



# **Certified Master Chef® (CMC)® Examination Manual**

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## **American Culinary Federation Certified Master Chef® (CMC®) Examination Manual**

The American Culinary Federation (ACF), the premier certifying body for American chefs, is pleased that you have decided to embark on the journey to validate your skills at the pinnacle of culinary certification – Certified Master Chef (CMC). The purpose of this practical exam is to verify the mastery of cooking skills of each candidate and ensure that the candidate demonstrates the utmost professionalism.

CMC exam candidates are expected to have exemplary organizational, sanitation, mentoring and cookery skills. Every aspect of this exam is designed to verify those skills, and candidates are evaluated from the time of arrival until the kitchen is clean on the final day. It is the American Culinary Federation's greatest wish for your success and that upon completion you will be one of the elite CMCs in the world.

It is your responsibility to read and understand the contents of this manual before applying for the examination. This manual contains current information about the certification examination developed by the CMC committee as of June 2010, thereby nullifying all prior publications.

All correspondence should be directed to the national headquarters of the American Culinary Federation at the following address including: address changes, handbook requests, information about the development and administration of the CMC practical examination, certification programs and recertification:

American Culinary Federation  
180 Center Place Way  
St. Augustine, FL 32095  
Phone: (800) 624-9458  
Web site: [www.acfchefs.org](http://www.acfchefs.org)

## **Application Process**

### General Qualification Guidelines

- Possess the practiced skills to perform culinary art to the highest standards.
- Have a foundation of quality experience and education in advanced level courses, externships and/or competitions.
- Be physically and mentally prepared to perform eight days under extreme pressure.
- Secure funding to cover expenses: application fee, examination fee, travel, housing, meals and miscellaneous based at approximately \$4,000 - \$6,000.

### Specific Experience Requirements

- Level of practice documentation of a Certified Executive Chef (CEC), or Certified Culinary Educator (CCE) in good standing.
- Letters from two CMCs recommending the candidate for the exam.

### Specific Education Requirements

The following must be completed within the past five years. The ACF's Certified Culinary Administrator (CCA) exam will be accepted as an equivalency for Management and Cost Management coursework.

- Sanitation and food safety: current sanitation certificate or Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification.
- Cost Management: approved course completion (classroom hours or credit transfer).
- Management: approved course completion (classroom hours or credit transfer).
- Wine: approved course completion or successful completion of a 30-hour wine course from an accredited institution.

## **Application Steps**

### Step 1

Submit a letter of intent and the completed application to apply for the ACF Certified Master Chef Exam, along with letters of recommendation from two CMCs and the nonrefundable application fee of \$300 to:

American Culinary Federation  
180 Center Place Way  
St. Augustine, FL 32095

Candidates will receive a copy of the Certified Master Chef Manual, be listed as a preparatory candidate and will be notified of each occurring exam for the following three terms.

### Step 2

Upon receipt of the completed application and required documentation, the candidate will receive confirmation of receipt and status being updated to an active candidate. From this point forward, the candidate will be subject to all policies and procedures regarding the exam.

### Step 3

The last step is to register for a CMC examination. Active candidates are notified of pending test dates. In addition, examination dates are listed on the ACF website. There must be a minimum of six active candidates enrolled for a particular date in order for the exam to be held.

### **Fees, Payments, Refunds and Other Expenses**

Once a candidate has committed to an exam date they are to respond to the notice and follow the payment schedule as listed below.

The examination fee for the Certified Master Chef or Certified Master Pastry Chef is \$3,800 (subject to change).

The application fee of \$300 is nonrefundable and entitles the candidate to be listed as a preparatory candidate for the next three exams.

Three months prior to the start of the exam, the candidate is required to make a deposit of \$1,500.

Two months prior to the exam, the candidate is required to pay the remaining balance of \$2,000.

Candidates accepted for an exam date, but who are unable to attend, must submit a written letter of withdrawal. Letters of withdrawal received one month prior to administration of the exam may be fully refunded. However, notices received after this time only qualify for a 75 percent refund. There will be no refunds once the exam has begun.

All other expenses associated with taking the exam (travel, room, board and etc.) are the responsibility of the candidate. This includes any charges required by the host institution for make-up exams.

### **Examination Site**

The host institution conducting the examination has been carefully selected by the ACF Certification Committee in accordance with ACF standards. The host site will provide assistance to candidates to find reasonably priced room accommodations. Faculty at the host institution will not serve as exam evaluators to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

### Facility

The building classrooms, kitchen laboratory and other instructional and examination areas have been deemed safe and meet all industry standards, as well as local codes for sanitation, health, fire and insurance. The test kitchen, classroom and examiner's room will be available for the duration of the eight-day exam.

### Kitchen Laboratory

The Kitchen Laboratory contains between six and no more than 12 fully equipped individual testing stations. In addition to the individual test stations, the kitchen has already met the following requirements:

- Open gas ranges.
- General refrigerator and freezer space.
- Small equipment in excellent working condition for each station.
- Community utensils and equipment.
- Observation windows on at least one side.
- Easily controlled entrances and exits.

Small Equipment and utensils provided at each station include:

- Bain marie with whips and spoons.
- Cutting board.
- Ladles in two, four, six, eight and 12 ounces.
- China cap.
- Chinois.
- Spider.
- Skimmer.
- Food processor.
- Electric mixer.
- Scales.

Common community areas within the kitchen have the following equipment and utensils:

- Slicer.
- Blender.
- Pasta machine.
- Grinder.
- Ice cream freezer.
- Assorted pots, roasting pans, sheet pans and bowls.
- Cheesecloth, aluminum foil and plastic wrap.

Service equipment in the same pattern, sizes and color available to all candidates include:

- Large silver platter with the capacity to hold eight portions.
- Large china platter with the capacity to hold six portions.
- Assorted terrines and underliners with the capacity to hold six portions.
- Soup cups with underliners.
- Soup bowls with underliners.
- Appetizer and salad plates approximately 10¼".
- Dinner plates 12½".
- Sauce boats.

One student apprentice will be available to each candidate for each kitchen laboratory segment of the entire examination. The host institution will attempt to provide each candidate with one student apprentice to remain with them for the duration of the examination, however this is not guaranteed.

#### Classroom and Examiner's Room

Classroom space is provided for lectures and individual written testing. The examiner's room should be located next to the kitchen laboratory.

#### Resource Center

The host institution's culinary arts and hospitality management library, computers and related software, as well as audio and video equipment, will be made available to candidates.

#### Par Stock Items

The following is a sampling of products that should be available for use by the candidates. During the exam, any items needed by a candidate at any time must be requisitioned up to and including those on the following list. Seasonality will affect availability and should be taken into consideration by candidates.

##### Staples

Cornmeal  
Cornstarch  
Rice flour  
A.P. flour  
Bread flour  
Carolina rice  
Arborio rice  
Bread crumbs  
White bread

##### Groceries

Olive Oil  
Vegetable Oil  
Peanut oil  
Vinegar (assorted)  
Dijon mustard  
Tomato paste and purée  
Tomatoes (canned)  
Tabasco sauce

##### Stocks

White  
Chicken  
Brown

##### Produce

Shallots  
Garlic  
Yellow and Red Onions  
Carrots  
Celery  
Lemons  
Oranges  
Limes  
Assorted potatoes

##### Wines and Alcohol

Dry sherry  
Dry vermouth  
Grand Marnier  
Madeira  
Port  
Brandy  
Standard Brandy  
Standard Chablis  
Red wine  
Beer  
Applejack  
Bourbon

##### Cheeses

Cream cheese  
Swiss/Gruyère  
Parmesan type cheese  
Cheddar

##### Dairy

Milk  
Butter (unsalted)  
Eggs  
Skim Milk  
Heavy Cream  
Sour Cream  
Plain yogurt

##### Sauces/Miscellaneous

Brown sauce  
Glace de viande

### Requisition and Other Supply Guidelines

The candidate is responsible for ensuring all food supplies are ordered and have arrived within the first hour of the preparation window. If the food supplies have not arrived, it is the responsibility of the candidate to inform the kitchen proctor.

China, glass and other items must be secured by the candidate by requisition within two hours of the service window. If any items are not available that are needed, it is the responsibility of the candidate to inform the kitchen proctor.

### **Examination Schedule Overview**

The order of the lectures, tests and the start and stop times may vary depending on the host institution. However, candidates must complete each segment within the designated time limit.

#### Wednesday prior to test start day

- Receive protein for Healthy Cooking segment – This will be sent to the candidate's email address at 9 a.m. on the Wednesday prior to the start of the exam, unless other arrangements are made in writing to the exam coordinator two weeks prior.

#### Thursday prior to test start day

- Return nutritional analysis, menu and ingredient list within 24 hours – All required information must be delivered electronically or by fax before 9 a.m. that Thursday morning. The nutritional analysis must be documented by a registered dietitian, and it will be reviewed by the CMC exam administrator for verification.

#### Friday

- Orientation 2 Hours
  - Draw Buffet Catering Proteins
  - Healthy Cooking Orientation

#### Saturday

- Storeroom Visit for Buffet Catering Supplies 1 Hour
- Healthy Cooking 5 Hours

#### Sunday

- Buffet Catering Prep 12 Hours
  - Draw Classical Cuisine Proteins

#### Monday

- Submit Classical Menu and Requisition
- Buffet Catering Plating and Service 3 Hours
  - Draw Freestyle Cooking Protein

#### Tuesday

- Submit Freestyle Menu and Requisition

### Tuesday continued

- Classical Cuisine 4 Hours
  - Three Courses – menu items are chosen by candidate

### Wednesday

- Freestyle Cooking 4 Hours
  - Four Courses – one course must be non-meat, fish or poultry
- Draw Global Cuisine Menu

### Thursday

- Global Cuisine 4 Hours
  - Three entrees

### Friday

- Baking and Pastry 5 Hours
  - Draw Continental Cuisine Menu

### Saturday

- Continental Cuisine – morning 4 Hours
  - Three Entrees
- Market Basket – afternoon 5 Hours
  - Five Courses

Note: A 30-minute service window is applied to the end of each time frame, except for baking and pastry, and buffet catering.

## **Master Chef Examination Outline**

Over the eight days of the CMC examination, the tests are administered in eight major segments.

1. Healthy Cooking
2. Buffet Catering
3. Classical Cuisine
4. Freestyle Cooking
5. Global Cuisine
6. Baking and Pastry
7. Continental and Northern Europe Cuisines
8. Market Basket

### Grading Criteria and Procedures

There are eight major categories in the eight-day master chef examination. Each segment of the examination is graded in two parts:

- Kitchen Skills – maximum 100 points and weighted to reflect 35 points of final grade.
- Presentation and Tasting – maximum 100 points and weighted to reflect 65 points of final grade.

A perfect score is 100 points and a minimum passing score per segment is 70 points. The minimum passing final cumulative score of the entire exam is 75 points.

Since each scoring segment can have one to five judges, a candidate's grade is determined by the average of the judge's scores. The minimum passing score (the combined average of the kitchen skill, and presentation and tasting scores) for each segment is 70 points.

A candidate must have a cumulative passing score of 75 percent during the first 7 days of the exam in order to participate in the last day of the exam.

A candidate may continue with the examination even if they fail one segment, but must maintain a cumulative average of 75 percent. The failure of two segments (less than 70 points) results in an automatic withdrawal from the examination.

The candidate may be permitted to retake any major failed. All retakes will be administered at the next CMC exam and availability is subject to the host institution. Candidates retaking tests do so at their own expense and fees as determined by the host institution and are payable to the institution.

Candidates who fail a segment after taking it for the third time have failed the entire exam and may not retake the individual test segments. Instead must reapply for the full eight-day examination.

#### The Final – Day 8

The final segment administered on the eighth day counts for 35 percent of the total grade. It consists of two tests, Continental Cuisine/Northern Europe and Market Basket. The minimum passing grade for either test is 70 points and the combined average score of the two tests must equal or exceed 75 points. A score of less than 70 points on either segment of the final will result in a failure, regardless of the combined average score.

Candidates who fail one major and the final have failed the entire Certified Master Chef/Certified Master Pastry Chef Examination. They may not retake the individual test segments, but instead must reapply for the full eight-day examination.

Candidates who pass the six major tests and then fail the final can retake the final within two years or two exams (in case of cancellation one year). If the candidate fails to retake the final (either the first part, second part or the full day) within two years or two exams, their test scores are null and void, and they must reapply for the entire eight-day examination.

Score sheets are subject to change based on test requirements.

## **CMC Exam Majors**

### **Healthy Cooking**

Briefing: One hour and 30 minutes, including written exam.

Time format: Four hours and 30 minutes kitchen preparation, and 30 minutes service.

Objective: The candidate must demonstrate knowledge of Healthy Cooking principles through the development and preparation of a four-course meal for 10 people. The objective is to be met through the preparation of the meal in accordance with sound nutritional principles, a balanced focus, portion size, and the use of added salt, fats and sugar. The mastery of cooking principles will be assessed in the formulation of the menu and its components.

### Demonstrated competencies

- Four classical cuts.
- Four cooking methods.
- Knowledge of platter service.

### Activities

On designated day prior to the start of the CMC exam, each candidate will receive a market basket ingredients list containing:

- Three protein items (appropriate combination of meat, fish and poultry).
- One grain.
- Three fruits.
- Lettuce.

A nutritional analysis, verified by registered dietitian, of a four-course menu and the appropriate food requisitions must be submitted to the CMC exam administrator no later than time designated (approximately 24 hours from when ingredients for market basket are sent) prior to the start of CMC exam. The exam coordinator can provide contact resources for registered dietitians upon request.

The menu must consist of the following courses:

- Appetizer, served hot.
- Salad.
- Main course.
- Dessert, served hot, cold or any combination.

The total caloric value of the meal should not exceed 1000 kcal. The balance should be 15-20 percent protein, 45-60 percent carbohydrates and 25-30 percent fat.

The candidate will be given one hour and 30 minutes of classroom time to complete the nutritional component of the exam, four hours and 30 minutes for preparation, and thirty minutes for serving. The meal will be served in the 30-minute window at the end of the preparation time frame in the following manner: four portions plated for individual service and six portions on platters for Russian service.

### Grading and Testing Criteria

- Serving method and presentation, 15 percent.
- Cooking fundamentals, 15 percent.
- Ingredient compatibility, 15 percent.
- Portion size and nutritional guidelines, 15 percent.
- Taste, 40 percent.

## **Buffet Catering**

Briefing: One hour.

Time format: 12 hours preparation, and three hours setup and presentation time.

Objective: The candidate must demonstrate knowledge of the different types of garde manger products, their make-up and preparation procedures. The candidate should demonstrate an understanding of the functionality of the garde manger kitchen and the utilitarian philosophies attached to it. The candidate will also demonstrate the high art form attributes of presentation that is necessary in a cold food competition.

### Demonstrated competencies

- Emulsified forcemeat.
- Product utilization as related to the garde manger kitchen.
- Cured protein.
- Cold salad.
- Two standing garnishes.
- Platter poured with chemise and aspic may be reinforced with gelatin, but must be of appropriate flavor and color.
- Cold mousse.
- Appropriate sauce.

### Activities

- The candidate will receive the assignment and must return menu and requisition at designated time the following day.
- Candidates are allowed to bring their own platter for presentation, however, only the host facility china may be used for plating.
- A cold main course that would be served during a special festivity will be prepared, therefore fulfilling the demonstrated competency section. The candidate will prepare cold buffet items to be served in the following manner: four portions plated and eight portions on a platter as served on a buffet.

### Assignment Format

The candidate will receive an assignment including the items listed below. Some of each item must be used to avoid point removal. All other supporting ingredients to be used must be requisitioned by the candidate during the storeroom visit on the first day.

- Two primary protein items.
- One secondary protein item.
- Two vegetable items.
- One starch based item.
- One supplementary item.

### Grading and Testing Criteria

- Serving method and presentation, 20 percent.
- Cooking fundamentals, 15 percent.
- Ingredient compatibility and portion size, 10 percent.
- Competencies, 15 percent.
- Taste, 40 percent.

## **Classical Cuisine**

Briefing: One hour.

Time format: Four hours preparation and 30-minute service window.

Objective: The candidate must demonstrate the ability to understand, interpret and execute the philosophy of Auguste Escoffier and classical cuisine as prescribed in the *Le Guide Culinaire*. The candidate will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the foundations of classical cuisine and preparation throughout the presented menu. The mastery of classical techniques and presentation will be strictly adhered to according to *Le Guide Culinaire*.

### Activities

- Draw protein items at the end of the second day of the CMC exam.
- Develop a menu using recipes from *Le Guide Culinaire*, *The Complete Guide to the Art of Modern Cooking* by Auguste Escoffier.
- Consommé selection will be given during protein drawing and the consommé may be derived from available stocks. The preparation of a white bouillon is not required, although it is reasonable to impose the same flavor profile incurred when a white bouillon is used.
- Submit a menu and requisition list at designated time as requested by proctor.
- Receive storeroom supplies.
- The candidate must prepare 10 portions and platters are to be appropriate for Russian service:
  - Soup – four plated portions and six portions in a soup terrine.
  - Fish course – four plated portions and six portions on a restaurant platter, and both must be served with the applicable accompaniments.
  - Entrée – four plated portions and six portions on a restaurant platter, and both must be served with the applicable accompaniments.

### Grading and Testing Criteria

- Classical serving method, 15 percent.
- Classical presentation, 20 percent.
- Classical cooking methodology, 20 percent.
- Portion size, 5 percent.
- Taste, 40 percent.

## **Freestyle**

Briefing: One hour.

Time format: Four hours production and 30-minute service window.

Objective: To verify the mastery of a candidate's skills in relation to the construction and preparation of a menu. This segment of the exam should demonstrate the candidate's personal cooking style and philosophy through all aspects of the menu. The judging team will assess the performance reflected through the mastery of all standard cooking fundamentals and menu methodology as a basis for evaluation.

### Activities

The candidate will receive a market basket at the close of the buffet presentation. The supporting ingredients must be requisitioned at the designated time.

- Six protein items.
- Four vegetable items.
- Three starch items.
- Lettuce.
- Three supplementary items.

### Menu Requirements

Each ingredient in the basket must be used to some extent. Prior to exam segment protein is drawn. Menu and requisition are due at the designated time.

The four courses will be comprised of the following selection:

- Appetizer or soup.
- Fish course.
- Salad.
- Main course.

The menu will be presented as four plated portions and six portions appropriate for Russian service.

### Grading/Testing Criteria

- Serving method and portion size, 15 percent.
- Cooking fundamentals, 15 percent.
- Menu composition, 15 percent.
- Presentation, 15 percent.
- Taste, 40 percent.

## **Global Cuisine**

Briefing: One hour.

Time format: Four hours preparation and 30 minutes service.

Objective: The candidate must demonstrate knowledge of several global cuisines. The practical component of this discipline will be demonstrated by the preparation of three main dishes from three different regions of the world. It is expected that the candidate demonstrate a knowledge representative of the traditions, philosophies and methodology that is indicative of each cuisine. The methods of service and preparation should directly relate to the traditional integrity of the dish, and demonstrate a mastery of the same by presenting the dishes in the style of a special occasion for that cuisine.

### Main Areas of Testing

- Cuisines of the Americas.
- Cuisines of Asia.
- Cuisines the Mediterranean.

### Activities

The candidate will draw an assignment the day before the test and will requisition all ingredients needed for preparation of the assignment. Platters are to be appropriate for Russian service.

The candidate will prepare 10 portions of each region's main dish prepared for Russian service with four plated portions and six portions in the appropriate serving:

- Main dish one
- Main dish two
- Main dish three

### Grading and Testing Criteria

- Serving method and portion size, 15 percent.
- Cooking fundamentals, 15 percent.
- Presentation, 15 percent.
- Adherence to global cuisine's principals, 15 percent.
- Taste, 40 percent.

## **Baking & Pastry**

Briefing: One hour.

Time format: Five hours preparation and finishing

Objective: To verify the candidate's knowledge and preparation of the mandated competencies listed below. The purpose of this segment is to demonstrate that the candidate is well versed in baking and pastry skills and is competent in the production of the same. Special attention should be paid to the product consistency and detail of the finishing techniques, such as product shape, baking doneness, size consistency and marketability.

### Activities

The candidate will prepare 10 portions of a hot or cold kitchen dessert that should include the five fundamental components of a complete dessert. This should be presented for tasting.

- One, two-pound recipe of a yeast leavened product per the candidate's choice.
- Two dozen portions of a chemically leavened quick bread product per the candidate's choice.
- Two dozen portions of a puff pastry vol-au-vent or bouchée. The puff pastry will be provided by the proctor.

### Grading/Testing Criteria

- Product size and shape consistency, 15 percent.
- Presentation finishing techniques, 15 percent.
- Baking techniques fundamentals, 15 percent.
- Marketability, 15 percent.
- Taste and texture, 40 percent.

## **Continental and Northern Europe Cuisines**

Briefing: One hour.

Time format: Four hours preparation and 30 minutes presentation.

Objective: The candidate must demonstrate knowledge of Continental and Northern Europe Cuisines. The practical component of this discipline will be demonstrated by the preparation of three main dishes from three of the countries of this region. It is expected that the candidate be able to demonstrate a knowledge representative of the traditions, philosophies and methodology indicative of each cuisine. The methods of service and preparation should directly relate to the traditional integrity of the dish, and demonstrate a mastery of the same by presenting the dishes in the style of a special occasion for that cuisine.

The areas of testing are:

- Cuisines of Spain and Portugal.
- Cuisines of Germany, Austria and The Netherlands.
- Cuisines of Switzerland.
- Cuisines of Italy.
- Cuisines of Russia and Poland.
- Cuisines of England and Scotland.
- Cuisines of Scandinavia.

### Activities

The candidate will draw an assignment the day before the test and will requisition all ingredients needed for preparation of the assignment. Platters are to be appropriate for Russian service.

The candidate will prepare 10 portions of each region's main dish prepared for Russian service with four plated portions and six portions in the appropriate serving:

- Main dish one
- Main dish two
- Main dish three

### Grading and Testing Criteria

- Serving method and portion size, 15 percent.
- Cooking fundamentals, 15 percent.
- Presentation, 15 percent.
- Adherence to international cuisine principals, 15 percent.
- Taste, 40 percent.

## **Market Basket**

Time format: Five hours preparation and 30 minutes service.

Objective: To evaluate the candidate's ability to write and prepare a menu within specific time constraints at the highest level by demonstrating the mastery of all culinary foundational skills. All kitchen activities will be thoroughly scrutinized and evaluated with the prescribed mastery in mind. It is fully expected that a mastery of cooking methodology, butchery and craftsmanship will be demonstrated during the cooking period. Furthermore, the end result will be expected to exemplify these standards to the fullest extent of plating, platter construction, taste and finishing skills.

### Activities

The candidate will be presented with a market basket and each ingredient in the basket must be used to some extent. A written requisition for supplemental ingredients must be submitted within one hour to the proctor and delivery can be expected within one hour. A five-course menu must be submitted within 30 minutes from the candidate's start time to the proctor and it must be presented as four plated portions and six portions for platter service.

The market basket will contain the following ingredients:

- Three seafood proteins.
- Three other proteins.
- Nine vegetable items.
- Four starch based items.
- One fruit.
- Lettuce.
- One legume.

The five courses will be comprised in the following manner:

- Appetizer.
- Soup.
- Fish course.
- Salad.
- Main course.

### Grading and Testing Criteria

- Serving method and portion size, 15 percent.
- Cooking fundamentals, 15 percent.
- Ingredient compatibility, 15 percent.
- Presentation, 15 percent.
- Taste, 40 percent.