

The battle of female chefs in facing dominant social norms

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Abstrak

Many traditions in the world require women to master cooking at an early age. Cooking in a traditional kitchen (domestic area) – always attached to women – is often interpreted as an obligation and a form of women’s service to their families, spouses, children, and other people in their lives. Hence, cooking in the domestic space is an undefined job. When these activities shift to a public space, it becomes a profession, with a professional work area, and the workers are predicated professional chefs. Ironically, the professional kitchen, which people assume, could easily be run by women, is controlled and dominated by men. This study focuses on the experience of female chefs in professional kitchens, noting the problems they face and often hinder their career paths, explaining their low numbers. This qualitative study is a feminist perspective with data collection methods from in-depth interviews with female chefs in professional kitchens. The analysis of the primary data was conducted by applying the theory of gender at work developed by Aruna Rao. Our research shows that female chefs face multiple barriers working in professional kitchens: both subtle and overt discrimination, various types of oppression, conscious or otherwise, influencing their decisions when choosing between work and family. This study shows that during their careers female chefs frequently face various gender-based obstacles arising from ability, resources and support, social norms, and deep structures, as well as rules and policy.