

HIRING A PRIVATE CHEF IN CALIFORNIA: THE ROLE TERMS SHEET

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Fill this in before you talk to any chef. Every line is something the chef's offer letter should state. The rules quoted are from California's Wage Order 15 (household occupations, 8 CCR 11150). Whether they apply to your role is a question for your employment adviser. This sheet tells you which questions to ask.

1. WHERE THE CHEF WORKS

Home address(es), and the share of the year at each: _____

Why it matters: the law of the place where the work is done generally governs the role. If a second home is outside California, ask your adviser which rules apply there.

2. LIVE-IN OR LIVE-OUT

☐ Live-in (the chef lives in housing you provide) ☐ Live-out

Why it matters: the overtime rules are different.

- *Live-out:* Wage Order 15 sets overtime at 1.5× past 8 hours in a workday or 40 in a workweek, and 2× past 12 hours in a workday. On the 7th consecutive day of work in a workweek it is 1.5× for the first 8 hours and 2× after that.
- *Live-in:* the chef must have at least 12 consecutive hours off duty in each 24, the working day spans no more than 12 hours, and there are at least 3 free hours inside that span. Hours worked past 9 in a workday, or during scheduled time off, are paid at 1.5×. A live-in chef works no more than 5 days in a workweek without a day off of at least 24 consecutive hours, except in an emergency. A 6th or 7th day is paid at 1.5× for the first 9 hours and 2× after that.

3. WHO REPORTS TO THE CHEF

Number of people the chef directs day to day: _____ Can the chef hire, fire, or recommend either? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why it matters: overtime doesn't apply to an exempt role. To be exempt as an executive, the chef must run the kitchen as a recognized part of the household, regularly direct the work of two or more other employees, have real say in hiring and firing, regularly use their own discretion and judgment, spend more than half their time on that work, and earn at least twice the state minimum wage for full-time work (\$70,304 a year in 2026). The salary test is easy to meet. The others decide it.

4. THE SCHEDULE

Days per week: _____ Usual start and finish: _____

Travel with the family? ☐ Yes ☐ No Overnight availability expected? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why it matters: time the chef spends under your control counts as work. If you expect the chef to be available overnight, tell your adviser.

5. PAY

Annual base salary: \$ _____

Housing, vehicle and other benefits, listed separately: _____

Why it matters: keep the base salary separate from housing and benefits. Overtime, where it applies, is calculated on the regular rate, and an all-in figure hides what the base actually is.

6. BEFORE THE START DATE

- ☐ Written offer stating exempt or non-exempt, and how any overtime is calculated
- ☐ For a non-exempt chef, California's written pay notice at hire (Labor Code 2810.5): pay and overtime rates, payday, the employer's name and address, the workers' compensation carrier, and sick leave rights
- ☐ Workers' compensation cover in place
- ☐ Payroll set up (your business manager may already run it)
- ☐ Form I-9 completed within 3 business days of the start date

This sheet is general information, not legal advice. For your own role, please speak to your employment adviser.

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