

CASE

STUDY

Competencies for

Food Graduate Careers

Specifications or Quality Systems Technologist



Name: Natasha Blazey

Degree Course studied: BSc (Hons) Food Science with Industrial Year

Place Studied: University of Nottingham

Date Graduated: July 2021

First Graduate Job: Technical Compliance Coordinator, Compleat Food Group

When did you first become interested in Food Science?

I was actually looking at the journalism and I was interested in food, so I was looking at being a restaurant critic. Then it developed into science communication and becoming a science journalist. And then I was looking courses and found food science. This looks right up my street and then it's kind of that's just what I wanted to focus on. I did A-levels in Biology Chemistry and English Literature.

What was Uni Study Like?

Studying the course, I loved the variety of it. With straight food science you do more microbiology, which I actually really enjoyed and the practical side. I learned a range of communication skills and flexibility which I need in my graduate job now.

When I was applying for university, they'd just announced that Brexit was happening. So I was surprised by the constant rapid changes almost in real time, that affects every industry including the food industry.

My industrial year was with International Flavours and Fragrances (IFF). It was a really good experience for me, and it was tough, but I really enjoyed it and knew that I enjoy the practical side and being hands on. IFF actually supply some of our flavours now in my graduate job, so it's nice to see the link.

What are the day-to-day routines in your job?

In Technical and in particular in a small site, you have to be a jack of all trades. I liaise with suppliers, the microbiology lab and investigate any complaints that come in. For document control, any updates comes to me first and I reissue out and make sure that everyone's using the correct version. I lead our management taste panel and carry out internal audits and lead the traceability portion of external audits. You always have to evolve. So for example, it was a completely all vegan site. But now we've started handling prawns and squid.

What advice would you give to someone thinking about Food Science as a career?

See how much experience you can get as possible in the industry, even if it's just a day or week, not just in food manufacturing but also retail or the hospitality industry. Also ask questions. Build connections. We've always been told, even though the industry is huge, it's small.

This material has been developed with industry involvement to support graduates, employers and degree educators. <https://www.ifst.org/resources/competencies-food-graduate-careers>