



CENTRAL KITCHEN LEAD/CHEF JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB SUMMARY:

Under the direction of the Director of Child Nutrition Services, assist in the planning, organizing, managing, and overseeing of food preparation, recipe development, and distribution activities in the Central Kitchen. This includes production, assembly, and packaging of food for school sites; creating and testing recipes; facilitating the ordering of food and supplies; managing central kitchen inventory; and serving as a liaison between the Director of Child Nutrition and the Central Kitchen staff. The position integrates culinary expertise with school nutrition program compliance, ensuring all food safety and sanitation regulations are met.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Assist in coordinating and overseeing the ordering, preparation, cooking, packaging, and transporting of food and supplies throughout the district.
- Create, test and evaluate new standardized recipes to support innovation, scratch-cooking and student appeal, while meeting USDA nutritional standards.
- Lead and participate in preparing and cooking a wide variety of food items in large quantities from standardized recipes, including portioning, conversions, and complex recipe calculations.
- In conjunction with the Child Nutrition Services Direction, develop and implement seasonal menus that promote freshness, quality, and student participation, incorporating local and farm-to-school ingredients when possible.
- Review and evaluate site meal counts to ensure food items, equipment, utensils, and staffing needs are met for daily service and production requirements.
- Oversee daily production to ensure meals are visually appealing, nutritious, and aligned with menu, cost, and program requirements.
- Guide day-to-day kitchen operations by providing leadership and direction to staff; assign duties, review work for accuracy and compliance, and adjust workflows as needed. Enforce standards for conduct, grooming, hygiene, and dress.
- Train and support Central Kitchen staff and substitutes on proper practices, culinary techniques, equipment use, and procedures for safely preparing, handling, serving, and storing food.
- Ensure all production methods meet Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), county health regulations, and district food safety standards.
- Monitor and inspect food service activities to ensure food quality, quantity, sanitation, and safety standards are consistently met, including verifying and recording required food temperatures.
- Oversee and participate in inventory management, ordering, receiving, and storage of food and supplies, ensuring cost-effective practices and minimal waste.

- Provide input on food product use, production procedures, and operational adjustments needed to meet program guidelines, nutritional requirements, and daily production needs.
- Recommend purchases of food, supplies, and equipment; assist in evaluating product quality and vendor performance; and provide feedback on equipment upgrades and kitchen process improvements.
- Operate standard and specialized commercial kitchen equipment, including ovens, steamers, kettles, mixers, slicers, and food transport systems.
- Promote strong customer satisfaction by ensuring meals are appetizing, properly presented, and meet district expectations.
- Communicate production issues, equipment needs, and staffing concerns to Child Nutrition administration.
- Support food production for catering events and special functions, ensuring high presentation and service standards.
- Use a pallet jack to retrieve food items according to specified quantities; open cans, replenish containers, and assist with proper storage and rotation of supplies.
- Maintain accurate records related to production, temperature logs, inventory, and distribution.
- Operate computers and office equipment as assigned; maintain proficiency with nutrition management software.
- Drive a district vehicle to obtain or deliver food and supplies to district sites as needed.
- Attend and participate in meetings, trainings, and professional development.
- Perform other related duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Knowledge of:

- Principles and practices of large-scale quantity food preparation, menu design, and nutrition.
- Scratch cooking and recipe development for large-scale production.
- Culinary techniques, flavor balance, and food presentation.
- Cost control, inventory management, and efficient production planning.
- Health, safety, sanitation regulations, and HACCP procedures.
- Menu planning, portion control, and nutritional analysis.
- Effective training, guidance, leadership, and communication techniques.
- Computer software, including word processing, spreadsheets, and nutrition management programs.
- District programs and service expectations at each school site.
- National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and all other Federal and State regulations and guidelines related to child nutrition programs
- Inventory control, food ordering, and record-keeping procedures for food items, equipment, and materials, including receiving and order verification.
- Operation of commercial kitchen equipment and the standard tools, utensils, weights, and measures used in foodservice.
- Food handling techniques, including storage, proper temperature control, sanitation, and safety laws/practices related to preparing, handling, and serving food.
- Sanitation and safety laws and practices related to preparing, handling, and serving food.
- Standard kitchen equipment, utensils, and weights, and measurements.
- Basic mathematics for food production (addition, subtraction, division, decimals, measurement, proportions, inventory counts, and ordering).
- Oral and written communication skills.
- Interpersonal skills using tact, patience, and courtesy.
- Proper lifting techniques.

Ability to:

- Plan, organize, and oversee large-scale food preparation and distribution activities including planning, production and assembly for school sites.
- Prepare food in both quality and quantity while ensuring safety, consistency, and visual appeal.
- Exercise sound culinary and operational judgement.
- Lead, motivate, train, and support a diverse team of food service professionals.
- Interpret, apply, and explain rules, regulations, policies, and procedures.
- Operate a computer and utilize nutrition management systems.
- Work as a team, problem solve, work quickly and efficiently to produce large volumes of food within set timeframe.
- Communicate clearly, courteously, and effectively with individuals at all levels, both orally and in writing.
- Meet schedules and timelines with accuracy and efficiency.
- Provide exceptional and courteous customer service.
- Serve food in compliance with all health and sanitation regulations; operate and clean a variety of food service equipment safely and effectively, while maintaining a clean, safe, and organized working environment.
- Estimate food needs, adjust recipes for quantity, maintain portion control, and ensure consistent quality.
- Work independently and collaboratively as part of a team (ensuring cooperative working relationships) while maintaining productivity and professionalism under pressure, time-sensitive demands, and frequent interruptions.
- Maintain regular and consistent attendance.
- Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability when routines, duties, or the work environment change.

Education and Experience:

- Equivalent to completion of the twelfth grade, including or supplemented by coursework in nutrition, culinary arts, or food service management.
- Any combination of education, training, and experience equivalent to graduation from a recognized culinary school, or at least three years of experience in a central kitchen, high-volume production kitchen, or institutional culinary environment.

WORKING CONDITIONS:**Environment:**

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. The work environment is varied and dynamic, encompassing both standard administrative settings and specialized food service areas:

- Work is performed in a Central Kitchen environment, outdoor receiving areas, and general warehouse/storage environments. Frequent driving of a District vehicle is required to travel between school sites and other work locations.
- Regularly exposed to intermittent noise, frequent interruptions, and a fast-paced, dynamic operational atmosphere.
- Exposure to extreme temperatures (e.g., heat from ovens/cooking equipment, extreme cold from refrigerators and freezers); wet and/or humid conditions; cleaning/sanitizing agents; and fumes or airborne particles (flour, cooking odors).
- Requires the ability to sit or stand for extended periods; operate computer and office equipment; communicate effectively (oral and written).
- Lift, carry, push, and pull medium to heavy objects (up to 50 pounds) using proper lifting techniques.
- Stand, walk, and bend frequently.
- Work near potential hazards, including exposure to boiling water, very hot foods and equipment, extreme heat and cold, and sharp objects (knives, slicers, mixers) in a commercial kitchen setting.
- The noise level ranges from moderate in the administrative office to loud in the central kitchen and production areas.

Physical Abilities:

The physical demands below are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential administrative, operational, and food service functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

- Ability to frequently lift, carry, push, or pull heavy objects, weighing up to 50 pounds (e.g., cases of food, supplies, loaded food carts, storage racks, and materials).
- Standing or walking for extended periods of time on potentially hard surfaces in both office and kitchen environments.
- Ability to reach overhead, above the shoulders, and horizontally, as well as frequently bend at the waist, kneel, or crouch to access supplies, equipment, and records.
- Hearing and speaking to exchange information clearly, communicate with staff and parents, and respond to telephone inquiries, often over moderate to loud noise levels.
- Seeing to observe food production, verify delivery orders, check for compliance, proofread complex documents, and monitor food service activities.
- Dexterity of hands and fingers for tasks requiring precision and speed, including handling kitchen tools, and performing repetitive hand and upper extremity motion (e.g. food preparation tasks).

OTHER:

- Pass the District's applicable proficiency exam (e.g., written test, oral interview, and/or work sample) for the job class with a satisfactory score.
- License Required: possession of a valid California Motor Vehicle Operator's License must be bondable.
- Valid Food Handler's Card issued by the San Diego County Health Department (upon time of hire).
- Valid SERV Safe Food Manager's Certificate (or equivalent Food Safety Certificate from a Department of Health approved organization) within probationary period.
- Complete up to six (6) hours of Professional Development annually related to school nutrition, as determined by the USDA.

CLEARANCES:

- Criminal Justice and FBI Fingerprint Clearance.
- Tuberculosis Clearance (Negative TB test result plus periodic post-employment retest as required).
- Pre-employment physical exam and drug screening clearance.

Range: 12

Board Approved: 05/19/2026