San Diego’s Specialty Foods & Brews sector encompasses the region’s strong brewery, beverage and food culture. As one of the San Diego Workforce Partnership’s Priority Sectors, this study serves to inform the workforce development system on how to best prepare the future workforce for these two subsectors. The full report analyzes workforce needs and opportunities in the industry, including hiring challenges and skills in demand from Specialty Foods & Brews employers.

**SPECIALTY FOODS**

In San Diego’s specialty foods industry, restaurants saw food preparation and serving jobs increase by 23% in 2015. San Diego’s job growth rate (44% from 2009–2016) has also far exceeded the growth rate for the state (21.7%) and the nation (22%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food establishment size</th>
<th>Growth expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–10 employees</td>
<td>Low growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–49 employees</td>
<td>Low to slow growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–99 employees</td>
<td>Growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+ employees</td>
<td>Growing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Job Openings at Specialty Foods Establishments**

- San Diego: 4,940 in 2010, 7,156 in 2015, 8,150 in 2020
- California: 113,996 in 2010, 137,711 in 2015, 150,381 in 2020

**SPECIALTY BREWS**

San Diego’s brewing industry accounts for almost 30% of all craft breweries in California. Known as the Craft Beer Capital of the U.S., San Diego had 128 total operating breweries as of June 2016. Most breweries are growing and expanding and expect to hire additional workers to meet their needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brewery size</th>
<th>Growth expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>1–10 employees</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–49 employees</td>
<td>Growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–99 employees</td>
<td>Growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+ employees</td>
<td>Steady growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brewing Industry: 2016 Average Earnings**

- San Diego County: $200,336
- Portland: $53,999
- Seattle: $47,810
- California: $107,719
- United States: $80,619

San Diego’s brewing industry has the highest percentage growth in job openings compared to other comparable regions like Portland and Seattle, as well as the highest average earnings for 2016. Areas of concentrated brewing activity in San Diego include Mira Mesa/Miramar, central San Diego city, the Hops Highway (Highway 78 between Oceanside and Julian), and the City of Vista.
EMPLOYER-DESIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

According to employer interviews and job postings data, the following knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) are most commonly associated in the Specialty Foods and Brews sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft skills</th>
<th>Technical skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Brewing certificates: Cicerone, UCSD Extension, SDSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great personality</td>
<td>Professional/commercial brewing experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and attitude</td>
<td>Lab experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Culinary skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Food Handling and ServSafe certificates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and problem solving</td>
<td>Operate heavy equipment and machinery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative and inventive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Quality control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability and dependability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common sense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOP CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY EMPLOYERS

Specialty brews employers generally identified their top challenges to be:
- Insufficient cash flow
- Access to capital
- Employee retention or turnover

Finding qualified workers was a major challenge cited by employers in the specialty food industry. Soft skills and prior experience are often more important for these employers than certifications or degrees. Challenges for specialty foods employers include:
- Lack of qualified candidates
- Access to capital
- Minimum wage concerns
- Employee retention
- Regulatory compliance
- Lack of exposure in a sometimes niche market

EMPLOYER HIRING PRACTICES

All employers reported sourcing workers through a variety of methods.

Specialty brews:
- Local brewing certificate programs: Cicerone, UCSD Extension, or San Diego State University
- Brewingwork.com
- Internal promotion

Specialty foods:
- Career Technical Education (CTE) programs
- San Diego Art Institute
- Recruiting agencies and head hunters

Both:
- Word of mouth
- Customers or visitors
- Referrals, industry contacts, social networks head hunters

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create small business internship programs to allow job seekers to experience local small businesses for at least 1–3 months prior to seeking employment
- Provide facilities or other resources such as incubators where small food businesses can rent space in a commercial kitchen at an affordable cost
- Make it easier for small companies to get access to capital
- Provide assistance to small businesses to offset costs associated with training programs and certifications

15 occupations were identified by employers as some of the most commonly employed in the industry.

Specialty Foods:
1. Chef/cook
2. Server
3. Barista
4. Hostess
5. Baker

Specialty Brews:
1. Brewer
2. Assistant brewer
3. Beertender/tasting room staff
4. Bartender
5. Cellarman/cellar “rat”

Cross industries:
1. Sales
2. Marketing
3. Social media
4. Accountant
5. Administrative clerk

DID YOU KNOW?

San Diego is one of the nation’s fastest-growing coffee cities. Ranked 6th best in the U.S. by SmartAsset, San Diego’s specialty or craft coffee scene is making the region comparable to coffee hubs such as Portland and Seattle.

JOB SEEKER TIP

Network. Talk to people in the industry, to owners and employees. Many top executives got their start in the industry by getting to know their bartender, brewery owner or someone else in the industry.
This report resulted from a regional collaboration in San Diego County. This San Diego Workforce Partnership (SDWP) would like to acknowledge the advisory group and representatives from companies, initiatives and programs in San Diego County who participated in surveys, interviews and focus groups for this report. This study could not have been produced without their support.

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