



HOW TO GET INTO A CAREER IN FOOD AND DRINK

A TOP TIPS GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



A CAREER IN FOOD AND DRINK



2018, Scotland's Year of Young People, shone a light on the skills and talents of our young people countrywide, giving them a voice in a whole range of issues that affect them.

The annual celebration of Scottish produce and the people behind it, Scottish Food & Drink Fortnight, delivered by industry leadership organisation Scotland Food & Drink, joined this nationwide initiative to honour and profile young people in the sector today, highlighting the breadth of career opportunities available to inspire others to follow their lead. With more than 27,000 jobs to fill in the sector by 2022, and with food and drink being the country's top sector, with ambitious plans for growth, considering a career in this area would be a wise move. This also aligns with the Skills Investment Plan for the food and drink sector.

To round off the Fortnight campaign, we asked experts in the field, including young people themselves, to share essential advice for any young person thinking about working in food and drink.

We hope you find this useful and that it gets you thinking. Food and drink is a dynamic, rewarding and varied industry, and could be just what you're looking for – the world is your oyster.

If you need further advice, please contact info@foodanddrink.scot

Good luck!

James Wither
Chief Executive, Scotland Food & Drink

Where do the job opportunities for young people lie within the food and drink sector?

It's hard to think of another industry with so much diversity – you could be in food and farming production, manufacturing, PR & marketing, sales, brand management, business development, packaging and processing, new product development and innovation, retail and catering, buying and merchandising, engineering and technical roles, warehousing and logistics, policy and campaigning to tasting, plus all the support roles you'd expect to find in any business such as finance, HR or IT.

There are opportunities at all career levels, too, from entry-level positions to apprenticeships and internships, graduate programmes and management, to running your own business. Social enterprises are also becoming more common in the food and drink world, too, which gives another interesting angle.

Not only that, but with Scotland being home to a bounty of fabulous food and drink products, you could find yourself in anything from fish and seafood to red meat and game, whisky, beer and spirits, speciality coffee, cheese and dairy, bakery, grocery and so much more – take your pick!

The food and drink industry can also offer rapid career progression, and opportunities to work both nationally and internationally. It's a dynamic and fast-moving industry and needs innovative, motivated and enthusiastic young people to help maintain its global reputation – that could be you.



I'd love to consider a career and the food and drink sector but don't know where to start. What are the top key things I should do?

- Do your research - speak to people in the sector you're interested in and find out as much as you can about what it's really like to work in your chosen field. Don't be afraid to ask questions and ask for advice
- Offer to shadow someone in a business that appeals to you and/or find work experience opportunities
- It seems obvious, but make sure you have a clear, concise, appealing and relevant C.V. – stick to two pages max and tailor for each job application
- Make a list of your top 10 favourite brands/companies, check their websites for news on vacancies and make direct approaches too; research food and drink recruitment agencies and get on their books. Be clear about what you are looking for and what you can offer
- Take inspiration from other young people like you who have forged a path in food and drink. There are lots of case studies available from places like the [Food and Drink Federation Scotland](#), [Lantra](#) careers and [My World of Work](#). These will give you an insight into the different career options and the routes people have taken into the industry
- Think about the relevant education choices, like school subjects or college/university courses. If you're at the senior level of school, consider undertaking a [Foundation Apprenticeship in Food and Drink Technologies](#). There are also opportunities to join a food or drink business and undertake your training there, for example as a Modern Apprentice, graduate recruit or Graduate Apprenticeship
- If you're a school-leaver, think about what you like doing and what you were good at in school. Think about how you portray yourself - neat and tidy, punctual, willing to learn and what skills you might bring to the industry. Then perhaps think about a part-time job working with food, such as in a café or supermarket or deli, or volunteer with a charity – all brilliant ways to get hands-on experience in the food world or to demonstrate your commitment and work ethic
- Some part time jobs and schools offer to train you to achieve your [REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene Certificate](#), this is a great employability skill to have and may potentially put you ahead of others when applying for a job as it's a basic requirement to work in food and drink
- Find a mentor – we can't stress how valuable this can be. You may have different mentors throughout your career, as your business grows and develops, and this will be a huge asset to you personally and professionally
- It's important to keep an open mind and be flexible. Your first job won't be your dream job, but it will be the first step to finding it! You never know where things will lead, so grab any chances to experience the food and drink world in any way that you can, and the rest will follow

What training is available for young entrepreneurs?

There's a range of training available and would explore any of the following, as well as keeping your eyes and ears open:

- [Business Gateway](#)
- [Developing the Young Workforce](#)
- [Entrepreneurial Spark](#)
- [The Princes Trust](#)
- [Scottish Chambers of Commerce](#)
- [Skills Development Scotland](#)
- College courses and SQA qualifications
- Guidance teachers, if still at school

You can also be proactive and contact other entrepreneurs and ask how they did it – they will be more than happy to share their top tips.

Also remember that food and drink employers value personal knowledge and enthusiasm, too. So, if you have a passion for an area then show it!

How can I obtain work experience in the sector to find out more about what I'd like to do?

There is no doubt that obtaining hands-on work experience (usually unpaid) is a brilliant way to help you find out what kind of areas/jobs you would love to do and build up your knowledge, skills and contacts at the same time. Whether it's for a few days or a week or two, dip your toe into the water and see what happens. There are various ways to find such experience, including:

- Find out if your school or college has any links with the industry – they often organise work experience placements or they can speak to local employers to set something up. Speak to careers advisors or guidance staff, where relevant, as they may be able to help
- Search for employers in your area and approach them – show enthusiasm, willingness and knowledge about what they do. Don't be disheartened if they say no – it's probably just because they are very busy or don't have the resources. Keep trying until you strike gold
- Ask family and friends if they know anyone who works in the industry whom they could introduce you to – personal introductions/connections are always invaluable
- Contact your local Developing the Young Workforce - they may be able to facilitate something for you
- Employability programmes offer structured work experience to young people who are currently unemployed
- Have a good LinkedIn profile set up
- If you are looking for work wither unpaid or not, make sure your public social media profiles reflect your professional side and do not show you in a way that may be off-putting to a potential employer - they do check these out!
- And remember that the more effort you put in, the more opportunities will come your way

Are there any industry events I should be attending?

There is so much going on in the food and drink world, so you are spoilt for choice. The more events you go to and people you meet, the more you increase your chances of landing a job:

- Whilst many trade events aren't open to the public, you could contact the organiser and asking if you can go along. Some may be open to all, even if for a charge. The [Scotland Food & Drink website](#) is a good place to find out what's going on and where
- Social media is your friend, as so many events and opportunities are promoted this way, especially on Twitter such as @scotfooddrink @Eat_Scottish @FDFScotland and @DYWGLasgow (search for your local branch)
- There are loads of fantastic food and drink events, festivals and markets across the country, which are a great way to meet producers (don't be afraid to chat to them and ask questions), try a variety of tasty products and soak up the buzz. Everything from the annual Royal Highland Show to street food events such as Platform and Dockyard Social; farmers' markets such as Fife and Dumfries & Galloway; music and food events such as Best of the West and Mhor Fest and so much more – there are literally hundreds of events countrywide, so take your pick!
- There are useful listings of events here and here below and also do your research via social media and the internet
- Look out for career fairs too

What are the basic, fundamental requirements of running a food business that I should be aware of?

This is a very important area and one that must be taken very seriously. It's a big subject and seeking expert advice is essential, so the below is only a basic guide to the kind of areas that you need to be aware of:

- Accreditation –if you are producing a product, many customers will require [Safe and Local Supplier Award \(SALSA\)](#) as a minimum and, in some cases, [British Retail Consortium \(BRC\)](#)
- Health and Safety & Food Safety Standards are paramount, such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), and food labelling and legislation. More info from Food Standards Scotland [here](#) and [here](#)
- Marketing & social media
- Problem-solving
- Customer service
- Sales, finance, commercial and business management
- Commercial skills & business management
- Product design & innovation
- Market intelligence – knowing your customer needs and target market for your business

What's the best way to find financial support to set up or develop my business?

There's no one single option here, but rather funding will come from a mix of sources. A few places to start looking include the following:

- Business Gateway
- Scottish Enterprise
- Entrepreneurial Spark
- Scottish Chambers of Commerce
- Connect Local
- Federation of Small Business
- The Princes Trust
- Crowdfunding
- Your local authority
- Your local bank
- Look for any small, entrepreneurial support organisations or business networks in your area

Can I set up a business from my kitchen table at home?

Many businesses start this way, as it's a chance to test the market for your product and build up slowly, saving on costs. However, you need to make sure that you stick to all the relevant food safety regulations and procedures and not cut any corners. Speak to others who started this way and learn from them. It's also critical to have a clear, concise business plan from the outset.



What's the single most important piece of advice you can give me for working in the food and drink sector?

We've asked our experts for their top piece of advice, so here goes!

- Work hard and say yes to opportunities, even if you feel out of your depth
- Understand the market, make something that is new, exciting and fills a gap in the market
- Enjoy what you do and be enthusiastic
- Talk to others in the sector
- Network, network, network!
- Surround yourself with great people
- Try not to get bogged down when you hit a stumbling block; see everything as a potential opportunity and make the most of contacts you make
- Be passionate about what you do. Your attitude is your most important attribute - everything else can be learned and developed
- Keep going! If you believe in your produce, then perseverance and enthusiasm can really help
- Be open-minded, adaptable, flexible and never give up
- Compassion, kindness and ability to problem solve are essential attributes that you should cultivate and demonstrate
- Demonstrate a can-do attitude and not be afraid of hard work and learning – food and drink is a rewarding career that could take you all over the world!

How much money can I expect to earn in the sector?

- This varies considerably, depending on the role and sector, but could be anywhere from £20-£25k upwards. There are good opportunities for progression and this can happen very quickly, usually around 3-5 years.
- The more effort you put in, the more likely you are to move up the ladder increase your earnings – it's up to you, and depends how far you want to go.
- It could also be said that food and drink careers can often be vocational - enjoying the job and being happy can be as important as the pay cheque

Are the opportunities mainly in cities, or are there jobs in rural areas too?

There are jobs in both rural and urban areas as well as at home and around the world – food and drink can take you anywhere and everywhere.

However, it's worth saying that small, artisan food producers are in rural areas because they are closer to the primary producers there. However, it can sometimes be difficult to find premises in rural areas, marketing can be costlier and more difficult depending on local infrastructure, but many rurally based businesses sell through the internet.

Who can I speak with about my career aspirations/goals?

- Local employers; schools and college contacts, particularly guidance and career advisors; many of the organisations listed below; family and friends
- Others in the business who are already doing it - seek out those you admire and approach them for advice
- Attend as many career days as possible and speak to your local Developing the Young Workforce team. Also, using Twitter and LinkedIn social media to understand the companies and people who work in these areas. Setting up your own profile and asking for help- particularly on LinkedIn - would also generate advice and comments

What are the best online resources for more information?

[All About Careers](#)

[Apprenticeship Scotland](#)

[Business Gateway](#)

[Connect Local](#)

[Food and Drink Federation Scotland \(FDFS\)](#)

[Institute of Food Science & Technology](#)

[My World of Work](#)

[Project Scotland](#)

[Scotland Food & Drink](#)

[Scottish Enterprise](#)

[Scottish Food & Drink Fortnight](#)

[Skills Development Scotland](#)

[Tasty Careers](#)

[Volunteer Scotland](#)

[Year of Young People](#)

[Young Scot](#)

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