

Production Worker

"You need to be team-oriented but also self-motivated and able to work alone. People who enjoy physical work and who take pride in contributing to a team effort and a quality product will do well as a production worker."

WHAT I LIKE BEST ABOUT THE CAREER

"I enjoy seeing the product go from raw materials to finished product and playing a role in making sure it is a good, high quality product."

THE WORKING WORLD

"Don't limit yourself. Keep all your options open."

EMPLOYER

Weston Bakeries Ltd.

EDUCATION

Grade 12,
Diploma in Printing Management

YEARS IN WORKFORCE

6 years

SALARY RANGE

\$18,000 - \$28,000

CAREER PATH

Production Worker



•Michelle•Johnson•

WHAT IS A PRODUCTION WORKER?

The smell of baking bread. If that thought brings a smile to your face, imagine working in a place where you are surrounded by it each day. That is daily reality for Michelle Johnson, who helps produce fresh bread and rolls for Weston's Bakeries Ltd., a wholesale bakery. Michelle has worked every job on "the line", which can be summarized as a sequence of "mix it, proof it, top it, bake it, bag it."

WHAT DOES A PRODUCTION WORKER DO?

Production workers take responsibility for one point or task in a sequence of steps from raw ingredients to finished product. The

automated process starts with mixing a 250-kg. batch of dough, then moves through a series of stations where the dough is divided, molded into pans, proofed, baked in the oven, de-panned, sliced, bagged and put onto trays for shipping. New employees typically start with more labour-intensive jobs like taking the pans off of the conveyor belt and loading onto pan trucks. With experience, workers can proceed to more technical jobs, operating computerized machinery that in many cases has been custom-designed for the industry and for Weston's.

Jill of All Trades Having worked at Weston's for more than six years now, Michelle has gained the experience required to do any job in the production process. Currently, she is on "coffee break relief", which means she moves up and down the



line, taking over for others while they take their coffee breaks. This allows Michelle tremendous variety in every work day, and the advantage of seeing the "big picture" of production from every vantage point along the way. During the peak summer months Michelle serves as a lead hand, making up the production running order for the day, supervising and training a team of ten workers and trouble-shooting as needed.

Opportunities to Learn Michelle has taken advantage of several opportunities to learn new skills on the job. As part of an employee hiring team she learned how to do interviews, select new hires and conduct orientation training for new employees. As part of the scheduling committee she works with supervisors to plan the work schedule for all employees. "Learning is part of every day," she stresses. "We are always looking for ways to improve our process and management is very open to discussing our ideas."

HOW TO BECOME A PRODUCTION WORKER

Michelle started at Weston's as a summer job while studying at a technical institute. She enjoyed the work and decided to stay. "To work here you need to have your Grade 12," explains Michelle. "You need to be team-oriented but also self-motivated and able to work alone." People who enjoy physical work and who take pride in contributing to a team effort and a quality product will do well as a production worker.

THE FUTURE

Recent growth in the food processing industry has opened up more opportunities for production workers. Michelle enjoys her work and looks forward to continued work with Weston's. She especially enjoys serving as a lead hand in the summer months and welcomes any opportunities for new challenges and opportunities to learn on the job.

RELATED CAREERS

Lead Hand

A lead hand is a team leader in a production facility, often reporting to a foreman or supervisor. Lead hands need to know the work very well but have increased responsibility for front line supervision and planning the production run.

Production Supervisor

A production supervisor oversees the production process, ensuring that materials and workers are in place to keep the production line going and meet production targets.

Labourer

A labourer is often an entry-level job in a processing plant, performing physical tasks like moving stock, racking, packing, cleaning up and janitorial functions.



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For more info, check with Janet Henderson,
 Alberta Food Processors Association
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 or visit the website at www.afpa.com