

Missouri Career Mentor video script



Matthia Accurso

Sous Chef

The University Club

University of Missouri at Columbia

My name is Matthia Accurso, and I am a sous chef at a private club for a large university. Day-to-day most of my tasks usually involve cooking for large groups of people – from small to large. It can vary anywhere from two to 600 people. We usually prepare the food by prepping it one day in advance and executing it the following day. Aside from that, I usually have just basic management of employees, you know, monitor them, make sure they're on the right track with their everyday duties. I have to make sure to order everything, work through all the food costs, labor costs – all those kind of number management. But mostly just preparing food, which is the fun part of the job.

Early Interest

Pretty much, I have cooked as far back as I can remember. I remember I started cooking probably when I was six, seven, something like that. My mom... I remember my mom showing me how to make bread. It is something I have always enjoyed, something I have always enjoyed. My first professional cooking job I took when I graduated, right around graduation from high school. I worked part-time for several years, and first began to learn all the basic skills. It was something that I thoroughly enjoyed the whole time. So once I graduated from the University I took the position full-time cooking, and it is something that has been immensely pleasurable for me. It has really been a lot of fun.

Early Influence

When I was a junior in high school I saw that they were offering culinary arts classes at my high school. So I decided to sign up for them to see how I liked it. I enjoyed it from the start. Every day we just got to go into class and cook. I mean, how much fun is that for being in high school? And so from there my teacher got me a part-time job working for the same place that I work today. And it is extremely fun -- a fun job to have every day to go in and cook.

Characteristics

Usually, employers look for someone who likes to be on their feet a lot and doesn't mind working long hours. That's part of the biggest parts of the job. Aside from that, I mean, they look for somebody who can maintain their composure under pressure -- as that is very key – and someone who is passionate about what they are doing, some who enjoys it. They can see that, because you can see in anyone's work how much they really enjoy doing it by their end product. So that's a big key.

Joys & Challenges

What I enjoy most about my career is the ability to cook every single day. I mean, it's extremely fun. I feel very blessed to be able to work every day and prepare food, and I almost feel like it's not even really

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a job sometimes. But the hardest part is sometimes it does involve long hours. I work up to sometimes 14 hours in a day. It can be kind of tiring at times, but it's something that really pays off in the long run because it's such a fun job.

My Mentors

I have had several mentors in my life. My high school culinary arts teacher, he really made me feel like it was something that I can do and do well. It's something I will always remember. He also helped me get my first professional cooking job. My current boss has also been a mentor to me in many ways. He is a very good chef. He knows an immense amount of information, and every day I am still amazed at how much he knows. And he has really helped me out in many different ways – shown me numerous techniques that are extremely advanced – and he has really helped me out along the way.

High School Classes

I would say most classes that I took -- in terms of general education that I took in high school -- I realize, have a lot of value, you know. English and writing skills are very important because every day I am writing down something -- whether it be menus, I need to make sure they are grammatically correct, and math just to solve basic equations in terms of calculating numbers and food costs or inventory and stuff like that. And science as well, I believe, in terms of like.... I never really understood science as much in high school as I did when I started cooking, then I could really see the different processes that are there, you know. So that has been really interesting as well to me, and I have realized how important that has been later on when I really started developing my culinary skills, and I can see like the science behind a lot of the things that were going on.

Goals

I have many goals. One that I enjoy doing is competing culinarily. It's something that is a lot of fun, and it really pushes you to exceed and be better every day you work. So every day I try to prepare myself for these competitions by just making sure my techniques are exactly right. And so awards – in terms of medals and winning competitions – are always a goal that I have on the table. Long term, I would just like to be the best cook that I can be.

Advice

If somebody was interested in getting into the culinary industry, I would say go out and get a part-time job – whether it be washing dishes or prep cooking, if can get a job like that. And just see how you like it. You know, that's where most people's interests or passions spawn from. It's from starting off, you know, seeing what's going on and really learning those few small things and seeing just how much fun it can be. And just seeing, you know, if this is something you would want to pursue. At the same time, you get paid for it while you can kind of learn those things.

Memorable Moment

The very first day I walked in I didn't know barely anything about cooking. I started peeling a case of potatoes, and one of the other cooks leans over and he asked me if I regretted working there yet. And I had been there probably a total of, like, 20 minutes. So I responded with 'No, I don't think so.' And he said, 'Don't worry. You will.' And I always think about that – the longer and longer that I keep this job, you know, it was just a very interesting way to start a work.