

Chef interview checklist

Hotels and restaurants usually run a short HR screen, a technical talk with the executive or head chef, and a practical trade test, sometimes followed by a trial shift during service.

10 QUESTIONS TO PRACTISE OUT LOUD

1. For the trade test, cook two dishes from our menu and one of your own in 90 minutes. How will you plan it?

What it checks: Organisation, time management and cleanliness under observation, plus whether your own dish shows real skill and suits the restaurant's style.

2. Tell me about a time a guest sent a dish back.

What it checks: Whether you handle complaints without ego, fix the problem quickly and learn from it, rather than blaming the guest or the server.

3. What salary are you expecting for this chef de partie position?

What it checks: Whether you know typical kitchen pay for your level and city, and understand benefits like meals, accommodation and service charge.

4. What is the temperature danger zone, and how do you cool and store cooked food safely?

What it checks: Basic food safety knowledge that protects guests from food poisoning, which every professional kitchen expects without exception.

5. Describe a time a key supplier did not deliver before service.

What it checks: Resourcefulness and planning when supplies fail, and whether you protect the guest experience with smart substitutions.

6. Are you comfortable with split shifts, weekends and working on festivals?

What it checks: Whether you understand hospitality hours and will stay reliable during the busiest days, which are usually holidays and weekends.

7. How do you calculate the food cost of a dish and set a menu price?

What it checks: Kitchen business skills: whether you can control margins, which is a core part of a sous chef or head chef role.

8. Tell me about a conflict you had with a colleague in the kitchen.

What it checks: Whether you can resolve tension in a stressful, hierarchical kitchen without letting it affect service or food quality.

9. Why do you want to work in our kitchen?

What it checks: Whether you know the restaurant's cuisine and standards and have a genuine reason to learn there, which predicts whether you will stay.

10. How do you prevent cross-contamination and manage allergens during service?

What it checks: Whether you protect guests with allergies through clear systems, not only memory, which can be a matter of life and death.

TIPS FOR THIS INTERVIEW

- Carry your own knife roll, clean chef whites, safety shoes and a notebook, since many kitchens run the trade test on the same day.

- Choose a signature dish you can cook perfectly under pressure, and make sure it fits the restaurant's cuisine and style.
- Revise food safety basics: danger zone temperatures, cooling rules, colour-coded boards, allergens, FIFO and the records an FSSAI inspection checks.
- Practise explaining recipe costing with one of your own dishes, including yield, plate cost and a sensible menu price, if you are applying for senior roles.

THE DAY BEFORE

- ☐ Confirm the time, venue or video link and the interviewer's name
- ☐ Plan your route and leave time for traffic, or test your camera, microphone and internet
- ☐ Keep copies of your resume, ID proof, certificates and photographs in a folder
- ☐ Iron your clothes and charge your phone and laptop
- ☐ Do one final run-through of your introduction, then stop and rest

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Arrive 15 minutes early, or log in 5–10 minutes early for a video call
- ☐ Greet everyone politely, including the receptionist or coordinator
- ☐ Listen to the full question, pause, then answer in a clear structure
- ☐ Take brief notes of names and key points
- ☐ Ask your prepared questions and confirm the next steps before you leave