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What is it like to be a Chef?

by Jennifer | [Being Married to a Chef](#), [Blog](#), [Chef Life](#) | 0 comments

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When I started [this series](#) about what it's like to be married to or date a chef in a specific area of the kitchen, I had one of my readers, who is the chef in the relationship, ask if she could answer the questions. Of course I said yes!!

So today, I'd like to introduce you to Chef Heather Turner. You can find out more about her on her [website](#) or on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Tell me a little about yourself and your chef (how you met, how long you've been together, do you have kids, etc.)

I worked in professional kitchens since I was 13 (with a work permit), 20 years in the business with the last 8 as an executive chef. I met my husband about 3 years after I graduated from the Culinary Institute of America. I was actually married at the time (to another chef) and we became friends. He was working as a salesperson for Dole & Bailey, a high end white tablecloth supplier. We've been together for about 18 years now, 11 years married. 2 step daughters who are totally awesome. I've been out of the business now for about 10+ years but still do restaurant consulting and still dream of being on a line cranking covers out. Oddly enough they are never dreams of running out of food during a rush but instead of the adrenaline

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What position does your chef/cook have in the kitchen? Briefly describe the size and type of restaurant he is working at (fine dining/casual, size, privately owned or part of a restaurant group, etc.).

I started out as dishwasher, moved up to prep cook then line cook, worked for a few caterers, the majority of my jobs were in white tablecloth fine dining. I've worked in restaurants with only 24 seats up to catering jobs for a wedding for 2000 on Long Island.

From what your chef has told you or you have observed, what does he/she do in their current position and what are they responsible for?

My husband was well familiar with me griping about having to deal with vendors, staff that pulled no-shows, owners that would browse and muck up my food cost. As a Chef and the head of the kitchen, you're pretty much responsible for everything, ordering the food, cooking it, scheduling staff, training, appeasing the owners, going out in the dining room and being civil to diners (sometimes a challenge on a rough night).

What does a typical week and day look like for your chef (hours, days off, etc.)?

Tues-Sunday 9 am- 2 am on average, Most Monday's even though the restaurant may not be open, its your only "free" day to do things like staff scheduling and the ordering for the rest of the week. Day's off? What's a day off?

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WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A CHEF?

EMULSIFIEDfamily
1 part chef/husband, 1 part wife 3 parts children

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hibachi grill and he would stay up and make me something to eat in the middle of the night when I got home from work.

Does your chef bring work home with him (phone calls, email, texts, menu planning, etc.)?

Menus, staff scheduling and ordering yes. Phone calls always, because when the dishwasher doesn't show up for work, guess who fills in.

What type of chef laundry do you have to deal with at this level?

Chef's pants and stinky clogs, coats at that point were done by a uniform service. Pants needed at least two washings to get the smell out. Clogs had to be left in my car, my kids rebelled.

What do you feel is the biggest change when your chef moved into this position, vs. the last position?

The best jobs are sous chef's positions, if I could do it all over again, I would have stayed a sous a lot longer than I did. You still get to cook plus having some influence and some management duties, but if you love to cook once you move into upper management it's less cooking and more management and paper pushing (although it does depend on the restaurant).

What is the hardest part about this position in the kitchen for you as a chef spouse or significant other?

For me it was never being home, and the occasional day when I could take a day off when a restaurant was open. You do nothing but worry that things are not going as well as if you were there. In hindsight though I missed so much. Your whole world for the most part and other people you know, are people in the business, cooks, waiters, bartenders and you really don't have a life outside of that crowd of people.

What (if any) are the perks of this kitchen position?

For my family? Coming into my kitchen and getting fed tidbits, teaching your husband to cook and one of your kids (that had an interest but thankfully went into a different profession after a brief stint cooking professionally). Some anti-perks? Even now years later, family and friends get all paranoid about cooking for me, even though I reassure them that I love their cooking they never believe me.

This is Jennifer again . . .

After reading the answers to these same questions from spouses and significant others, I LOVED hearing the chef's perspective. Thank you so much Heather for answering them for us!!

Any other chefs out there that can relate? Do you feel like you miss out on a lot at home? Let me know in the comments below.



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From one chef's wife to another,

-- Jennifer



Jennifer @ Emulsified Family

Married to a Chef



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Meet Jennifer

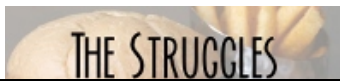
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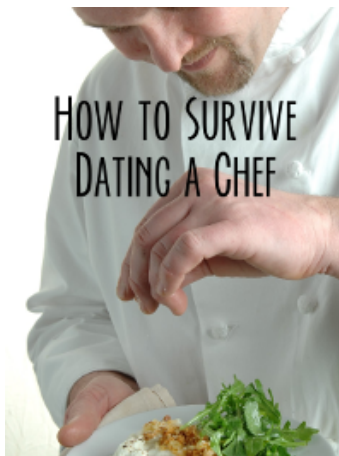
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