

Issa “Izzy” Abunimeh

EXECUTIVE CHEF · CATERING & CONTRACT FOOD SERVICE

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SUMMARY

Executive chef and catering director with 25+ years in hospitality, including 7 years with Sodexo running operations at scale: events for up to 10,000 guests at the Museum of Science and Industry and 25,000 daily meals across Chicago Public Schools. Known for presentation and deep culinary knowledge, from high-volume production to plated multi-course dining. Builds, trains, and leads teams of up to 500.

CORE SKILLS

Menu development · High-volume production · Banquet and event catering · Team leadership and training · Food and labor cost control · Purchasing and inventory · POS systems · International cuisine · Plating and presentation · Beverage pairing · Special dietary menus

EXPERIENCE

Executive Chef, Alpine Country Club

Round Lake, IL · Jan 2023 — Present

- Lead a kitchen team of 17, directing all food preparation and culinary operations for the club.
- Overhauled menus and kitchen systems, raising member satisfaction.
- Plan and execute club events for up to 250 guests.
- Forecast food requirements and manage food and labor costs.

Owner & Private Chef, Chef Izzy

Chicago metro · 2021 — 2023

- Designed and executed 6–8 course special-occasion menus in clients' homes, showcasing a range of cooking techniques.
- Tailored each menu to client preferences and dietary requirements for clients across the Chicago metro area.

Exhibition Cook, Chartwells Higher Education

University of Illinois Chicago · 2016 — 2021

- Designed and cooked dishes at the exhibition station, preparing food in front of students.
- Supported production for the main student dining hall.

— EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED

Performance Chef, Pirch 2016 – 2017

- Prepared gourmet dishes on new luxury appliances from multiple manufacturers, demonstrating them to prospective buyers at high-end residential developments.
- Produced daily meal prep for 30+ employees.

Chef, Events A-La-Carte 2013 – 2016

- Cooked and developed menus for events at private homes and commercial venues.

Chef, Catering Manager & Trainer, Hospitality One 2008 – 2013

- Trained 10+ new hires weekly in cooking, service, and client relations for a hospitality staffing agency.
- Supervised staff at banquets and private events.

Sodexo (Corporate) 2001 – 2008

- Reported to the District Manager; handled hiring, staff management, vendor relationships, and food and beverage inventory.
- Produced pull sheets and diagrammed room setups for events.

Operations Manager, New Orleans Public Schools 2005 – 2008

- Managed food service operations across the entire New Orleans public school district.
- Led orientation for ~1,200 food service staff district-wide.

Director of Catering, Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago 2004 – 2005

- Led catering teams of 100–500 for events of 3,000 to 10,000 guests, combining a core staff with rental crews.

Food Service Manager, Chicago Public Schools 2001 – 2003

- Ran food service for 15 schools producing 25,000 meals daily, with 150–225 staff across sites.

— EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

Associate's Degree, International Food and Beverage Service · Notre Dame Center, 1995

BASSET Beverage Alcohol Sellers and Servers Education and Training

ServSafe Food Service Sanitation Manager, Illinois · valid through 2029

NutriKids Menu Planning Training