard knife set is enough to get any chef started, although you'll soon want to add more to your collection, such as a boning knife and a cleaver.

A cutlery board is another piece of equipment that many chefs don't want to share with others in the kitchen. Whether it's a wood board or one made from plastic, good chefs make sure to clean and store them correctly each time they are used. And most chefs will have more than one cutting board, reserving one just for meats, another for vegetables, and one for cutting strong flavoured foods such as onions and garlic.

Personal measuring cups are another item a good chef doesn't want to be without. You'll need a set of wet measuring cups for liquids as well as dry measuring cups for dry ingredients such as flour, sugar, and grated carrots. Having your own set of measuring cups close to you in the kitchen means you won't have to go hunting them down from the other side of the room, only to find that they are being used by another cook.

There are many other pieces of cooking equipment that the perfect chef might want to have their own set of for their exclusive use. This can include pots and pans, mixing bowls, a knife sharpener, and countless other gadgets. Good equipment leads to perfection in the kitchen.

How To Become The Perfect Chef: Attending School

As you consider how to be the perfect chef, you have to consider the importance of going to school to learn how. The good news is that going to school to become a chef is not something that you have to spend years doing. In fact, many programs for full time students are only a handful of months until completion. This is not true for all, since some of the very best demand four to six years worth of training, such as the culinary institutes in France. For most professional chef students, though, attending a local school is all that is required of them.

There is even more good news for those who wish to become professional chefs but have to dedicate at least some of their time to other tasks during their days. You can take courses at local schools part time. Many are available for evening and weekend training. This means you can raise a family, work a job or do other tasks you need to while earning your education in culinary arts. In this case, the amount of time you invest in your education will depend on the number of classes you take at a time. Part time students may take twice as long to graduate.

As a full time student at a standard culinary institute, you can get your initial degree at just six to nine months. Most students go on to student for another six to nine months to earn a higher level of degree. During this time, some students also enrol in business management courses offered by the culinary school. These help to prepare the student for managing other employees and to one day be able to start their own restaurant or culinary business.

Look for local schools. Always enrol in accredited programs first and foremost. These programs give you the quality education you need to do well. Some of the more elite schools really do make it worthwhile to attend them. You may be able to get a higher level of apprenticeship or internships. When you begin applying for positions, you also get to take advantage of the prestigious name on your resume of the school. This does make a difference in higher end locations.

Not everyone has to go to school to tighten up their skills in the kitchen. Those who wish to hold professional jobs in the industry, do so as they have the right resources available to them.

Getting and Using Feedback

As you grow and develop into a great chef, it will be important to take into consideration what other people think. Many beginning chefs make the mistake of not getting enough feedback.

They are hoping that they know better, with or without their culinary education. One thing is important to remember. Your cooking is only as good as people's tastes for it. That does not mean you should write off your style. Rather, invest in what they are saying.

There are several things you can learn from what other people have to say about your cooking. First, you will need them to be honest with you. As you prepare and test recipes on them, you need their honest input. This information can then be used to make changes to the recipe in an effort to perfect them. The process may seem long, but ultimately it is that, that leads to success.

Get useful information from those that taste your recipes. What did they not like? Perhaps it had too much spice or not enough. Perhaps they wanted more salt. Perhaps they did not like the texture of the dish. These are all little things that can be adjusted as you go. Ultimately, they will lead to improved quality in each of the recipes that you complete.

Ultimately, it is the chef that has to make decisions regarding the quality of the food that they place on the plates of their guests. It takes a great deal of time to perfect a recipe, unless you are just changing up a good old sand by. Even then, it is essential to get the attention of those who you need to impress.

One of the biggest problems that individuals run into is taking criticism to heart. Don't do it. Rather, use this as a tool to helping you to improve your overall abilities and to strengthen your ability to create fantastic dishes. The more information you gather from those who try your dishes the better. In fact, the last thing you want to hear at their first tasting of your first recipe try is that it is great! Rather, you need to know what information they can provide beyond that. Where can you tweak the recipe to get better results?

The best part of creating your own recipes is working with them until they have that wow sensation that shows you that people really do like them.

Jobs After Culinary School

After culinary school, don't sit still for too long. On your way to becoming a professional chef, you will need to polish your knives and hit the ground running. There are many different career paths available to those who are qualified. After you have gotten your training in, it is time to consider what to do next. Here are just a handful of options you may have. Follow your passion and the opportunities that present themselves to you.

Many culinary graduates enter the workforce working for full service restaurants including those stand alone restaurants and hotel chains. These positions may start as assistants and often start in the kitchen as prep work. This is quite important since it teaching the student not only how to cook food but how the kitchen is run. Once they learn to meet the high demands on their time in these beginning positions, those who prove themselves worthy move up the chain of command. Their goal is to one day be head chef in the restaurant.

Many of those who leave culinary school have a much larger idea of what they would like to do. Many are passionate about opening their own restaurant. This does require a much larger commitment, but it is very possible to do well in this area with the right education. Often, it is best to work in the industry for some time before committing to just a large financial investment.

Others leave school to enter other professional chef areas. For example, many plan to spend a great deal of time developing a catering business. Others wish to open a pastry location, perhaps a bakery. These businesses may not require the immediate requirements of working in a kitchen, but they do often require internships with these locations instead. This gives the individual the experience they need to be successful from the start.

As a professional shift, you can always make changes to the plans you have so that they better fit your skills or your passions at that time. There is no strict rule on what you have to do after you leave school. Many apprentice and take internships to gain valuable knowledge and skills in the kitchen and beyond. These skills are often more important than those offered to you during your days in culinary school. For some, this is the time to start dreaming and crafting plans of how they will develop their culinary education even farther.

Knife Skills For The Perfect Chef

As a chef, you need to be able to cut food properly. Knife skills can take a long time to master, though. If you have watched some of the chefs on television chop away at increasing speeds and marvelled over how to do this yourself, your first step is to go slow. One of the worst things you can do is to try to cut quickly in the wrong manner. The good news is that you can gain these knife skills in several ways.

One of the most important ways to learn knife skills is to take a class. The problem with trying to learn through reading is that you cannot see the actual movements. When you take a course, you are actually learning to cut with hands on practice. Your teacher can show you how to do it the proper way and correct small problems that may hold you back from having great skills. Since using a knife should be in very specific movements that are highly precise, learning from a professional is one of the best routes to take.

There are a variety of tutorial programs available online to help you, too. These programs are a fantastic way to sharpen your knife skills right from home. The key is to choose those programs that are designed by professionals and those that provide the top level of instruction to you. The best are videos or detailed screenshots that show you step by step what you need to do to cut into that pile of herbs or how to slice that turkey.

Knife skills include learning how to use a peeling knife, a paring knife and how to core foods. Learn how to use the back of a knife to puree garlic. Find out how to use a zigzag motion of a knife to slice across an onion for a fine dice. Perhaps the most impressive skill to learn is how to place your hands and the proper motion of chopping. You do it much the same, as you would cut a bagel, for example.

If you have yet to hone your knife skills, there is no better time to do so than right now. There are excellent programs available to aid you in the process. Once you do perfect those skills, each item you do cut will look and taste better for the new skills you have mastered.

Making Meals Easy to Eat

Have you ever gone to a dinner party and found yourself with huge pieces of lettuce too difficult to cut with a knife? Perhaps you have found yourself with shells on your lobster that were so hard to pull off that when you did get the meat out, some of it flew across the table. The fact is, there are some foods that are not easy to eat. As a chef, you do not want anyone who comes to your dinner party to find themselves unable to sit down and enjoy their meal.

Spot problem foods in your menu. Which foods are difficult to eat? Foods that require extra utensils are going to be a problem, such as shellfish. You may want to consider other foods that are hard to chew. Some meats, no matter how well cooked, are just more difficult to chew than others. Some foods are just messy. If these are foods that are on your menu, you have two choices. You can choose to remove them from the menu. On the other hand, and often the better case, is to make enjoying these foods easier.

What can you do? If there are hard shells, a good place to start is by removing the meat from the shells for the individual before it arrives at their plate. Instead of handing everyone a plate with a lobster on it, serve a lobster soup that has larger clumps of the meat in it. The key here is to find ways to present the same food that makes it slightly easier to eat.

There are times when this may not matter. During important dinner parties and definitely during employment opportunities, you definitely do not want to allow your guests to have to manage tea sandwiches that will not stay together.

Keep foods cut in the proper portion to avoid any potential problem with consuming them. Take some time to slice foods properly so that they are bite sized pieces. Always take the time to remove pits and other items from the foods that could not only be uncomfortable to manage but also dangerous to consume. It only takes the chef a few extra minutes to handle this type of a problem.

Sitting down to a great meal is important to anyone. It is just as important to leave the table clean, feeling full and most definitely comfortable. By taking a few extra steps ahead of time, you can make this possible.

Plating for the At Home Chef

It is commonly said that you eat first with your eyes rather than your mouth. What does this mean to the average individual who is preparing a meal for a host of individuals? It means that you should take some extra time to help make each plate a memorable meal for your guest. Consider it a gift. Would you just hand them the shirt or would you wrap it neatly in a package, add a bow and some ribbon and really dress it up? You do not have to overdo it to get the look you are hoping for, though. Rather, you just need to keep in mind what it takes to make a meal visually appealing.

Have you ever not liked something long before you tasted it? This is a common problem because food can look boring, especially after you have eaten the same recipe hundreds of times. Instead of worrying about this, though, find some ways to dress up what you are serving. A good place to start is with the plates themselves. The best option is a plain, white plate with or without decoration on it. White allows the food to speak for itself. It keeps the centre on the

portion on the plate rather than on the design on the plate. Look for quality dishes in a variety of sizes and shapes that work with your dishes. Keep in mind that quality plates often give off that feeling of elegance you may be going for.

Next, consider colour. When planning the menu, be sure you use foods of different colours. Bright green, deep reds, beautiful burgundy sauces all have a different colour to them and all have a very inviting feeling to them. You are sure to find yourself using a range of flavours that work together too.

Dress up the plate with leafy herbs. Adding some fresh thyme, parsley or other herbs to the dish, just right over the top, adds that extra layer of flavour and keeps the meal visually appealing. For many people, this makes it a flavourful choice. Use the herbs already contained in the dish.

These are just a few of the ideas you want to keep in mind when it comes to dressing up your plates. A good chef allows his guests to enjoy very tasty foods, but also foods that are appealing from the time the plate is set down in front of them.

Perfect Chefs Choose A Speciality

Most chefs will choose a specialty to focus on when they enter culinary school and as they work in the culinary industry to gain experience. There are several different kinds of specialities to choose from, each with their own disciplines and rewards. You'll want to choose a specialty that excites you and fills you with passion. Following are some specialty chef positions that you might want to consider.

The head of the kitchen is the executive chef, who is in charge of the sous chef as well as everything that goes on in the kitchen. It's the executive chef who is the supreme head of the kitchen. To be a perfect executive chef you need to be able to plan the menu as well as make sure that every dish that goes out of the kitchen is of the highest quality. You'll also need to estimate the labour and food costs, order food and stock, and hire the kitchen staff. Most executive chefs will cook food every day, working side by side with the sous chef. Together, you'll make sure that plates go out perfectly garnished and looking great.

Now on to the sous chef, who is in reality the right hand person to the executive chef. It's the sous chef who is second in command of the kitchen. If you like a challenge, the position of sous chef will be just right for you, because even though the executive chef gets all the credit for a perfectly run kitchen, it's in fact the sous chef who does most of the work. You'll be the one who is in charge of others in the kitchen, such as other specialty chefs, cooks, and the kitchen staff. Another of your tasks will be to demonstrate any new cooking techniques to the kitchen. A perfect sous chef is able to keep everything running smoothly while giving up the glory to the executive chef.

Although the executive and sous chefs are the main cooks in the kitchen, there are many speciality cooks underneath them that you might consider. A gourmet chef is one who specializes in a certain cuisine, such as foreign dishes. You'll need to know how to prepare foreign delicacies as well as be able to pair the dishes off with the perfect bottle of wine. You

might want to specialize in cold food preparations, which is the role of the garde manger. You'll focus on pates, hors d'oeuvres, salads, and cold sauces, to name a few.

A perfect chef is one who specializes in the culinary industry, working hard to perfect the tasks assigned to the speciality.

Take A Local Cooking Class

Sometimes, the best way to get even better at something you love is to get another perspective at it. For this reason, taking a local cooking class can be one of the best ways an individual can sharpen their skills, learn new techniques and improve their overall ability to prepare that perfect meal. If you are looking for a way to really take the world by storm with an interesting meal, these classes are a good place to start. Many larger cities have just what you are looking for, including good food choices, great instruction and how to help that works for everyone.

A cooking class is most likely to teach you a skill first and foremost. For example, you may learn how to prepare an Italian dinner by learning how to make a good tomato sauce. You may learn a specific dish, such as a full menu of German food. Other classes are designed to teach you a bit more about the technical aspects. For example, you may be able to take a class on making cakes and cookies and in the process will learn the difference between baking powder and baking soda and how to use each. These classes really contain a great bit of knowledge.

In addition to this, you get hands on training. Some classes are put on by your favourite local chefs. You get to head to their restaurant, roll up your sleeves and learn how they prepare your favourite dishes. All the while, you have the chef standing next to you teaching you how to make the recipe exactly right. Even if it is not a chef you know, you still have a professional who is able to teach you about the proper use of a knife, the right way to season a dish and give you feedback on how well you have done. That is valuable.

No matter how experienced of a chef you are, there is always something else to learn. By taking a few cooking classes, you can explore those areas of the culinary world that you may not know a lot about just yet. You can learn new cooking methods or styles that you have never used before. You may even find more than a few dishes that will help you to tempt your taste buds and really impress your next set of dinner guests. A cooking class does not have to be just basic education.

Should You Become a Professional Chef?

As a professional chef, you will have the expertise, knowhow and passion to make memorable meals every time. A professional chef makes his career cooking and studying food. It goes without saying that the most chefs have a passion for food that goes well beyond that of the average person. They often see food in a unique way. They love the textures, tastes, sights and smells of the food they make. They are creative, striving for the next big dish. Nevertheless, it does take a lot of education to make this a reality.

The question most people have to answer first is if they have the drive to be this good. Getting an education is the first step. You will likely need to attend a two year or four year educational

program. The program often entails full time schooling which will centre on everything from food history to plating to pastry and beyond. In some cases, you can specialize in certain areas. This is specifically true for those who will be becoming a pastry chef rather than a standard chef. Schooling is often the most labour-intensive part of the process to becoming a professional, but it is by no means the only option.

From here, you most likely will enter into a culinary internship with some of the top restaurants around the country. Be warned. The restaurants that you work at are often selected based on affiliations the school has with them. As you are considering which culinary school to attend, find out which affiliations the school has prior to enrolling. Of course, the more elite the school is, the better the restaurant and hotel relationships will be.

But, school is not the only thing that needs to be taken into consideration when making a decisions whether or not to be a professional chef. You also have to take into consideration your ability to love your work. Ask yourself questions about what the job is like and how it will affect your daily life. Chefs work long hours, often stretching into the late evenings and most weekends. Chefs also start at the bottom and work their way up the ladder, no matter what school they have been in. This means dishes and prep work, followed by various other positions within the kitchen.

If you can do these things, chances are good you can be a professional chef. Having a passion can make everything else easier to manage.

The Physical Qualities of the Perfect Chef

To become a good chef, you will need to have a variety of skills. Your body is one of them. You will need to have a few specific qualities that help to make you a good candidate for being a great chef. As you consider whether cooking is your passion and if you should attend a culinary school, consider the benefits of having a body that has the build to do the work in a kitchen. A good place to start is with a passion for cooking and for food. You should love to eat and enjoy all types of food. Those who love to pick the "unique" item off the menu are people that are most likely to be interested in the food's taste, texture and smell. If you are squeamish about cutting up a chicken, chances are good that you do not have the level of intensity you should have to be that perfect chef. You can change this.

In addition to this, you also have to take into consideration your ability to smell well and taste properly. If there is some physical limitation here, it could interfere with your ability to provide your guests with a great meal. Determine if this is a problem for you and find ways to resolve it, if it is. You need to be able to tell the subtle differences in tastes of spices and to distinguish from the saltiness of two foods.

The good news is that many of these skills can be learned. If you do not know the difference between allspice and cloves just yet, you can learn this. It goes without saying that there is a great need for talented chefs who are able to meet these demands. If you have a passion but not the skills work at it. Chances are good you will find exactly what you are looking for. There are other physical qualities to consider. Are you able to manage several things at one time? Do you have the physical ability to remain on your feet for hours at a time? Do you have the dedication to working with a dish until it comes out just right? If you plan to work in a

restaurant, you will need to work with others, can you do that well? Asking yourself these questions now can help save you time later. For many, these are easy yes questions.

The Importance of Testing Recipes

Why do you need to test a new recipe before you serve it to your guests? Won't you have to go to a lot of work twice? While this is true, the results of a new recipe gone wrong could be more catastrophic than the time that is invested in testing out the recipe in the first place. The good news is that it is very possible to get the quality you want without a lot of investment of your time in the weeks leading up to a dinner party or special event.

First, choose a recipe that has techniques and cooking methods that you are used to. If you plan to deep fry a turkey, but have never done this in the past, one of the worst things you can do is to try and do it the day of. There are just too many risk factors involved. Instead, a few weeks prior to the special event, make a special dinner for you and your family of fried turkey and let them help you with the problems. This will help you to test out the cooking method and to determine if the turkey is seasoned well, cooked properly and overall works out.

There are times when you do not have to make the same meal well in advance to practice your cooking technique. For example, if you will be slicing a turkey for the first time, and are worried about doing a good job, give yourself some practice on a few chickens prepared over the last few weeks. Your family is unlikely to mind pieces of chicken rather than slices while your guests will definitely want slices of turkey. Give yourself the opportunity to test them out.

In addition to these types of testing, perhaps the most important one comes in at the spice level. If you have not invested enough time in testing out the combination of spices in a dish, do so before you add them to the meal. Test out the dish for flavour, salt content and for overall good taste with the combination of spices that you have used. This definitely will provide you with a bit of a better level of respect since when the final dish hits their plate, it is perfect.

Invest a bit of extra time in testing your recipes. It will pay off with a great meal. Choose recipes you love and have experience with if you just can't make time for testing.

The Chefs Important Baking Tools

As a chef, you are only as good as your ingredients, skill and the tools that you use to make the food come out perfectly. For those doing a little baking, there are several pieces of equipment considered vitally important to have and to use on a regular basis. If you are going to spend money to get your kitchen set up, be sure that you have a few of these items at your beck and call.

First, know the difference between dry measures and wet measures and have both on hand. There are slight differences that can really impact the recipe if used improperly. For liquids, you will want something that has a handle and spout to it. Always set it down on the countertop to see what's actually inside. For dry ingredients, use an aluminium (if possible) measuring cup.

Next, look at your other ingredients in terms of tools. Baking sheets are commonly needed. Look for non-stick sheets including hard anodized products for easy cleaning and standardized heating. Also, parchment paper can be a very helpful tool to have to keep items from sticking to your sheets. Keep a roll on hand.

For hand tools, you will need a few. Rubber spatulas are a must have in most baker's kitchens. Look for quality here. If you will be doing a lot of cookie making, invest in several sized ice cream scoops. These help you to keep your cookie portion sizes even throughout each one. Also, for removing items off your baking sheets, look for quality metal spatulas. The blade should be as thin as possible, but sturdy to pick up something with a bit of weight to it. You will also need cooling racks to set each baked good on so that you can remove them from the hot metal pan that will continue to cook them.

For exact measurements, have on hand a baker's scale. It is often best to use a scale instead of a measuring cup when the portion sizes have to be just right. Next, consider cake pans and models. Look for those that have a removable or false bottom for the very best results. Plus, have a thermometer on hand to make sure that your foods are properly temped.

These are just some of the many items you'll need to have in your kitchen as a baker. The good news is that most items are inexpensive and readily available, too.

The Learning Curve To Becoming The Perfect Chef

As you start to study the intricacies of food, it is also important to consider the daily experiences that will define your skill. No matter if you are trying to improve your culinary skills at home or trying to get into a professional position, there will be a learning curve. You will make mistakes and you will have plenty of meals that are not creative, well put together or otherwise challenging. The key is to be the type of person that makes it through this process successfully. Most chefs that enter the restaurant world do so as a trainee. During this time, they are learning the ins and outs of restaurant work. The stress and pressure of a busy kitchen is enough to make even some of the best chefs waver. It is often important for this to happen, though. This is part of the learning curve. Once you are tested by the most intense situations, you are likely to take your knowledge that much farther and your skill to the next level. Professional chefs are able to work under extreme conditions.

Later, you will move up to sous chef positions. These positions allow you to start running areas of the kitchen and you are able to start making decisions about meals. You may be given trainees to work with. Still, even at this position, you are not the head chef and you must abide by the requirements of that chef. This part of your learning curve will keep you in the kitchen, but you are doing more cooking and less of the prep work. Nevertheless, in many locations, sous chefs are the right hand of the chef on duty. They need to do what needs to be complete to keep the head chef on track.

After years of training and experience, you may be able to move up to a higher level of education, including the head chef. The head chef is responsible for running the kitchen as a whole, and managing the individuals who work under them. This is not an easy job by any level, but it is one of authority in the kitchen. Many head chefs go on to develop their own restaurants, if they are interested in doing so.

Learning curves in the kitchen are helpful teaching tools. Take them as such, as even the most stressful of events can be beneficial to the chef.

The Job of a Professional Chef

What is the job of a professional chef on a daily basis? This will change from one location to the next, and from one person to the next. Yet, there are some tasks that a chef must handle on a daily basis that will ultimately determine how well his or her kitchen runs. As you consider the many ways that you are preparing to become a perfect chef, you will need to take into consideration your ability to manage successfully each of these areas. The better you do, the more successfully you will be.

One of the first things a chef must do is to plan menus. Menus need to appeal to those eating them, first and foremost. In addition to this, meals need to also be balanced with fruits, vegetables, protein and starches. They should be appealing to the taste buds, the eyes and to the crowd as a whole. It can be a challenging portion of being a chef.

Next, the chef needs to inspect and manage his or her supplies. For each item on the list, the chef needs to coordinate delivery of the ingredients. Everything from the plates it will be served on to the quarter teaspoon of a spice that will be used needs to be monitored. Food needs to be in good condition, ripe and needs to be held properly to prevent any illness.

Along with managing supplies, most chefs also have to stay within a budget. This means ensuring that all meals that are prepared are done properly but that the location is able to make a profit from serving them. Balancing the cost of ingredients and labour along with the prices people will pay for the meal can be a challenge. The good news is that when done properly, the location is profitable.

In addition to all of this, a chef is in charge of his or her kitchen. Maintaining the kitchen's staff and cleanliness are some of the most important tools and requirements of the chef. You will need to maintain the quality of the food that is prepared as well as making sure that everyone, everything is healthy, and monitoring of all safety requirements.

The job of a chef is quite complex. It can take a great deal of time to work up to success. Yet, for many chefs, getting into a head chef position makes all the work worthwhile.

The Mix of Sweet, Spicy and Savory

There are many ways to mix flavours and get great results with each of the meals you prepare. The combination of flavours really helps to set the tone for the meal. A chef can mix and match spices to come up with the most unique combination. Sometimes, using a variety of flavours together can really help to make an ordinary dish in some something much more.

Sweet and hot work very well together, for example. Many Asian inspired dishes make this happen. They combine a soft level of heat with a sweetness. This confuses the taste buds and delivers that very powerful flavour burst. Look for these to add a lot of contrast to your dishes.

Savoury foods can also have a mixture of heat in them, or a mix of sweetness. How do you get these different levels of flavours? Use various ingredient mixes. Use a variety of spices. One of the best ways to take your skills to the next level is to start using spices you may not have heard of or have used in the past. There are hundreds of different spices but the average home uses only a handful of them. If you have old outdated spices, this is a great time to throw them out and look for new, fresh ingredients for your meals.

When it comes to adding heat, be careful. There is no doubt that you can add too much heat to a dish if you are not careful. Instead, start with softer peppers that have a more mild heat level. You should be able to still taste the pepper flavour not just the heat. Most of the larger grocery stores now carry a good selection of peppers to use. Avoid the hottest habaneros and instead look for coloured bells and banana peppers. Many people enjoy the taste of jalapenos, which do have some bite, but much less than others. You can also get a level of heat from powdered versions of peppers, like cayenne and chilli pepper, but use these when others are not available.

Take the time to find a combination of flavours that you enjoy. Do use these combinations on a variety of foods. Meats are a common choice but you can also find some great taste combinations for vegetables, too. You can even spice up your soups, stews, salads and even desserts using the right types of heat and sweet!

The Perfect At Home Chef

What does it take to become a perfect chef at home? You may believe that the first stop in this process is at the local cooking supply store for all the right cooking pans, cookbooks and knives. This is not always the case. Before you start purchasing a variety of products, start by looking at your skills in the kitchen. Do you have room for improvement? If so, there are some outstanding ways to get those skills caught up. Then, if you decide to, you can start purchasing all the cooking supplies you will need.

One of the most important skills to have as a perfect chef is a good sense of taste. If you are the type of person who is afraid of flavour and shy away from new foods, let go. You'll need to try new foods and be willing to tempt your taste buds as often as possible. This allows you to formulate new recipes and it can help you to understand why you put certain ingredients together and why you should not mix others.

Next, consider your ability to cut. Grabbing that steak knife and using it to cut herbs is not the right way to go. At first, you may not need the highest quality set of professional knives, but you will need to use what you have properly. Learn to curl your fingers under to keep them from getting cut. Learn how to julienne fresh herbs and how to cut steaks on the bias so that they are even more tender.

Take your next step into the textbooks. You will want to learn about meats, the different cuts and how to prepare them. Next, look at vegetables and the many ways to prepare them. Do you need to skin carrots? How do you use a lemon peel in recipes? Gathering knowledge about food is an important step in the right direction of becoming a perfect chef.

By far the most important aspect to becoming a perfect chef is to practice! Cook and be creative. Put unique foods together and experiment with flavour. Learn about those other spices

in the spice rack and how to use them. The more flavours you work with and the more styles of cooking you use, the better. Cooking takes time to perfect. Everyone will burn their fair share of dishes. Yet, those who keep going and keep looking for the right blends of food are those who will become the perfect chef.

The Perfect Chef Opens A Restaurant

You have a passion for food and everyone tells you just how good your meals are. You want to open a restaurant so that you can make a profit off this talent. Many chefs open a restaurant not necessarily for the profit potential but rather for the underlying goals of wanting to provide their guests with a higher level of food. They want to share their abilities with others. They want to take people on a journey with their food. They want to fill a market sector that is open in the community. All of these are options that individuals do have.

As you consider the many ways that you can prepare a great meal for your family, consider how you can do the same for a larger crowd. The difference is large. With a restaurant, you need to hire staff, manage the building, handle a budget and find ways to save money. You have to advertise to let others know why they should pay for a meal from you. You have to compete with other businesses in the local area.

The first step in determining if you can start a restaurant and work it is to start off with a business plan. Either create one yourself or have one professionally done. This will give you the ability to lay it all out there and to get the financing you need to get started. With a business plan, you make key decisions about who your business is, what it will provide, why it will be profitable and who will run it.

Next, consider the investment to get started. Most restaurants do not do well for at least a full year, after they have covered the costs of opening and have become a familiar face in the city. Even then, the risks are high. It is estimated that nine out of every ten restaurants that are opened fails. What will make your business more likely to succeed? Find out what it will take to make the case but at the same time, be sure you can handle the financial loss.

Having great skills and talents in the kitchen are important when it comes to opening a restaurant. You also have to have the right ability to communicate with and manage others. You will need to dedicate your time to working your business, which is nearly always long hours. However, the rewards are gratifying.

The Physical Demand of Being a Chef

Being a perfect chef takes a lot of training and a lot of hard work. Not only is this emotionally draining, but it is also physically challenging. Believe it or not, you may need to get fit before you can expect to do well in the kitchen on a regular basis. The body can handle most of the work of cooking a meal for the family but to work in a restaurant, you will need to have the strength, stamina and the willingness to do a lot of physical work.

The amount of physical work depends on the tasks you will take on often defined by your job in that kitchen. Nevertheless, you are likely to be taxed in any area. For example, the chef needs to be strong. Heavy pots and large boxes of supplies need to be moved from place to place.

Many of those pots will be hot, often with liquid sloshing about. Having the skills to move them from place to place is very important.

Perhaps the most physically demanding part of being in the kitchen is having the stamina to remain on your feet. Even if you do get a lunch break, chances are good you will be on your feet for a full nine hours a day, or more. Back muscles, legs and overall physical conditioning is required to strengthen your body enough to actually see promise. You may find yourself exhausted after a few hours if you have not built up to this level.

To make matters even more challenging, many kitchens are full of potential problem areas. You may find yourself slipping on floors that are wet and getting burned from time to time. These are all tragedies when they happen, but an individual who is physically fit is less likely to be seriously injured by them. The fact is, if you are prone to injury, the kitchen may not be the place for you. Most chefs are looking for the type of individual that is able to keep up with the intense work required in a kitchen.

The good news is that all of this hard work can help you to stay healthy. It can be very amazing to see how well your body can become toned just by working in a restaurant for a few months. You may love the work, but your body may love being fit and active as you are in this environment.