

Chocolatier interview questions

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What to expect

Chocolatier interviews mix a conversation with a practical assessment. Employers want to see that you can hold a temper, work clean, and keep a range consistent when orders shift.

- **Technical and craft:** Questions on tempering, fillings, enrobing and finishing, often followed by a bench trial where you temper and mould on the spot.
- **Food safety and compliance:** Allergen control, labelling, storage temperatures and hygiene practice under a food safety program and council inspection.
- **Process and production:** How you plan a day's production, manage batch sizes, and set up for seasonal peaks.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of a failed batch, a tight deadline, or a quality problem you caught before it left the kitchen.
- **Client-facing and retail:** Explaining products, handling allergies and dietary questions, and supporting counter sales in a retail setting.

Usually a short phone or in-person screening first, then a sit-down with the head chocolatier or production manager covering your background and food safety knowledge. Most employers then run a paid or unpaid practical trial of an hour or more, tempering, moulding, dipping or finishing, sometimes alongside the existing team. Retail-facing roles often add a short counter scenario or a chat with the shop manager.

1. Walk me through how you temper chocolate from start to finish.

Why they ask

Tempering is the core skill of the role, and the interviewer is checking that you understand why each stage exists, not just that you can repeat a machine setting.

How to structure your answer

Give an ordered walk-through. Name each stage, the reason for it, and the check you use to confirm you are on track before moving on.

Example answer

"I start by checking the couverture is in good condition and the room is cool and dry. I melt it gently to around 45 to 50 degrees Celsius, then cool it while seeding with tempered chocolate or tabling it, stirring steadily until it drops to roughly 27 degrees. From there I bring it back up to working temperature, about 31 for dark and 29 for milk, and hold it there in the machine. I test with a spatula dipped and set aside; if it sets glossy and snaps cleanly within a few minutes, it is ready to mould or enrobe."

2. Your chocolate comes out dull and streaky with no snap. What do you check?

Why they ask

Fault finding under time pressure separates a chocolatier who understands crystallisation from someone following a recipe card.

How to structure your answer

Work from symptom to likely cause, rule out the cheapest explanations first, then say how you fix the batch.

Example answer

"Dull and streaky usually means the chocolate is out of temper or has been temperature shocked. I would first check the working temperature with a digital thermometer rather than trusting the machine display. Then I would look for water contact, a damp bowl or a wet spatula, and check whether the moulds were cold or the room was too warm or too humid. If it is simply under tempered, I reseed and take it through the curve again rather than adding fresh chocolate and hoping. I would also check the cooling area, because setting too fast or too slow throws the finish out."

3. Tell me about a time a batch did not meet your standard.

Why they ask

The interviewer wants to know you catch problems yourself and own the fix, because a substandard batch that reaches a customer damages the brand.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: the situation, what you were making, what you did about it, and what changed afterwards.

Example answer

"We were finishing a large gift order and one tray of praline bonbons came out with a slightly soft shell. Rather than send it, I stopped the run and checked back through the day. The filling had been piped too warm, so it was softening the shell from the inside. I moved the remaining trays to a cooler part of the kitchen, re-tempered the couverture, and reworked that tray into a mixed box we could sell at the counter. Afterwards I added a cooling step to the filling routine so it sets before it goes near the mould."

4. How do you manage allergens and labelling in a kitchen handling nuts, dairy and soy?

Why they ask

Allergen control is a legal obligation under the food safety standards, and getting it wrong is the fastest way for a chocolatier to end up in front of the council.

How to structure your answer

Lead with the requirement, then describe your day-to-day practice: separation, cleaning, records and labels.

Example answer

"Everything runs off our food safety program. I keep nut products on separate boards and utensils, and clean down fully between runs, not just a wipe over. Where a product contains a declared allergen, I check the label against the recipe before anything is packed, and I record the batch so we can trace it if a customer raises a question. I also ask the same questions at the counter, because someone buying a gift box needs a clear answer on whether a piece contains nuts or dairy."

5. A cafe customer doubles their order two days before a peak period and you are already at capacity. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a judgement question. Employers want to see how you prioritise and communicate rather than saying yes to everything and missing the deadline.

How to structure your answer

Assess the work, prioritise what is fixed, be honest about limits, and offer an alternative.

Example answer

"I would work out what the change actually adds in production time before answering. If I can meet it by moving a lower-priority line to the following week, I would do that and confirm the new delivery time in writing. If I genuinely cannot, I would tell the customer straight away rather than risk a late or rushed order, and offer what I can do: part of the order on time, a simpler range from existing stock, or a later date. I would also flag it to the production manager so the decision is not just mine."

6. A customer tells you the box of chocolates they bought tasted grainy. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Retail-facing chocolatiers carry the brand at the counter, so the interviewer is testing both product knowledge and how you treat a complaint.

How to structure your answer

Listen and take it seriously, ask the questions that identify the cause, then resolve it and feed the information back to production.

Example answer

"I would thank them for telling us and ask when they bought it and how it was stored, because grainy texture often points to a filling that has been too warm or a ganache that split. I would replace the box or refund it on the spot, then write down the batch details so the kitchen can check that run. If other customers report the same thing, that changes it from a one-off into a production issue, and I would raise it with the head chocolatier the same day."