



Consumer Food Science

Why people eat what they eat

"If your passion is food but you don't want to spend your life in the kitchen, Consumer Food Science is the way to go. It gives you the chance to explore the bigger issues that surround food - new product development, consumer behaviour, and the consumer experience ... there are cultural and economic questions in there as well... I really enjoyed it!"

Michael Gin

(Masterchef finalist and Marketing Advisor Harraways Oats)

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Consumers are becoming increasingly demanding in what they choose to eat: low carb, vitamin enriched, fat free, organic, sustainably produced, isotonic, carbon neutral, fortified, genetically modified, healthy... and then there's flavour, safety and affordability. Finding out what people in different markets around the world want and then how to produce it and get it there in top condition is a real challenge for food producers!

That's where Consumer Food Scientists come in. Their goal is to help turn product ideas into reality. Consumer Food Science students learn about the technical, socio-economic and psychological factors influencing food choice, food production, the subtle art of advertising, food labelling and the regulatory environment.



Why study Consumer Food Science

- It gives you the opportunity to work with food and people.
- You'll study how people make food choices, bringing together elements from many different subjects.
- You can make a contribution to the fast moving and dynamic food industry.
- You will gain an understanding of the marketing that helps to sell a product.

Career opportunities

Consumer Food Science encompasses many different subjects and applications, and that's reflected in the breadth of job opportunities. Our graduates frequently find employment before they have even completed their final year at university. You could end up working for a national or international food company specialising in dairy, confectionery, brewing, fruit and vegetables, seafood or any other foodstuff.

Graduates go into research institutes, for example, Plant and Food Research, or government agencies such as the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). There are exciting career options in food quality management, food promotion, sensory analysis, teaching, marketing, consumer research and the hospitality industry.

Background required

High School students are recommended to take Biology, Maths and English in year 12 and preferably in year 13.

What is the difference between Consumer Food Science and Food Science?

Consumer Food Science is more "people" based whereas Food Science is more "product" oriented.

A Consumer Food Scientist understands how consumers perceive foods (sensory science), how consumers make food choices, how food regulations affect manufacturers and consumers,

and how food quality can be managed. Alternatively, if you enjoy science subjects like chemistry and biology, then Food Science is probably a better choice.

Can I combine Consumer Food Science with other subjects?

A minor or a second major is compulsory for your BAppSc degree. Popular choices for combining with Consumer Food Science are Marketing, Management, Entrepreneurship, and Nutrition Communication. There is also room for extra papers to explore your wider interests.

What will I learn?

The Bachelor of Applied Science (BAppSc) in Consumer Food Science provides you with a comprehensive understanding of the food industry, combining both theory and practical hands-on experience.

First Year

A paper called Food Principles gives you a broad understanding of food and food production. Food marketing and Statistics papers are part of the first year course. You will also take the first year papers for your chosen minor or second major. You may have room for other papers such as biology, chemistry, psychology, history, anthropology or sociology.

Second Year

In this year you will take core papers covering food chemistry, food systems, and sensory science. You will also choose papers towards your minor subject for example Marketing, Management, or Nutrition Communication. You may be able to add extras according to your interests.

Third Year

At this stage, you will take an industry sponsored full year hands-on food product development paper, as well as papers in advanced sensory science and advanced aspects of consumer food choice. You will also complete the third year paper(s) towards your minor or second major.

There are course advisors within the Department who can help you plan your study path.

How will I study?

Classes consist of lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical laboratories, self-directed learning using readings and website material, and field trips to food manufacturers and research organisations. Assessment is a combination of assignments/projects, examinations, laboratory reports, essays and oral presentations.

You will have the opportunity to work in groups on a large project which includes interaction with the food industry, a most valuable experience.

Do I need to take Chemistry for Consumer Food Science?

No. But it is useful to have taken a course in chemistry at school. Any chemistry you need to have a better understanding of food, will be taught as part of the degree.

Can I teach in the school system with a degree in Consumer Food Science?

Yes. Studying Consumer Food Science enables you to teach food and technology in the school system, both at primary and secondary level.

Can I include some nutrition study in the Consumer Food Science degree?

Yes. You can take a general nutrition paper in your second year and one paper at third year level, or add a minor in Nutrition Communication. In order to complete a major or minor in Human Nutrition, you need to take chemistry, biochemistry and biology in the first year.

PROFILE Harriet Munro

When Harriet Munro arrived at Otago, she knew she wanted to study something to do with food, but wasn't sure what. Within a week, she had found the ideal programme in Consumer Food Science.

"Consumer Food Science is part of the AppSc programme (now Applied Science) and that gave me the flexibility to do a double major in Marketing which was great. Consumer Food Science is all about people – consumer behaviour has always been the best bit!"

Harriet followed up her undergraduate degree with a Postgrad Diploma, looking at food waste in residential colleges. She credits this postgrad research with giving her more standing with future employers.

"When you're studying you don't always look ahead, but if you want to do postgrad study you need to get good grades. It's really valuable to get work placements or internships over the summer break too, things that will give you those extra skills and experience."

After completing her studies Harriet moved back to Wellington and gave herself a set time limit to find her ideal job. The marketing assistant role at My Food Bag came up two weeks before her time limit!

"My Food Bag started in March and took off really quickly. When I joined the team in April there were only eight of us, so I got to be a part of things that a junior marketing assistant wouldn't have exposure to in a larger firm. In six months I moved up to Marketing and Communication Executive, and now I'm the Marketing Manager for retention. My job is to keep track of customer satisfaction and always seek for ways to improve the service we provide."

Harriet sees lots of scope for growth and change in her role at My Food Bag, and she recommends students find the thing they REALLY want to study, and then take every opportunity that comes their way.

"Put your hand up for everything! Get as much experience as you can. Look ahead and work towards those long term goals."



For questions about
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otago.ac.nz/foodscience

