

Aims and Objectives

In recent years there has been considerable growth in the small food enterprise sector, a sector which is characterised by craftsmanship and a high hand-made element, producing low volume, high quality, and increasingly diverse range of food products. This Diploma aims to provide a wide ranging relevant education to those involved in this sector. The programme delivers an education across all areas of food production, including food science, food culture, technology, management, marketing, food safety, and impact on the environment.

Benefits of participation

- Receive a level 7 University Diploma
- Interact and engage with like-minded people who are passionate about food
- Achieve HACCP certification
- Understanding Marketing Plans and Business Plans
- Get to grips with digital marketing and on-line retailing
- Learn how to conduct sensory taste tests
- Understand the fundamentals of financial record keeping

Highlights

- Participate in dynamic discussions and interactions with like-minded students and lecturers/trainers
- Meet and learn from artisan and speciality food producers during site visits / field trip, and guest lectures
- Get involved in workshops and practical demonstrations conducted by experienced trainers and technicians
- Avail of access to experts across all areas relevant to food production, both during and after the course

Who should attend

This course is intended for individuals who are starting a speciality/artisan food business from the farm home, small production unit or those who are interested in growing an existing food business. It will also be of interest to those who are involved in the sector as producers, retailers, chefs, buyers, food writers and those working in support/regulatory agencies.

Delivery

The Diploma is delivered over one academic year on a part-time basis through a blended format of 14 two-day workshops (9 online and 5 in person). Sessions run every two to three weeks from October to May on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (9:00–16:00) and include lectures, guest speakers, case studies, workshops, practical sessions, and a field trip. Assessment is continuous and completed at the end of each module.

For the 2026/27 academic year, delivery is in partnership with Food Studio at GreenTech HQ (a centre of expertise for innovation, business and sustainability in Enniscorthy, Wexford), with two in-person workshops at GreenTech HQ and three at UCC.

Accreditation

A Diploma in Speciality & Artisan Food Enterprises, 60 credits, level 7 (NQF) will be awarded by University College Cork to successful candidates.

Application procedure

Please complete the Diploma in Speciality & Artisan Food Enterprises application form available at <https://www.ucc.ie/en/ace-dsafe/>

Cost

€2,800, Fee includes full tuition, all course materials and refreshments.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine will provide 64% of the fee for eligible applicants.

Closing date: 18th September 2026

Start date: 6th October 2026



Programme Outline

Local Food Production Systems

Develops an understanding of the characteristics that make speciality foods distinctive from mass-produced food products, and the multidimensional challenges involved in achieving high environmental standards in the sector.

Food Chemistry and Packaging

Develops an understanding of the key characteristics of major food constituents such as water, lipids, proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins, and provides an overview of the principal packaging systems used in foods.

Food Processing Technology

Provides essential scientific background in the steps involved in food processes and production of the main food product types, and the design of food premises and how this influences hygiene.

Nutrition

Provides scientific information on nutrients in food, digestion and absorption of food, function of nutrients, diet/disease relationships and dietary requirements.

Food Microbiology

Provides essential scientific background in the field of food microbiology and safety; information on factors affecting the growth of microbes in food, fermentation processes, principles of cleaning and sanitation, and factors leading to outbreaks of foodborne illness.

Risk Analysis

An introduction to the regulations and legislation of food law; the fundamental challenge of producing consistently safe food; clear and simple guidelines for all those operating in the food processing sector; and the labelling and traceability requirements for food products.

Sustainable Marketing and Business for Speciality Food Enterprises

Develops an understanding of the business & marketing planning process. Provides an overview of the opportunities and challenges facing small speciality food enterprises : the entrepreneurial process and the factors the influence NPD success.

Assignment

Integrates and applies the knowledge and skills acquired on the course to the development of your idea or existing food business.



Testimonials

"This Diploma opened so many doors during the development of our own range of Malay Kitchen sauces. Being a chef and operating 2 restaurants, we needed to know the specific steps needed to bring our restaurant produced sauces to retail. This course provided me with all the information needed to launch, from manufacturing process to distribution; as well as the networking with local artisan producers. I would highly recommend this course to anyone who is looking to start producing food for retail."

Norza Daud-Collins, Malay Kitchen, Kinsale

"I found the Diploma fundamental to the furthering of my wholesale bakery, as well as in launching my sister company, a cookie dough retail product. Particularly useful for me were the lectures on packaging, food science, HACCP & distribution. It was also extremely valuable to connect with all the knowledgeable lecturers on the course, as well as meeting likeminded entrepreneurs and sharing ideas. I'd recommend the Diploma to anyone wanting to start or develop their food business." Aisling Tuck, Naked Bakes & Oh Happy Treats, Dublin.

"The Diploma was the first step in my journey to realising my dream of diversifying our dairy farm into farmhouse cheese production. The course is a must for anyone starting up or developing an artisan food business to anyone thinking of setting up a food business." Norma Dinneen, Bó Rua Farm Cheddar.

"The Diploma course covered a broad range of subjects and on completion of the course, I felt I had the necessary skills and confidence to start up a seasonal winter café. This was followed by the launch of Good Fortune Cookies. I am so proud and delighted to have won bronze in Blas na hEireann in our first year in business. We are looking forward to extending our range soon and excited for what the future holds!"

Sarah Cremin, Good Fortune Cookies, Cork.

"The Diploma provided me with the confidence and fundamentals to start a food business including information on ingredients, equipment, packaging and HACCP. And I've had the benefit of UCC's expertise when required ever since." Philip O'Connor, Seymours Irish Biscuits.

"The Diploma in Specialty Food Production was of great help to me. My business producing Italian sausages, La Tradizione, had just started trading a few months before I started the course. The Diploma course is well structured and managed. I have learned many things that I am finding quite helpful when it comes to producing, packaging, and selling our sausage products. Despite being only just over 6 months long, the Diploma course is packed with information and learning. I would advise anyone that is looking to start a good business, no matter what stage, to sign up for this." Davide Masi, La Tradizione, Dublin

"I would highly recommend the Diploma in Speciality Food Enterprise. It has been a very rewarding experience and an important investment in both my personal development and my business. The programme helped me think more strategically about growth and innovation, while building a valuable network of industry contacts and support"

Aymar Gourdet, Le Skinny Chef

For more information please contact:

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