

Food Preparation Workers

SOC: 35-2021 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$34,220

Median Salary

30,900

Employment

-3.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: No formal educational credential

■ 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

6.7/10 - Good 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

Dexterity, Interpersonal skills, Listening skills, Physical stamina, Physical strength

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Food Preparation Workers assist in **preparing ingredients and meals in restaurants, cafeterias, and other food service establishments**. They follow recipes, maintain kitchen cleanliness, and support cooks and chefs to ensure efficient food production. Their work is critical in food service, hospitality, and culinary operations.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy working with food, following procedures, and assisting in kitchen operations.

What Do Food Preparation Workers Do?

These professionals perform basic food preparation tasks, organize ingredients, and maintain sanitary conditions in the kitchen.

Common responsibilities include:

- Washing, peeling, cutting, and preparing ingredients
- Assisting in cooking or assembling menu items
- Maintaining cleanliness and sanitation of work areas, equipment, and utensils
- Storing food properly and checking for quality
- Following recipes and portion guidelines
- Supporting cooks, chefs, or kitchen staff in daily operations
- Monitoring kitchen inventory and restocking supplies as needed

Key Areas of Food Preparation

Food preparation workers may focus on specific tasks or types of cuisine:

- Ingredient Preparation: Washing, chopping, and measuring ingredients
- Basic Cooking and Assembly: Preparing salads, sandwiches, or simple dishes
- Sanitation and Safety: Maintaining hygiene standards and safe food handling
- Inventory and Storage: Managing supplies and ensuring proper storage
- Support for Kitchen Staff: Assisting chefs, cooks, or culinary teams

Skills and Abilities Needed

Food preparation workers combine basic culinary skills with attention to detail and efficiency.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Career Pathway

This role typically requires minimal formal education and on-the-job training:

- High School Diploma or GED (minimum): Basic math, reading, and communication skills
- On-the-Job Training: Learning food preparation techniques and kitchen procedures
- Culinary Courses (optional): Enhancing skills in cooking, nutrition, or food safety
- Internships or Practical Experience: Gaining experience in restaurants, cafeterias, or catering
- Continuous Learning: Staying informed on food safety standards, cooking methods, and kitchen technology

Where Do Food Preparation Workers Work?

They are employed in organizations that prepare and serve food:

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

- Institutional or Industrial Kitchens

Work environments include kitchens, preparation areas, food service lines, and catering sites.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career requires physical stamina, attention to hygiene, and the ability to work efficiently in fast-paced environments. Workers must manage multiple tasks while supporting kitchen staff.

Who Should Consider This Career?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy working with food and assisting in kitchen operations
- Are detail-oriented and organized
- Can follow instructions and maintain hygiene standards
- Have physical stamina and adaptability
- Want a career in food service, hospitality, or culinary support

How to Prepare Early

- Take courses in food safety, nutrition, or basic cooking
- Volunteer or work part-time in kitchens, cafeterias, or catering
- Develop teamwork, time management, and organization skills
- Learn proper handling and storage of ingredients
- Explore vocational programs or training in culinary arts

Food preparation workers support the kitchen by preparing ingredients, maintaining hygiene, and assisting cooks, contributing to efficient and safe food service operations.

Generated by StartRight • Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics & O*NET

Source: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/food-preparation-and-serving/food-preparation-workers.htm>