

Peter Winstanley



Peter Winstanley is Head of Technical in the Food Integrity Department at Bakkavor. Bakkavor manufactures and markets a wide variety of fresh prepared food, covering a range of categories including meals, desserts, pizza & bread and salads.

What are your responsibilities and how many people report to you?

I work as part of our Central Technical team and my role primarily focuses on the food safety and integrity of the raw materials we use in the manufacture of thousands of goods. I have a small team in the centre with five direct reports, who manage how suppliers are approved and managed on an ongoing basis, to ensure they are doing things right for our produce and prepared materials going into our 23 UK manufacturing sites.

I also have responsibility for our Early Careers programmes in Technical for Bakkavor's UK sites.

Thinking back to school days, did you know what you wanted to become?

No, definitely not. Pure chance I met someone with a Food Science background who described what they did as a job and it ticked all the boxes I wanted in life at the time.

What were your main interests, e.g. science in general, food technology, microbiology, nutrition, something else?

I was interested in food, engineering, science, microbiology and travelling.

What qualifications do you have? GCSEs? A Levels? Degree(s)/other?

I have a BSc in Biology and MSc in Food Science.

In rough outline what was your job pathway – companies and job titles and anything of particular note, e.g. level of responsibility, exposure to any particular developments/issues?

I was fortunate enough to get on to the graduate training scheme with Thornton's Confectionery, where I started in production management.

The next two years took me to the other side of the world – to New Zealand, where I worked for almost two years for a vegetable processing manufacturer, making powders, pastes, purées, and Individual Quick Frozen vegetables.

When I returned to the UK, I took a role at Tesco in the chilled foods team and was the Technical Manager for chilled ready meals. I was fortunate enough to visit many parts of the world from where our materials and products came.

After almost seven years at Tesco, I chose to move back into manufacturing and took a role with my supplier at the time – Bakkavor. I originally joined our central technical team where we provide support to sites when the need arises, whilst also conducting audits of our own manufacturing facilities to ensure compliance.

I then took up the role as the Technical Manager for one of our factories in London, where I later became the Head of Operations for the site, responsible for running the operations of the £100m site, with over 800 employees. I moved back into technical, with a role as Head of Technical for the three ready meal and houmous facilities in London. I moved back to the Central Technical team where we have an overview of activities across the 23 manufacturing sites in the group. I have responsibility for the food safety and integrity of the 6000 raw materials we buy as a group, and every week is varied and every day we get to learn something new.

What were your aspirations when starting your career and what are they now?

To lead and develop a dynamic team who will be able to make a difference in the business or to the industry every day.

What single piece of advice would you offer someone curious about working in the Sector?

Get involved. The industry offers almost every role imaginable. The global food supply chain relies on different teams from all over the world, and there is a role available to anyone who wants it.

What would you say to encourage them further? i.e. what are the best bits?

The industry is fast paced and changes all the time. With so many different aspects to explore, the job roles are very varied and can bring new challenges daily, making the job interesting. After 20 years, I still find it interesting and learn something new each day.