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introduction

Australia is indeed a lucky country with respect to opportunities in Commercial Cookery. It is a large island continent with a single, stable government that ensures a peaceful living environment. The continent encompasses a range of climates from tropical through temperate to alpine, which enables us to grow and produce a wide variety of fresh foods in all seasons. Distances can be huge, but because this is a single country, transport of these foods is relatively easy with no need to cross borders.

Australia's wide cultural diversity is reflected in the variety of foods and eating styles available. Australia has built, and is continuing to develop, a high reputation for the wonderful mix-and-match 'fusion' dishes.

The population of, and visitors to, Australia have discovered the wonderful world of adventurous, casual and even al fresco dining out, which provides opportunities for trained cooks to service wider customer demands. However, everyone who becomes an expert in a chosen field needs to build on a solid foundation of basic knowledge and skills.

There is always work in the hospitality industry. It is a growing industry and often staff are on the move from one job to another to gain experience in the different types of establishments around Australia and overseas. Large hotels, small à la carte restaurants, function centres and informal cafes and bistros all operate differently and valuable experience is gained by working in several types of different establishments.

To quote Dr Samuel Johnson (1709–84), 'The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.'

The responsibilities of anyone involved in the preparation and service of food include:

- 1 a professional approach to cooking to achieve high standards of texture and flavour
- 2 a sequential workflow to ensure efficiency
- 3 correct portioning of all foods
- 4 care during preparation and cooking to preserve the nutritional value of food
- 5 attention to the presentation of food items to achieve visual acceptability of finished products and to maximise the appeal of dishes
- 6 participation as an effective team member
- 7 good food handling and hygiene practices.

Use this book to help you to acquire the basic skills and knowledge you need to be a good cook. Make these skills habits—good habits that are difficult to break.

Chapter 1

Follow workplace health, safety and security procedures

Our duty of care—keeping the workplace safe

The commercial kitchen can be a hazardous work environment. Workplace safety cannot be ignored or passed over as someone else's responsibility. Kitchens—commercial kitchens in particular—can be dangerous places to work. Most people who do any cooking will have had some experience of a burn or cut (usually on the hand).

Accidents happen in every workplace, but commercial kitchens have more dangers than most. If you work in a commercial kitchen it is your responsibility to be aware of the types of emergency situations that can occur, common causes of accidents and how to work safely to reduce the risks. You should be vigilant and aware of the possible dangers at all times and actively try to reduce injuries to yourself and others around you. You should also have an understanding of the occupational health and safety laws and be clear about what is expected of you in the workplace.

In this chapter we discuss all of these issues and the role you can take in improving safety in your workplace.

On completion of this chapter you should be able to:

- 1** Follow workplace procedures for health, safety and security by demonstrating an understanding of OHS laws, safe working practices and an ability to recognise and report hazards, risks and dangers in your workplace.
- 2** Follow established procedures in the event of any emergency.
- 3** Participate fully in established OHS procedures at work and actively contribute to ongoing improvements to OHS through hazard identification and discussions with colleagues.

Workplace safety laws

Workplace safety is often referred to as occupational health and safety (OHS). Workplace safety laws place a legal responsibility on everyone to show a duty of care and to work safely at all times.

Each Australian state and territory has workplace safety laws that entitle every employee to as safe a working environment as possible. (Refer to the list of state and territory government websites in Activity 1.1 for details on the OHS laws in each area.)

In addition, an independent authority—Safe Work Australia—commenced in 2009 to oversee Australia-wide improvements in OHS. Safe Work Australia is a federal government authority that was set up to provide businesses with advice and direction on improving and maintaining a safe work environment and advise on worker's compensation and rehabilitation as required. Safe Work Australia also co-coordinates an inter-governmental agreement between the Commonwealth and states and territories to harmonise OHS legislation across the country.

The website is: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/swa/

DUTY OF CARE (EMPLOYERS)

The workplace duty of care requires employers to provide their employees with a safe place to work. This includes training and supervision of staff in safe work practices, provision of safety equipment where needed, proper first aid treatment as required, the keeping of an up-to-date injury register and regular discussion and consultation with staff on safety issues. Business operators and owners are also responsible for the safety of visitors to their premises.

DUTY OF CARE (EMPLOYEES)

Employees have responsibilities too. They are required to follow all safety directions, use provided safety equipment, report *any* injury or illness and promptly report *all* faulty equipment. Employees

ACTIVITY 1.1

Access information about OHS in your state or territory from the websites listed below. All the sites have fact sheets and guidelines on how to improve workplace safety as well as details of the current laws in each state. Look for fact sheets or guidelines that identify:

- 1 the actual duty of care requirements of employers in your state or territory
- 2 your duty of care as an employee.

Australian Capital Territory www.worksafety.act.gov.au

New South Wales www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory www.worksafe.nt.gov.au

Queensland www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/

South Australia www.safework.sa.gov.au

Tasmania www.wst.tas.gov.au

Victoria www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Western Australia www.safetyline.wa.gov.au

are expected to contribute to discussions on and decisions about improving safety in the workplace.

Some jobs and workplaces have higher risks attached to them than others. For example, a construction worker on a large building project is in a higher risk position than a call centre operator. However, accidents can happen anywhere and *everyone* must work to reduce the incidence of risk or injury in their workplace. There are heavy penalties for not actively working to reduce hazards in any particular workplace.

Accidents in the kitchen

Commercial kitchens are particularly hazardous workplaces. Dangers in the kitchen include:

- concentrated corrosive chemicals
- gas (explosion potential)
- electricity (potential for electrocution)
- sharp knives and blades
- sharp-edged work tables and benches
- hot liquids and foods
- steam
- hot cooking equipment
- machinery with moving parts
- heavy lifting
- cramped working spaces
- slippery floors
- steps and uneven surfaces.

Combine these dangers with the pressures of high-volume food service over a short time. Add tempers, frustration and fatigue. Under these pressures accidents can and do happen in commercial kitchens. Accidents occur in seconds, but they are irreversible and the results can take a long time to clear up and deal with.

In the case of a small but deep cut to a finger, it only takes a second to inflict the cut, but it will take a lot longer to treat and heal. It will require immediate cleaning, a sterile dressing, a rubber glove and will cause pain for several days or even a week. Continuing to work and use the finger will involve pain and discomfort. It will take time to heal and during that time there are risks of infection and contamination of food.

With more serious accidents the consequences are far greater. Again, it takes only a few seconds for the accident to occur, but the consequences can be weeks of recovery or even permanent disability.

Here's another scenario: a cook carrying a heavy, awkward 30-kilogram box of cryovac whole sirloins into the kitchen to prepare for roasting slips on some spilt oil while walking past the deep-fryer. The cook falls backwards, landing heavily on their backside and hitting their head on a corner of the fryer. The results of this two-second fall are:

- a fractured coccyx (the tailbone at the end of the spine)
- a deep cut to the head, which bleeds profusely and requires five stitches.



Figure 1.1 It is important that employees are aware of hazards in the workplace.

The cut leaves the cook with a shaved head where the stitches are and weakness and headaches. It heals quite well in a week.

The fractured tailbone, however, is much more serious. The fracture heals with time, but the cook is off work for two months and cannot sit, walk, stand or lie down without pain during this time. For the next four months the cook is only allowed to do light duties at work and is still in considerable pain and discomfort for months after the accident. The cook is unable to lift, carry, bend over or remain sitting or standing for any period of time and it is painful to drive a car. It can take years for such an injury to completely heal.

This type of accident results in a range of costs, not all financial.

- **Business costs:** The business may be required to pay sick leave entitlements to the injured cook as well as bear the cost of wages for a relieving cook. This relief cook may need training. Agency fees may have to be paid if the relief staff was obtained through an agency. Workcover insurance premiums may rise and there will probably be an investigation by the state OHS authority.
- **Personal costs:** The accident victim will suffer pain, discomfort and disability as well as emotional trauma. They will experience major disruptions to their normal life, with restrictions on work, social activities, movement, travel and independence. The cook will probably be unable to even put on their own socks and shoes for a time.
- **Family and social costs:** Friends, family and work colleagues will be affected when the injured cook is unable to continue their normal life. The cook will be unable to take children to sports training or matches, play in their tennis team, go dancing or even sit comfortably to watch television, eat a meal or sleep.
- **Financial costs:** The monetary costs can be extensive and affect many people. There are the costs of medical bills, including hospital fees, ongoing physiotherapy, medicines, painkillers and doctors' visits. The cook will lose any over-award or penalty rates they were on. They may be unable to meet their regular expenses such as bills, credit cards, loan repayments and mortgages, not to mention other living expenses. If the injured cook is the main income-earner in a family, the accident will result in considerable strain on the family budget.

Consider this

Look at your own lifestyle. Draw up a list of your regular financial commitments. Consider how you would be affected if you had an accident that put you off work for a month. Do you have sick leave entitlements to cover you for four weeks? Would you be able to cover all your expenses? Think about how an accident could affect you and train yourself to work as safely as possible.

The *human factor* is a major component of accidents in the workplace as accidents are usually caused by people following unsafe working practices or creating unsafe working conditions. It is the people (staff) at work who operate machinery and spill liquids and it is people in the workplace who have accidents.

CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS IN THE COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

Common causes of accidents in the commercial kitchen include:

- lack of training in the use of equipment and hazardous chemicals
- carelessness, lack of concentration or being distracted by something when carrying out a task
- work areas are sometimes small and cramped with poor lighting
- faulty equipment or machinery
- equipment that has had safety guards removed
- poor storage of supplies and obstructions in walkways creating difficult access
- spills and slippery floors
- incorrect handling of hot foods, cooking mediums and cooking equipment
- incorrect lifting of heavy objects
- faulty or frayed electrical leads.

Once again, the subject of 'good habits' comes up. Start the right way and you will develop good work habits that will stay with you your whole working life. Be ready and prepared for work. Be alert and keep your mind open to learning. Have all your tools ready. Follow the routines that have been set in your workplace.

Safe lifting techniques

There are many occasions when a cook needs to lift heavy objects. Knowing and using correct lifting techniques is an important habit to develop.

BEFORE LIFTING

- Check the object for rough or sharp edges and slippery surfaces.
- Check the weight of the load.
- Know your limit; know the weight that you can safely lift on your own.
- Ask for help if the load is beyond a safe limit.
- Know where you are going—plan your route before lifting and clear any obstacles.
- Wear gloves for protection if it will help you to lift more safely.

WHEN ACTUALLY LIFTING

- Stand close to the load with your feet slightly apart.
- Bend at the knees, *not* from the waist as this will bend your back and strain it.
- Grip the load firmly, making sure it will not slip.
- Keep your arms close to your body and lift your head to straighten your back.

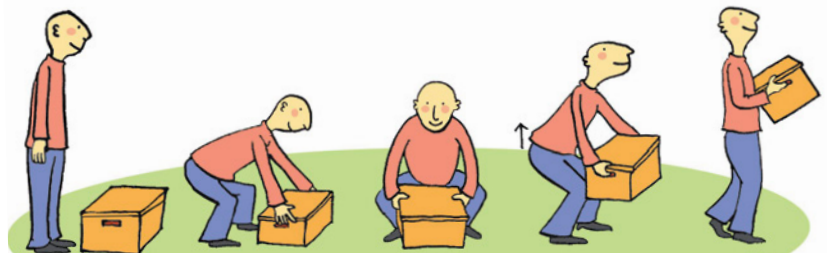


Figure 1.2 The five stages of safely lifting heavy objects.

- Using your leg muscles, stand up straight.
- Make sure you can see where you are going.
- Transfer the heavy item to a trolley whenever possible.

Checklist 1.1 Reducing accidents in a commercial kitchen

Develop these good habits from the beginning of your career as a cook:

- Bathe daily and keep fingernails clean. Men should shave daily or keep their facial hair tidy and trimmed.
- Get sufficient rest; feel fresh, awake and ready for work.
- Wear a clean uniform and correct working shoes.
- Make sure your toolkit is complete and clean.
- Make sure your knives are clean and sharpened.
- Apply yourself to the task of learning and practicing the basic skills of cooking.
- Concentrate on each task. If you are distracted, stop what you are doing and look up. Don't return to the task until you can concentrate fully.
- Report faults or equipment breakdowns.
- Learn how to correctly use all the machinery and handle hazardous chemicals at your workplace.
- Ask for help if you are not sure how to do something.
- Train yourself to lift correctly and ask for help whenever necessary.
- Clean and tidy as you go. Clean up any possible hazards when you see them.
- Follow all safety directions you are given. Use all safety guards fitted to machinery.
- Do not participate in practical jokes or horsing around that may lead to an accident. Actively discourage any colleagues who do.

ACTIVITY 1.2

Read through the checklist above and evaluate your own work practices. Can you put a tick next to each item? If not, apply yourself to improving your performance for your own safety and that of your work colleagues.

Emergencies in the kitchen

Emergency situations that can occur in a kitchen include:

- power failures
- fires
- chemical spills
- gas explosions
- burst water pipes and flooding
- serious accidents in the kitchen
- bomb scares
- robberies.

ACTIVITY 1.3

Would you know what to do if any of these emergencies occurred in your workplace?
Ask your supervisor about the workplace emergency procedures and make sure you know what to do in each of the above situations.

SAFETY



An emergency is a sudden unexpected event that requires immediate action.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

A well-organised kitchen should have procedures in place to deal with all kinds of emergencies. However, these procedures need to be practiced regularly or people forget what to do. Remember doing fire drills at school? We should all practice emergency procedures regularly so we can react in a split second. Just as a competitive sports person has to train regularly in order to compete at their peak level, the more often we perform a procedure or activity, the easier it becomes to remember and repeat it.

Some of the important emergency procedures that should be practiced in a kitchen are:

- emergency evacuations
- using fire extinguishers and fire blanket
- cleaning chemical spills
- giving first aid
- telephoning for emergency services
- handling a bomb scare phone call
- handling an abusive or deranged person in the kitchen
- what to do in the event of a robbery.

Extra training that can provide valuable skills in these situations includes:

- Responsible Service of Alcohol certificate (includes training in handling difficult people)
- a first aid course, such as Senior First Aid (Workplace Level 2), available from St John Ambulance or Australian Red Cross.

ACTIVITY 1.4

Make sure that you know where the fire blanket and fire extinguishers are situated in your workplace. Do you know how to use them correctly? Have they been demonstrated to you?
If you are unsure, you could contact your local fire and emergency service and arrange for a fire officer to come and explain their correct use in your workplace.

Security in the kitchen

Security describes the protection and safety of people and their property. In a commercial kitchen this usually means the staff, their personal belongings, the kitchen premises and the equipment used in it. However, customers and guests need to be considered when the kitchen is a part of a business that provides accommodation or a live entertainment venue.

REMEMBER THIS

Customers and guests using accommodation services may have valuable belongings or documents that will need extra security.

Some of the security issues that may arise in the workplace are:

- key control
- cash handling and control
- security of personal property, especially staff belongings and tools
- unauthorised people on the premises
- security of alcohol and cigarettes (if they are sold from the premises)
- security of all stores, stock and equipment.

KEYS

Every business should have a key register, which records who has copies of which key(s) and whether these keys are returned by staff members who leave.

Only authorised staff should have or use keys to storage areas. These keys protect stores, supplies, equipment and cash or takings and should never be lent to unauthorised people or left lying around.

CASH HANDLING

Large amounts of cash should not be left in registers or drawers at the point of sale or service. At busy peak times cash should be regularly cleared to a secure place.

Business takings should be banked regularly, but care should be taken to vary the routine to avoid the risk of robbery on the way to the bank. There are a number of specialist security firms that carry and bank cash for businesses.

UNAUTHORISED PERSONS

Photo ID badges or tags are a good way to differentiate between staff and the casual visitor or customer who may be 'observing' business routines prior to a future robbery. Potential thieves can look normal and provide plausible reasons for being on your premises.

Always smile and look at, greet and offer to help any strangers you encounter at your workplace, whether they are a customer or not. Someone planning a robbery will avoid places where there is a possibility of being recognised or remembered. They will move on and try another place where the staff ignore them! Potential customers, on the other hand, will be impressed with your welcoming attitude.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

A secure staff change area with lockers for bags, wallets, mobile phones and other personal property should be provided. These things do not belong in the kitchen for security, health and hygiene reasons.

Doors should not be left unlocked where people can enter the premises unobserved and access change rooms or storage areas.

Participating in kitchen safety and working proactively

In all your duties as a cook, you must focus on working safely, hygienically and cleanly. A person who is constantly looking for better, safer and more productive ways to complete tasks or work at hand is called 'proactive'. This is often referred to as 'continuous improvement'.

In your work as a cook you should constantly evaluate what you are doing and ensure that you are working in a way that minimises the risks of causing food contamination or accidents. This is known as 'risk management'. There are always risks and hazards present in every commercial kitchen—good cooks discipline themselves to always be aware of possible hazards and take action to reduce or control risks.

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING PROACTIVELY

- Ask for:
 - instruction in a new task
 - help to lift heavy objects
 - demonstrations of new skills and use of unfamiliar equipment.
- Practice all required skills until they become a habit.
- Concentrate on the job at hand.
- Organise yourself to work cleanly, safely and professionally.
- Help to develop a better, safer workplace by talking about and discussing improvements to the kitchen operations.
- Report any problems, faults or hazards.
- Talk about workplace safety.
- Use these proactive guidelines in all your work, but especially when trying to prepare safe, good food for your customers.

Summary

- Workplace safety is everyone's responsibility.
- It is essential that you are familiar with the work safety laws and aware of the potential dangers when working in a commercial kitchen.
- There are numerous costs associated with accidents: business, personal, social and financial.
- The common causes of accidents can be avoided as long as you familiarise yourself with the potential risks and dangers in your workplace, keep an eye out and avoid them.
- Be aware of the emergency practices and procedures of your workplace.

Revision questions

- 1 Which law relates to workplace safety in your state or territory?
- 2 What are the main accident risks in a commercial kitchen?
- 3 What are the main causes of accidents at work?
- 4 What are the possible consequences of a serious accident at work?
- 5 What can you do to reduce the risk of accidents in your workplace?
- 6 What are the important steps in the safe lifting of heavy objects?
- 7 What are the possible emergency situations that could occur in a commercial kitchen?
- 8 What are the emergency procedures to be followed at your workplace?
- 9 What are the main security issues in a commercial kitchen?
- 10 How can you be proactive in improving safety in your workplace?

If you have had trouble answering any of the revision questions, you should reread this chapter, review your notes or ask your chef or supervisor for clarification.