RESTAURANT LEADERSHIP / TRAINING & OPERATIONS

Sous Chef Training Guide

Kitchen execution • Safety • People leadership • Financial accountability

PROGRAM OVERVIEW	DETAIL
Training audience	Sous Chef / newly promoted kitchen leader
Applies to	MSG Hospitality concepts; customize by restaurant
Training method	Read + observe + demonstrate + manager verification
Materials	10 supplied MSG training templates consolidated into one guide
Completion standard	Trainer observes consistent execution; checklist and sign-off

What this guide is for

A Sous Chef translates the Executive Chef's standards into consistent execution on every shift. This workbook combines core expectations from MSG Hospitality's supplied templates with practical demonstration prompts for training, coaching, and sign-off.

How to use it

1. Review the relevant module before performing the task on shift.
2. Watch a qualified trainer demonstrate; then perform the task under supervision.
3. Use the practice prompts to explain decisions and demonstrate safe execution.
4. Have the Executive Chef or designated manager verify proficiency in the final checklist.

Property-specific items to confirm

Insert the current restaurant menu, approved recipes, manager authorization limits, emergency contacts, invoice recipients, scheduling access, POS permissions, vendor list, and current local safety requirements before deployment.

MODULE 02 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Role & accountability

Understand where the Sous Chef leads, what requires approval, and what must be communicated.

Position mission

The Sous Chef identifies priorities for each shift with emphasis on food quality, sanitation, staff development, cost control, and smooth kitchen execution. The role supports the Executive Chef in implementing menus, supervising kitchen staff, and upholding service standards.

Core areas of ownership

AREA	ON-SHIFT EXPECTATION
Menu & quality	Confirm recipe, flavor, temperature, presentation and portion consistency.
Kitchen operations	Plan prep; supervise line, prep and dish; maintain organized workstations.
Team development	Coach, train, communicate expectations and document follow-up.
Purchasing & inventory	Support accurate receiving, product rotation, ordering and waste controls.
Financial performance	Understand food cost, BOH labor, production yields and operational spending.
Guest & events	Help resolve food-quality concerns and execute catering or event orders.

Decision boundaries

Follow the Executive Chef's and concept GM's assigned approval structure. Escalate food-safety hazards, injuries, harassment, major guest complaints, equipment failure, unauthorized comps, suspected theft, and material inventory discrepancies. Never assume authority to change labor policies, purchasing commitments, menu pricing, or food-safety standards.

Training demonstration

- Describe the three most important priorities for your next shift.
- Identify who approves menu changes, vendor orders, schedule adjustments, and guest compensation.
- Explain one situation you would escalate immediately rather than solve alone.

MODULE 03 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Onboarding roadmap

A flexible learning sequence built around practical verification, not a fixed number of shifts.

PHASE	FOCUS	EVIDENCE
1 | Orientation	Role, service culture, menu, facility, hazards	Walkthrough and standards discussion
2 | Systems	Toast, Sling, invoices, inventory, daily controls	Supervised system demonstrations
3 | Kitchen leadership	Prep, expo, recipes, staffing, opening/closing	Lead a shift segment with feedback
4 | Financial discipline	P&L, food cost, waste and purchasing	Explain numbers and corrective actions
5 | Validation	Menu test, event execution, emergency drills	Observed checklist and sign-off

Training materials register

- Sous Chef job description and checklist
- Guest Service Guide
- Food Safety Training Sheet
- Workplace Safety and Knife Safety
- Toast Basics and Sling Training
- Invoice Scanning and Submission
- P&L Basics

Read → show → perform → verify

For every competency, the trainer first explains the standard, demonstrates it in context, then observes the Sous Chef performing it. Log strengths, needed corrections and a follow-up date. A document acknowledgment alone does not demonstrate practical competence.

Trainer planning exercise

- List the three modules requiring a live demonstration before independent shift leadership.
- Identify an available trainer and verification method for each module.

MODULE 04 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Guest experience & hospitality

Service standards apply to kitchen leaders as well as guest-facing staff.

The service standard

- Warm greeting; professional appearance; proactive anticipation; ownership; respect; clean and safe environment; gratitude.
- Treat requests and complaints as information to act on, not interruptions. Never blame another department in front of a guest.
- Coordinate with the expo and FOH before a delay becomes a larger service issue.

Timing targets in the source service template

CHECKPOINT	TEMPLATE TARGET
Arrival greeting	Within 30 seconds
First beverages	2–5 minutes
Appetizers / entrées / desserts	Approx. 7 / 15 / 5 minutes
Guest check-back	After 2 bites / 2 sips
Payment / reset	2 minutes / 2–3 minutes

These are targets in the supplied generic service template, not verified standards for every MSG concept; review and adapt to the venue and type of service.

Food quality recovery

When a ticket is delayed or a dish is wrong, communicate the corrected timing to expo/FOH, prioritize safe remake execution, verify the replacement before it leaves the pass, and record repeat defects for coaching.

Scenario drill

- A guest says their entrée arrived cold. Demonstrate the communication sequence with FOH, the remake and the service recovery follow-up.
- Describe when food-quality concerns require immediate GM involvement.

MODULE 05 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Food safety fundamentals

Safe food handling is a daily leadership responsibility, not a one-time training exercise.

Personal hygiene & cross-contamination

- Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds at required moments; change gloves appropriately.
- Separate raw proteins from ready-to-eat foods; store raw products below cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Use designated boards and tools, and wash, rinse, sanitize and air-dry between tasks.
- Label, date-mark and rotate products using FIFO; monitor and log refrigeration and product temperatures.

Temperatures in the supplied training template

PROCESS	TEMPLATE REFERENCE
Cold holding	41°F or below
Hot holding	135°F or above
Poultry / reheating	165°F; reheating within 2 hours
Ground meat	155°F
Seafood / pork / steaks	145°F

Training-template figures are reproduced for familiarity. Verify applicable current local food code, product-specific exceptions and the property HACCP/variance requirements before operational use.

Allergen controls

The template identifies milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish and sesame as major allergens. Treat every disclosed allergy as serious: confirm the order, communicate to all involved stations, clean hands and equipment, prevent contact, and escalate if safe preparation cannot be assured.

Live check

- Demonstrate a calibrated thermometer reading and the required log entry.
- Walk through an allergy ticket and identify every handoff to kitchen and FOH.

MODULE 06 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Workplace & equipment safety

Prevent burns, cuts, slips, chemical exposure and unsafe equipment use.

Everyday protection

- Wear appropriate slip-resistant, closed-toe footwear and required PPE; keep aisles and exits clear.
- Clean spills promptly, use wet-floor signs, secure mats and use safe lifting technique.
- Announce “Behind,” “Hot,” or “Sharp” when moving through shared work areas.
- Use dry towels or heat protection for hot pans; prevent fryer splash and never add wet product to hot oil.
- Know first-aid supplies, evacuation routes, fire-safety equipment and local incident-reporting procedure.

Chemical and CO_2 awareness

Follow labeled directions and Safety Data Sheets; do not mix cleaning chemicals. Store chemicals away from food. Where draft systems are present, secure CO_2 cylinders upright and escalate suspected leaks. Do not attempt untrained repairs or enter a potentially dangerous atmosphere.

Emergency response mindset

Stop work, protect people, seek emergency assistance when appropriate, notify management, preserve information, and complete required incident documentation. Follow venue-specific emergency action plans and certified training; this guide does not substitute for hands-on emergency instruction.

Safety walkthrough

- Locate emergency exits, first-aid equipment, SDS access and incident forms.
- Identify three hazards in the BOH and state who must be notified.

MODULE 07 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Knife handling & safe prep

Standardize sharp-tool behavior from receiving product to cleanup.

Knife handling rules

- Work on a stable, non-slip board; keep the work area and hands dry.
- Use a controlled pinch grip and claw guide hand; receive hands-on coaching for technique.
- Never catch a falling knife. Step back and call out “Knife down.”
- Carry tip-down at your side with blade facing back; announce when passing.
- Pass handle-first after verbal confirmation or set down safely for pickup.
- Never leave knives hidden in sinks, towels, bus tubs or food; clean and store promptly.

Maintenance, specialty tools and response

Hone lightly according to the chef’s instruction; sharpening is a separate scheduled activity. Store guarded blades securely. For mandolines use guards/cut-resistant protection; slicers are for trained users with guards in place and power disconnected before cleaning. Report all cuts, control contamination and follow first-aid and incident procedures.

Knife demonstration checklist

- ☐ Stable cutting surface and workstation setup
- ☐ Safe grip and guiding hand
- ☐ Controlled carrying and transfer
- ☐ Correct hand-wash, sanitizing and storage
- ☐ Stop-work and incident notification

Trainer sign-off prompt

- Observe the trainee cutting one assigned menu ingredient accurately without unsafe handling.
- Verify cleaning, storage and response to a simulated dropped knife.

MODULE 08 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Menu execution & quality control

Turn approved recipes into repeatable plate quality and predictable service.

Before service

- Review reservations, events, menu changes, 86 list, specials and expected volume.
- Verify prep list, stock levels, recipe versions, allergens, plating photos and holding procedures.
- Confirm station assignments, mise en place and equipment readiness.

During service

- Call and coordinate tickets with expo; communicate accurate waits and bottlenecks.
- Check portions, flavor, appearance, temperature and modifiers against approved standards.
- Record remake patterns, waste and deviations; coach privately and promptly.
- Monitor takeout packaging, labels, modifiers and transport suitability.

After service

Compare production to sales and waste, review quality issues with the team, document recipe concerns and recommend changes to the Executive Chef. Do not change menu prices or standardized recipes without approval.

Plate validation

- Plate an approved entrée using the actual recipe and visual standard.
- Explain how you verify modifiers, allergens, portion size and takeout quality.
- Identify the impact of a recurring oversized portion on cost consistency.

MODULE 09 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Prep, opening & closing controls

Build a repeatable shift cadence that protects product and labor.

Opening walkthrough

- ☐ Review prior-shift notes, staffing and forecasted covers.
- ☐ Check cooler/freezer logs, equipment, sanitation and corrective actions.
- ☐ Review deliveries, inventory needs, prep priorities and allergen setup.
- ☐ Assign stations, production targets, breaks and chef communication.

Mid-shift management

- ☐ Track ticket times, staffing coverage, waste, stockouts and guest concerns.
- ☐ Reforecast prep as sales change and communicate required adjustments.
- ☐ Verify station restocking, clean-as-you-go and safe holding.

Closing verification

- ☐ Confirm product cooling, labeling, storage and FIFO rotation.
- ☐ Complete cleaning/sanitizing, waste notes, inventory exceptions and equipment checks.
- ☐ Verify invoices, outstanding tasks and opening handoff are routed appropriately.
- ☐ Share an accurate shift summary with the Executive Chef/GM.

The checklist is a suggested management framework. Add concept-specific open/close tasks and approved temperature/cleaning logs.

MODULE 10 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Inventory, receiving & COGS

Connect product movement to waste, menu execution and profitability.

Receiving controls

- Compare the shipment with the purchase order/invoice; confirm quantity, unit, condition and vendor.
- Inspect temperatures, packaging integrity, shelf life and item specifications before accepting product.
- Document discrepancies, rejected deliveries, credits and substitutions promptly.
- Rotate deliveries and protect the cold chain during put-away.

Inventory discipline

Use consistent units, count dates and item descriptions; separate food, beverage and supplies. Investigate count variances rather than overriding numbers. Record spoilage, breakage, transfers and staff meals according to venue policy.

Basic COGS relationship

CONCEPT	WHAT IT MEANS
Beginning inventory + purchases − ending inventory	Approximate product consumed during a period
Product consumed ÷ relevant sales	Product cost percentage
Portion size × ingredient unit cost	A building block of recipe costing

Classification and timing can differ by accounting method. Use approved inventory reports and accounting guidance for official financial statements.

Inventory demonstration

- Receive a sample invoice and identify a short shipment and credit request.
- Explain how incorrect units, unlogged waste or late invoices distort COGS.

Invoice scanning & submission

Use the supplied invoice SOP to maintain complete, traceable accounting records.

Source procedure: same-day processing

- Collect physical, emailed or delivered invoices daily and process on the same day received.
- Scan legibly using the office scanner/MFP; the source specifies at least 300 DPI.
- Group scans by vendor; the source gives a 1–5-page batch guideline and a 20 MB PDF limit.
- Mark the physical invoice “SCANNED” after a successful scan.
- Use VendorName_InvoiceDate.pdf (example: USFoods_2025-07-31.pdf).
- Email invoice PDFs on the same day with subject [INVOICES] Vendor Name – Date Submitted.

Critical gap before implementation

The supplied template contains blank invoice email recipients and ambiguous batching language (a line permits mixed-vendor single-page batches while the file-naming rule specifies one vendor per PDF). Management must confirm recipients and the final single-vendor filing rule. Do not guess addresses or adopt conflicting practices.

Trainer checks

- Scan a sample invoice into a readable vendor-specific PDF.
- Show how to check for duplicates and verify successful submission.
- State where invoice exceptions and vendor credits are documented.

MODULE 12 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Toast POS: operational basics

Develop enough POS fluency to validate orders and support accurate reporting.

Daily fundamentals from the template

- Log in under your own authorized credentials; never share PINs.
- Clock in/out through the approved workflow and report missed punches.
- Open checks using the correct table/order type and guest count.
- Enter items, modifiers and notes carefully; verify before sending to kitchen/bar.
- Understand split checks, tenders, receipts and check-closing process.

Voids, comps and exceptions

The source requires manager approval for discounts and comps. Use role-based permissions; do not perform unauthorized voids, discounts or refunds. Validate the reason and record an audit trail. Open checks and unclosed payments can compromise reporting.

Sous Chef application

Use approved kitchen views/reports to understand modifier accuracy, ticket volume, item mix and order timing where access is assigned. Confirm available features in the restaurant’s current Toast configuration; menu names and menus vary by location.

Guided system demonstration

- Find a sample order and review seat/table, modifiers and allergy instructions.
- Explain how an incorrect void or open check can affect sales information.
- Demonstrate how to ask for assistance without sharing a login.

MODULE 13 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Sling scheduling & team communication

Support staffing coverage and clear shift communication with the scheduling tool.

Access and availability

The source uses Sling for schedules, time-off requests, shift swaps, notifications and manager/team messages. Employees view shifts via the app or https://app.getsling.com and can update availability and request leave. Approvals must be confirmed; requests or swaps are not automatically final.

Sous Chef management routine

- Review scheduled coverage relative to reservations, prep workload, event volume and expected sales.
- Flag understaffed periods early and coordinate with the authorized scheduling manager.
- Monitor breaks and overtime per company policy, wage-and-hour requirements and manager direction.
- Document changes through approved channels and give timely team updates.
- Do not treat scheduling app features as permission to override labor approvals.

Scheduling case

- Review a sample high-volume dinner roster and identify coverage gaps.
- Walk through how a time-off request or proposed shift swap is reviewed and confirmed.
- Explain how you would reassign tasks during an unexpected absence.

MODULE 14 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

P&L literacy & controllable costs

Learn how kitchen decisions show up in the restaurant's operating performance.

What the P&L summarizes

A profit and loss statement compares revenue and expenses over a period. Revenue can include food, beverage, catering and other sales; expenses include cost of goods, labor, operating costs and fixed costs such as rent and insurance.

Illustrative target ranges from the supplied template

METRIC	TEMPLATE TARGET	SOUS CHEF LEVER
COGS	30%	Purchasing, recipe yield, portion control, waste
Labor	26–28%	Production planning, BOH scheduling and overtime
Operating expenses	10%	Supply use, maintenance and equipment care
Rent	6–8%	Fixed; understand impact, not direct shift control

These figures are the generic template's training targets, not approved budgets for every MSG operation. Review property-specific benchmarks with finance and ownership.

Controllable vs. less controllable

Kitchen leaders directly influence food purchasing, waste, yield, portion sizes, spoilage, labor deployment and smallware loss. Rent, insurance and loan terms are typically outside the Sous Chef's direct control.

Financial coaching prompt

- Explain why food cost can rise even when menu prices do not change.
- Identify two operational responses to high food cost and two to excess labor without compromising safety.

MODULE 15 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Recipe costing & portion economics

Translate approved recipes, yields and selling prices into daily decisions.

Example: a menu item

INPUT / OUTPUT	ILLUSTRATIVE AMOUNT
Menu selling price	$28.00
Ingredient/portion cost	$8.40
Food cost %	$8.40 ÷ $28.00 = 30%
Contribution after ingredient cost	$28.00 − $8.40 = $19.60

Contribution after ingredient cost is not net profit; it does not yet deduct labor, rent, utilities, other operating costs, tax or financing.

The Sous Chef's control points

- Use the current approved recipe and unit conversions, not estimates.
- Account for trim loss, cooking yield, sauces, garnishes and portions when calculating an item.
- Audit over-portioning and inconsistent batch yields; retrain from a measured standard.
- Separate recipe changes from pricing approvals; report proposed adjustments to the Executive Chef.

Mini exercise

If ingredient cost rises from $8.40 to $9.10 while the selling price remains $28, the food cost percentage becomes 32.5% and ingredient contribution falls to $18.90. Discuss what operational changes should be examined before changing price.

All figures on this page are illustrative, not a claim about MSG venue performance.

MODULE 16 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Special events & catering execution

Coordinate kitchen production for banquets, private dining and large-format service.

Before the event

- Review the signed event order, final counts, timing, allergies, menu, service style and location.
- Confirm approved portion specifications, prep pars, packaging/holding equipment and delivery needs.
- Coordinate responsibilities with FOH, expo, culinary leadership and the events team.
- Document any outstanding guest decisions and obtain confirmation before production.

During the event

- Protect food temperature, allergen controls and plated/buffet presentation.
- Monitor batch pacing and communicate ready times and shortages.
- Resolve changes through the approved lead; record unplanned consumption or substitutions.

After the event

Record waste, overages, shortages, food quality comments and production lessons. Confirm returnable equipment and required event documentation for the next service.

Scenario

- A plated dinner adds ten guests after prep is complete. Identify who must approve changes, the production implications and the communication chain.
- Show a hypothetical event prep sheet with quantities and a timing checklist.

MODULE 17 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Leadership, coaching & escalation

Create clear expectations, coach consistently and document important follow-up.

Coaching cycle

- State the expected standard and demonstrate the correct method.
- Observe performance and provide specific, private feedback.
- Ask the employee to repeat the task and confirm understanding.
- Record significant retraining needs, ownership and follow-up dates.

Immediate escalation examples

Escalate suspected foodborne illness, serious allergen failures, injuries, intoxication or aggressive behavior, harassment, threats, police involvement and serious guest complaints under the venue escalation procedure. Do not investigate allegations independently beyond authorized fact gathering.

Communication framework

WHEN	WHAT TO COMMUNICATE
Shift handoff	Sales volume/forecast, shortages, prep status, hazards, equipment and staffing.
To Executive Chef	Quality issues, proposed recipe changes, inventory loss, vendor and labor concerns.
To GM / FOH	Ticket delays, allergen risks, event pacing, guest food-quality concerns.
To finance / admin through approved path	Invoice omissions, receiving discrepancies, inventory exceptions.

Leadership observation

- Conduct a short pre-shift lineup and delegate three clear priorities.
- Give a constructive coaching note using observable facts, not opinions.

MODULE 18 / SOUS CHEF DEVELOPMENT

Competency assessment & sign-off

Complete training only after the Sous Chef demonstrates practical understanding on shift.

Final competency checklist

OK	COMPETENCY / REQUIRED DEMONSTRATION
☐	Role, approval boundaries and shift leadership
☐	Service recovery and FOH coordination
☐	Food safety, allergens and sanitation
☐	Knife / equipment / workplace safety
☐	Recipe execution, plate quality and portion control
☐	Opening, closing and shift handoff
☐	Receiving, inventory, FIFO and invoice submission
☐	Toast POS basics and authorization controls
☐	Sling schedules, coverage and team communication
☐	P&L basics, COGS and labor awareness
☐	Catering/event kitchen execution
☐	Menu test and live supervised shift

Trainer observations & corrective actions

Strengths:

_____

Reinforcement needed / owner / due date: _____

Follow-up notes: _____

Acknowledgment

I have reviewed the relevant training materials and demonstrated the assigned skills. Final authorization for independent duties is subject to the location's management approvals and required certifications.

Sous Chef: _____ Trainer: _____

Restaurant: _____ Date: _____

Compiled from the 10 MSG-supplied templates. This training guide requires concept-specific verification before use; it is not itself a food handler certificate or regulatory compliance determination.