



# “If you want innovations, money alone is not enough.”

His grandfather had a restaurant in Lyon. He also loves good food and is happy to live in Brussels, where he has no problem finding it. “My dream? Developing healthy food products that taste good as well.” We are talking to Joel Wallecan, who bridges the gap between knowledge and business at the Anton Jurgens Institute.

Ever since his childhood innovation and processes have fascinated him. After his study Chemical Process Technology at the University of Brussels he had to choose one of the many possible roads open to him. He chose Food. “My study mainly focussed on chemistry and petrochemistry - from the development of production lines to heat and mass transfer. Eventually physico chemistry appealed to me the most. That is what got me interested in Food.”

## Helicopter

In 2004 he walked into Cargill's European research centre in Vilvoorde (Belgium). He laughs and says: “I hardly knew what starch was. Fortunately a lot of my basic knowledge of petrochemistry I could use in Food as well.” As a research scientist, he is involved in the development of links between applications and processes. The intention is to improve and innovate the taste and texture of food - from proteins to sugars and fats. Joel: “What is the most challenging aspect of my job? The helicopter view: my work is at the crossroads of nutrition, research, marketing and business. These worlds can hardly communicate with each other. That is what makes the Anton Jurgens Institute so interesting to me: I am learning how to build bridges between all those disciplines.”

## Challenge

According to Joel the strength of the Anton Jurgens Institute lies mainly in the ability to connect theory and practice. With a grin on his face, he says: “In the world of research it often works like this: ‘If you give me a bag of money, I’ll publish three articles at the end of my study.’ But that is not the way to innovation. If that’s what you want, you need to cooperate with the business world,



which is exactly what you learn at the Anton Jurgens. Moreover, they challenge you to improve your social and communication skills, which is not a bad thing for most researchers, who are often slightly introverted types.”

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