

The Scandinavian School of Brewing strengthens the industry's competitiveness

In cooperation with University of Copenhagen, the Brewingschool is currently educating more and more innovative brewing specialists, brewmasters and brewery managers

By Michael Thorsen

In the wire fencing to the oldest part of the brewery in Faxe, a so-called metal 'revolving gate' has been installed – the entrance leading to the golden nectar. Behind it, production buildings and tanks pile up shoulder to shoulder.

Today, the revolving gate is just one of many entrances to Denmark's second largest brewery, Royal Unibrew. It ensures that only those who are trusted can go in and out – that is, if they can key in the four-digit code of the day on the keypad. However, an entrance code is not the only thing needed for a managerial position on the other side of Royal Unibrew's fence – education is also required.

Ensuring that the process runs smoothly

The phone is ringing to 29-year-old brewhouse manager Anders Nielsen in an older house to the left of the entrance. An operator informs him that one of the pumps has broken down. Anders Nielsen, who graduated from the Scandinavian School of Brewing and the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) just four years ago, looks at the numbers and symbols on one of the seven screens on the tables in front of him. A moment later, he calls back with instructions as how to resolve the situation so that production can resume as quickly as possible.

One moment the white-coated technicians are sitting in front of computer screens in the control rooms not far from the large halls where the brewing takes place. The next moment they are out on the production floor, dealing with everything from intake of raw materials, wort production, adding ingredients, fermentation, storage, filtering the beer and so on.

- I am responsible for the day-to-day operation management, project management and ensuring that the entire process runs smoothly from start to finish with all the requirements being met, Anders Nielsen says.

Successful career

- I also have the overall responsibility for making sure that the finished beer is delivered to packaging every day, that the right brands are produced and that we order the right amount of raw materials that we are going to use. All of this is done in cooperation with the operators, the brewers and the team leaders, Anders Nielsen adds. He has a bachelor's degree in biotechnology from DTU and a Master Brewer diploma from the Scandinavian School of Brewing.

The 29-year-old brewhouse manager is just one of several former students from the nearly 100-year-old Scandinavian School of Brewing, who now has a successful career at one of Denmark's breweries. Another one is Andreas Falkenberg, packaging manager and manager of the new microbrewery at Albani in Odense. He is using the knowledge from the Scandinavian School of Brewing on a daily basis when he assesses e.g. if the cleaning procedures are sufficient, whether the pasteurization process is optimal and whether the packaging process is correctly.

- I often use the knowledge I learned at the school when I need to adapt processes and recipes in the brewing process in order to achieve a better result within specifications, Andreas Falkenberg says.

Develops recipes

Both he and Anders Nielsen had practical first-hand experience with brewing before they attended the Scandinavian School of Brewing, while a third graduate, Daniel Carlfeld Bjørk, despite work experience while he was studying, still had a great deal to learn in terms of practical experience when he was hired as a brewing specialist in Faxe.

Daniel Carlfeld Bjørk is primarily a product developer. He tells that the three other former students are jointly responsible for creating a new series of beer for Royal Unibrew called ANARKIST (ANARCHIST) sold under the brand name of Theodor Schiøtz Brewing Co.

Attractive, industry-related and practically applicable education

The headmaster of the Scandinavian School of Brewing, Kim Lau Johansen, is proud of the part the role the school has played in the three young men's business careers. Together with the board, – and 40 external lecturers – he is already in the process of developing the courses even further.

- In the coming years, we will make the courses even more attractive, which is why we constantly strive to keep up with the latest scientific breakthroughs.

Nearly every day, we are in contact with researchers from the University of Copenhagen and with the Carlsberg Research Laboratory, where some of our lecturers come from, Kim Lau Johansen says.

- One of the things we would like to know more about is development of sour beers. There are many consumers who like the taste of it. Our students need to be able to take that knowledge with them when they leave, so they can produce sour beer as the demand for it grows.

He also refers to other industry-related areas of study, where the school can be pioneers in terms of education e.g. in the development of non-alcoholic beer and, following the latest trends, using new Nordic ingredients and methods.

- We are in the process of targeting our courses even more for the competences needed after graduation. We would also like to involve the students more and make more exercises, thus making the courses even more industry-related and practically applicable.

Skilled new brewmasters

Jens Erik Klemmensen, the head of production at Royal Unibrew in Faxe, supports the Scandinavian School of Brewing.

- If the industry want to be able to compete, we need to train skilled new brewmasters that can go straight into the breweries. The alternative is that we train people in-house, as they do in the oil and pharmaceutical industries, but that costs a lot of money. Fortunately, students from the Scandinavian School of Brewing qualify directly for a position in a brewery just after they graduate. Everyone in this industry should be supporting that.