



Case Study on the Culinary Team at Taj Aravali Resort and Spa, Udaipur

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Abstract

Objective: Chef's Wellness – Enhancing Well-being and Comfort at Work with a 360 degree approach.

Chefs face multiple occupational hazards, including prolonged standing, irregular shifts, exposure to heat, fumes and chemicals, as well as high mental stress. These factors contribute to health concerns such as obesity, joint pain, varicose veins, digestive issues and compromised lung function.

To address these challenges, a holistic wellness program focusing on Nutrition, Ergonomics, Physical Activities like Chair yoga and Flexibility training, Breath Work and Stress management plays a crucial role in improving oxygen intake and relieving physical or psychological tension.

The nutritional habits of culinary professionals play a crucial role in their energy levels, performance and overall well-being. This case study explores the recommended nutritional habits for culinary teams, emphasizing nutrition-rich meals, hydration strategies and structured meal planning. The study proposes a nutrition regimen that supports sustained energy levels, enhances cognitive function and promotes overall health while accommodating the demanding schedules of culinary professionals.

Ergonomic implementation of posture at work, a structured 7-minute exercise routine to avoid muscle tension and manage long working hours with periodic break, playful activities, buzzer reminders for movement was recommended.

Stress management techniques such as meditation and group sports activities are encouraged. Adequate rest, proper sleep hygiene and periodic spa treatments are essential. Monthly counseling sessions were proposed to address psychological and emotional stress.

By integrating these strategies, chefs maintained their health, managed long working hours effectively and enhanced overall well-being, ensuring both personal and professional excellence.

Keywords: Udaipur; Stress Management; Culinary Teams

Introduction

Culinary professionals experience numerous occupational hazards that impact their overall health and well-being. At Taj Aravalli, Udaipur, chefs encounter various physical, environmental and psychological stressors during their work cycle. This case study explores the occupational risks, health concerns and proposed remedies for chefs and kitchen workers.

Identified occupational hazards

- Environmental Factors
 - Exposure to warm and hot environments while moving between the cabin, kitchen and restaurant, impacting basal metabolic rate.
- Physical Strain
 - Prolonged standing for extended hours.

- Disruption of the biological clock due to break shifts.
- Disturbance in circadian rhythm.
- Irregular meal patterns.
- Psychological Stress
 - High mental pressure due to execution and delivery demands.
 - Strict timelines, food costs and high attrition rates.
- Chemical and Environmental Exposure
 - Exposure to fumes from flames.
 - Contact with toxic gases and chemicals in stewarding.
 - Heat stress from ovens.
 - Erratic breathing due to limited fresh oxygen supply.
- Health Concerns Among Kitchen Professionals
 - Obesity
 - Back and knee pain
 - Constipation
 - Varicose veins
 - Difficulty in breathing due to climatic conditions
 - Poor digestive system
 - Compromised lung function (operating at 30% capacity)
 - High blood pressure due to extended work hour.

Literature review on occupational stress among chefs and recommended interventions

Occupational stress: A case study among chefs and kitchen workers

Health is a real issue for culinary professionals due to the lack of time to care for their well-being.

A study by Neelesh Kohli and Dr. Manju Mehta highlights that chefs work in highly stressful, unstable and often unpleasant environments. The high-pressure work environment, combined with perfectionism and limited space, significantly contributes to occupational stress [1].

Workplace Hazards Categorized

- Chemical Hazards – Exposure to dust, fumes, liquids and mists.
- Physical Hazards – Noise, vibration, radiation and extreme temperatures.
- Biological Factors – Contact with bacteria, viruses, fungi and protozoa.
- Ergonomic and Mechanical Hazards – Repetitive actions, heavy lifting and work-related injuries.
- Psychosocial and Organizational Stressors – High work demands, long hours and stressful working conditions [2-5].

Key findings from the study

- Working Hours: 80% of respondents work more than 8 hours per day.
- Work Posture:
 - 77% work in a standing position for long durations.
 - 10% work in a sitting position.
 - 13% work in a bending posture.
- Health Issues:
 - 100% of respondents experience heat stress.
 - 13% report hearing problems.
 - 20% suffer physical injuries.
 - 37% frequently experience headaches.

Recommendations

- **Health Education Programs:** Awareness initiatives should be conducted by experts to educate chefs about occupational hazards and self-care practices.
- **Training and Wellness Programs:** Encouraging training sessions to manage stress and improve workplace well-being.

Work-related stress among chefs: A predictive model of health complaints

An online study surveyed 710 chefs through the Italian Chefs Federation. The study assessed occupational stress using Karasek’s Job Content Questionnaire and Siegrist’s Effort-Reward Imbalance model.

Key objectives

- To evaluate the correlation between occupational stress and health complaints.
- To analyze individual factors such as age, sex and BMI as risk elements.
- To assess work-related factors like chef categories, job duration and shift length as stress contributors.

Observations/Conclusion

- The culinary profession is one of the most stress-prone occupations.
- Long working hours, demanding schedules and intense work environments contribute to high stress levels.
- Job duration and shift length are significant predictors of work-related illnesses.
- Studies indicate chefs have a higher-than-average risk of mental health issues such as chronic pain and depression.

Our suggestions

Keep it fun

- Play music in the kitchen for 30 to 40 minutes daily.
- Engage in fun activities like Antakshari or listening to morning prayers.

Nourish your body

Culinary professionals often work in high-pressure environments with long hours and irregular meal patterns. Maintaining optimal health through balanced nutrition is essential for their well-being. This case study presents a structured nutritional plan designed specifically for culinary teams to ensure sustained energy, mental clarity and overall health benefits.

A balanced and structured meal plan alternating between raw and regular food, incorporating fresh, seasonal foods and hydration strategies is advised below.

Recommended nutrition habits

- **Balanced Breakfast**
 - Consume a protein-rich breakfast paired with healthy carbohydrates, such as fruit with nuts and seeds.
 - Prioritize raw fruits, vegetables, sprouts and green juices.
 - Include a vegetable juice daily to help with cleanse and boost energy levels.
- **Recommended Juices**
 - **Booster Juice:** Amla, pomegranate, beetroot, mint leaves, pepper.
 - **Green Juice:** Green apple, spinach, kale, mint, celery, ginger.
 - **ABC Juice:** Apple, beetroot, carrots, ginger, pepper.
- **Hydration Strategies**
 - Maintain adequate water intake throughout the day.
 - Limit the consumption of carbonated drinks, excessive caffeine and alcohol.
 - **Summer Hydration Options:**
 - Lemon juice with mint, coriander, jaggery, salt and pepper.
 - Coconut water with honey, mint and pepper.
 - Kokum juice with cumin powder and salt.
- **Winter Hydration Options:**
 - Kadha with ginger, turmeric, pepper and cloves.
 - Herbal teas such as tulsi, mulethi, cinnamon, cardamom and black pepper.

Meal structuring for optimal performance

Balanced nutrition

- Consume a well-balanced nutrition with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats.

- Avoid unhealthy fats, excessive sugar, tea, coffee and processed foods.
- Incorporate fresh, seasonal ingredients.
- **Regular Meal Timing**
 - Maintain consistent meal schedules despite hectic work shifts.
 - Avoid skipping meals to prevent overeating during later hours.
 - Incorporate nutritious snacks such as sprouts salad, quinoa salad, handful of peanuts and chana or roasted makhana.
 - Drink herbal tea throughout the day to regulate metabolism.

Sample Meal plan - Follow one day regular/One day raw plan

Raw plan

- **Morning Routine**
 - Begin with warm water, adjusting ingredients based on seasonal needs (e.g., lemon, ginger, turmeric).
 - Follow with a nutrient-dense juice such as ash gourd juice, wheatgrass juice, aloe vera juice, or lemon ginger turmeric juice.
 - After 30 minutes, consume green tea or seasonal kadha.
 - A bowl of fresh fruits like pomegranate, honeydew melon, musk melon, or papaya.
 - Include soaked nuts and seeds.
- **Mid-Morning**
 - Sprouts (steamed, sauteed, or boiled) with salad (cucumber, tomato, shredded beetroot, shredded carrot, coriander, lemon juice, salt, pepper and spices of choice)
 - A small glass of vegetable juice:
 - Add 3-4 from the following list - spinach, kale, beetroot, carrot, celery, cabbage, parsley, coriander, mint, cucumber, ginger, amla and lemon juice
 - Additionally, add 1 small fruit such as an apple, pear, musk melon, pineapple, or grapefruit
 - You may add black salt, pink salt and/or pepper.
- **Lunch**
 - Pre-lunch salad with a mix of fresh vegetables (tomato, cucumber, lettuce, olives, avocado, bell peppers, microgreens, beetroot, carrot).
 - Sweet potato or yam.
 - **Protein sources:** Quinoa, masoor dal, paneer, tofu, feta cheese, sprouts, or boiled chickpeas.
 - During breaks, consume a bowl of healthy soup with a combination of vegetables and **preferred lentils:** Hot soup (choose a combination of 2-3 vegetables - bottle gourd, saragwa sing, moringa leaves, tomato, beetroot, carrot, pumpkin, spinach, or vegetables of choice, or healthy soup of the day), Add a source of lentils – yellow moong, green chilkha moong, or masoor dal (preferred)

- Main meal options:
- Sprout bhel with vegetables and spices.
- Grilled vegetables with protein sources like tofu or sprouts.
- Buddha Bowl featuring whole grains, seasonal vegetables, and protein-rich legumes, dressed with healthy oils and herbs.
- Post-Lunch
 - A glass of buttermilk with cumin powder, hing and pink salt.
- Mid-Evening
 - Green tea (Tulsi Mulethi Brahmi Tea) or coconut water.
 - Light snacks such as soaked nuts and seeds, makhana bhel, chana chaat salad or sprouts salad.
- Dinner (Early by Sunset)
 - Preferably, the mid-evening meal should be the last meal of the day.
 - If required, consume a light cooked meal such as:
 - Vegetable and lentil-based soup.
 - Kodo millet khichdi with moong dal and vegetables.
 - Moong dal chilla with coriander chutney.
 - Sweet potato and vegetable cutlets with chutney.
 - Bedtime Routine
 - Chamomile tea with a pinch of nutmeg.

The nutritional habits outlined in this study provide a structured, nutrient-rich meal plan designed to support the demanding work schedules of culinary professionals. Implementing these recommendations can enhance energy levels, mental clarity and overall well-being, ensuring that culinary teams perform optimally in their high-paced work environments. By maintaining consistency in hydration, balanced meal planning, and nutrient-dense food choices, culinary professionals can achieve long-term health benefits and improved workplace productivity.

Ergonomics and physical activity

Ergonomic interventions

- Workstation Adjustments:
 - Ensure proper height for work surfaces to prevent excessive bending.
 - Use anti-fatigue mats to reduce strain from prolonged standing.
 - Provide adjustable chairs for occasional sitting during prep work.
- Proper Footwear:
 - Encourage chefs to wear cushioned, slip-resistant shoes to support posture and reduce fatigue.
- Optimized Workflows:
 - Arrange frequently used tools and ingredients within easy reach.
 - Rotate tasks among kitchen staff to prevent repetitive stress injuries.

- Physical Activity
 - Engaging in regular physical activity outside of work is essential for maintaining overall health and well-being. Implementing playful activities, such as using a buzzer as a reminder to stretch, can encourage movement throughout the day.

Recommended exercises

Simple stretching and movements

- Stretch legs every 30 minutes.
- Walk around for 30 seconds every 30 minutes.
- Twist sideways (left to right).
- Bend down sideways gently.
- Perform forward and backward bending.
- Coordinate breathing in and out with every stretch and bend.
- Engage in jogging and yoga to improve flexibility and endurance.

Benefits

- Reduces stress and mental tension.
- Improves cardiovascular health and lowers blood pressure.
- Releases emotional knots and enhances overall well-being.

7-Minute Workout Capsule (2-3 Times a Day)

- Twisting Exercise
 - Bring legs to a 65-degree angle.
 - Twist from one side to the other, moving the head along.
 - Breathe in at the center, breathe out on the sides.
- Gentle Forward and Backward Bending
 - Keep knees bent, hands behind the lower back.
 - Inhale while arching backward comfortably.
 - Exhale while half-squatting, tucking in the stomach and buttocks.
 - Repeat 7-8 times.
- Chest Expansions (PT Exercises)
 - Inhale deeply, expand arms outwards (Titanic pose).
 - Exhale while bringing arms back.
 - Repeat several times.
- Spot Jogging
 - Jog in place for 1-2 minutes.
- Mountain Pose to Snake Pose (Repeat 4-5 Times)
 - Stand firm with feet touching the ground.
 - Keep back straight, arms slightly against the sides, palms facing inward.

- Tighten knee, thigh, stomach and buttock muscles.
- Balance weight evenly on both feet.
- Inhale and arch back slightly.
- Move between mountain pose and snake pose.
- Leg Movements
 - Move the right leg front to back 3-4 times.
 - Repeat with the left leg.

Yoga poses for strength and flexibility

Pawanmuktasana (Wind-Relieving Pose)

- Lie flat on your back.
- Breathe evenly.
- Bend your knees and raise your legs.
- Grasp legs just below the knees.
- Hug knees and pull them towards the chest.
- Lift the head and move it forward until the forehead touches the knees.

Setu Bandhasana (Bridge Pose)

- Lie on your back.
- Fold knees and keep feet hip-distance apart (10-12 inches from the pelvis).
- Keep arms beside the body, palms facing down.
- Inhale and lift the lower, middle and upper back off the floor.
- Roll shoulders in, touch the chest to the chin (without moving chin down).
- Support weight using shoulders, arms and feet.
- Keep thighs parallel to each other and the floor.
- Breathe easily and hold for 1-2 minutes before releasing.

Stress management

- Healthy ways to manage stress. Practice meditation, deep breathing exercises, yoga or engaging in hobbies to relax and unwind.
- Play any sports available on the property or board games, go for cycling.

Adequate rest

- Take short breaks 2 to 3 times throughout the day for 2 to 3 minutes:
- Step out into the open to stretch, walk and recharge.
- Whenever, there is an opportunity to rest your legs, do so. Stretch out your legs on stool in the day to avoid varicose veins and back issues.
- Practice Yoga stretches.

- Do deep and slow breath inhalations and exhalations through the day.
- Practice Yoga Nidra

Get enough sleep

- Aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep every night to help your body recover and stay energized.
- Aim for sufficient sleep to allow your body to recover and rejuvenate.
- Prioritize a consistent sleep schedule and create a relaxing sleep environment.
- Take a long warm shower, de stress yourself before you hit the bed. This helps the body to heal in a very relaxed state.
- While showering, consciously slow breath in and breath out the day completely, all the carbon dioxide collected in the AC rooms.
- Even if you are in AC rooms, ensure there are small openings/ventilations in windows.
- Avoid caffeine and electronic devices before bedtime to promote better sleep quality.

Take time off –

- Take regular breaks and days off to recharge.
- Get a massage or a spa every weekly off.
- Utilize your time off to engage in activities that you enjoy and spend quality time.
- Go for SWIMMING on the property.

If smoking

- Try to minimize the puffs.
- Go out and do 30 blow outs. Deep breath through the nose and blow out through the mouth. This will help to clean out the lungs.

Conclusion

The demanding nature of a chef’s profession presents numerous occupational challenges, impacting their physical, mental and emotional well-being. This case study on the culinary team at Taj Aravali Resort and Spa, Udaipur, highlights the crucial need for a structured wellness program to mitigate the adverse effects of prolonged standing, irregular shifts, heat exposure and high mental stress. By integrating a 360-degree approach - focusing on nutrition, ergonomics, physical activity, breathwork, stress management and adequate rest - chefs can significantly improve their health and work performance.

Implementing small but impactful changes, such as ergonomic workstation adjustments, a structured 7-minute workout, hydration strategies, balanced meal planning and guided meditation, helps chefs sustain energy levels, enhance focus and prevent chronic ailments. Encouraging relaxation through periodic breaks, spa treatments and recreational activities further supports mental resilience and emotional well-being.

A well-rounded approach to chef wellness ensures longevity in the profession, reducing absenteeism and burnout while fostering a healthier, happier workforce. This case study serves as a model for the hospitality industry, emphasizing that prioritizing the health of culinary professionals is not just beneficial for individuals but also enhances the overall quality of service and guest satisfaction.

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