

2017/8 Summer students at Formula Foods, GreenMount Foods, Prolife Foods and Invita

Over summer, the food processing industry employs university students to provide additional technical resources during a busy time of year, and help with projects that might otherwise be postponed. For the students, the work experience gives them valuable experience implementing the theory they have learnt at university, an insight into the career options available to them once they graduate, and valuable networking opportunities.

Three of students who shared their experiences, had completed the second year of their food tech degrees at Massey.

Laura McKie worked as a Lab Technician at **Formula Foods**. She was supervised by **Dave Rout** and several other members in the technical team.

Laura did a wide variety of work, including analytical testing of water activity, viscosity, total solids and pH; shelf life trials, including analysis and taste paneling; and working in QC, testing many of the flavours and ingredient blends produced at Formula Foods. She also assisted in the R&D area, resulting in her own specific project.

Laura says: "I feel so grateful for the opportunity I was given to work at Formula Foods. Over the course of the summer, I have learned so much about the food industry and work environment. I was able to use some of the knowledge gained from my university studies over the past two years. Additionally, I learnt hands-on practical skills with regards to the tests performed which will help me considerably in the next couple of years at university. Working at a medium-sized company was valuable, as I was able to work in many different areas that the company specialises in. I was able to meet many people working there from a variety of backgrounds in the industry."

Dave Rout reports that Formula Foods has employed uni students for many years. "I enjoy teaching food technology students the hands-on practical work which they will come to experience in the food industry. We usually also have a chemical engineering student employed in our manufacturing department, which helps over the busy summer months. Occasionally a student may work for longer periods, or in a technical role permanently. From a business aspect it helps with spreading the workload over the summer and also staff holidays."



Nicole Harvey worked at **GreenMount Foods** in Hastings, under the guidance of **Technical Manager Sandra Chambers**.

Nicole spent time working in the factory, to learn how each of the different processes works, and did a broad range of QA and product development work. She oversaw quality control checks, did internal audits, conducted QA tests on incoming ingredients and finished products, wrote Certificates of Analysis and Compliance for customers, updated customer specifications, developed a new sauce and created a Food Defence Plan.

Nicole says “Working at GreenMount Foods has enabled me to get hands-on experience in a variety of different roles in both product development and quality control. This has been an

important learning experience for me as it has enabled me to get a 'taste' of what a Food Technologist can do. I have been unsure while studying towards my degree whether I want to major in Process Engineering or Product Development and this work experience has shown me what the different fields require. By working on both the factory floor and in the technical team, I was able to get a strong understanding of how a company is structured and the importance of communication between the different roles and departments. I have enjoyed applying the knowledge that I have learnt from studying and seeing it all in action in the factory. I have also greatly appreciated the knowledge that has been passed on to me by Sandra in both understanding how important quality control is within a company and the process you must go through in order to develop a new product."

Sandra reports that employing a student has a multitude of benefits for the employer. "As a small company, we have a very small technical team, with two of us carrying out all the Quality, Food Safety, Compliance and Product Development functions. Employing Nicole has enabled us to increase our output in all of these areas and to complete some projects that we were unable to free up the time to do. Employing a student also gives the employer a chance to trial potential future employees. We have also been able to keep current with what they are learning as part of their degree. I also believe that whenever possible, as NZIFST members, we have a responsibility to give students the chance to work in industry and to mentor them. This is the ideal way to enable them to understand what types of jobs are out there and helps them decide where their passion lies."

Nicole recommends all students seize the opportunity of taking on an internship. "It is the perfect time to ask questions, develop skills and knowledge and find out what the work force requires that you can't learn on pen and paper. Along the way you will build up friendships and networks and most importantly you will get a feel of what you may be doing or what you would like to do in the near future."



Sumedha Garg spent the summer working at **Prolife Foods Ltd**, supervised by **Anna Ellis**, **Innovations Manager**.

Sumedha worked on the NPD documentation. Prolife was in the process of putting everything on the company Intranet so that it's easy for everyone, in all the different teams, to find the relevant and up to date documents. Sumedha updated and uploaded numerous documents and worked with the NPD, Operations, Quality and Marketing teams to get feedback and approval of them. She also set up sensory testing for the taste panel, to make sure that everyone on the panel can taste sweet, sour, salty, bitter etc.

Sumedha says "Prior to working at such a large food manufacturing company, I was unaware with the amount of time that is invested in documentation processes. However, by working here I realized that filing some of these documents helps a company train their staff and deliver the utmost quality product to their consumers.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this work experience as by interacting with different departments of the company, I could see what type of work I could be involved in once I graduate. All in

all, this internship has been a great start for my Food Technology career and I can't wait to see where my profession takes me next. “

Anna says “Sumedha has been a huge asset to the NPD team by doing the laborious work of documentation updates, thereby allowing the team to spend more time on the many projects they have on the go. She has come in with a great attitude and willingness to learn and has got stuck in to a less than glamorous job and done it well.”



Chelsea Johnson had completed the first year of her food technology degree at Massey when she worked at **Invita NZ Limited**.

Chelsea says that working for Invita has given her a much greater understanding of the industry that she plans to join when she graduates. “I have been working in quality service under Raminder Kaur, updating Technical Data Sheets, Safety Data Sheets and PIF forms. I have also learnt about the requirements for shelf life extensions, and undertaken this process myself, with Raminder’s guidance. Having just completed my first year, I had no experience of quality control in the food industry.

I have greatly enjoyed my experience working at Invita. I am grateful to all of the staff, especially to Raminder, who have been welcoming and insightful. I now have a great deal more knowledge than I came in with, and a greater understanding of the areas and positions available with the degree, and what I want to do in the future.”

Technical Services Manager Raminder Kaur comments that Chelsea’s good communication skills and “can-do” attitude enabled her to liaise effectively with her colleagues, and complete all her tasks in a well-organised and timely manner.

