

## 20.1

# Restaurant Personnel

## READING PREVIEW

### Key Concepts

- Identifying restaurant personnel
- Working the front door
- Greeting and seating diners

### Vocabulary

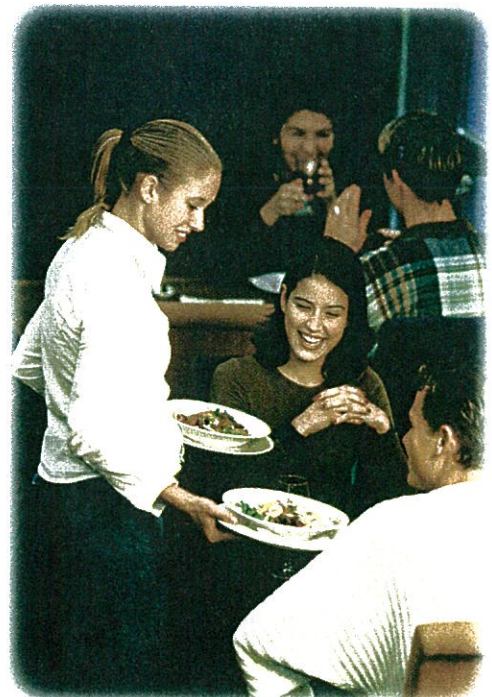
- back of the house
- back waiter
- brigade
- bus person
- captain
- carver
- chef de cuisine
- continuous seating plan
- dining room attendant
- dining room manager
- entremetier
- executive chef
- expediter
- fish station chef
- fixed seating plan
- front of the house
- front waiter
- grillardin
- grill station chef
- line chef
- maître d'
- maître d' hotel
- no-reservation policy
- pastry chef
- pâtissier
- poissonier
- prep chef
- receptionist
- reservation policy
- roast station chef
- rôtiisseur
- roundsman
- runner
- saucier
- sauté station chef
- second chef
- server
- sommelier
- soup and vegetables station chef
- soup station chef
- sous-chef
- station chef
- swing chef
- tournant
- trancheur
- vegetable station chef
- wine steward

“**G**ood service, no matter whether the restaurant is upscale, family-friendly, or quick service . . . is simply the ability to make the customer happy.”

— Marjorie Livingston  
The Culinary Institute of America

## Restaurant Personnel

How does everything get done properly in a restaurant? The answer is: Restaurants break down a big task into smaller manageable parts, each carried out by well-trained staff. Typically, the system of staffing a restaurant is referred to as a brigade system. A **brigade** (bri-GADE), is a group of workers assigned a specific set of tasks. The tasks might be related by a cooking method, type of food, or equipment.





Restaurants typically use the brigade system in both the dining room, which is often referred to as the **front of the house**, and in the kitchen, which is referred to as the **back of the house**.

The skills necessary in the front and the back of the house depend on the style of the food establishment. Most restaurants use standard names for personnel within their brigades. These often are based on a classic French brigade system. The specific terms used in a restaurant may vary, based on the size of the restaurant and the type of food and service offered by the restaurant.

**Front-of-the-House Brigade** A formal restaurant may require some or all of the following professionals in their front-of-the-house brigade. An informal restaurant may require only a few of these professionals. The most common term for the position is listed here first, but common variations (both English and French) are also indicated when appropriate.



**FIGURE 20-1**  
**Maître d' and Chef**

The maître d' works with the chef to design the menu.

**Inferring** What kind of personality characteristics do you think a maître d' should possess?

- **Maître d'.** The person responsible for running the front of the house is the **maître d'** (MAY-truh DEE), which is short for **maître d'hôtel** (MAY-truh doh-TELL). The maître d' is also called the **dining room manager**. The maître d' is responsible for training service personnel, working with the chef to design the menu, arranging guest seating, taking reservations, and for good public relations with guests.
- **Captain.** At fine dining restaurants, the **captain** is responsible for explaining the menu to guests and taking their orders. The captain is also responsible for the smooth running service in a specific group of tables. The captain may also help serve the food. The captain is always available to the tables in his or her charge and never leaves the dining room.
- **Carver.** In classic service, the person in charge of carving and serving meats or fish and their accompaniments from the meat cart is called the **carver** or the **trancheur** (tran-SHUR). In modern dining rooms, the captain often replaces the carver.
- **Wine Steward.** It is the responsibility of the **wine steward**, who is also called the **sommelier** (suhm-uhl-YAY), to manage the buying and storing of wines, maintain proper wine inventory, counsel guests about wine choices, and serve wine properly at the table.
- **Server.** Second in line of responsibility after the captain, the **server**, sometimes called the **front waiter** often helps the



captain take orders. The server is responsible for making sure the table is set properly for each course, that food is delivered properly to the correct tables, and that the diners' needs are met. The server can take an order to the kitchen, if necessary.

- **Runner.** Depending on the size and formality of the restaurant, the **runner** may deliver food and drinks to the front waiter, clear plates, and refill bread and water. The runner, often called the **back waiter**, provides overall assistance to the server.
- **Receptionist.** In formal restaurants, the **receptionist** assists the **maître d'** in greeting guests, answering the telephone at the front desk, and taking telephone reservations. In more casual restaurants, the receptionist may replace the **maître d'** and be referred to as the host or hostess.
- **Bus Person.** In large or formal restaurants where the back waiter assists the front waiter, a separate worker, the **bus person** (sometimes called the **dining room attendant**), is responsible for clearing and cleaning tables.

**Back-of-the-House Brigade** A formal restaurant may require some or all of the following professionals in their back-of-the-house brigade. Many formal restaurants use French terms to describe their back-of-the-house cooking positions. A chef who has responsibility for a particular type of food is often referred to as a **station chef** or a **line chef**.

- **Executive Chef.** The head chef is called the **executive chef**, or **chef de cuisine** (CHEF duh KWEE-zine). The executive chef commands the kitchen, designs the menu and oversees its execution, as well as overseeing food costs. The executive chef also coordinates the style of service with the **maître d'** and devises a system for how service staff should communicate orders to the kitchen.
- **Sous-Chef.** The French term **sous-chef** (SU-chef), means under-chef. The sous-chef, also known as the **second chef**, is the executive chef's principal assistant, who is responsible for scheduling personnel and temporarily replacing the executive chef or other chefs as necessary. The sous-chef sometimes acts as the expediter.
- **Expediter.** The **expediter** (ex-PED-eye-ter) accepts orders from the dining room and relays them to the various station chefs. The expediter also reviews the dishes before service to make sure they are correct. The expediter often accepts orders from the dining room, relays them to the various chefs in the kitchen, and reviews the dishes before they are served to the customer.

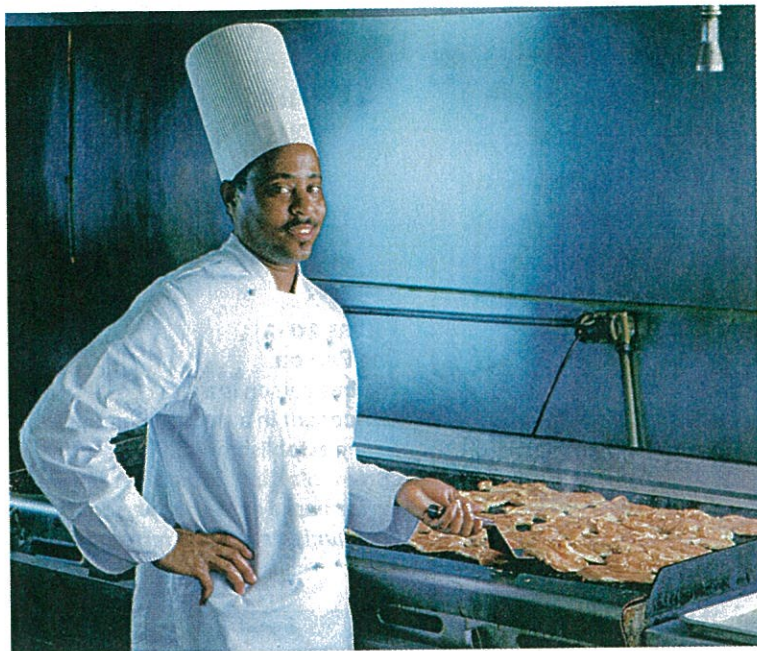
**FIGURE 20-2**  
**Bus Person**

The bus person is a vital component in a smoothly running dining establishment.

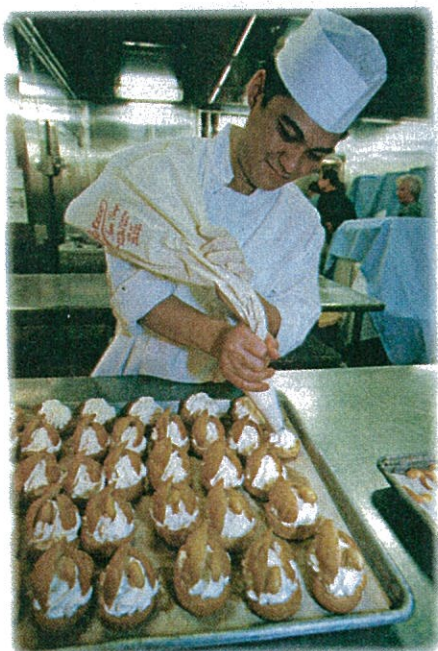
**Communication** What does the performance of the bus person communicate about a restaurant?







▲ Grill chef



▲ Pastry chef

- **Grill Station Chef.** The chef responsible for all the grilled items is the **grill station chef**, also called the **grillardin** (gree-yar-DAH-N).
- **Roast Station Chef.** The chef responsible for all the roasted items is the **roast station chef**, also called the **rôtisseur** (roh-tess-UHR).
- **Fish Station Chef.** The chef responsible for preparing and cooking fish and seafood is the **fish station chef**, also called the **poissonier** (pwah-sawng-YAY).
- **Sauté Station Chef.** The chef responsible for sautéed dishes and accompanying sauces is the **sauté station chef**, also called the **saucier** (saw-see-YAY).

- **Garde Manger.** As you know from Chapter 10, the garde manger or pantry chef is the chef responsible for cold food preparations, including salads and salad dressings and cold appetizers.
- **Soups and Vegetables Station Chef.** The chef responsible for hot appetizers, pasta courses, and vegetable dishes is the **soup and vegetables station chef**, also called the **entremetier** (ehn-tray-mee-tee-AY). In larger kitchens, this position is broken into the **soup station chef**, who is responsible for stocks and soups, and the **vegetable station chef**, who is responsible for vegetables and starches.
- **Roundsman.** Working wherever needed, the **roundsman** is a roving chef who may fill in for absent chefs or assists chefs in other stations. This position is also known as a **swing chef**, or **tournant** (toor-NAHN).
- **Pastry Chef.** The chef responsible for making pastry and many other desserts is the **pastry chef**, also called the **pâtis-sier** (pah-tee-SYAY).
- **Prep Chef.** The chef responsible for preparing ingredients that will be used by other chefs is the **prep chef**. A prep chef washes and peels vegetables and fruits, cuts meat, and does any other work necessary for supporting other chefs.



What position is the head of the front-of-the-house brigade? Of the back-of-the-house brigade?



## Working the Front Door

The first opportunity a restaurant has to make a good impression is at its front door. The guest's first contact with the restaurant is with the maître d' or the receptionist. Whether that first contact with the customer is made on the telephone or in person at the door, the person making the contact plays an important role. Naturally, a warm telephone conversation or personal reception at the front door makes guests feel welcome and promises a good dining experience before they are even seated at their table.

**Telephone Etiquette** In the food-service business, you sometimes communicate with people as much by telephone as in person. It can be difficult for a customer to get through to the restaurant or to understand what the restaurant representative is saying. If the person answering the phone is uncooperative or not well informed, the customer is not likely to form a good impression. Callers can become so discouraged that they do not make a dinner reservation. The person assigned to answer the telephone should be trained to keep the following telephone etiquette in mind:

- As much as possible, answer the telephone at the first ring and no later than the third ring.
- Develop an appropriate and brief telephone greeting. For example, "Hello, this is Oliver's Restaurant, Vanessa speaking. May I help you?" Have the greeting written down and placed next to the telephone where it can easily be seen by anyone answering the phone.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Very often people answering the phone speak so fast that callers cannot understand what they say.
- Know the restaurant's hours and location.
- Focus on the person being spoken to until you satisfy their question. Be pleasant and courteous.
- Avoid speaking to anyone else at the same time you are on the phone.
- Avoid putting customers on hold for long. If unable to give your complete attention, ask callers for their telephone number. If they do not give you a number, ask them to call back soon, making sure to give them your name. It is better to call back than not to give your full attention.
- When a caller asks to speak to someone, reply with, "May I ask who is calling?"



**FIGURE 20-3**  
**Working the Front Door**

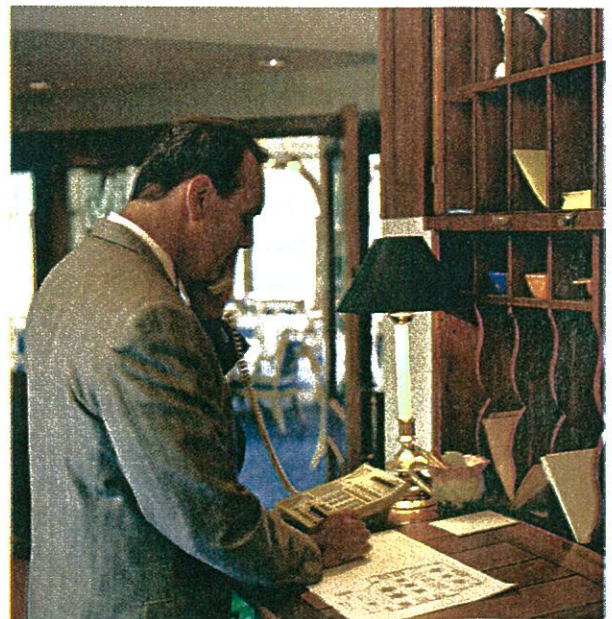
The guest's first contact with a restaurant is the maître d'.

**Drawing Conclusions** Why is a warm welcome important when greeting customers?

**FIGURE 20-4**  
**Answering the Telephone**

Be pleasant and courteous when answering the phone.

**Predicting** How would you feel if you were treated discourteously in your first contact with a restaurant?







## CHEF'S TIP

### HOLIDAY RESERVATIONS

Because holidays such as Mother's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, and New Year's Day are especially hectic for restaurants, take special care when taking reservations for these days.

**Reservations** Restaurant kitchens need to anticipate how much food to buy and prepare. Dining room managers need to know how many guests to set up for and how many servers will be necessary. Reservations provide information about how many customers to expect and when they will arrive, making it easier for a restaurant to plan. Advance knowledge of how many guests to expect is particularly necessary for busy mealtimes when there might otherwise be too many people for a dining room to handle and not enough food, or too many servers and too much food.

Upscale restaurants usually take reservations because their dining service is often more elaborate and lengthy, their customers do not dine casually, and the customers often travel from a distance to get to the restaurant. When a restaurant takes reservations, it is said to have a **reservation policy**.

Some restaurants don't take reservations. This is referred to as a **no-reservation policy**. They serve customers on a first-come-first-served basis. Most restaurants that do this expect a steady volume of diners or a quick turnover. However, some popular upscale restaurants that have a steady following don't take reservations, which leads to lines of customers waiting to get into the restaurant. Some restaurants view this as a way of generating an image of desirability.

## Analyzing the Decision to Take Reservations

### Using a Reservation Policy

#### Advantages

- Guests can make definite plans for dining in the restaurant.
- Restaurant management can plan ahead.
- Guest traffic flow and table sittings can be staggered, improving traffic flow in the dining room.
- Food orders can be staggered, enabling kitchen staff to produce dishes with greater attention to detail and consequently higher quality.
- Less rush and stress in the dining room and kitchen encourages smooth relations between guests and service staff.
- Service staff has greater opportunity to provide better service to diners.
- Service staff can more easily handle requests for special diets, menu exceptions, birthdays, and so on.

#### Disadvantages

- Taking and confirming reservations is more labor-intensive initially.
- Customers who don't show up for their reservations can throw off planning for both the kitchen and the dining room.
- May discourage diners from spontaneously patronizing a restaurant if the expectation is that reservations are required.



Many formal restaurants that use reservations will accept guests without reservations when the restaurant is slow. On the other hand, casual restaurants that don't usually take reservations may require them for groups over eight.

**The Reception Desk** The front desk (also called the reception desk) provides any information necessary to a guest or the dining room for smooth operation. Here you might find the reservation book or computer station, a seating plan for the dining room, copies of the menu and wine list, a logbook or history of daily dining room records, telephone and telephone directory, an answering machine, an employee directory, a credit card machine, maps, emergency numbers, paper supplies, pens, pencils, and other administrative necessities.

Menus should undergo quality control at the reception desk. Menus that are dog-eared, stained, or otherwise unsightly or outdated should be replaced.

**Taking Reservations** An efficient system for taking and recording reservations should be in place. One way to organize the procedure is to use a preprinted form that can be filled in at the time the reservation is made.



## CHEF'S TIP

### MESSY MENUS

*Sloppy menus are unappealing and signal sloppy service or careless management.*

## Analyzing the Decision to Take Reservations

### Using a No-Reservation Policy

#### Advantages

- Eliminates the cost of staff to take and manage reservations.
- Encourages turnover of tables.
- Tables are not tied up by customers who don't show up for their reservations.
- Revenue is increased through bar sales to guests waiting to be seated.

#### Disadvantages

- The line for a table can discourage potential customers.
- Diners may become rushed by service staff feeling pressured by people waiting to be seated.
- Extended waiting can cause disgruntled customers and bad publicity.
- Creates crowding at the entrance.







**FIGURE 20-5**  
**Greeting Guests**

All guests feel appreciated if they are greeted warmly.

**Drawing Conclusions** *Why would restaurants use databases to keep track of their regular customers' preferences?*

## FOCUS ON SAFETY

### Clear the Way

Crowding tables together can block the way for bus persons or wait staff, leading to spilling or dropping food. Spills can cause slipping or falling, resulting in injuries.

Reservations should include the following:

- Date when the reservation was taken
- Name of the person taking the reservation
- Date and time for the reservation
- Name and telephone number of the guest
- Number in the party
- Smoking or nonsmoking preferences
- Any special seating requests
- Any special server requests
- Any handicapped seating requests
- Any other special requests (birthday or other occasion, accommodating children, or others with special needs, and so on)



*What are the advantages and disadvantages of a reservation policy?*

## Greeting and Seating Guests

As the first link in the chain, so to speak, the maître d' or receptionist sets in motion the entire restaurant experience.

**Greeting Guests** The maître d' or receptionist should greet guests with a warm smile and a professional demeanor. Regular customers will feel appreciated if the person at the front door knows them and refers to them respectfully by name. After the greeting, guests should be asked if they have a reservation and accommodated as soon as possible. The maître d' or receptionist should offer to check coats and wraps before customers are seated.

**Seating** The maître d' should lead guests to their tables rather than permit them to make their own way. This gives management control over the traffic flow and establishes a relationship between the maître d' or receptionist and the guest.

There are many advantages to a preplanned dining room seating plan. Placement of tables should take into account the flow of server traffic through the room, exit doors, and paths for leading guests to their seats. It should allow for an even distribution of customers, as well as the safe and attractive placement of tables and seats.

A seating plan should create an impression that the room is filled. This is done by seating guests strategically, first at window seats and then in the central area of the room. The plan should allow for servers to move about to set tables and clear dishes without disturbing guests at nearby tables. Diners should be distributed to the wait staff evenly to prevent overload for any one server and to provide an equal opportunity to everyone on duty.



There are typically two ways to organize seating:

- **Fixed Seating Plan.** By staggering set meal times (such as at 6 p.m., 8 p.m., and 10 p.m.), a **fixed seating plan** enables the kitchen to work at a steady, reliable pace.
- **Continuous Seating Plan.** As long as there are empty tables that turn over regularly, a **continuous seating plan** allows the wait staff to pace themselves and the restaurant to have a steady volume of business, even if checks are not large.

**No-Shows and Late Arrivals** Customers who don't show up for their reservations, or who show up very late, cause big problems for restaurant management. These customers cause restaurants to lose money and disappoint customers who have had to wait for tables—only to see empty tables in the dining room.

One way of minimizing the likelihood of no-shows or late arrivals is to call the day before to confirm reservations. A restaurant may decide on a policy of giving away a table if guests arrive a half hour late might be better than not filling a table at all—and losing revenue. Of course, you could always allow for bad weather or for regular customers, who should always receive special consideration.



**Reading  
Checkpoint**

*What are the two ways to organize seating in a restaurant?*

## 20.1 ASSESSMENT

### Reviewing Concepts

1. What position is the head of the front-of-the-house brigade? Of the back-of-the-house brigade?
2. What are the basic steps involved in taking reservations?
3. What are the two ways to organize seating?

### Critical Thinking

4. **Drawing Conclusions** Most upscale restaurants require reservations. Why would the service staff hold tables for guests even if they don't arrive on time? What do you think are the best measures a restaurant can take to protect itself from no-shows without discouraging their repeat business?
5. **Comparing/Contrasting** Compare a fixed seating plan with a continuous seating plan.
6. **Predicting** How will a no-reservations policy in a fine dining restaurant affect customers? Service staff? Kitchen staff?

### Test Kitchen

Divide into groups of 10. Each group will be a kitchen brigade, with each individual assuming the role of a specific type of chef at the appropriate location in the kitchen. Using a menu from a local upscale restaurant, your teacher or classmates will order 10 meals from the menu. An expeditor will relay the meal orders to the various chefs, who will describe what they must do to prepare the dish.

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### Descriptive Writing

Research the reservation policies of five different types of restaurants by calling them during their down time. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of each of the policies of the particular establishments you have researched.