
Executive Chef Leadership: Culinary Innovation, Menu Engineering and Food Cost Control Course

28 June – 9 July 2027
Cape town





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Ref: 150_15590 **Date:** 28 June – 9 July 2027 **Location:** Cape town **Fees:** 8640 GBP

Programme Summary

Executive chef leadership in culinary innovation, menu engineering and food cost control is a ten-day training course for senior kitchen leaders at advanced level, culminating in a costed menu innovation plan for their own operation. Kitchens are expected to create distinctive food while holding margins, safety and consistency across outlets. The approach joins modern technique with recipe standardisation, menu analysis, cost control, food safety and team leadership. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in executive chef leadership and culinary innovation.

The Business Case

Menus are often redesigned on creative instinct, and new dishes reach service before their yield, cost and safety controls are settled. The result is margin drift, inconsistent plates between shifts and outlets, and food safety exposure when new methods such as sous vide enter the kitchen. Executive chefs who combine technique with costing and systems turn creativity into a menu the business can sustain.

- Food Cost Percentage: Falls as standardised recipes, yield tests and purchasing specifications are enforced.
- Menu Contribution Margin: Rises as dishes are repositioned, re-engineered or removed on evidence.
- Guest Consistency and Food Safety Incidents: Improve as methods are documented and critical limits are controlled.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Precision Temperature Cooking: The science of time and temperature in protein and vegetable cookery underpins the technique work in Sessions 1 and 2.
- HACCP Principles of the Codex Alimentarius: Hazard analysis and critical control points are applied to modern methods in Session 7.
- ISO 22000: Its food safety management system structure frames how controls are documented across outlets.
- Kasavana and Smith Menu Engineering Matrix: Classifying dishes by popularity and contribution margin structures Session 5.



Intended Participants

- Leaders who set the culinary direction and menu strategy for one or more kitchens.
- Chefs who approve new dishes, recipes and production methods before they reach service.
- Kitchen heads accountable for food cost, purchasing and waste.
- Leaders responsible for food safety systems in central production and outlet kitchens.
- Managers who build, coach and retain senior kitchen brigades.

The programme serves hotels and resorts, catering and banqueting, restaurant groups and institutional food service.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate modern techniques, including sous vide, fermentation and contemporary pastry, for use in their operation.
2. Participants will be able to construct standardised recipes with yields, portion specifications and plating standards.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose menu performance using the menu engineering matrix and contribution margin.
4. Participants will be able to design food cost controls from purchasing to waste.
5. Participants will be able to justify HACCP critical limits for new production methods.
6. Participants will be able to prioritise kitchen team development and innovation routines.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Precision Cooking and Culinary Science

How does controlled heat change texture, flavour and consistency?

- Heat Transfer and Protein Behaviour in Professional Cookery
- Sous Vide Principles: Time, Temperature and Pasteurisation
- Low-Temperature Roasting and Combi Oven Programming
- Water Baths, Thermal Probes and Equipment Selection
- Cook-Chill and Regeneration for Banqueting Volumes

Day 2: Modern Techniques and Flavour Development

Which methods add depth and distinction without slowing service?

- Fermentation, Curing and Controlled Ageing
- Stocks, Reductions and Modern Sauce Systems
- Hydrocolloids, Gels and Texture Modification
- Smoking, Infusion and Aroma Techniques
- Plant-Forward and Allergen-Aware Dish Design



Day 3: Contemporary Pastry and Plating

How are modern desserts and plates designed for repeatable quality?

- Plated Dessert Structure and Component Planning
- Chocolate, Sugar and Frozen Dessert Methods
- Visual Composition, Colour and Plate Geometry
- Plating Standards and Photographic Specifications
- Mise en Place Design for High-Volume Plating

Day 4: Recipe Standardisation and Yield

How does a creative dish become a recipe any shift can reproduce?

- Standardised Recipe Cards and Method Writing
- Butchery and Produce Yield Testing
- Portion Specifications and Plate Costing
- Batch Scaling for Outlets and Events
- Recipe Management Systems and Version Control

Day 5: Menu Engineering and Menu Analysis

Which dishes earn their place on the menu?

- Kasavana and Smith Menu Engineering Matrix
- Contribution Margin and Popularity Index Analysis
- Stars, Plowhorses, Puzzles and Dogs Action Plans
- Menu Layout, Descriptions and Price Positioning
- Point-of-Sale Data for Menu Decisions

Day 6: Food Cost Control and Purchasing

Where does food cost leak between the supplier and the plate?

- Food Cost Percentage and Theoretical Versus Actual Cost
- Purchasing Specifications and Supplier Evaluation
- Receiving, Storage and Inventory Rotation Controls
- Waste Tracking and Root Cause Analysis
- Monthly Food Cost Reconciliation and Variance Review

Day 7: Food Safety Systems for Modern Kitchens

How are new production methods kept safe across outlets?



- HACCP Principles Applied to Sous Vide and Fermentation
- Critical Limits, Monitoring and Corrective Actions
- ISO 22000 Documentation Across Central and Outlet Kitchens
- Allergen Management and Cross-Contact Control
- Food Safety Audits and Verification Records

Day 8: Culinary Innovation and Menu Development

How is new menu development managed from idea to launch?

- Trend Scanning and Concept Briefs
- Dish Development Cycles and Tasting Panels
- Seasonal and Local Sourcing in Menu Planning
- Guest Feedback and Sensory Evaluation Methods
- Launch Planning, Training Packs and Pilot Service

Day 9: Kitchen Team Leadership

How does an executive chef build a brigade that sustains standards?

- Kitchen Brigade Structure and Role Design
- Coaching, Skills Matrices and Succession Planning
- Workload Planning and Labour Productivity
- Communication Between Kitchen, Service and Management
- Kitchen Culture, Retention and Wellbeing

Day 10: Applying Executive Chef Leadership to the Menu

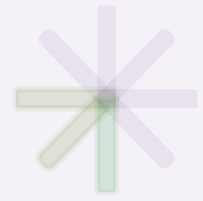
Is the proposed menu creative, costed, safe and ready to deliver?

- Re-Engineering a Current Menu with Day 5 Analysis
- Costing New Dishes with Day 4 and Day 6 Controls
- Validating Day 7 Critical Limits for New Methods
- Presenting the Menu Case to Owners and General Managers
- Costed Menu Innovation Plan Completion

Methodology

The programme combines technique demonstrations and tastings with data work on recipe costs and menu sales. Each session moves from a short briefing to structured exercises in which participants test dishes, costings and controls against their own operation, drawing on hotel, banqueting and restaurant group cases.

- Suggested activity: Setting time and temperature for a sous vide protein and writing its critical limits.
- Suggested activity: Classifying a hotel restaurant menu with the menu engineering matrix.



- Suggested activity: Reconciling theoretical and actual food cost for a banqueting week.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a costed menu innovation plan for an outlet they lead or a case operation. It includes the menu engineering analysis, new dishes with standardised recipes and costings, HACCP controls for new methods, a launch plan and team training actions, ready to present to owners or general managers.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is executive chef leadership training suitable for experienced head chefs?

Yes. It is set at advanced level for chefs who lead kitchens or are preparing for executive roles, and assumes professional cooking experience; costing and menu analysis start from first principles.

Which models does the executive chef leadership course rest on?

It rests on precision temperature cooking, HACCP principles of the Codex Alimentarius, ISO 22000 food safety management and the Kasavana and Smith menu engineering matrix.

How is the costed menu innovation plan from executive chef training used at work?

You can use it to relaunch a menu, brief owners on margin improvements and train your brigade on new dishes and controls.

How does culinary innovation and menu engineering training differ from a cookery diploma?

It joins advanced technique with the commercial and leadership responsibilities of an executive chef, rather than building basic cooking skills.