

10 QUESTIONS

FOR YOUR PERSONAL CHEF

Having a personal chef can change your life for the better—but only if you ask for what you really want. *Worth* consulted Connecticut-based private chef Adam Cobb, U.S. Personal Chef Association president Gail Kenagy and household management expert Teresa Leigh to find out the interview questions you might not think to ask.



1 How local can you get? If locally sourced food is important to you, make sure that you and your chef see eye-to-eye on the issue. The upside to staying local: The food is fresher, more environmentally friendly and generally supports family-owned small businesses. The downside: It's sometimes pricier and limits the types of produce you get depending on the season.

2 Would you help manage a kitchen garden? Many personal chefs have expanded their role to help plant and maintain gardens for clients who care about fresh and organic produce. Even if your chef doesn't have a background in horticulture, he may be willing to work with a gardener for you.

3 What kind of special diet experience do you have? Most people want a chef to say that he has experience preparing meals that meet their needs. But your focus should be on his honesty and openness to trying new diets. If he ticks off a



laundry list that includes everything from Atkins to low-cal, ask how experienced he is with each.

4 Will you give an example of a dessert you'd make that I can eat? Whether a chef claims experience with your diet or not, he should be able to improvise a recipe that meets your needs. That ability is a better indicator of whether you'll be satisfied than a three-page C.V.

5 What are your favorite specialties? You want a chef whose talents you can fully appreciate, so make sure his repertoire matches your tastes. If you have a more traditional palate, for example, an expert in Asian fusion dishes probably won't be right for you. Be wary of a chef who claims to specialize in everything or who parrots the dishes you say are your favorites.

6 Do you have a good driving record? If your chef plans to do grocery



shopping for you, particularly if he plans to use your car, you could be liable if he gets in an accident. Minimize your financial risk by making sure that your chef has a clean driving record.

7 Are you insured? Since your chef will be spending a lot of time in your kitchen dealing with knives, flames and potential spills, you should protect yourself from liability by making sure that he is insured. Most employers who have a chef working on a full-time basis will add the chef to their insurance plan.

8 Will you prepare a sample meal? It's not just an opportunity to sample his cooking. Use the occasion to see how he handles money and interacts with your family. If you have children, is he at ease around them and vice versa? Offer to reimburse the cost of the meal. Does the chef provide receipts without being asked and leave you the extra food?



9 Would you consider a stage in a high-end restaurant? If you're willing to part with your chef for a few nights a week, a stage, or internship, at an upscale restaurant can provide him the chance to expand his repertoire and keep abreast of food trends.

10 What's your feeling on mac 'n' cheese? Especially if you have young children, be upfront about the kinds of meals you and your family will want. A chef well-versed in French cuisine shouldn't have trouble whipping up spaghetti and chicken fingers. Whether he's happy to make such fare may be another matter. Your chef shouldn't become frustrated by frequent requests for comfort food. **W**

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