Dairy NPD Technologist

Technical and product development

Job title	Dairy NPD Technologist
Department	Technical and product development
Reports to	NPD Manager (or Technical Manager on sites without one)
Direct reports	None
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Turns a customer or marketing brief into a new or improved dairy product, such as milk, cream, yogurt, cheese, a dessert, a powder or a drink. NPD stands for new product development. Works up recipes on the bench and pilot plant, runs factory trials with production, agrees the specification and shelf life with quality and the laboratory, and hands the finished product over to production with a written process.

Key responsibilities

Briefs and recipe development

- Take a customer or marketing brief and agree what the product must taste like, look like, cost and claim before work starts
- Develop recipes on the bench for milk, cream, yogurt, cheese, desserts, powders or drinks, recording every trial
- Choose ingredients, cultures and packaging with procurement, checking each against the brief and the approved supplier list
- Make samples on the pilot plant to see how the recipe behaves at larger scale
- Run sensory panels, record the results and prepare samples for customer presentations
- Keep trial records clear enough that any sample can be made again the same way
- Work on recipe changes and cost reductions to existing products as well as new launches

Factory trials and scale-up

- Plan factory trials with production, agreeing the line, time, raw materials and what happens to the trial product
- Be on the line during trials, taking samples and recording process settings at each stage
- Compare trial product with the bench sample and adjust the recipe or process where needed
- Write the process so operators can follow it: settings, hold times, in-process checks and limits
- Agree in-process limits with quality; any result outside a limit is a failure and the product is held
- Hand the product over to production with the written process, training and a first-production check
- Support the first production runs and sort out problems quickly with the production and quality teams

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Specifications, labels and shelf life

- Write finished product and raw material specifications with the quality team
- Build allergen and nutrition data for each product from the recipe and supplier information
- Prepare label copy and claims with the regulatory or quality team so every statement can be backed up
- Set up shelf-life studies with the laboratory and review microbiological, chemical and sensory results against the agreed limits
- Treat any shelf-life result outside a limit as a failure, hold the project at that point and find the cause
- Keep specifications up to date when a recipe, supplier or process changes
- Raise a HACCP review for any new ingredient, process step or packaging

Costings, projects and launch

- Build product costings with finance and procurement and check the margin against the brief at each gate
- Keep each project on the tracker with dates, actions, risks and owners
- Present projects at gate reviews with trial results, costings and open issues
- Send customer samples on time with the right paperwork and specification
- Check first-production product, packaging and labels against the specification at launch
- Review each launch afterwards and write up what to repeat and what to change
- Keep up to date with new ingredients, processes and products in the market that could help future projects

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Degree, HND or equivalent in food science, dairy technology or a related subject, or equivalent experience in dairy product development
- Experience developing dairy products on the bench and taking them through factory trials
- Working knowledge of dairy processing such as pasteurisation, separation, fermentation, cheese making or drying, as relevant to the site
- Understanding of HACCP and food safety as they apply to a new product or process
- Confident with spreadsheets for recipes, costings and nutrition calculations
- Clear, accurate writing for specifications, process documents and reports

Desirable

- Food hygiene certificate at the level the site requires
- HACCP certificate, as required where the job is based
- Knowledge of food labelling and nutrition claim rules, as required where the job is based
- Experience with sensory panel methods and sample preparation
- Experience designing shelf-life studies and reading microbiological results
- Experience with product costing and margin calculations
- Knowledge of cultures, stabilisers, sweeteners and other functional ingredients used in dairy products
- Experience working to retailer or customer technical standards and specification systems

Skills and attributes

- Curiosity and a practical, hands-on approach
- Attention to detail in recipes, records and specifications
- Clear communication with production, quality, sales and customers
- Organised, able to run several projects at once
- Keeps going when a trial fails and learns from it
- Good palate and willingness to taste product often
- Honest about results, even when they are not what the project wants

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Measures of success

- Projects delivered to the agreed launch date
- Launched products meet the brief, the specification and the agreed margin
- First production runs meet the specification without rework
- Complete and accurate trial records, specifications and process documents
- Shelf-life studies finished before launch with every failed result investigated and closed
- Customer samples sent on time and accepted
- No food safety or labelling problems from new products after launch

Working conditions and safety

Mainly daytime hours, split between the development kitchen or pilot plant, the laboratory, an office and the factory floor during trials. Trials may run early, late or at weekends to fit the production plan, and factory work involves standing for long periods in warm, wet or noisy areas near moving machinery; PPE and training are provided. Some travel to customers, suppliers and other sites may be needed.

- Follow health and safety rules and safe systems of work, and wear the correct PPE
- Follow food safety, hygiene, HACCP and quality procedures at all times
- Report hazards, accidents, near misses and concerns promptly

This job description outlines the main duties of the role. It is not a complete list, and the employer may update it as the business changes, in consultation with the jobholder.

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