

Cooks

SOC: 35-2010 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$35,760 Median Salary	2,805,100 Employment	+5.0% Growth Rate
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■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: See Requirements (BLS)

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 25.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.
This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■ Work-Life Balance

4.2/10 - Fair work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	7.0/10	Investigative	3.8/10
Artistic	4.6/10	Social	7.6/10
Enterprising	5.2/10	Conventional	6.0/10

■ Top Skills Required

Attention to detail, Dexterity, Physical stamina, Sense of taste and smell

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Cooks prepare, season, and cook **food in restaurants, cafeterias, and other food service establishments**. They follow recipes, maintain kitchen safety and sanitation, and ensure meals are served on time and to quality standards. Their work is critical in food service, hospitality, and culinary operations.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy cooking, creativity, and working in a fast-paced environment.

What Do Cooks Do?

These professionals prepare ingredients, cook meals, and maintain kitchen operations.

Common responsibilities include:

- Preparing and measuring ingredients according to recipes
- Cooking food using various methods such as baking, grilling, frying, and boiling
- Seasoning and garnishing dishes for taste and presentation
- Cleaning, sanitizing, and organizing kitchen equipment and work areas
- Monitoring food quality, temperature, and safety standards
- Assisting in menu planning and inventory management
- Collaborating with kitchen staff and following health regulations

Key Areas of Cooking

Cooks may specialize in certain cuisines, techniques, or food service areas:

- Short-Order Cooking: Preparing quick meals in diners or fast-food establishments
- Institutional or Cafeteria Cooking: Preparing large quantities for schools, hospitals, or cafeterias
- Specialty or Cuisine-Specific Cooking: Focusing on ethnic, gourmet, or dietary-specific dishes
- Food Preparation and Safety: Ensuring proper handling, storage, and sanitation
- Team Coordination and Kitchen Workflow: Collaborating with chefs, servers, and other kitchen staff

Skills and Abilities Needed

Cooks combine culinary knowledge, technical skill, and teamwork.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires minimal formal education and practical experience:

- High School Diploma or GED (minimum): Basic math, reading, and food safety knowledge
- On-the-Job Training: Learning cooking techniques, recipes, and kitchen operations
- Culinary School or Vocational Training (optional): Formal education in cooking and culinary arts
- Apprenticeships or Internships: Gaining hands-on experience in professional kitchens
- Continuous Learning: Staying updated on new cooking methods, dietary trends, and safety standards

Where Do Cooks Work?

They are employed in food service establishments and institutions:

- Restaurants and Cafés
- Hotels and Resorts
- Schools, Hospitals, and Cafeterias
- Catering Services

- Institutional or Industrial Kitchens

Work environments include commercial kitchens, food preparation areas, and dining service locations.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires physical stamina, attention to detail, and the ability to work in fast-paced, high-pressure environments. Cooks must maintain quality, consistency, and safety standards while preparing meals.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy cooking and food preparation
- Have creativity and attention to detail
- Can work in fast-paced environments
- Are physically capable and reliable
- Want a career in the culinary or food service industry

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in cooking, nutrition, or culinary arts
- Gain experience through home cooking, volunteering, or part-time food service work
- Develop skills in food preparation, sanitation, and kitchen safety
- Learn various cooking techniques and cuisines
- Explore internships, vocational programs, or culinary school opportunities

Cooks prepare and create meals, ensuring food quality, safety, and presentation, supporting culinary operations in a variety of food service settings.