

Case Study: Joe Baker

Job Title:	Brewer at St Austell Brewery
Category:	HIT Brewer Apprentice of the Year
Quote:	“Learning how to develop a recipe design as part of my apprenticeship has been incredible as it allowed me to be creative and earn recognition too. My beer design ended up in Wetherspoons!”

Why an apprenticeship?

When I joined St Austell Brewery, I had a chemical engineering degree and no prior experience of the brewing industry but I knew I loved the brewery’s products – and Cornwall too. The opportunity to do an apprenticeship was really exciting and I saw it as two ways of learning. One was the very hands-on experience that came with the brewery’s training, and this helped me understand the kit I was using which is very specific to St Austell. The other was the in-depth knowledge behind brewing that I experienced through HIT’s partnership with Nottingham University. The university trips and lectures taught me the theory behind brewing processes and really advanced my knowledge.

Benefitting my business

As a brewer, I work in one of three areas: brewhouse, fermentation and processing. Throughout these areas, I ensure that beer of the highest quality is being brewed, correct processes are followed and the workspace is kept clean and tidy. The apprenticeship has given me greater knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes of a production area, and this includes regulations and safety concerns. I have also developed my abilities to share and receive knowledge and how to adapt that to my workplace. All these new skills have meant I have been able to help train new staff members and participate in problem solving due to my in-depth background knowledge.

Learning how to develop a recipe design as part of my apprenticeship has been incredible as it allows me some creativity within the industry and recognition too. This is how my beer design ended up in Wetherspoons! Our Brewing Director, who coordinates with our National Sales Managers, often receives requests for beers to go into the pub chains so we submit several beer styles and ideas with costings. I like to create beers that are economically attractive and able to be scaled up, so I was thrilled when my beer recipe ‘Average Joe!’ was selected to feature as one of 30 real ales in Wetherspoon’s 12-day autumn ale festival. The beer, a sweet, amber ale, featured as part of St Austell’s Cask Club series, and was then supplied to 480 Wetherspoon pubs.

It really was a career highlight to receive such positive feedback. I was also interviewed about my beer on ITV and BBC Radio Cornwall.

The experience has inspired me to carry on progressing within the company, either taking on more leadership and responsibility or by continuing to produce beers and recipes that are well received and enjoyed by many.

The HIT Training difference

HIT’s apprenticeship training has been invaluable in consolidating my knowledge and learning how to present my learning in a usable format. My HIT trainer was always happy to help me whenever I found anything tricky to understand and to overcome any barriers to my learning. My employer has also been very supportive, ensuring that I have practical experience relating to each module and providing site visits to other breweries to gain different experiences within the industry. As well as allowing me to brew my own recipe, St Austell has also helped me promote apprenticeships to the next generation.