

Job Description

Function:	Technical
Position:	Site Head Chef – Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Job holder:	
Date (in job since):	
Immediate manager (N+1 Job title and name):	Head of Operations
Additional reporting line to:	
Position location:	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

We are looking for a talented and dynamic Site Head Chef who has experience of both a retail café environment as well as plated service to support the refinement and development of spaces at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The primary responsibilities of the Site Head Chef are to manage the day-to-day operations and culinary teams across the Gateway Café, Terrace Café, Staff Canteen, event spaces and mobile units. Additionally, the development and management of seasonal menus and activations will be a key part of this role.

This role requires creativity, flair, and innovation to continually evolve the food offering while championing RBGE's sustainability objectives. The Site Head Chef is responsible for developing inspiring, commercially successful menus that are driven by seasonality, making full use of locally sourced ingredients and produce grown within the RBGE Kitchen Garden. Working closely with the gardening team, the Site Head Chef plays an integral role in ensuring that forthcoming harvests help shape menu development and create a genuine field-to-fork experience for visitors.

Alongside menu creation, the role is accountable for managing food costs, stock control, purchasing, and labour budgets to deliver strong financial performance while maintaining exceptional quality standards. The position also demands strong leadership, with responsibility for coaching, training, and developing the kitchen team, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, creativity, and excellence. Through effective team development, innovative menu planning, and a commitment to sustainable practices such as carbon reduction and promoting sustainable eating, the Site Head Chef will work with the Innovation and Development chef to ensure our catering outlets remain at the forefront of contemporary, environmentally conscious hospitality while delivering an outstanding visitor experience.

This role is hands on and requires a dedicated individual who has a creative flair, is a foodie and is looking to put their stamp on a very unique, versatile and beautiful location.

Heritage portfolio was founded in Edinburgh in 2002 and since then has consistently produced outstanding catering and event services for private party, private dining, wedding and corporate clients throughout the UK. We have also offered exceptional 'in-house' cafe services in some of Britain's leading visitor attractions, where we have developed a loyal repeat customer base.

Many of our business clients and venue partners have worked with us, and only us, throughout the past decade and more, because they know they can put their faith in our unwavering commitment to the highest possible standards of cooking, service and imaginative event delivery.

Our mantra is 'building a business to be proud of', and as we grow and flourish in the world of bespoke events and weddings, we still remain true to our original ethos: to provide an amazing experience that goes beyond the remarkable food we serve.

1. Purpose of the Job – State concisely the aim of the job.

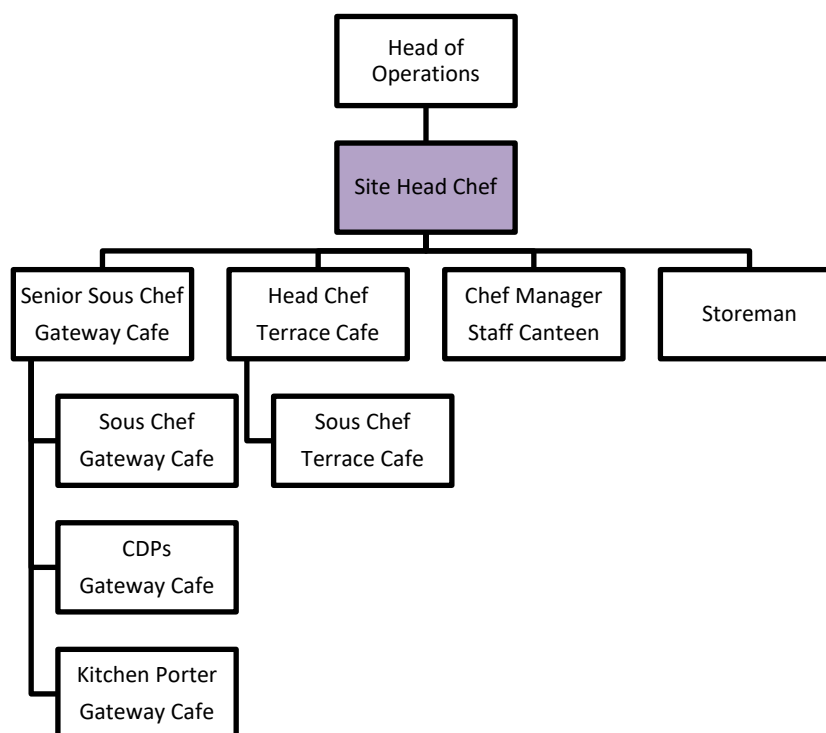
- Lead and take overall responsibility for the culinary operation across Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, setting high standards in quality, innovation, safety and service delivery.
- Develop and deliver innovative, seasonal menus that celebrate Scottish produce and ingredients grown within the RBGE Kitchen Garden, while maintaining variety and appeal across the day-to-day catering offer.
- Collaborate with the RBGE horticultural team to align growing plans with menu development, creating a genuine field-to-fork visitor experience.
- Present menu tastings to clients and support the development of new food concepts, activations and customer engagement opportunities.
- Plan and manage all food offers for programmed events, including Christmas at the Botanic, Botanic Lates and other seasonal experiences.
- Champion sustainability throughout the catering operation, driving responsible sourcing, waste reduction, carbon-conscious menu design and sustainable food practices.
- Manage menu costing, pricing, procurement and stock control to achieve commercial targets, including maintaining a monthly food cost target of 23%.
- Maximise contract profitability through effective control of food, labour and operational costs while delivering agreed business objectives.
- Create and manage rotas across all culinary teams, ensuring appropriate staffing levels, holiday cover and agency support where required.
- Lead, coach and develop a high-performing kitchen team, fostering a culture of accountability, continuous improvement and professional development.
- Maintain clear communication through regular team meetings, briefings and performance discussions.
- Oversee all kitchen operations, ensuring consistently high standards of food quality, presentation, service and customer satisfaction.
- Create and maintain a positive safety culture, ensuring compliance with all food safety, health and safety, legislative and company requirements.
- Lead by example with a proactive, hands-on approach, demonstrating energy, professionalism and commitment to operational excellence.
- Maintain and regularly review all Kitchen Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure they remain current, effective and compliant.
- Support the ongoing evolution of the RBGE hospitality offer through creativity, innovation and a commitment to delivering exceptional and environmentally responsible dining experiences.

2. Dimensions – Point out the main figures / indicators to give some insight on the “volumes” managed by the position and/or the activity of the Department.

Shared FY22/23 Revenue - Retail - £2.5m

- Terrace- £500k
- East Gate-£140k
- Gateway- £1.5m
- Other Activity: £500k
- Events £1m

3. Organisation chart – Indicate schematically the position of the job within the organisation. It is sufficient to indicate one hierarchical level above (including possible functional boss) and, if applicable, one below the position. In the horizontal direction, the other jobs reporting to the same superior should be indicated.



4. Context and main issues – Describe the most difficult types of problems the jobholder has to face (internal or external to Sodexo) and/or the regulations, guidelines, practices that are to be adhered to.

- Manage kitchen labour budgets in line with agreed structures, productivity targets and business demand.
- Maintain full compliance with Food Safety and Health & Safety requirements, including the annual review and update of all HACCP documentation.
- Lead the recruitment, induction, training and development of kitchen team members, building capability and supporting succession planning.
- Produce accurate menu costings for seasonal menu changes, events and key business activations, ensuring commercial targets are achieved.
- Ensure the food offer remains innovative, commercially competitive and aligned with the expectations and values of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

5. Main assignments – Indicate the main activities / duties to be conducted in the job.

Growth, Client and Customer Satisfaction

- Identify and deliver organic growth opportunities through innovation and new initiatives across retail and event catering.
- Work collaboratively with the Head of Operations to drive revenue growth and expand existing accounts.
- Ensure contractual commitments and agreed SLAs are consistently met through high-quality, cost-effective service delivery.
- Manage commercial performance, including P&L accountability, working closely with kitchen teams and adhering to established commercial processes.
- Develop the capability of kitchen and casual teams through effective training, coaching and succession planning.
- Provide leadership and support to kitchen teams, driving operational excellence and supporting the continued growth of the events business in line with the annual events programme.

Rigorous Management of Results

- Agree annual budgets with Finance and develop business plans aligned to the overall site strategy.
- Monitor, analyse and forecast financial performance to drive profitability and ensure robust account management.
- Maximise revenue and profitability through innovative solutions, operational efficiencies and continual service improvement.
- Champion Health & Safety by ensuring full compliance with Safeguard procedures and delivering appropriate briefings covering Food Safety, Health & Safety, Fire Safety, First Aid, and venue-specific requirements.
- Ensure compliance with all company, client and statutory policies, regulations, licences and qualifications.
- Maintain audit readiness and compliance across all inspections, including EHO visits and Unit Business Health Checks.
- Oversee employee training and development to meet statutory requirements, support career progression and strengthen succession plans.
- Maintain effective stock, asset and cash controls through regular audits and stock counts.
- Manage supplier relationships to ensure quality, value and service standards are achieved.
- Monitor performance against SLAs, challenging and supporting direct reports to implement corrective actions where required.

Leadership and People Management

- Recruit, induct, motivate, develop and retain high-performing teams.
- Lead performance excellence through coaching, mentoring and development of both technical and behavioural competencies.
- Provide clear direction and support to ensure operational objectives and business goals are achieved.
- Manage permanent, fixed-term and casual labour resources in line with productivity targets, policies and procedures.
- Take overall responsibility for the performance, development and wellbeing of direct reports.
- Build and maintain strong client relationships to support long-term, profitable partnerships.
- Lead regular team briefings to ensure effective communication and engagement across all levels.

Innovation and Change

- Demonstrate commitment to continuous professional development and industry best practice.
- Drive innovation and continuous improvement to enhance quality, efficiency and commercial performance.
- Support sustainability initiatives and strengthen culinary performance through collaboration with commercial partners and horticultural teams.

Brand Reputation

- Promote Heritage Portfolio as an employer of choice, building strong relationships internally, within local communities and with key stakeholders.
- Champion employee health, wellbeing and engagement.
- Drive service excellence while maintaining brand standards, compliance, corporate social responsibility and operational quality.

Planning and Organising

- Plan and prioritise resources, workload and operational activities effectively to ensure business needs are met while supporting colleague wellbeing and work-life balance.
- Ensure the appropriate number and calibre of employees are deployed across all operational and event activities.

6. Accountabilities – Give the 3 to 5 key outputs of the position vis-à-vis the organization; they should focus on end results, not duties or activities.

- Oversee the effective day-to-day operation of the kitchen, ensuring efficient service delivery and team performance.
- Maintain exceptional food quality and consistency throughout all stages of preparation, production and service.
- Develop and implement innovative menus and hospitality packages that meet customer expectations and business objectives.
- Ensure all dishes are produced in accordance with approved recipes, specifications and presentation standards.
- Plan, coordinate and oversee annual back-of-house maintenance and compliance checks, ensuring equipment and facilities remain fit for purpose.
- Maintain high standards of kitchen cleanliness, food safety and health & safety compliance at all times.
- Manage stock control processes, including accurate stocktaking and inventory management.
- Work closely with retail managers to ensure seamless operations and consistently high service standards.
- Monitor, review and respond to customer feedback, implementing improvements where required.
- Ensure all kitchen equipment is maintained in good working order and that faults are reported and resolved promptly.
- Manage, coach and develop team performance, providing regular feedback and support to promote engagement and continuous improvement.

7. Person Specification – Indicate the skills, knowledge and experience that the job holder should require to conduct the role effectively

Essential Knowledge, Skills and Experience

- Proven experience operating at Head Chef level within a high-volume catering, hospitality or events environment.
- Strong menu development and planning skills, including seasonal menu cycles and product innovation.
- Ability to accurately cost menus and manage food margins to achieve commercial objectives.
- Demonstrable leadership and people management experience, with the ability to motivate, develop and build high-performing teams.
- Excellent culinary skills with a creative and innovative approach to food development.
- Strong organisational, planning and prioritisation skills.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Competent IT skills, including the use of catering, stock control and menu management systems.
- High standards of personal presentation and professionalism.
- Intermediate Food Hygiene certification.

Desirable

- Experience managing catering operations across multiple venues, outlets or food concepts.
- Experience using budgeting, forecasting and menu planning tools.
- IOSH Managing Safely qualification (or equivalent).
- Advanced Food Hygiene certification.

8. Competencies – Indicate which of the Sodexo core competencies and any professional competencies that the role requires

Growth, Client & Customer Satisfaction / Quality
of Services provided

Rigorous management of results

Brand Notoriety

Commercial Awareness

Employee Engagement

Leadership & People Management

Innovation and Change

Analysis and Decision Making

Industry Acumen

Learning & Development

9. Management Approval – To be completed by document owner

Version	V4	Date	04/08/2026
Document Owner			

10. Employee Approval – To be completed by employee

Employee Name		Date	
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