

Restaurant Manager Job Prospects in the USA: Where the Jobs Are, What They Pay, and Which Roles Have Six-Figure Potential

The U.S. restaurant manager market is large, but the six-figure lane is much narrower than the job-title count suggests. The Bureau of Labor Statistics groups restaurant managers under the broader occupation “Food Service Managers.” In 2024, there were **352,800 food service manager jobs** in the United States. The occupation is projected to grow **6 percent from 2024 to 2034**, with about **42,000 openings per year** on average over the decade. The median annual wage was **\$65,310** in May 2024, while the highest 10 percent earned **more than \$105,420**.

That last number is the key. Six-figure restaurant manager jobs exist, but they are not the middle of the market. They sit in the upper band, where the employer is paying for greater operating burden: higher volume, larger teams, more managers, stronger labour control, cost accountability, guest recovery, standards discipline, and cleaner reporting. This market overview supports the senior-operator argument in Part 2: experienced managers are not trying to prove they can manage; they are trying to prove that their operating control is expensive enough to price above the median.

The National Restaurant Manager Market at a Glance

Market category	Best available statistic	Pay signal	Number of jobs / openings	What it means for a serious manager	Requirements and proof employers look for
Total U.S. food service manager occupation	352,800 jobs in 2024	Median annual wage: \$65,310; top 10% earned more than \$105,420	42,000 projected openings per year, 2024–2034	Large national market, but six-figure roles are upper-band roles, not average restaurant manager jobs	Several years of food-service experience; proof of budget, labour, staffing, standards, and operating control
Job outlook	6% projected growth from 2024–2034	Growth is faster than the 3% average for all occupations	Employment projected to rise from 352,800 to 375,300 jobs	Opportunity exists, but growth does not automatically equal	Candidate must show scope, not just tenure: sales volume, team size,

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Food services and drinking places	202,590 food service managers in 2023	Mean annual wage: \$66,620	Largest wage-and-salary pool for restaurant manager jobs	premium compensation This is the broad restaurant/bar market; most jobs are not six-figure unless the role is high-volume, GM-level, or multi-unit	manager count, and authority level Labour deployment, cost control, staffing, standards, guest recovery, and reporting discipline
Restaurants and other eating places	181,690 food service managers in 2023	Mean annual wage: \$65,570	Major restaurant-specific employment pool	Large opportunity base, but title alone has weak pricing power	Candidate must define annual sales, headcount, manager count, service model, and actual authority
Full-service restaurants	86,960 food service managers in 2023	Mean annual wage: \$72,190	Large but more selective than the total restaurant category	Stronger proving ground because service complexity, guest recovery, table turns, beverage control, and floor execution matter more	Throughput control, FOH/BOH coordination, comp control, staffing discipline, and standards under pressure

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Intro / lower-level restaurant manager jobs	BLS does not isolate “entry-level restaurant manager” separately; lowest 10% of food service managers earned below \$42,380 in May 2024	Below \$42,380 for bottom 10%	Included inside the 352,800 total jobs	This is not the target market for a six-figure candidate; these roles are useful only as contrast	Basic supervision, scheduling, guest handling, sanitation awareness, and early management experience
Independent restaurant manager / owner-operator lane	BLS reports 30% of food service managers were self-employed workers in 2024	Pay varies widely because self-employed income is not the same as wage-and-salary pay	Applying BLS’s 30% share to 352,800 total jobs suggests roughly 105,800 self-employed food service managers	Independent restaurants can create high authority but uneven pay. The question is whether the operating proof transfers to a larger employer	P&L literacy, vendor control, cash discipline, staffing systems, compliance, food cost, and full-unit accountability
Hotel restaurant / traveler accommodation manager jobs	Traveler accommodation represented 3% of food service manager employment in 2024	Median annual wage in traveler accommodation: \$79,280	Applying BLS’s 3% share to 352,800 jobs suggests roughly 10,600 jobs	Hotel F&B is a stronger premium lane than ordinary restaurants because it adds rooms, banquets, events, departments, brand standards, and guest-recovery complexity	Cross-department coordination, banquet/event execution, labour planning, brand standards, reporting, and multi-outlet reliability

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Casino hotel restaurant manager jobs	1,680 food service managers in casino hotels in 2023	Mean annual wage: \$88,040	Small job pool, stronger pay signal	Casino hotels are a premium-adjacent lane: fewer jobs, but higher complexity and higher wage signal	24/7 scheduling, multi-outlet discipline, high guest volume, security coordination, compliance, beverage control, and manager-of-manager readiness
Gambling industries food service manager jobs	790 food service managers in gambling industries in 2023	Mean annual wage: \$89,170	Very small job pool	This is not a high-volume job-count market; it is a higher-complexity, higher-control market	Regulated-environment judgment, scheduling discipline, guest recovery, cash/security awareness, and cross-functional coordination
Amusement, gambling, and recreation industries	5,130 food service managers in 2023	Mean annual wage: \$84,180	Smaller pool than restaurants; stronger wage signal	Useful for managers who can run food service inside a larger guest-experience operation	Event-based staffing, high-traffic execution, volume forecasting, cross-functional handoffs, and guest recovery
Special food services	16,740 food service managers in 2023	Mean annual wage: \$76,890	Smaller than restaurants but stronger than broad	Includes catering and contract-style food	Production planning, contract execution,

Market category	Best available statistic	Pay signal	Number of jobs / openings	What it means for a serious manager	Requirements and proof employers look for
			restaurant averages	service; better for operators with logistics, production, and event discipline	delivery timing, purchasing discipline, staffing by event, and client accountability
Educational services / institutional food service	Educational services represented 2% of food service manager employment in 2024	Median annual wage: \$77,240	Applying BLS's 2% share to 352,800 jobs suggests roughly 7,100 jobs	Usually more stable and systemized than restaurants, but not always the highest-upside hospitality lane	Compliance, sanitation, production planning, procurement, budget discipline, staffing, and institutional reporting
Current broader vacancy pressure	JOLTS reported 6.866 million total U.S. job openings in March 2026; accommodation and food services had a 5.5% job openings rate	Industry-wide vacancy pressure, not manager-specific	JOLTS is not manager-specific, but it shows broader hiring pressure in accommodation and food services	Senior managers can use this context carefully: the industry still has staffing pressure, but manager-level leverage must be tied to proof	Staffing stabilization, bench-building, onboarding repair, schedule control, and retention discipline
Occupational title spread	O*NET lists titles including Banquet Manager, Catering Manager, Dining Service Director, Food and Beverage	Title alone does not predict pay	Same occupational family spans restaurants, hotels, institutions,	"Restaurant manager" is too broad. Pay depends on scope, not title	Define service model, sales volume, headcount, manager

Market category	Best available statistic	Pay signal	Number of jobs / openings	What it means for a serious manager	Requirements and proof employers look for
Formal baseline requirements	Manager, Food Service Director, Kitchen Manager, and Restaurant Manager		catering, and F&B departments		count, cost authority, labour authority, and reporting line
	BLS lists high school diploma or equivalent as typical entry-level education, with less than five years of related work experience and short-term on-the-job training	Education alone does not price a candidate into the six-figure band	Applies occupation-wide	For senior candidates, formal education matters less than operating proof, unless targeting upscale restaurants, hotels, or corporate systems	Several years of experience; employers may prefer postsecondary hospitality, culinary, food service management, or business education for upscale restaurants and hotels
	BLS lists hiring, training, discipline, ordering, kitchen oversight, inspections, food safety, complaint handling, scheduling, budgets, payroll records, and performance/customer-service standards	Baseline duties are not premium proof	Applies occupation-wide	A six-figure candidate must show what what improved under those duties, not merely that they performed them	Baseline-action-result proof: what was broken, what authority the manager had, what changed, and what result held

What the Numbers Actually Say

The restaurant manager market is broad, but not evenly valuable. The official national occupation count is large: **352,800 food service manager jobs** in 2024, with **42,000 projected openings per year** over the 2024–2034 decade. That confirms that restaurant management is not a tiny or disappearing field. The job outlook is also stronger than the all-occupation average, with projected employment growth of **6 percent** compared with **3 percent** for all occupations.

However, the wage data shows a clear split between the ordinary market and the premium market. The median food service manager earned **\$65,310** in May 2024, while the highest 10 percent earned **more than \$105,420**. That means the six-figure manager is not an average restaurant manager with a better resume. They are an upper-band operator who has to justify why they belong above the midpoint.

That is why job count alone is misleading. Restaurants and other eating places employed **181,690 food service managers** in 2023, with a mean annual wage of **\$65,570**. Full-service restaurants employed **86,960 food service managers**, with a higher mean annual wage of **\$72,190**. The full-service segment is still not automatically six-figure, but it is a better proving ground because the work exposes more of the operating complexity serious employers value: floor control, kitchen timing, guest recovery, labour deployment, standards discipline, and manager follow-through.

Where Six-Figure Potential Is Stronger

The strongest pay signals do not always come from the largest job pools. Casino hotels employed only **1,680 food service managers** in 2023, but the mean annual wage was **\$88,040**. Gambling industries employed only **790 food service managers**, but the mean annual wage was **\$89,170**. Those are much smaller markets than ordinary restaurants, but they carry stronger premium signals because the environments are more complex, more regulated, more cross-functional, and more demanding.

Hotel and traveler accommodation roles are another important premium-adjacent lane. BLS reports that traveler accommodation represented **3 percent** of food service manager employment in 2024, and the median annual wage in traveler accommodation was **\$79,280**. This does not mean every hotel restaurant manager earns close to six figures. It means hotel F&B can carry more pricing power than ordinary restaurant management because the manager may have to coordinate with rooms, banquets, events, front desk, housekeeping, executive leadership, brand standards, and guest recovery systems.

Special food services also show a stronger wage signal than ordinary restaurant categories. In 2023, special food services employed **16,740 food service managers** and reported a mean annual wage of **\$76,890**. This lane can include catering and contract-style food service, where the management burden is less about ordinary restaurant floor command and more about logistics, production planning, labour by event, purchasing, delivery timing, and client-facing accountability.

Independent Restaurant Manager Jobs Are Harder to Price

Independent restaurant management is difficult to measure cleanly because federal data does not separate “independent restaurant manager” from chain restaurant manager in a simple public category. The closest official signal is that BLS reports **30 percent** of food service managers were self-employed workers in 2024. Applied to the total occupation count of **352,800 jobs**, that suggests roughly **105,800 self-employed food service managers**, but that number should be

treated as an estimate derived from the BLS employment-share table, not as a direct count of independent restaurant manager job postings.

For a senior operator, independent restaurant experience can cut both ways. It may show real authority: vendor management, food cost, staffing, compliance, cash flow, marketing awareness, local reputation, and full-unit decision-making. But it can also be hard for outside employers to price if the candidate cannot document sales volume, cost lines, labour structure, profitability, team size, manager count, and operating improvements. Independent experience is valuable when it translates into proof. It is weaker when it reads only as survival.

Intro Jobs Are Not the Target Market

The entry-level restaurant manager market should be treated as contrast, not as the target audience. BLS does not isolate “intro restaurant manager” as its own category, but the wage distribution gives a useful signal: the lowest 10 percent of food service managers earned less than **\$42,380** in May 2024. Those roles likely include lower-authority, lower-volume, assistant-manager, early-career, or limited-control management positions.

This matters because a six-figure candidate should not sound like they are applying for an intro job. They should not lead with availability, effort, basic supervision, or general hospitality language. The premium candidate has to lead with operating scope: annual sales, weekly sales, guest volume, team size, manager count, labour responsibility, cost accountability, service complexity, and measurable outcomes.

Requirements: What the Market Officially Requires vs. What Premium Employers Actually Price

The formal entry requirement is not difficult. BLS lists a **high school diploma or equivalent** as the typical entry-level education for food service managers, with related work experience and short-term on-the-job training. BLS also notes that some employers prefer postsecondary education for upscale restaurants and hotels, and that some companies recruit management trainees from hospitality or food service management programs.

That formal baseline does not explain six-figure pay. The premium market prices operating proof, not only education. O*NET’s occupational summary is useful because it shows how broad the role family is: reported titles include Banquet Manager, Catering Manager, Dining Service Director, Food and Beverage Manager, Food Service Director, Kitchen Manager, and Restaurant Manager. The same occupational family can include very different levels of scope.

For a high-paying employer, the real requirements are more specific:

Requirement area	What the ordinary candidate says	What the six-figure candidate must prove
Sales volume	"I managed a busy restaurant."	"I ran a \$X annual-volume unit / \$X average weekly sales unit."
Team size	"I supervised staff."	"I led X hourly employees and X managers across X dayparts/outlets."
Labour	"I controlled labour."	"I corrected labour leakage by daypart, reduced recurring overtime, and protected service metrics."
Staffing	"I hired and trained employees."	"I identified early-washout points, rebuilt onboarding ownership, and improved retention/bench stability."
Cost control	"I watched food cost."	"I corrected waste, variance, comp leakage, void misuse, beverage loss, or inventory error patterns."
Standards	"I maintained high standards."	"I tied line checks, walkthroughs, close quality, and manager accountability to fewer remakes, cleaner opens, or stronger inspection readiness."
Guest recovery	"I handled complaints."	"I reduced preventable recovery cost by improving escalation timing, table-touch discipline, and repeat-issue tracking."
Management	"I worked with other managers."	"I improved manager follow-through, shift ownership, handoff discipline, and upward reporting."
Reporting	"I communicated with leadership."	"I delivered weekly operating updates on labour, staffing, standards drift, cost variance, and corrective actions."
Concept fit	"I can work in any restaurant."	"My strongest fit is high-volume full-service, hotel F&B, casino F&B, multi-unit casual, premium casual, catering/contract, or institutional food service because..."

Vacancy Pressure and What It Means

The broad accommodation and food services labour market still shows pressure. JOLTS reported **6.866 million total U.S. job openings** in March 2026, and the accommodation and food services job openings rate was **5.5 percent**. This is not a restaurant-manager-specific vacancy count, so it should not be used to claim there are hundreds of thousands of manager openings. It should be used more carefully: the broader industry still has open-role pressure, and employers still need leaders who can stabilize staffing and reduce operational fragility.

For the six-figure restaurant manager, that means staffing proof matters. A candidate who only says "it is hard to find good people" is not adding insight. Every operator already knows the market is difficult. The premium candidate explains how they reduced the damage: better onboarding ownership, better trainer selection, fewer weak closes, stronger first-30-day follow-up, clearer schedule accountability, and stronger bench planning.

The Job-Prospect Bottom Line

The U.S. restaurant manager market has plenty of openings, but not every opening is worth the same. The broad occupation has **352,800 jobs**, projected growth of **6 percent**, and **42,000 annual openings**. That is a healthy market. But the median pay of **\$65,310** shows that the average role is not a six-figure role. Six-figure pay sits closer to the top band, where the highest 10 percent of food service managers earn more than **\$105,420**.

The strongest opportunities for premium candidates are likely to sit in higher-complexity environments: high-volume full-service restaurants, hotel food and beverage, casino hotels, gambling-adjacent hospitality, special food services, contract dining, catering, institutional food service, multi-unit operations, and premium independent restaurants with real volume. The common thread is not the title. It is the operating burden.

For a senior restaurant manager, the opportunity is not simply “there are jobs.” The opportunity is that employers still need operators who can make hard businesses less fragile. The candidate who can prove labour control, staffing stability, cost discipline, guest recovery, standards accountability, and manager follow-through is not competing as an average restaurant manager. They are competing as an upper-band operator.

That is where the six-figure market begins.