

Recession drives chefs' salaries down, survey finds

By Dina Berta

NEW YORK (May 5, 2009) After steadily rising for the past four years, the average chef's salary has taken a recession-driven hit, according to a recent report from StarChefs.com, an information and e-business website.

Executive chefs saw their average salary drop 3.5 percent, from \$77,611 in 2007 to \$74,869 in 2008, the survey found. Pastry chefs were particularly hard hit. The average pastry chef's salary dropped 12.8 percent, from \$53,017 in 2007 to \$46,228 in 2008. Salaries for all other chefs' positions were also down, with chef-owners recording a 9.7-percent drop, and hourly line cooks reporting a 1.3-percent decline.

Nearly 1,000 people from across the country and in various culinary positions participated in StarChefs.com Fourth Annual Salary Survey, which was released Monday.

StarChefs.com blamed the nation's economy for the salary reductions, noting that many operators are trimming labor expenses by laying off employees, freezing bonuses and making pay cuts.

The survey reflects what some industry recruiters have been noticing in the field.

"Opportunities are tight right now," said Alfred Ehrlich, owner of the Kitchen Maestro recruiting firm in Forest Hills, N.Y. "The market is flooded with culinary professionals — some good, some not so good, but a few are great. I'm sure some restaurateurs feel they can get a bargain at this time."

The survey also noted that long hours are still the norm for chefs, who work an average of 53 hours a week.

[Click here to view the full study.](#)

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