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# THATCHERS

— THE FAMILY CIDER MAKERS —



Hi, I'm Tom Cross and I've just completed my level 2 Food and Drink Process Operator apprenticeship here at Thatchers.

## **My Background:**

Before joining I was at Weston College and completed my level 2 and level 3 in Engineering. I chose an apprenticeship because I wanted to gain hands on experience in a role that had variety to learn new skills. I didn't want to join a big corporate company or scheme, so this was perfect for me.

## **Application process:**

It was my mum who found the job and helped me apply! However, I did also do work experience at Thatchers as part of my college work. The assessment day really took me out of my comfort zone, but it gave me the confidence I needed to shine. My tips for other students attending this day is to work as part of a team not on your own. As working at Thatchers is all about teamwork and problem solving and that's what the company like to see.

## **My current role:**

During the apprenticeship programme I was fortunate enough to gain experience in all different departments. Then at the end I was asked to work in Blending which I was really pleased about as this was an area I really enjoyed.

Blending is the final step of making the cider before it goes to production to either be canned, kegged, or bottled. A day in the life in blending always starts with a handover. This will then give direction on what needs doing. Throughout the day it's also about continually liaising with production to check on what they're packaging, and how much they're producing so that we can keep up with supply. Each blend can take 45 mins - 2 hours depending on what cider you're making, and on average you would do about 6-8 blends a shift. Plans continually change so communication and adaptability is key in my role.

## **My skills, knowledge, and experiences from the programme:**

As part of the programme I visited different companies to enhance my overall business knowledge about how other companies operate. I have been on various training courses which all counted towards my off the job training. I have also had the opportunity to work on a project in the lab which was great to take the lead and have ownership at apprenticeship level.

For me my confidence is the one thing that improved massively. Joining the world of work is very daunting and I've never had to mix with so many different people and being on a rotation around departments means that I continually had to put myself out there to mix. As Thatchers is a growing

business and changing all the time I'm always developing my knowledge daily unknowingly. It really is a great company to learn and develop with.

As part of my apprenticeship I have had various opportunities outside of my role, including presenting to the board and having training from a memory man! Whilst presenting the board was scary, the training really helped give me the confidence and allowed me to show the skills and personality I must give visibility to myself in the company.

**What I'm most proud of:**

I am most proud of being offered a role in the Blending dept especially as it is a sought-after job. I believe I got offered tis because I expressed an interest, and my hard work must have paid off!

**Top tips:**

My best advice for other students is to not think too much about the qualification when looking for an apprenticeship. Look more into the company you want to be a part of and the job itself.

I truly believe doing an apprenticeship in a company you feel valued, gives you more opportunities and to develop and grow. I have always felt supported throughout my apprenticeship journey.

