

Chefs & Cooks

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Working as a Chef [NOC 62200] or Cook [NOC 63200]

Job Description

Chefs direct food preparation and cooking activities, as well as prepare meals and specialty foods. Chefs use their formal training to create original dishes. Chefs understand flavours and textures and how they go together. They are skilled in complex cooking techniques. Chefs can hold a variety of titles including executive chef, sous-chef, speciality chef.

Working as an **Executive chef** you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- Manage the kitchen
- Plan menus, organize food preparation and cooking activities and ensure food quality standards
- Arrange kitchen equipment purchases and repairs, food ordering, hiring staff
- Supervise activities of sous-chefs, specialist chefs, chefs and cooks
- May prepare food on a regular basis for special guests and functions

Working as a **Sous-chef** you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- Act as second-in-command and run the kitchen in the absence of the chef
- Plan menus and order food and kitchen supplies
- Prepare and cook meals or specialty foods.
- Supervise specialist chefs, chefs, cooks and other kitchen staff
- Demonstrate new cooking techniques and new equipment to cooking staff

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Working as a **Chef and specialist chef** you will perform the following duties:

- Prepare and cook complete meals or specialty foods
- Instruct cooks in preparation, cooking, plating, garnishing and presentation of food
- Create new recipes and decorative food displays for special events such as banquets and weddings
- Supervise cooks and other kitchen staff
- May plan menus and order food

Source: WorkBC Career Profile for Chefs

<https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/chefs>

Cooks prepare the food served in restaurants, cafeterias, and hospitals. A cook can put together a meal by following a recipe.

Working as a **Cook** you will perform some or all of the following duties:

- Prepare and cook complete meals or dishes as instructed by chef
- Schedule and supervise kitchen staff
- Maintain inventory and records of food, supplies and equipment
- Clean kitchen, work area and cooking equipment
- May hire and train kitchen staff

Sources: WorkBC Career Profile for Cooks <https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/cooks>,
Career Cruising (profile for Cook)

VPL Digital Library <https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising/>

Industry Overview

Chefs and cooks work mainly in the food service industry. Industry sources report that the food services industry is experiencing staff shortages. It is anticipated that the province of BC will require many new workers in this sector over the next decade.

Chefs need to stay up to date on new culinary trends and have an idea of what customers are looking for. They need to plan menus months in advance and have a good idea of what will be popular and available. They must understand the cost of specialty items and stay within their budget.

Cooks who keep up with new food trends and consumer demand often have more employment opportunities. Food trucks have recently become popular and some cooks prefer to run a food truck than work in a more traditional restaurant.

Employment may be seasonal, as many jobs are dependent on the tourism industry.

Job Outlook in BC

Chefs

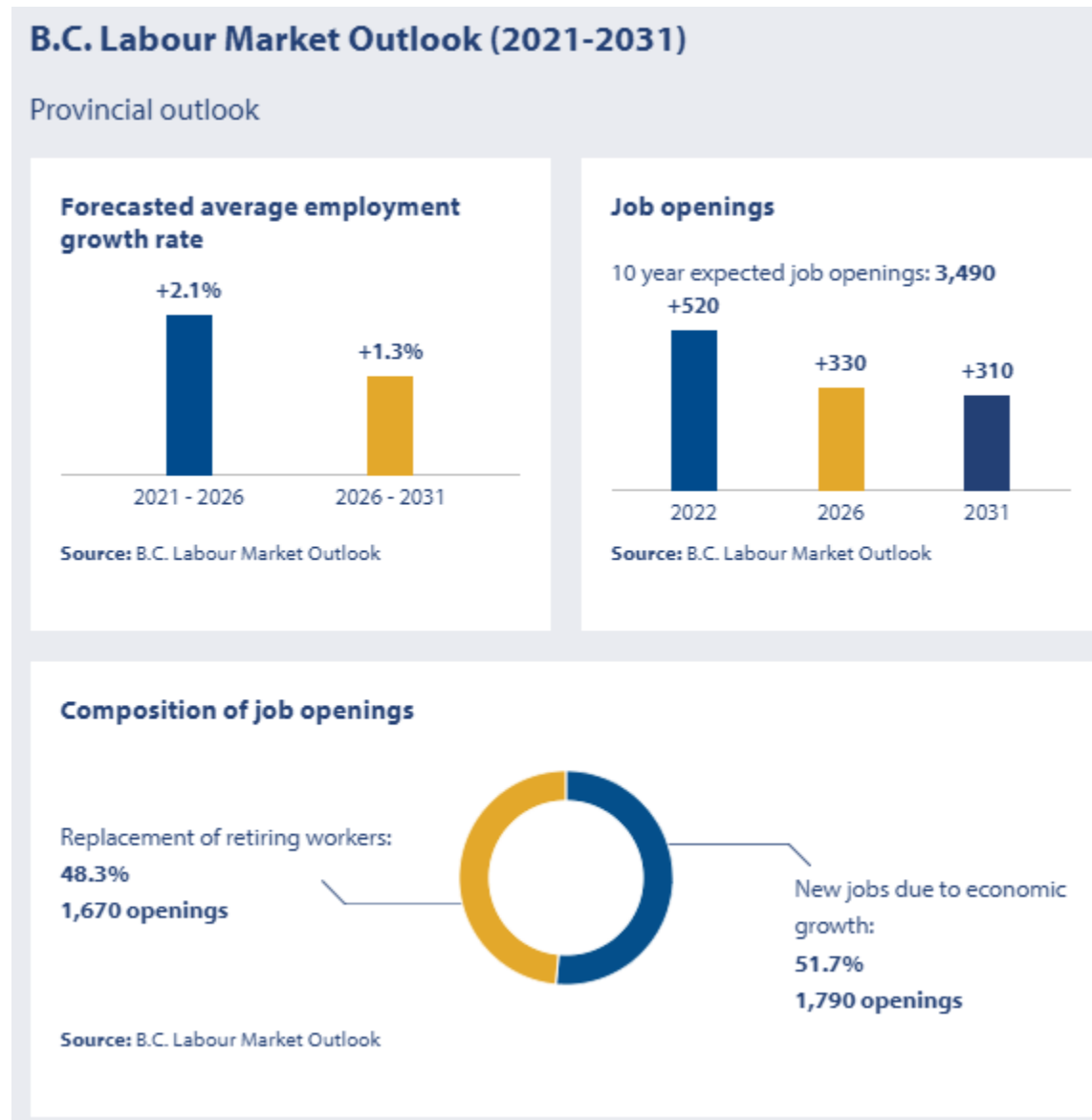


Chart from WorkBC

Cooks

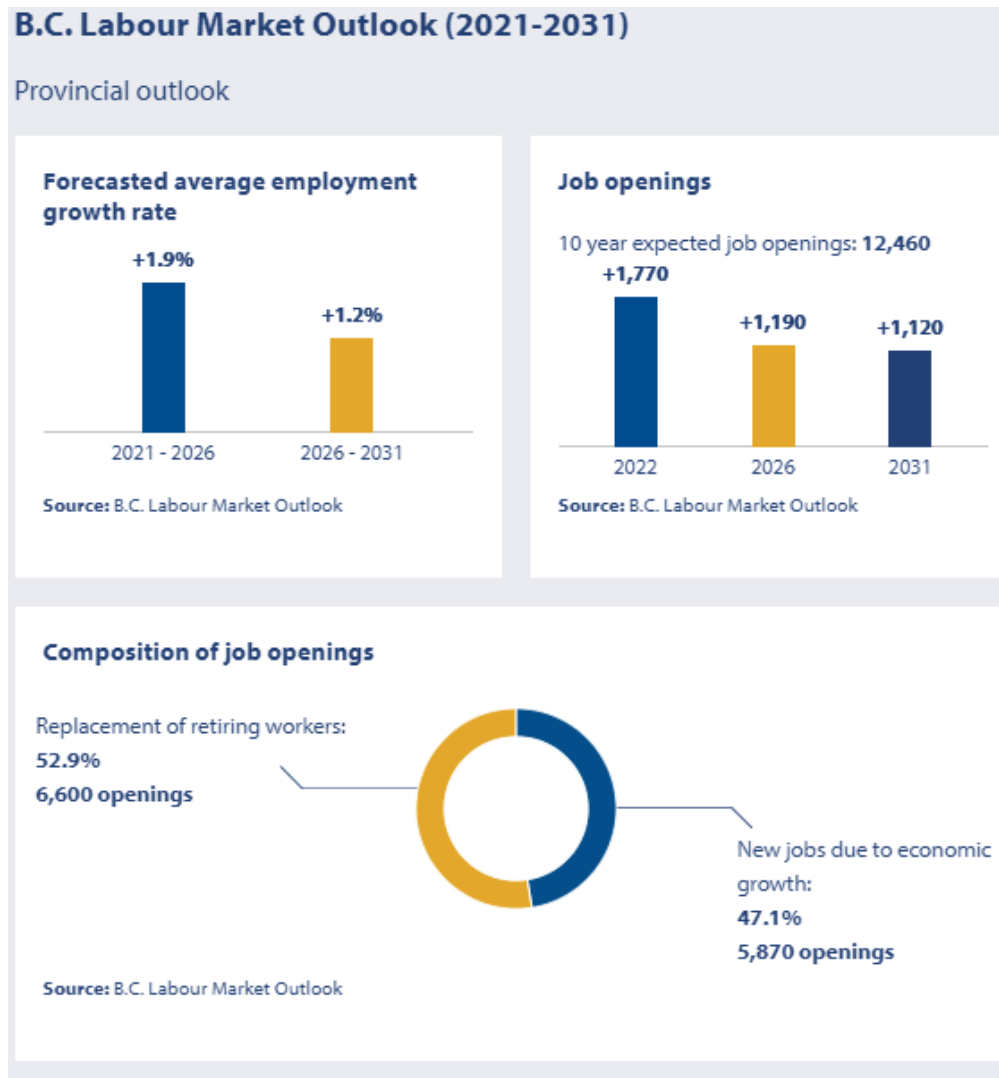


Chart from WorkBC

WorkBC provides job openings in BC regions from 2021 to 2031

Region	Employment in 2021	Average Annual Employment Growth 2021-2031	Expected Number of Job Openings
Vancouver Island			
▪ Chefs	1,400	1.7%	520
▪ Cooks	6,080	1.7%	2,170
Lower Mainland/Southwest			
▪ Chefs	6,790	1.7%	2,420
▪ Cooks	20,840	1.7%	7,890
Thompson-Okanagan			
▪ Chefs	1,040	1.5%	370
▪ Cooks	4,080	1.4%	1,490
Kootenay			
▪ Chefs	1,050	1.2%	60
▪ Cooks	190	0.9%	310
Cariboo			
▪ Chefs	100	2.3%	50
▪ Cooks	1,150	1.4%	530
North Coast & Nechako			
▪ Chefs	80	1.7%	30
▪ Cooks	700	1.6%	30
Northeast			
▪ Chefs	20	0.6%	10
▪ Cooks	420	0.6%	150

Source data: Work BC

You can learn more about working as a chef or cook in BC from:

WorkBC Career Profile for Chefs

<https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/chefs>

WorkBC Career Profile for Cooks

<https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/cooks>

Career Cruising

<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising/> [profiles for Chef & Cook]

Available from the VPL Digital Library

Types of Employers

Chefs and cooks are employed by restaurants, cafeterias, hotels and resorts, food trucks, hospitals, cruise ships, educational institutions, catering companies and a wide range of other establishments.

Source: **Career Cruising**

Salary

In BC the median annual salary for **chefs** is \$38,333. The median annual salary for **cooks** is \$33,370.

Chefs: The pay for chefs varies a great deal and depends mostly on experience, reputation, and whether you work part-time or full-time. Entry-level chefs may earn little more than minimum wage, while experienced chefs who work full-time can make up to \$60,000 a year. Experienced chefs, and those who own their own restaurants, can earn more.

Cooks: The income for cooks varies widely. Factors affecting earnings include training and experience, employer, geographic location, and whether or not you are unionized. As a union member, you have your wages and benefits negotiated on your behalf by union representatives. Cooks who work in large institutional settings such as hospitals, schools, and colleges are usually unionized.

Sources: Work BC & Career Cruising

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In BC regions you can expect to make:

Chef

Hourly wages by community/area

Community/Area	Low (\$/hour)	Median (\$/hour)	High (\$/hour)
British Columbia	15.65	20.00	29.33
Cariboo Region	15.65	20.00	29.33
Kootenay Region	15.65	20.00	29.33
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	15.65	19.00	29.33
Nechako Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Coast Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Northeast Region	N/A	N/A	N/A
Thompson–Okanagan Region	15.65	21.35	28.85
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	16.41	20.00	33.75
Canada	14.00	19.00	27.00

Source: Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Cook

Hourly wages by community/area

Community/Area	Low (\$/hour)	Median (\$/hour)	High (\$/hour)
British Columbia	15.65	16.25	23.00
Cariboo Region	15.65	15.65	21.00
Kootenay Region	15.65	16.00	20.97
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	15.65	16.25	22.00
Nechako Region	15.65	16.00	18.75
North Coast Region	15.65	16.00	18.75
Northeast Region	15.65	15.65	18.00
Thompson–Okanagan Region	15.65	16.00	20.67
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	15.65	18.00	23.81
Canada	13.00	15.60	21.18

Source: Job Bank Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

Working Hours

Working hours vary depending on the type of establishment. Your work hours may include early mornings, late evenings, holidays and weekends. Work varies between part-time and full-time hours. Chefs and Cooks who work in hospitals, schools, and other such institutions are more likely to have regular working hours. Resorts usually offer seasonal employment only.

Chefs: work full-time, part-time, on contract or on call. The hours may include early mornings, late evenings, weekends and holidays. The work may also be seasonal, especially at resorts.

Cooks work shifts, including evenings, weekends, and holidays. The number of hours worked each week varies widely among cooks. Part-time may be as little as 5 or 6 hours a week, while busy full-time cooks may work up to (and sometimes more than) 50 hours a week.

Sources: Work BC & Career Cruising

2. Skills, Education and Experience

Skills for Chefs

- must be creative and have a good sense of timing
- detail-oriented when it involves food preparation and presentation
- excellent communication, good managerial skills
- ability to motivate staff
- have good sense of taste and flavour
- able to work under pressure, handle many different tasks at once

Skills for Cooks

- well organized and able to work under pressure

- enjoy working with their hands and have an interest in preparing food
- detail oriented
- have strong communication and teamwork skills

Education and Experience

Chefs and Cooks do not require certification to work in BC but employers tend to prefer hiring those who are certified.

Chefs: Many colleges and private schools offer programs in food preparation, cooking, chef training, and culinary management. Higher professional certifications are available for those with extensive experience in the field. Professional designations such as these improve a chef's chances of securing better paying positions in fine restaurants and large hotels.

Chefs generally need:

- Secondary school completion and cook's trade certification or equivalent credentials, training and experience
- Some formal training that is often accompanied by on-the-job training and additional coursework

Sous-chefs, specialist chefs and chefs usually need:

- Several years of experience in commercial food preparation

Executive chefs usually need:

- Management training and several years of experience in commercial food preparation, including two years in a supervisory role and experience as a sous-chef, specialist chef or chef

Cooks: A high school diploma is often required for this career. To get the higher-skilled and higher paying jobs, you can complete an apprenticeship or attend a college or vocational school for cooking, culinary arts or related program. On-the-job training may also be provided.

Qualifications

This occupation is not regulated in British Columbia

Voluntary *Red Seal* certification is available through SkilledTradesBC, including Apprenticeship programs for Professional Cooks. Graduates of this program can earn the *Red Seal* certification which allows you to work in other provinces without having to re-certify.

For more information see:

- **Professional Cook 3 Red Seal | SkilledTradesBC**
<https://skilledtradesbc.ca/cook-professional-cook-3-red-seal>

Internationally Trained Chefs and Cooks

If you have significant work experience in a trade but have never been certified in Canada, you may get credit for your prior training and experience:

- Challenging a Certification Exam | SkilledTradesBC
<https://skilledtradesbc.ca/apply-apprenticeship/challenging-certification-exams>

3. Finding Jobs

You'll find job advertisements in local newspapers, trade journals, and electronic sources, as well as through professional associations' publications.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily and the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and in *The Province* on Sundays.

Online Job Postings

- **Go2HR Job Board**

<https://www.go2hr.ca/job-board>

- **Hospitality Careers Online**

<https://www.hcareers.com/>

- **Indeed.com**

https://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search

Find jobs posted on a multitude of company career sites and job boards

Professional Associations' Career Resources

- **Canadian Culinary Federation**

<https://ccfcc-jobs.careerwebsite.com/>

Identifying the Right Position

When you browse job advertisements, you'll find a range of different job titles that are relevant.

For **chefs**, look for these related job titles:

- Banquet Chef
- Corporate Chef
- Executive Chef
- Executive Sous-Chef
- Head Chef
- Master Chef
- Sous-Chef
- Specialist Chef
- Supervising Chef

Source: NOC, <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

For **cooks**, look for these related job titles:

- Apprentice Cook
- Banquet Cook
- Breakfast Cook
- Cafeteria Cook
- Camp Cook
- Caterer Cook
- Hospital Cook
- Licensed Cook
- Pastry Cook
- Pizza Cook
- Restaurant Cook
- Short Order Cook

Source: NOC, <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/>

Creating a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of hotels in Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **Go2HR Tourism Company Directory**
<https://www.go2hr.ca/companies>
- **The British Columbia Restaurant & Foodservices Association**
<https://www.bcrfa.com/>
(Requires membership to access)
- **Business in Vancouver – Book of Lists**
Available Central Library, 338.9711 B97b or online at <https://www.biv.com/lists>
- **Tourism BC Accommodation Guide**
<https://www.hellobc.com/plan-your-trip/accommodations/>
- **Reference Canada**
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>
Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "Restaurants" or "Caterers" or "Foods Carry Out" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.
Available from the VPL Digital Library

NOTE: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

4. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume or curriculum vitae and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your relevant experience.

Use the library catalogue, <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

To learn about applying for jobs in Canada, use the following guides which are available in print at the Central Library or online at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic/>.

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>
- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>
- **Networking for Employment**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>
- **Learn More About Working in BC and Canada**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/learn-more-about-working-in-bc-and-canada>

5. Getting Help from Industry Sources

Industry Associations

Hospitality, tourism, and professional associations in BC and Canada can provide assistance and information on training and certification.

- **The British Columbia Chef's Association**
<https://www.bcchefs.com/>

A volunteer association dedicated to the education of both junior members and the upgrading skills of regular members

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- **The British Columbia Restaurant & Foodservices Association (BCRFA)**
<https://www.bcrfa.com/>
BCRFA is the advocate for the restaurant and foodservice industry. The BCRFA represents more than 3,000 restaurant and foodservice businesses across BC.
- **Canadian Culinary Federation (CCFCC)**
<https://culinaryfederation.ca/en/>
Canada's national association for chefs and cooks. See links to culinary training programs and other culinary associations.
- **Go2HR**
<https://www.go2hr.ca/>
Provides programs and services for BC's hospitality industries
- **Restaurants Canada**
<https://www.restaurantscanada.org/>
A national association representing a community of 30,000+ foodservice professionals

Industry Journals

Search the Vancouver Public Library catalogue for journals related to your profession.

Examples at the Central Library:

- **Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine**
Available at VPL Central Branch, 647.905 F686 and online
<https://www.foodserviceandhospitality.com/>
- **Chef's Quarterly** (The British Columbia Chef's Association)
<https://www.bcchefs.com/chefs-quarterly-magazine>

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Branch, Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic>