

Employing 14–17 Year Olds in Restaurants: What Work Can They Do?

16- and 17-Year-Olds

16- and 17-year-olds may do most kinds of work in restaurants, but are **prohibited** from doing the following types of hazardous work:

- **Working with power-driven meat processing machines.**

This includes meat slicers, saws, patty forming machines, grinders, or choppers. Employees under 18 are not permitted to operate, feed, set-up, adjust, repair, or clean such machines.

- **Working with commercial mixers and certain power-driven bakery machines.**

Employees under 18 are not permitted to operate, feed, set-up, adjust, repair, or clean such machines.

- **Driving.**

Generally, no employee under 18 may drive on the job or serve as an outside helper on a motor vehicle on a public road. But 17-year-olds who meet certain specific requirements may drive in very limited situations. Such minors are prohibited from making time-sensitive deliveries (such as pizza deliveries or other trips where time is of the essence) and from driving at night.

See the Dept. of Labor's Fact Sheet #34, www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/shdfs34.htm.

However:

- Cooking on a grill or fryer is **not** prohibited.
- Use of non-powered knives is **not** prohibited.
- Selling to motorists from a window-counter is **not** prohibited.

14- and 15-Year-Olds

14- and 15-year-olds may work in restaurants and quick-service food establishments, but only in certain jobs:

- They **may** do kitchen work and other work involved in preparing food and beverages, including the operation of dishwashers, toasters, milk shake blenders, coffee grinders, etc.
- They **may** do cashiering, table service, “busing,” and clean-up work using vacuum cleaners and floor waxers.
- They **may** perform limited cooking duties involving electric or gas grills that do not involve cooking over an open flame. They may also cook with deep fat fryers that automatically raise and lower the “baskets” into and out of the hot grease of oil. They may not operate NIECO broilers, rotisseries, pressure cookers or fryolators.
- They **may** dispense food from cafeteria lines and steam tables and heat food in microwave ovens that do not have the capacity to heat food over 140°F.
- They **may** clean kitchen surfaces and non-power-driven equipment, and filter, transport and dispose of cooking oil, but only when the temperature of the surface and oils do not exceed 100° F.
- They **may not** perform any baking activities.
- They **may not** operate power-driven lawn mowers or cutters.
- They **may not** work in freezers or meat coolers.
- They also **may not** do any of the work prohibited for 16- and 17-year-olds, described above.

See the enclosed factsheet, *Facts for Employers: Safer Jobs for Teens* for important information on work permits and on the hours teens can work.