

**Name:**

Barry Meikle

Role:

Technical Manager – Free-From Standards

What is your role at BRCGS?

My role is managing the Gluten-Free and Plant-Based Programs which involves speaking to a lot of different people every day – both internally and externally. On any given day my role can involve speaking with our Sales, Marketing, Finance and Technical teams, as well as receiving queries from sites, certification bodies and auditors. I really pride myself in being able to provide answers to their questions as quickly, accurately, and as thoroughly as possible. I really enjoy getting my face out there to try and promote these Programs as they touch two of my passions – consumers with special dietary needs, and the environmental impact of the way we eat.

What is your background and what brought you to BRCGS?

My background is in catering. When I left school, I went to Catering College for two years. I was a chef in Edinburgh, Scotland for over 15 years. I progressed through the ranks and got to the point where the next natural step for me was to own my own restaurant which I knew I didn't ever want to do. As well as having a passion for cooking, I had always been interested in the food safety/science aspect of being a chef, so one day I asked a visiting Health Inspector how I could get into doing his job. "Four years at University" was not the answer I was hoping for, but with the support of my wife and family I was able to leave the catering industry pursue a degree in Environmental Health. Not long after I graduated, we emigrated to Canada. One day I was passing the office of (previous GFCP owners) the Allergen Control Group. I knocked on the door and...here I am!

What do you like most about your role at BRCGS?

I love solving problems, explaining how the Free-From Programs work, helping people and giving them the answers they need. I also like the fact that the GFCP and the Plant-Based Programs operate slightly differently from the other BRCGS Standards. As a result, they're a bit trickier to get a handle on, and it took me a while to get used to. I was lucky in the respect that I started working with the GFCP prior to its integration to BRCGS, so my understanding wasn't initially influenced by the way the other BRCGS Standards operate.

Reflections on the past 25 years

At 22 I couldn't have imagined the way my life turned out! I feel very fortunate to have had the experiences I had. The catering industry gave me a work ethic on which I really pride myself. It also gave me a drive and a reason to succeed in my degree – I didn't want to end up back in a kitchen again! I've been given some fantastic opportunities in my "2nd career", and there are some people that I could never thank enough for that.

What is your biggest achievement in your time at BRCGS?

Becoming Technical Manager of the Gluten-Free and Plant-Based Programs. I worked under my predecessor, Jessica Burke, for three years and she really helped me gain an understanding of every aspect of the role. I wouldn't be in this role today without her. When the time came, I really felt ready to take over from her, and I think that speaks volumes about the time and effort Jess put into my development.

What do you think is in store for the future at BRCGS

I think the last two years has shown us that anything can happen. We've had to adapt to new ways of doing things across the board, which I think has opened our eyes to the way things can possibly be done in the future. There will undoubtedly be challenges to our food system in the future in relation to the global population, climate change and the availability of fresh water as a result. I'd also like to see an increased emphasis on making the food system more sustainable with a focus on single-use plastics and a reduction in food waste. Our whole lives revolve around the way we grow, source and consume food and there are some massive challenges up ahead.