

## Lindsay Ferguson



Lindsay Ferguson is Head of New Product Development (NPD) and Innovation at Freshpak Chilled Foods

*What does your job involve? What are your responsibilities and how many people report to you?*

My role is to lead and develop the NPD team for the business, ensuring that development projects – i.e. new foods ideas – are aligned with customer and business priorities. I provide expertise on recipe development and raw material capability, whilst managing the process from concept to launch. I promote our exciting food products to colleagues within the business by encouraging them to try what we make in different ways and to tell their friends and family how good they are.

I provide leadership to, and manage, the NPD team. This includes supporting my colleagues' development, and sharing expertise. It is my responsibility to ensure the smooth running of the NPD Process from concept to launch. This includes project management of the process.

The company is always looking ahead, so I establish the Development Strategy to deliver innovation as part of the company's 3-year business plan. I am responsible for driving short, medium and long-term projects.

I have management of the NPD cost centre with responsibility for departmental cost control and I'm also involved in the forecasting activity as needed by the company.

Alongside Sales and Marketing colleagues I work to develop and maintain customer relationships with our retailer customers. I work collaboratively with Technical, Sourcing and Operations teams on innovative new products, raw materials, packaging and factory processes to deliver safe, ready to eat products.

Together with my team of six people with two direct reports, I cover both concept development (customer facing) and process development (factory facing).

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

I had the good fortune to have a fantastic technology department at secondary school and was able to study GCSE Food Technology. As part of that course we had a visit from a Food Technologist who was working at Masterfoods. Meeting them led me to want to pursue a career in the food industry in product development.

*Also thinking about school, did you have a particular teacher that inspired you to take the career path you've followed?*

Not a single teacher, but a collective of Food Technology teachers.

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

Food Technology and the science behind food have always been a particular interest for me. The way ingredients interact chemically to create foods we know and love fascinates me.

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

GCSE Food Technology, A Level Food Technology, BSc (Hons) Food & Nutrition, MSc Global Food Development – both from Sheffield Hallam University.

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

I started as a development technologist and progressed through Northern Foods and Greencore to NPD Manager. I then switched to retail as a Product Manager for Asda on Ambient Home Baking & Desserts before moving back into manufacturing and starting a career in bakery at New York Bakery Company as NPD Manager.

I then progressed to Senior NPD Manager in frozen pastry & bread with Lantmannen Unibake UK, before moving back to chilled food as Head of NPD & Innovation for Freshpak Chilled Foods.

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

At the start of my career my aspiration was to work for a retailer creating ranges for customers. Having achieved that a number of roles ago, it has now changed and I really enjoy the variety of my leadership role here at Freshpak.

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

Food is much more than you think it is; there are so many impacts on the products we create and challenges to get them to shelf you will never be bored in NPD, or any aspect of Food Manufacturing. It takes an army to create a new product on the shelf and the role is never the same every day. You always find yourself learning about how and why we put things together to create fantastic products.

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

There is no better feeling than seeing a product you created on the shelf for people to buy!