CHEFS

The first quarter of 2012 saw an increase in the amount of jobs advertised for chef roles in the hospitality industry. But while the Hospitality Employment Index (HEI) report, produced in partnership with People1st, indicated that there were more jobs compared to the same quarter in 2011, it also showed there were more applicants too.

But what does this mean for the people working on the ground, who are at the frontline of the recruitment process? Respected head chef Allan Picket, who oversees Plateau in London, gave us the lowdown on recruiting and employee retention, as well as his top tips for recruiters and applicants.

BIO

Allan Picket is the kind of head chef whose experience demands respect.

He started at the bottom and worked his way up from KFC to Michelin-starred restaurants. He learned from some of the best chefs in the business, including Michel Roux Junior and Marco Pierre White, and has worked at restaurants like the Michelin-starred L'Escargot and Aurora at the Great Eastern Hotel.
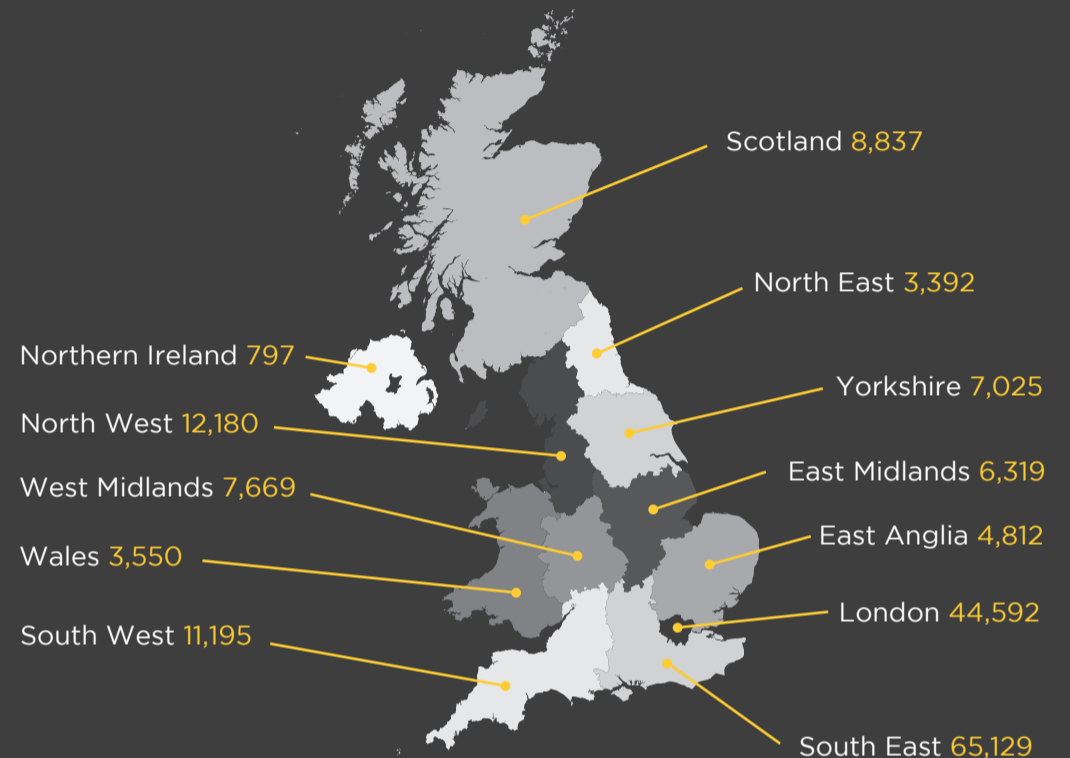
Allan's been head chef at D&D London's Plateau since May 2010 and is currently responsible for opening new restaurant The Old Bengal Warehouse. His role entails helping to oversee around 45 chefs on a daily basis and he's heavily involved in the Think Again campaign, which aims to inspire tomorrow's hospitality professionals.

You can follow Allan on Twitter at @chefallanp.

Chef Roles in 2012 Quarter One

In Q1 of 2012, there were 1,676 chef roles advertised and 21,824 applications.

You can find the right candidate in the right area by searching the active CVs and profiles on Caterer.com.

Scotland 8,837
North East 3,392
Northern Ireland 797
North West 12,180
Yorkshire 7,025
West Midlands 7,669
East Midlands 6,319
Wales 3,550
East Anglia 4,812
South West 11,195
London 44,592
South East 65,129

Each figure represents the number of searchable candidates for chef roles per region in the UK.

The State of the Industry

"With the amount of openings in London alone this summer, I do wonder how all the positions available will be filled. There is a skills shortage of sorts, but the thing I have learnt (and have the support to do) is to get myself into the colleges around the country to work with and support the learning curve of the students there."

Recruitment

"With any job ad, we tend to get a mixed bag of replies. Some are great and then some are pretty poor, to be honest. I can't remember the last time I received a letter asking me for a job. Those days have truly gone."

"Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn have come to the forefront over the last couple of years when it comes to recruiting. But what really works are ads on hospitality recruitment sites like Caterer.com: these bring us the best results when it comes to the amount of quality CVs we receive."

Employee Retention

"I hate to lose a member of staff. If one of my chefs wants to leave, then I always try and point them in the direction of a great kitchen within the company — we have such a diverse mix of kitchens to choose from.

"We try to invest in our staff. Training courses, stages in other great restaurants, supplier days and staff recognition awards are just a few of the many different things we do to try keep the guys here."

Top Tips for Recruiters

"Work with the local catering college so that you have the pick of the crop when they leave college in June."

"Network with other chefs and see if it brings anyone else in."

"Call the candidate yourself. Have a chat and then arrange the interview. I've worked in too many kitchens where a PA is left to set up interviews for chefs."

Top Tips for Applicants

"Pass your CV to a friend of the family and ask them to critique it. Get feedback and change it if need be. Make sure you spellcheck it as well: it's so simple, but I see so many CVs that haven't had a spellcheck."

"Always be ready to work a shift for free. Before I say yes, I want to see you in action, to see you if you can handle the pressure of what we do and also to see if you like what you see."

"Shave if you're a man; dress smart as first impressions are still the key factor that may get you the job you desire. Be honest about what you are and what you believe in. If you tell a couple of white lies you will get found out at some point."