



Kitchen Staff Organisation

Kitchen staff organisation: classical and contemporary models

The term ‘organisation’, applied as a kitchen management function, means the distribution, to members of the staff, of the tasks necessary to achieve the set objectives, so that each may make an effective contribution to the success of the enterprise. This involves the following:

1. Assessing the component parts of the operation.
2. Determining how these can best be done, without duplication of effort and in the most efficient and economical manner.
3. Assigning the individual tasks, which make up the total operation, to specific persons or teams.
4. Defining the parameters in which the various tasks can be accomplished with minimum effort but maximum efficiency – this may include financial budgets and the need to abide by company codes of ethical practice eg: purchasing, recruitment.
5. Delegating authority, so as to ensure that each member of the kitchen staff clearly understands their responsibilities and accountability. This is particularly important in an enterprise that is organised on departmental lines; without a clearly defined structure of authority a subordinate may be unaware of decision making limits which could lead to a situation of conflict.

The kitchen is the department in the hotel where food, as a raw material, is processed into dishes by a group of chefs working under the direction of an Executive or Head Chef, whose responsibility it is to allocate the workload between various kitchen sections and to see that the results are of the expected standard. The Head Chef organises the kitchen on the basis of ‘specialisation’ by assigning particular tasks to specialists in those areas. This is known as the *Partie* system in which the team of cooks, of various grades is divided into separate sections each dealing with a particular aspect of cookery and supplying certain sections of the menu. The term ‘Kitchen brigade’ is sometimes used to describe the complement of full staff in the kitchen. All international hotel kitchens of whatever size and in any type of food and beverage operation run on this system, although modified and adapted where necessary. This system leads to efficient operation and better results are achieved when measured against the moving of staff from one task to another during the course of the daily routine.

The first step in kitchen organisation is to establish the scope, size and nature of the operation. Normally guidelines will have laid down the objectives, nature and standard of operation; the more luxurious the establishment is, the higher will be the prices charged and the certainty that the kitchen will be run on related classical lines offering mainly à *la carte* dishes with perhaps an additional *table d’hôte* menu. The organisation requires that the Executive Chef breaks down the overall task into its components, grouping these in an orderly sequence of self-contained sections.

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The classical model: the ‘Partie’ system.

‘*Partie*’ is a French word meaning “part or section”. A *Partie* system is one in which the operational space, equipment, and jobs are divided up into sections. The *Partie* system evolved in the era of Escoffier, from an analysis of the tasks needed for the production of the menu and then grouping those tasks so as to maximise production, speed and efficiency. The original system lasted up until the 1930’s and was designed primarily for large restaurants, especially those in major hotels providing extensive *à la carte* and *table d’hôte* menus in the French tradition. As the task of the professional chef came to involve serving more customers in more and different ways, its organisation inevitably became more complex. The more elaborate dishes required highly specialised experts rather than general chefs who handled all types of cookery at once.

Modern hotel restaurants and other food service systems with quite different styles and sizes of menus cannot adopt the original *Partie* system in its entirety, but they can apply the same basic principles of organisation to their own food production systems. Such a ‘Systems analysis approach’ should take into account the type of menu and style of service desired, the people involved, and the physical resources of the kitchens to be used. It must organise all of these for efficient meal production. The quantity and quality of work skills required will be determined by the menu; the aim to assign skilled work to the most skilled individuals so that their abilities are fully used. Repetitive jobs, such as those on the grill or griddle, may be broken down into simplified elements and assigned to staff with lesser skills.

Each type of hotel operation will need its own unique organisational structure for best results. The organisational charts used later in this section of the learning guide to describe the *Partie* are therefore for illustration purposes only. They should not be implemented without extensive revision and adaptation to actual purpose and needs. Nevertheless, the way in which traditional luxury hotel kitchens originally developed their staffing is worth considering in order to understand the principles of their approach. Such historical knowledge also gives insight into the various customs of the kitchen that have evolved over the years.

Auguste George Escoffier was the first famous chef to use his cooking talents in a large modern hotel that offered food to the broader public. This presented for the first time the challenge of how to serve a wide variety of freshly prepared, excellent dishes to a large number of people. In many establishments it became necessary for the kitchen staff to work throughout the entire day, and in some cases, work split shifts. This is where staff are available for both lunch and dinner. Escoffier met this challenge by adding the principle of task organisation to that of kitchen layout, thus perfecting the *Partie* system. Escoffier studied the food and cooking techniques behind the recipes and allocated tasks to different specialists so as to help produce even the most complex of dishes regularly, efficiently and swiftly. This sometimes meant breaking down processes and allocating different tasks to different sections for the production of a single dish.

The Complete Kitchen Brigade or Partie System

The *Partie* system today, however, is simpler than it was in Escoffier's time because of several historical developments, such as:

- The introduction of machinery to do the work previously done by people.
- Changing trends in people's tastes and preferences towards simpler menus and meals.
- Economic factors that encourage the reduction of expensive labour and the simplification of recipes and service.
- The processing of food by freezing, canning, dehydration and vacuum packing which eliminates a great deal of basic preparation work.
- An increasing amount of products that are 'bought-in' to the hotel. Eg: Food products that are prepared 'off site' by specialised manufacturers and purchased by the hotel.

The *Partie* system will undergo still more change as automation, method study, and work simplification are increasingly applied within the kitchen. Understanding the *Partie* system will remain useful, however, because further improvements are more likely to be conceived by those who know both the traditional system and the new technological breakthroughs. This approach will enable progress to be more organised and logical rather than being based on haphazard changes which can affect productivity.

The duties and responsibilities of the senior staff in the kitchen brigade are:

Executive Chef or Executive Head Chef and Chef des Cuisines are the titles given to a chef whose position entails considerable administrative duties in connection with the overall operation of a very large kitchen or within an hotel that has several kitchens each with its own chef, but for which he/she has overall responsibility. In some catering companies this person might be employed in a policy-making position regarding the food production and service procedures for a number of separate establishments owned by the company.

Chef de Cuisine

The head chef is responsible for the efficient operation of the equipment of the kitchen, the preparation of menus, the ordering of commodities and equipment and the staffing of the kitchen. He/She is also responsible to the management for the required percentage of profit and, in a small kitchen, may be involved in the actual cooking production.

Sous Chef

The assistant head chef understudies the head chef in all duties. The Sous-Chef is mainly responsible for the efficient day-to-day routine of the kitchen.

The duties and responsibilities of the **supervisory staff** in the kitchen brigade are:

Chef de Parties

Chef Saucier

The sauce cook is responsible for the production of all dishes of meat, poultry and game cooked by boiling, poaching, steaming, stewing, braising and shallow frying. He/She is also responsible for the production of all hot sauces for meat, poultry and game with the exception of those sauces used to accompany roasts.

Chef Poissonier

The fish cook is responsible for the production of all fish dishes and sauces other than deep-fried or grilled fish.

Chef Rôtisseur

The roast cook is responsible for the production of all roasts and grills of meat, poultry and game, grilled and deep-fried fish, deep-fried vegetables and potatoes and most savouries. He/She is also responsible for the production of the sauces, accompaniments and garnishes for roasts and grills. In large establishments, grilled items are the responsibility of the Chef Grillardin or grill cook.

Chef Entremètier

The vegetable cook is responsible for the production of vegetables and potatoes, and sometimes egg and farinaceous dishes.

Chef Potager

The soup cook is responsible for the production of soups, and sometimes egg and farinaceous dishes.

Chef Garde-Manger

The larder cook is responsible for the preparation of all meat, poultry, game and fish in readiness for cooking, the cold buffet work, hors d'oeuvre, salads, sandwiches, canapés and cocktail hors d'oeuvre. In large establishments, the cold buffet work is done by the *Chef de Froid*, the hors d'oeuvre and salad by the *Chef Hors d'Ouvrier* and the meat by the *Butcher*.

Chef Pâtissier

The pastry cook is responsible for the production of all hot and cold sweets, cakes and pastries, petits fours, special display work and the supply to the main kitchen of items of pastry. In large establishments, specialists are often employed to make pastry, confectionery and sometimes for making ice cream desserts.

Other positions

Chef Tournant

The relief cook is responsible for replacing any of the above chefs de partie, with the exception of the Chef Pâtissier, on their day off or when otherwise absent.

Demi-Chef

A modern term for a junior Chef de Partie or Chef Tournant. A qualified cook that shares the responsibility for running a 'section' in the kitchen with another person on a rotation basis.

Chef Boulanger

The Baker responsible for the production of Baked Breads and Yeast good such as Croissant, Brioche and Danish Pastries.

Chef de Garde

The Night Chef is responsible for the Security of the kitchen during the night and for supplying all food requirements during this time.

Commis de cuisine

Assistant chefs who have completed an apprenticeship.

Apprentice

Chefs who are undertaking their initial training through an apprenticeship.

Cuisinier

A general name for a cook.

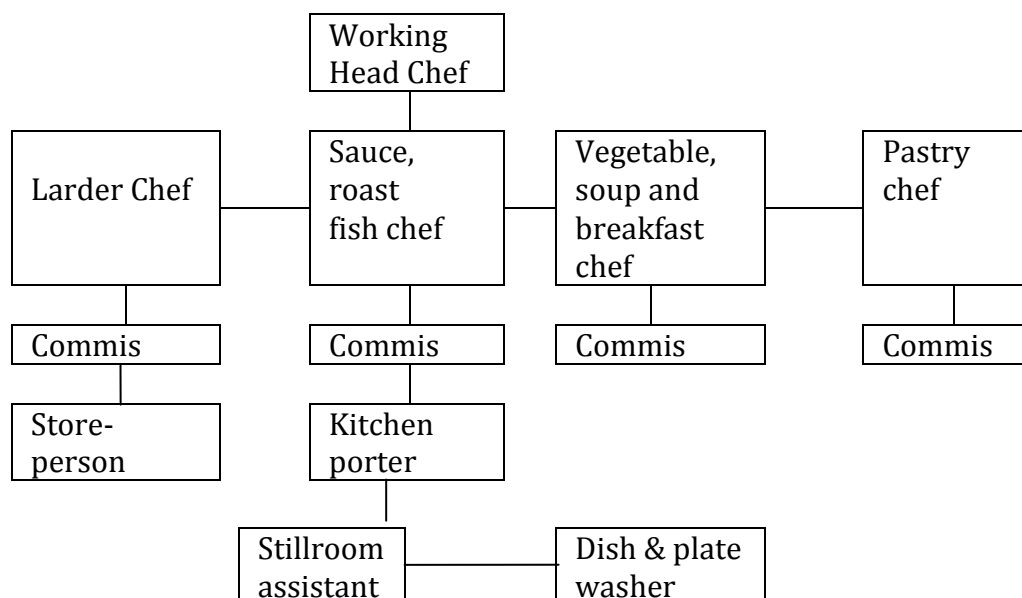
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Contemporary models: small enterprise model

The following kitchen organisation charts show the possible contemporary modifications of classical model for other types of food production establishments.

The kitchen of a smaller commercial establishments or enterprises such as stand alone restaurants could be staffed as follows; in such a system the Head Chef may direct the activities of one of the parties such as the sauce section or larder and be assisted by a Senior Chef of another section who would also act as the Sous Chef. The Head Chef would play an active part in the running of the partie but take over the running of the 'Pass' during the service. If the administrative duties of the department took up too much of his time the chef would not run a partie but assist and advise on all of them as necessary, acting more or less as the Chef Tournant.

Contemporary model of kitchen staff organisation for small enterprises



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Contemporary models: The commissary kitchen

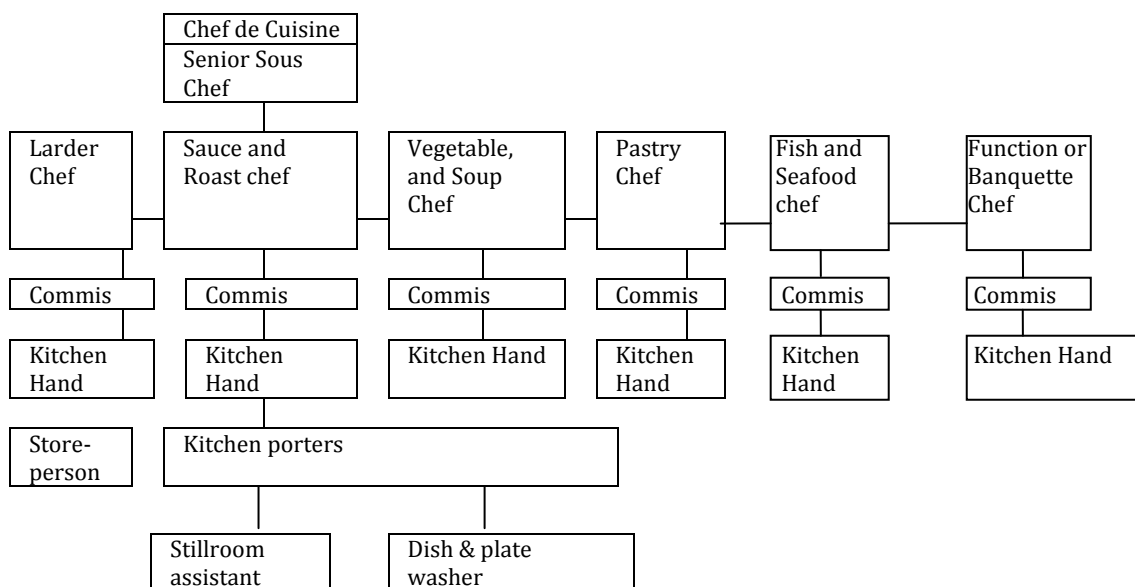
The following kitchen organisation charts show the contemporary model for the operation of a commercial commissary kitchen.

The Commissary Kitchen

In some large modern hotels all of the main food production is prepared in the ‘Commissary’ kitchen. This concept has a number of different applications; from purpose built kitchens that are rented out to different enterprises, centralised kitchens that prepare food that which is then distributed commercially to the general public, institutionalised centralised kitchens that produce food for hospitals etc and centralised production kitchens that prepare various stages of mise en place for different hotel outlets.

The commissary kitchen, in the international hotel context, is a centralised area overseen by a Chef de Cuisine or Senior Sous-Chef. It is responsible for producing all the main food products that are incorporated into the establishment’s menus. The items are generally ordered and distributed using a requisition system to the various food outlets for service.

Contemporary model of kitchen staff organisation for a commissary kitchen



Bibliographical Information

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