

Research what it takes to become a food service specialist. Learn about education requirements, job duties, average wages and job outlook to find out if this is the career for you.

!!!Career Information At a Glance

Food service specialists work in the military or in the private sector preparing menus and food. Find out about food service specialist education requirements and salary potential by perusing the following chart.

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|--|----------------------------|--|--|
| | __Degree Required__ | | None required; military training program and certificate options available |
| | __Key Skills__ | | Culinary skills, adaptability, stamina |
| | __Job Growth (2012–2022)__ | | 4%* |
| | __Average Salary (2013)__ | | \$21,110* |

"Source: *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics"

!!What Are the Duties of a Food Service Specialist?

A food service specialist is responsible for menu planning, ordering supplies and cooking a variety of foods. The duties of a food service specialist are similar, whether you're interested in a military or civilian career.

For example, in the U.S. Coast Guard, as a food service specialist you would work on any Coast Guard cutter, preparing meals and ensuring that foodstuffs are stored properly, according to Coast Guard regulations ("www.gocoastguard.com").

The term 'food service specialist' can also refer to a civilian position that translates into a kitchen prep worker. Military training may prepare you for a career as a cook or baker, in a variety of places that include kitchen and dining facilities.

!!What Training Is Required?

As a prospective food service specialist in the U.S. Army, you would have to complete a 9-week basic training program during which you would learn the food-related skills needed to prepare a variety of meals for other soldiers. In the Coast Guard, there are options for training, including either a 12-week specialized instruction program or on-the-job training. The Coast Guard's program can include accounting, administration and advanced baking. For either branch of the military, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) notes that a high school diploma is a requirement ("www.bls.gov").

As a civilian, a kitchen prep worker is required to have a high school diploma, according to the BLS. Colleges offer certificates of completion for food service specialists. These programs include training in sanitation practices, identification and preparation of various cuts of meat and even cooking to order, or à la carte.

!!How Much Can I Earn?

According to BLS, a food service specialist in the military could earn anywhere between \$1,516.20 and \$5,617.50 per month. A food service specialist is an enlisted member of the military. As a result, the potential salary depends on the time you've served in the military, your rank and duties.

The BLS reports that in 2012, there were 807,800 food prep workers jobs the United States. In 2013, the majority of these individuals earned between \$7.97 and \$13.94 per hour, or \$16,580 to \$28,990 annually.