

COOKING

Lexile 600L

Cooking is getting food ready to be eaten. It usually means mixing together ingredients and heating them. Heating food makes it easier for the body to **digest**. When food is digested, it is broken down so the body can use it. Heating food also kills bacteria. This makes food safer to eat.

People can cook in many ways. Cooking can be a hobby, career, and daily activity. Some people learn to cook from family. Others go to school to learn. They may then learn more about cooking on the job. A chef is a trained cook. The top chef at a restaurant is the executive chef. Other cooks work for the executive chef.

Background

Humans began cooking with fire about two million years ago. The first cooked food was probably raw meat heated directly in fire. About two hundred thousand years ago, people built cooking fires. These were like modern campfires.

Ancient Romans and others built stone and brick ovens. They burned wood in these ovens. They used them to bake bread. Ovens like these are still used to bake pizza and other foods. Wood was also burned in cast iron stoves beginning in the eighteenth century.

Gas stoves were invented during the nineteenth century. They were easier to cook on. Users could control the heat of gas stoves better than with stoves that used wood as fuel.

Electric stoves were invented during the 1890s. More homes were hooked up to electricity in the twentieth century. Many people wanted to cook with electric stoves.

Microwave ovens were invented during the 1950s. These ovens use microwave **radiation**. They cook very quickly and without heat. But many people were afraid of radiation. Microwaves did not become popular until the 1980s.

People have cooked using heat from Earth. They have done this for thousands of years. For example, the Maori of New Zealand used hot springs to cook food. They cooked food using natural steam, too. The Maori and others have also used hot stones to cook food. They put the stones in a hole. Then they put the food on top. They cover it and bury it. Hours later, they dig up the food and eat it.

Careers

Cooks need to learn many skills. They must understand cooking methods. They need to manage, or best use, their time. They must cook many dishes at once. Cooks need to work with others. They also need to understand food safety. Some cooks own a restaurant. These cooks need to manage money. They must learn to run a business.

Many cooking jobs are in restaurants. Many times, restaurants hire people without experience. They have entry-level jobs. The people in these jobs learn skills on the job.

Many restaurants have a chef. An executive chef is in charge of the kitchen. This person usually has gone to cooking school. A chef probably first worked as a cook. In time, a cook may become an executive chef. The executive chef decides what to make and how to cook it.

Assistant chefs work for the executive chef. They include the sous chef, pastry chef, and prep or line cook. The sous chef is executive chef's first assistant. The pastry chef makes **desserts**. The line cook may be in charge of one **station** in the kitchen. A station is a place where something is made. The line cook also may get food ready for cooking.

Cooks also work on cruise ships and in resorts. These chefs may cook for hundreds of people every day. They may be away from home for weeks or months.

Caterers also cook for large crowds. They may be hired to cook for weddings or parties. Caterers must know how many people they will feed. They must plan a menu. They make the food the way employers want it.

Some cooks make food for only one or a few people. They are called personal chefs. Personal chefs may work for wealthy people. They often cook for movie stars and athletes. Some personal chefs are hired to help people eat healthy foods. A person may want to lose weight. Or the person may be on a special diet for medical reasons. A person chef may have to find ways to make diet foods taste good.

Many chefs write books. They write recipes people can follow. Some also have television shows. They show people how to cook.

Cooking is a big field. It can be a career for people who study and practice cooking. Some chefs become famous. They may open their own restaurant. Other chefs work for employers. They work in restaurants and other places. All cooks need certain skills to do their jobs.



Courtesy pexels.com.

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■ By Josephine Campbell

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COMPREHENSION TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. When did humans begin cooking with fire?
 - A. about 200 years ago
 - B. about 2,000 years ago
 - C. about 20,000 years ago
 - D. about two million years ago
 2. Who might be employed to cook in a private home?
 - A. caterer
 - B. personal chef
 - C. sous chef
 - D. line cook
 3. Who is the first assistant to the executive chef?
 - A. line cook
 - B. pastry chef
 - C. sous chef
 - D. prep cook
-

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

4. Cooking makes food easier to _____.
5. Microwaves did not become popular until the 1980s because people were afraid of _____.
6. A _____ chef makes desserts.

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