

Unit 10: Interview with Sous Chef Patrick

(He works at a major casino in the mid–western U.S.)

Interviewer: Hi Patrick, thank you so much for speaking with us today. We understand you are a Sous Chef. Our students are taking their first food and beverage course and would appreciate hearing what you have to say regarding your job, how you got there, and prospects for the future.

First, can you tell us what your current position is and how you got started?

Chef: Restaurant Sous Chef—I actually started in the Food & Beverage industry when I was 15 years old. I knew at an early age that this was the direction I wanted to go. In my junior year I was able to attend culinary classes at the local career center which I continued through my senior year. This afforded me the opportunity to participate in culinary competitions those two years. I placed third in the cooking competition in my junior year and first in the cooking competition in my senior year. I placed first in both years in the culinary written competition. I went on to complete the two year Chef Apprentices Program at Johnson County Community College (JCCC). Actually I was the first student from the career center to complete both programs.

While attending JCCC, I was required to study under an ACF certified chef which is how I ended up working in a casino. I started as an entry level cook working my way up to a lead line cook within 6 months.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to get to this position?

Chef: Approximately 6 years

Interviewer: What are the pros and cons of your job?

Chef: It allows me to be creative, and I receive the satisfaction of my guests when they enjoy the food & the atmosphere. I always enjoy seeing “repeat” customers.

Long hours, late nights and working holidays could be considered “cons”.

Interviewer: Can you tell us what a typical workday looks like for you?

Chef: Check emails, start prepping for the day. Place food orders and communicating with my purchasing department to ensure my orders are delivered. Create schedules and check attendance, to make sure scheduled employees are in attendance and if not, then making sure I get those critical positions filled. Make and monitor break schedules for the employees. I am constantly tasting food for proper quality, taste and seasoning. A very important part of my job is “table touching” which is visiting with customers to get feedback on their overall experience and build relationships while doing so.

Interviewer: What are the major trends in this industry that you are seeing now?

Chef: Rising cost of goods and vendors are charging fuel surcharges. Another trend is to purchase foods from local farms, farmer's markets and dairy's.

Interviewer: In your estimation, what are the areas of future growth in food and beverage management?

Chef: I believe the food & beverage industry is on very solid footing and that the major franchises continue to expand. We are seeing a lot of new, trendy restaurants starting up yearly at a rapid pace. The future is bright for F & B management whichever way you chose to go.

Interviewer: Do you attend training during the year? Is this provided for by your employer or do you do this of your own accord?

Chef: There is basic training such as "serve safe" offered as well as continuing education courses offered through ACF and local colleges. In my situation tuition reimbursement is offered for continuing education.

Interviewer: Where do you get your inspiration for new menus and recipes?

Chef: Magazines, on line, books, experimenting and eating out at different restaurants.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for aspiring chefs and food and beverage managers out there?

Chef: Work hard, be enthusiastic and don't be afraid to be creative. Remember networking is a big part of moving up and becoming successful.

Interviewer: Thanks so much for your time and advice Chef. Your experiences should be helpful to any aspiring chefs and other future food and beverage professionals.