

Tanya Rutherford

Food Product Technologist

Career Description

A food product technologist applies research and technology to develop new food and beverage products that are safe and appealing to consumers.

Interview

Imagine walking into your local grocery store and there on the shelf is a product you helped to create. “You just never tire of that feeling,” says Tanya Rutherford. “I remember the first time it happened and it’s still cool.”

Tanya works as a product development technologist for a large food processing company in Kelowna. While she now focuses mainly on juice development, she has also helped to develop granola bars, fruit cereal bars and dried fruit products.

Tanya creates new product samples, fine-tuning different ingredients to get the flavours just right. Then it’s time to taste test! Promising samples are expanded to company-wide taste tests or outside consumer research panels. She also runs a production test to ensure the product “works in real life.”

So where does it all start? “The marketing department decides what products to pursue,” explains Tanya. “Then it’s our job from a technical aspect to figure out how to do it. Is it even possible?” Product labelling and packaging is also becoming more and more important, notes the food science grad.

Tanya’s typical day involves a healthy blend of individual and team effort. “You need to be able to work in teams and with other people,” she says, noting her experience as a production supervisor and in quality assurance has been a real benefit. “But you also have to be able to plan your own work without somebody constantly telling you, ‘Do this, now do that.’

“I love the fact that my job is always changing,” Tanya concludes. “For example, there was the whole low-carb diet a couple years ago. It’s fun to watch the trends and try to predict where they’re going to go.”

Key Quote

“I love the fact that my career relates to everyday life. More and more people are looking for food products that keep them healthy.”

Ask Tanya: How do I know if food science is right for me?

“Ask around. Talk to people who are doing the job you’re considering. Find out what they like and what they don’t. Then decide if it’s for you.”

Primary Location

- Lower Mainland, Thompson/Okanagan, Vancouver Island/Coast

Interests/Skills

- Self-motivated
- Creative
- Consumer trends
- Attention to detail
- Teamwork

Suggested Qualifications

- Degree in Food Science

Education and Training Options

- British Columbia Institute of Technology, Burnaby
- University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Related High School Subjects

- Chemistry
- Home Economics
- Business Education

Related Careers

- Production Supervision
- Quality Assurance Manager
- Food Chemist
- Food Safety Inspector

Did you know?

- The average Canadian drinks 25 litres of fruit juice in a year. (Source: Statistics Canada, 2004)