

The University of Otago Consumer Food Science Graduate Profile

Why do people choose certain food products and brands over others? Why do they eat what they eat? Why do they waste food which is still good to eat? How might we, as Consumer Food Scientists, impact upon these choices to encourage people to choose good quality and environmentally sustainable foods? How might we increase the value of New Zealand food exports? These are the sorts of questions that our students explore during their three year degree programme in Consumer Food Science (BAppSc). Our graduates will possess a deep, coherent and extensive knowledge of Consumer Food Science, a subject that provides an interdisciplinary understanding of food and consumer food choice. This will be coupled with knowledge of the fundamental contribution of research to this area. In addition, all our graduates will possess the following sets of attributes.

These attributes involve substantial affective elements:

- **INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE:** Commitment to intellectual openness and curiosity, as well as an awareness of the strong links between the social (i.e. “people”) and the natural (i.e. “product”) sciences
- **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:** Appreciation of the international food industry, the global politics and harmonisation of food production and consumption (i.e. how global political, economic, social and cultural structures might influence and be influenced by food choices) and the nature of global citizenship
- **LIFELONG LEARNING:** Commitment to the on-going acquisition of new knowledge and new skills, and an ability to apply these to the fast-moving and dynamic food industry
- **SCHOLARSHIP:** Commitment to the fundamental importance of acquisition and development of knowledge and understanding

These attributes include those most often sought by employers:

- **RESEARCH:** Ability to evaluate and conduct consumer research, using a range of both qualitative (i.e. interview and focus group) and quantitative (i.e. survey and experiment) research methods to investigate topical consumer food issues
- **CRITICAL THINKING:** Ability to analyse consumer food issues logically, to challenge conventional assumptions about what “good” food is, to consider different and often conflicting viewpoints and interests in food production and consumption (e.g. from private, public and non-profit sectors) and make informed decisions
- **ETHICS:** Application of ethics and knowledge of ethical standards when conducting consumer research, and developing, communicating and selling food products
- **ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY:** Basic understanding of the principles that govern both natural food production systems and the systems that move food from farm to fork, and the effects of consumer food choice on these systems
- **COMMUNICATION:** Ability to communicate information, arguments and analyses effectively, both orally (e.g. presentations to a group and one-on-one interviews) and in writing (e.g. reports, essays, papers and posters)
- **INFORMATION LITERACY:** Ability to apply specific skills in acquiring, organising, analysing, evaluating and presenting information, in particular recognising the importance of digital-based activity to keep up-to-date with ever-changing consumer food trends
- **CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING:** Knowledge and appreciation of biculturalism within the framework of the Treaty of Waitangi (in particular with regards to the food harvesting/production rights of Māori), knowledge of multiculturalism (in particular with regards to how cultural values influence food choice), and an ability to apply such knowledge in a culturally appropriate manner (e.g. producing and marking halal food products)
- **TEAMWORK:** Ability to work effectively as both a team leader and member, in the workplace and community
- **SELF-MOTIVATION:** Capacity for self-directed activity and the ability to work independently in the classroom, in the lab, in the workplace or in the field