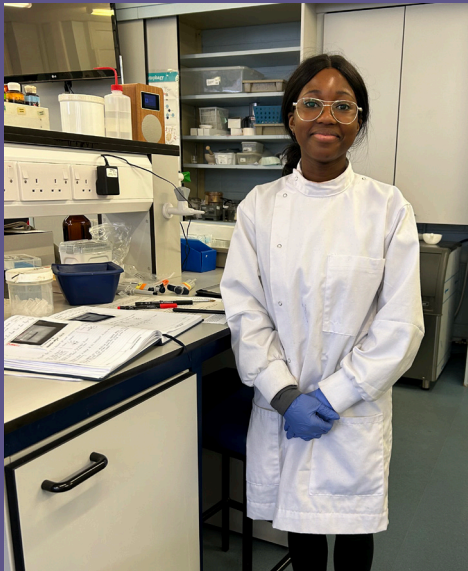


THE PEOPLE AND THE PASSION

ASTRID CHAGUNDA, FOOD SCIENCE STUDENT



WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

It was my mum that found the BSc (Hons) Food Science course at Glasgow Caledonian University and I thought it sounded perfect. And that was what influenced me to take on a Food and Drink Technology Foundation Apprenticeship in sixth year at school as well.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN FOOD & DRINK?

I really liked the idea of studying the science behind food. I wanted to learn more about the food industry but the idea of coming into the industry through a business office route didn't appeal to me. I'd developed a keen interest in food safety which has extended into food microbiology that minimises foodborne illnesses, while extending shelf life and reducing food fraud, waste and loss.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

As a student, I've really enjoyed the mix of theory and practical. At school, I had a placement at Brown Brothers where I got involved in different parts of the business from quality assurance through to butchery. I then had a university student placement at Malcolm Allan in the product development team, looking into new recipes for products. And that was after the semester-long placement at HAN University in the Netherlands which was definitely a memorable three months.

WHAT COMMON MISPERCEPTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADDRESS?

At school, food and drink technology can be seen as a bit of a "skive" subject. It's not home economics, it's a science subject. If you're into biology and chemistry, it can be utterly fascinating as you learn more about the science behind what you eat.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY?

I have to say in the food toxicology module, I was a bit taken aback by the discovery that all food can be toxic.

WHAT IS YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL?

Personally, I am quite careful about what goes into my food and what I'm eating. So at work it makes sense I want to confirm that whatever it says has gone into a product is what's in the product. In the longer term I want to work within a technical team doing lab work, possibly working on shelf life and traceability – being able to identify and trace the origin of individual food ingredients.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE TO OFFER PEOPLE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY?

What's surprised me is the sheer number of different paths into the industry. I decided to study for a degree because I knew I didn't want to enter the industry through an office or the factory floor but I've genuinely discovered so many avenues in, so my advice would be to give it a go. Oh and study food science - we need more food scientists!

THE PEOPLE AND THE PASSION

CHRIS GEARY, START-UP BUSINESS OWNER, RAW CULTURE KOMBUCHA



WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

I'd been happy working in the energy industry, developing sonar systems as an ROV (remotely operated vehicle) pilot. But when I was put on furlough during the Covid pandemic, I began to see a real opportunity in producing a hop-infused kombucha (a cold, fermented tea drink) so worked hard on the market research, developing the product and designing the brand.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN FOOD & DRINK?

I worked in hospitality when I was a student but it was never presented to me in a way that could be a career. Building my own brand and product line gave me something to really be proud of. As more and more people got on board with what I was doing, I believed in it more and more and Raw Culture went from something that I would sheepishly refer to, to being an entity in itself - something that's bigger than me and something that I'm a part of.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

Every day is different, but overcoming the challenges to produce and distribute something that people genuinely love and will willingly part with their hard earned money to enjoy gives me an indescribable sense of pride and accomplishment.

WHAT COMMON MISPERCEPTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADDRESS?

So many people with fantastic ideas think they need someone else to help them make their idea a reality. It's not easy but in my view if you believe in it, you can create it and you'll find that the people that said you shouldn't or couldn't do it either disappear or get on board. So don't be afraid to believe in your own ability, but never be afraid to ask for help along the way. Sure, you might fail ... but you also might just succeed!

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY?

In my previous lives in the design and engineering industries, things could be pretty cut-throat. People would leave you to figure something out rather than offer help and support. Since becoming a food and drink producer, I'm surrounded by people eager to help. I've made friends with other food producers, even commercial competitors, and we all support each other and help wherever we can. It's a real community and we all want to see each other succeed.

WHAT IS YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL?

Right now, I've realised I can't do it all myself, so my priority is building a team so things don't come to a standstill when I'm called away. We're producing 12,000 cans of kombucha a month and I need to be able to trust that things will be done properly, even without me.

That's starting to happen already, as I have a couple of part time helpers who help with production and packaging, allowing me to work on the sales and business development side of things.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE TO OFFER PEOPLE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY?

There are so many options in the food and drink sector to get involved in, even if you don't want to be in production. There's quality control and standards, which are a huge part of what we do. Or there's engineering - someone needs to be able to fix the machines the business depends on. There really are so many options in food and drink manufacturing without even touching the food or drink.

THE PEOPLE AND THE PASSION

MYLES REID, BUTCHERY APPRENTICE, SCOTT BROTHERS



WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

At school, I enjoyed practical subjects like PE, home economics and woodwork but I didn't really know what I wanted to do as a job. After I left, I was working part-time when I saw a job advertised with Scott Brothers. They are a butchers with a great reputation and it was good hours so I decided to apply. After speaking to them, they actually offered me a butchery apprenticeship so now not only am I earning, I am learning all the craft and skills as I go along.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN FOOD & DRINK?

I have to admit, I didn't know I wanted to work in food & drink. But now I'm here, I think it's the best job in the world.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

The best bit about what I do is working as part of a team – they are a great bunch of people. While we all have our own work and prepare our own products, when you see the counters laid out, it's amazing what you can achieve as part of that team. I also really enjoy the retail side, chatting with customers and finding out what they like and explaining the different products.

WHAT COMMON MISPERCEPTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADDRESS?

Sometimes people can think of butchery as a bit bloody and gruesome but to be honest, it's one of the cleanest environments you can work in. Health & safety and food hygiene are some of the first things you learn. Hygiene standards are so high that it soon becomes second nature because at the end of the day it's all about food safety.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY?

It's not all steak and sausages here – there is such a range of products and the demand for them always surprises me. From stir fries to en croutes, the products we offer are finished to a really high standard because it's all about offering the customer what they want and getting them to keep coming back for more.

WHAT IS YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL?

Ideally, I want to work my way up in Scott Brothers as they've been such supportive employers. I'd really like to be the manager of a retail shop, producing and selling the goods out front.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE TO OFFER PEOPLE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY?

The ability to be confident and likeable may not be the first thing you think about but I've found being able to communicate and put yourself across well is a huge thing. If you do a bit of research on the companies near you and contact them directly instead of waiting for jobs to come up, that can often help, you can get ahead of any competition!

THE PEOPLE AND THE PASSION

APRIL POLLOCK, GRADUATE PLACEMENT, MORRISONS



WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

I've just finished a 30-month graduate placement with Scotland Food & Drink where I was working within a business - Morrisons supermarket - as a local sourcing co-ordinator. This role supports Scottish food & drink producers taking their first step into retail.

I've always had an interest in food & drink production and agriculture and currently live on a farm with my partner who is a farmer. A school Young Enterprise project sparked my interest in business and led me to complete a degree in marketing and entrepreneurship at the University of Strathclyde.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN FOOD & DRINK?

The appeal of the industry was reinforced at university where lecturers used a lot of case studies from food & drink to explain branding and packaging. As a student, I spent some time as a marketing intern with Royal Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland (RHASS), as well as working in termtime in a farm shop.

The food and drink industry seemed like an interesting and fun place to work but when I graduated there weren't that many opportunities around, so I found myself working as a marketing assistant for a law firm. I did keep an eye out so when the Scotland Food & Drink placement turned up, I was keen to apply.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

I'm genuinely surprised by how much I do enjoy it and how rewarding I've found my role here. I'd been working in marketing in a law practice so leaving the security of a full-time role to take up a two-year placement was a bit of a risk, but taking that leap of faith is one of the best things I've done.

I really enjoy working alongside such a variety of Scottish producers - be it jam, biscuits, gin or whatever - and watching their journey into retail. It's really rewarding from having an initial conversation to potentially seeing their products on shelf for so many other customers to enjoy.

WHAT COMMON MISPERCEPTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADDRESS?

It's not so much a misperception but I'd really love it if consumers could find out more about what goes into our unique Scottish produce.

I am fortunate that I get to visit suppliers and understand the care and attention that goes into how things are made. Customers say they're willing to support Scottish but it's harder when something is priced at a premium. Programmes like the Hairy Bikers and Greg Wallace do help and if we could do more to explain to consumers how these things are made, that would really help. If they experienced half of what we do, they'd be buying Scottish far more often.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY?

The number of different pathways into the industry is remarkable but that's not always clearly communicated to people. In my case, I guess I would have thought that to get into buying you would have to go down south and do a four-year placement with the big supermarkets but it turns out the opportunities are here. There really is a job for everyone and that's a message we should all be working on getting across.

WHAT IS YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL?

I'm really lucky because I've just completed my placement and I've been offered a full-time position with Morrisons. I love what I do and I'm really looking forward to continuing to help suppliers get into retail.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE TO OFFER PEOPLE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY?

I'd suggest that if you like the sound of working in food & drink, find something that initially appeals to you - whether it's food production, a customer-facing role or food science - and see where it leads. You never know where it's going to take you because there are so many paths into the industry. But stay flexible and don't get disheartened if there's a specific thing you want to do and it doesn't happen straight away. If you're ambitious, hard-working and willing to adapt to a bit of change along the way then it will pay off.

THE PEOPLE AND THE PASSION

ALASDAIR MANSON, DISTILLER, GORDON & MACPHAIL



WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

I've had various roles over my 25 years in the workforce - from investment banking to maritime logistics to the tattoo industry. Around seven years ago, I moved to Moray from the central belt to be closer to family and got a job working as a data analyst at Gordon & MacPhail.

However, I've spent the last two years as a distiller at the Cairn, the company's new distillery just outside Grantown-on-Spey.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN FOOD & DRINK?

I didn't know much about the whisky industry before starting at Gordon & MacPhail. I soon got involved through the sensory panel - that assesses upcoming whiskies to collate and prepare the tasting notes that are on the back of the labels - and was quickly immersed in the whole experience. Undertaking the University of the Highlands & Islands whisky course lit a fire under me to learn more about spirit production and maturation, and everything else involved in creating malt whisky. So when the opportunity came up to join the founding team at the Cairn, I jumped at the chance.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

It's great to work with a team that's so passionate about the product and processes and are always striving to improve. Happiness and job satisfaction are real motivators for me. The more you enjoy doing something, the happier you are.

WHAT COMMON MISPERCEPTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADDRESS?

I guess many people think that traditional food & drink production means sticking to the way things have been done in the past.

Yes, we're making an iconic Scottish product with a great heritage here that's appreciated around the world but technology and automation play their part in the process.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY?

I was really surprised by how modern The Cairn is, being able to control the distillery processes from a computer or tablet has been fascinating. It's quite hands-off as you supervise the processes at each stage of production. I particularly enjoy overseeing the mash process which is an interesting one that needs pretty close attention.

WHAT IS YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL?

A goal is definitely to taste the first single malt from the Cairn Distillery. As our first product will be a 12-year-old single malt and the distillery is only two years old, we obviously we still have 10 years to wait! Personally, I'd like to learn a bit more about forecasting production, and understanding how we split the volume of spirit we produce annually - what will go into which casks.

I am really happy doing what I do so hopefully I will keep on distilling, and learning and experiencing a lot more about what we do. One of the best things about the job is there is a tangible product that can be physically measured at the end.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE TO OFFER PEOPLE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY?

I was fortunate that I had experience in the job I initially went into at Gordon & MacPhail. There was some additional vocational training when I moved into the distiller role but it was learning while I was working.

I'd say if a role sounds interesting, then give it a go. It might be the best move you ever make.

THE PEOPLE AND THE PASSION

BARBARA LUGOWSKA HR (HUMAN RESOURCES) ASSOCIATED SEAFOODS



WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

I arrived in the UK from my native Poland more than 20 years ago and did a degree in social sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University as I was interested in sociology and human nature. When personal circumstances took me to Dundee, I started working in HR (human resources) and it turns out I had found my calling. I started working with a poultry processor before moving into seafood and that's where I find myself now at Associated Seafoods.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WORK IN FOOD & DRINK?

It was the nature of the role that attracted me to the food & drink sector and now I'm here, I choose to stay in this industry. I love how fast-moving and dynamic it is. There is great job security – food will always be produced and it's made everywhere – and you can get involved in so many diverse projects. My journey began as an HR assistant, and I wouldn't be able to achieve my goals without the incredible support from mentors, managers and co-workers, as well as qualifications I was able to pursue while working.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

I can honestly say I enjoy most aspects of my role, and how it enables me in a variety of ways to make a meaningful difference, be it on individual, business, or community level.

I am passionate about people and love interacting and working in collaboration with others on different projects but I also enjoy aspects of my role you would not associate with HR, such as implementing IT solutions to support the HR function.

WHAT COMMON MISPERCEPTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADDRESS?

A few comments I've come across – and sometimes disappointingly in education – relate to “unskilled, low-paid jobs” and a lack of opportunities to progress. There is a huge amount of skill involved in producing the food that you can confidently and safely feed to your family.

Reward and recognition depends on the role, experience, and level of responsibilities and if you are interested in progression, there are plenty of opportunities.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY?

It is a fast-paced workplace and I'm constantly surprised how tackling daily challenges connects people and encourages them to work together as a team.

The level of skills and collaboration required to create a new product is incredible – it starts in the NPD team where the vision comes from. The technical team puts processes in place to ensure the safety and quality of the product, production makes it all happen, the finance team makes the figures add up, HR recruits and upskills the workforce, engineers look after equipment, and the hygiene team cleans the premises to the highest standards. Meanwhile marketing lets customers and consumers know about the fantastic new product.

WHAT IS YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL?

I was promoted a few months ago to the Group Head of HR role. I have a number of ideas that I would like to implement to support our workforce and the business and my primary focus is on making sure Associated Seafoods is a great place to work.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE TO OFFER PEOPLE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY?

Food & drink is a growing industry with such a variety of different career paths.

To take the first practical step, I'd suggest you look into food & drink businesses around you and get in touch with them directly if you're interested in what they do – being proactive will be well received. And businesses usually advertise their vacancies online so be sure to check what's out there.

And finally, if you get the job, give it a chance. Don't give up too early. For all my talk about being proactive, remember that good things come to those who wait.