



2019 Food SA Prize winner Tabitha Morgan (right) was presented with her certificate by Food SA's Karen McNaughton. Tabitha completed her industry placement with premium gelati manufacturers Gelista.

Tabitha Morgan has been announced as the winner of the 2019 Food South Australia Prize for the best performance by a student in the University of Adelaide's Bachelor of Food and Nutrition Science industry placement.

Tabitha has won the award for her work with local premium gelati manufacturers Gelista, where she had a breakthrough in solving a problem the company had been wrestling with for some time.

Gelista Managing Director Peter Cox said industry placements such as Tabitha's help his business make progress on important challenges affecting ongoing development.

"The students bring fresh eyes and their university training to these problems and, in the process, gain that all-important opportunity to get to work on a real life problem," Mr Cox said.

"Having students intern with us like this gives us a chance to progress the learning of our whole organisation. I thought Tabitha's work was outstanding and she showed great initiative," he said.

Food South Australia CEO Catherine Sayer said Tabitha's work placement results are a great example of why the industry's peak body sponsors this prize.

"Our workforce is one of the industry's most vital assets. We are very pleased to be able to support new graduates entering the industry with access to opportunities such as the Summit and introductions to industry as part of their prize," Ms Sayer said.

"Tabitha tackled and conquered a longstanding problem for Gelista, which shows the value of our emerging industry professionals to the sector, and we are very pleased to be able to foster their development in the hope that they will make ongoing contributions to the industry."

Tabitha says she believes the hands-on experience at this stage of her studies has been invaluable.

“I had the opportunity to apply my university training to a complex problem and work out the solution,” Tabitha says.

It was a perfect work placement for someone whose interest in the industry was born of a fascination with the chemistry of cooking given the infinitesimal alterations required for each round of testing until Tabitha was able to achieve consistent results with wet and dry ingredients to achieve a correct and consistent end product.

“I am fascinated by the way ingredients interact the way they do,” she says, citing Heston Blumenthal’s work with all manner of ingredients to achieve both flavour outcomes and enhance the eating experience as a source of inspiration.

Tabitha first investigated training in cooking rather than food production, but she says when she found out about the University of Adelaide’s food and nutrition science program, she was immediately interested.

As part of her prize, Tabitha was invited to attend the 2019 Food South Australia Summit.

“It was incredible, I met such a lot of interesting people in the industry, and I was amazed at how many different and new problems there are to solve. I talked to manufacturers and also to the people who make the equipment, and it gave me lots of ideas and great contacts.”

Tabitha’s plan is to stay in the South Australian food industry, and hopes her work future will include opportunities in the bakery or dairy sectors. She says winning the prize for work placement came as a surprise.

“I was surprised and very happy,” she says. “Winning the Food South Australia Prize makes me feel like all my hard work til now has been rewarded.”

Helen Morris is the Program Coordinator for the Bachelor of Food and Nutrition Science Program. She says the prize is a brilliant way of supporting the next generation of food and nutrition scientists as they graduate into the workforce.

“The Food South Australia Prize adds value to the industry placement completed by students in their final year by acknowledging students who have excelled in applying knowledge and skills acquired at University to innovate in real-life work-based environments,” Ms Morris said.

Food South Australia will continue to support Tabitha with opportunities to develop her professional networks as part of her prize.