

# School to career



focus on jobs in hospitality

Throughout history, individuals have provided food and shelter for guests — first in their homes, later in small inns and taverns. A traveler might eat his evening meal by the light of a hearth fire, share sleeping quarters with strangers and lead his horse from the stable the next morning. The most prosperous innkeepers offered rooms along trade routes, near ferry landings and in communities that were centers for business and government.

Today, hospitality is one of the largest industries in the United States and in many other countries, employing thousands of workers. Travelers still visit business and government centers. However, hospitality and tourism have grown in new directions. Accommodations are available in remote locations (and even in mobile locations, such as cruise ships). Hotel guests include families on vacation as well as corporate executives on business. Restaurants provide meals for hometown diners as well as for travelers.

Here in North Carolina, hospitality and tourism are a \$12 billion industry. State officials estimate that there are more than 40 million "visits" from business and vacation travelers each year. New hotels and restaurants open every month, to meet the increasing demand for the services they provide.

The hospitality industry attracts workers for many reasons. Some enjoy the fast pace and exciting environment. Hotel managers thrive on the challenges of operating multi-faceted businesses; chefs thrive on the creative aspects of preparing meals. There are opportunities to earn fame and fortune, to work in exotic locations and to meet a diverse group of customers, from celebrities to convention participants.

Work assignments vary widely. There are day and evening jobs. Some workers interact with their customers in person; others, by e-mail or telephone. The workplace may be a ten-room inn or a 1,000-room convention center.

The best opportunities in the hospitality industry are available for individuals who have formal education in addition to workplace experience. A curriculum program in hotel & restaurant management or in culinary technology provides an overview of many topics, from financial strategies to legal requirements.

Curriculum programs in hospitality provide individuals with guidance as they develop and perfect new skills that are in demand. These programs can also be a stepping stone to careers in other industries, including healthcare facility management, education, sports & entertainment operations and business administration.

## EDUCATION

Some entry-level jobs in hospitality do not require higher education. However, many jobs are open only to those who have earned a degree in a hospitality curriculum.

In a hotel & restaurant management curriculum, students master the basics of customer service as well as management skills — hiring and evaluating employees, managing properties, maintaining revenue-expense ratios, planning for workplace needs and responding to economic issues.

Students also study tourism law, risk management and loss prevention, reservations, sales, accounting, housekeeping practices, meetings and conventions, front office procedures, marketing and supervision.

A curriculum in culinary technology offers hands-on experience in food preparation, including meats, seafood, fruits, vegetables, baked goods and other food items. Students learn to plan menus, select high-quality fresh foods, evaluate costs and create attractive food presentations. They also learn about workplace sanitation and safety, as well as personnel issues.

Specialized classes focus on topics such as pastries and confections, wine and other beverages, international cuisines, exhibition cooking, nutrition and signature dishes. American Culinary Federation certification may be available to graduates.

Classroom activities combine lectures with laboratory exercises, giving students many opportunities to practice their new skills. Like many community colleges, Wake Technical Community College operates an on-campus restaurant that involves students in different aspects of restaurant operations. Wake Tech also offers an exchange program in Le Touquet, France.

## FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Industry observers predict that the number of jobs in this career field will continue to grow. Currently, hospitality/travel is the second-largest employment field in the United States.

## FINANCIAL AID

Grants, scholarships, loans and work/study programs are available for community college students. The financial aid office at each college can provide specific information on these opportunities. In addition, information on special curriculum-based scholarships may be available from academic department heads or from foundation directors at some colleges.

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## SKILLS REQUIRED

Each job in hospitality requires different specialized skills. For example, chefs must have a good sense of design, color and texture, so that meals look as good as they taste. However, some skills are essential in all hospitality jobs: teamwork and "people skills," good communication, reliability, attention to detail and problem-solving abilities.

## RECOMMENDED CLASSES

Courses in business management and related fields, communication (both written and spoken), math and computer applications are helpful to students who want to pursue a degree in a hospitality curriculum.

## WHAT YOU WEAR

Many employers provide uniforms that are appropriate to the workplace. For example, a hotel's management staff may wear business suits, while culinary workers wear chef's uniforms. Uniforms provide a neat appearance and help guests identify employees quickly.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you are interested in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry, you can learn more about preparation for your career by contacting Wake Tech:

Wake Technical Community College  
9101 Fayetteville Road  
Raleigh, N.C. 27603  
(919) 662-3500  
[www.waketech.edu](http://www.waketech.edu)

You may also want to contact industry organizations, such as:

North Carolina Restaurant Association  
PO Box 6528  
Raleigh, N.C. 27628  
(919) 782-5022  
[www.ncra.org](http://www.ncra.org)

Triangle Area Hotel Motel Association  
1500 Sunday Drive, Suite 102  
Raleigh, N.C. 27607  
(919) 787-5181  
[www.tahma.org](http://www.tahma.org)



If you would like to make a statement about your business' commitment to education, call Sheila Gould at 829-4639 or email [sgould@newsobserver.com](mailto:sgould@newsobserver.com) to find out how you can sponsor a School to Career Page.

## JOBS IN THIS FIELD

Job Title	Minimum Education & Experience	Average Salary
Front Desk Clerk	high school diploma	\$18,000
Line Cook	high school diploma	\$19,000
Pastry Chef	associate degree, experience	\$31,000
Restaurant Manager	associate degree, experience	\$52,000
Hotel Food & Beverage Director:		
Limited Service	associate degree, experience	\$45,000*
Full Service	bachelor's degree, experience	\$70,000*
Executive Chef	degree, specialized training, experience	\$66,000
Hotel Manager:		
Limited Service	associate degree, experience	\$45,000*
Full Service	bachelor's degree, experience	\$80,000*

\*Hotel administrators often receive bonuses, based on occupancy or on food and beverage sales, in addition to the salary averages listed.

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**Profile** KRISTINA BURCH  
Durham, North Carolina

It's a typical day on the job for Kristina Burch — busy, challenging and personally rewarding. Kristina is a dining supervisor for The Forest at Duke, where she supervises 45 workers, including a wait staff, café employees and dietary aides.

Working with a team that includes dining supervisors, service manager, kitchen manager and chef, Kristina helps ensure that the retirement community's residents and their guests enjoy complete meals within a two-hour window of service. Each day, the team serves more than 1,000 meals in four locations: a formal dining room, a casual café and two health centers.

"I work with a wonderful team," Kristina says. "[My coworkers] have been in the business for years, and they share their experiences and knowledge. They are great teachers. I learn something new every day."

At age 23, Kristina is building a career in the hospitality industry. She began by earning a two-year associate degree in culinary technology at Wake Technical Community College. She added a third year of coursework to earn her second degree, in hotel & restaurant management.

During her first year after graduation, she managed a cafeteria for the Compass Group in Research Triangle Park. "Had it not been for my education, I would not have been successful," Kristina says. "I just remembered what I'd learned in school and applied it."

Kristina adds that her classes at Wake Tech exposed her to many skills, from preparing exotic foods like ostrich meat to estimating the costs of recipes. "I think I was doing math through the whole second year — recipe conversions and food-cost percentages," she says. "We did a lot of [workplace] scenarios, too — some days we'd act it out, some days we'd brainstorm."

Although she enjoys her work, Kristina says that a career in the hospitality industry isn't for everyone: "You either love it or you hate it."

"There are long hours — you may work nights, weekends and holidays — you're constantly on your feet," she explains. "It's hard work, and you have to be able to take criticism — if you can't do that, you probably shouldn't be in this field."

Kristina adds that the hospitality industry is full of opportunities for the right people. She is creating more opportunities for herself; in addition to her management position, she is beginning a catering business by creating wedding cakes for friends from Person County High School.

BEST ADVICE: Don't be afraid to make mistakes. The price of greatness is responsibility.