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Does it taste good?



Before this question can be answered, processors would do well to understand **what is meant by “taste.”**

Uncle Bob offers the following to give you a better understanding about how you nose, tongue, eyes and ears affect the “flavor” of what you eat!

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Technology of Taste
By: Kevin Knapp
Edited --- a bit by: Uncle Bob

Oenophiles can easily find wine-tasting classes and hundreds of books devoted to the taste, aroma, terroir and other aspects of wine tasting. But when it comes to **food tasting**, notes **author Barb Stuckey**, any kind of book on the topic is hard to find.

Stuckey thought this odd: “While only 34 percent of Americans drink wine, 100 percent of the human population eats food.”

Stuckey figured she had found a market niche. She spent four years writing **“Taste What You’re Missing: The Passionate Eater’s Guide to Why Good Food Tastes Good.”**

While the book is indeed a guide — **it contains many insights into what taste is** and offers experiential tests for improving your palette — it is also a wake-up

call to the meat industry.

While processors have made strides in packaging and processing to deliver foods that are safe, inexpensive and easy to prepare, far less time has been spent answering what for many consumers is **the primary question** about processed, packaged, frozen, canned or fresh food: **Does it taste good?**

Before this question can be answered, processors would do well to understand **what is meant by “taste.”**

(IS) THE TONGUE THE TIP?

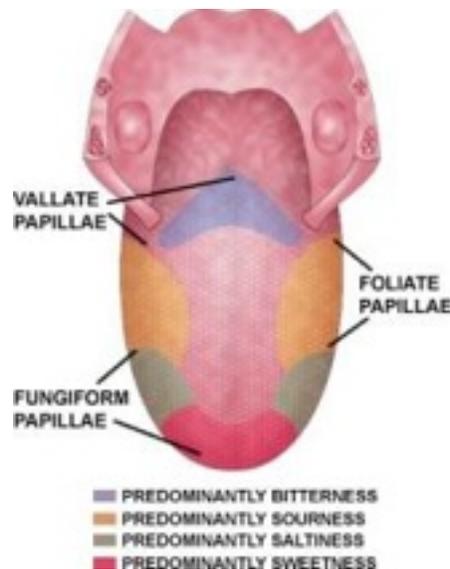


Speaking of our senses, if asked to identify **what organ is most important to taste**, most would say **the tongue**. **Not true**, Stuckey says. The tongue only perceives about 10 percent of the sensory input we get from tasting something; **the rest is aroma**. **“Yes, most of what you think you taste is actually smell,”** Stuckey writes.

To illustrate the relative unimportance of the tongue, Stuckey describes an experiment with a jellybean: ...close your eyes, hold your nose, and pick a jellybean from a bowl. As you put the jellybean in your mouth and begin to chew, keeping hold of your nose, you perceive the sweetness, but nothing else. Not until you let go of your nose will the “flavors” of the jellybean, be it watermelon or licorice, be perceived.

Stuckey lays out the **five primary tastes**: sweet, sour, bitter, salt and **umami**. While the first four are self-explanatory, umami is the taste sometimes referred to as meaty or savory, but which may **also be described as the taste of time**. The more umami an item has, **the more time it has had to develop or mature**. Think of the difference in flavor between a green tomato and a red tomato, or **between a fresh cut of meat and dry-aged beef**. (Note: Dry Aging is how we do it on the Lil Ponderosa!) **That’s umami**.

[But what of the science? Uncle Bob added additional info below ...



Here is a question you don't hear every day: **How many tastes can a person experience** (with only your tongue)? Four or five? Sweet, Sour, Salty and Bitter. But then there is --- **Umami**.

More on **Umami** here: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=15819485>

Glutamate is found in most living things, but when they die, when organic matter breaks down, the glutamate molecule breaks apart. **This can happen on a stove when you cook meat**, over time when you age a parmesan cheese, by fermentation as in soy sauce or under the sun as a tomato ripens. When glutamate becomes L-glutamate, that's when things get "delicious."

L-glutamate, said Ikeda, is a fifth taste. When Escoffier created veal stock, he was concentrating umami. When Japanese made their dashi, they were doing the same thing. When you bite into an anchovy, they are "like glutamate speedballs. They are pure umami," Jonah writes. "Aristotle was wrong. Plato was wrong. We have five tastes, not four. But when Ikeda's findings were published," Jonah says, "nobody believes him."

So Who Was Right?

It turns out, almost 100 years after Escoffier wrote his cookbook and Ikeda wrote his article, a new generation of scientists took a closer look at the human tongue and discovered, just as those two had insisted, that **yes, there is a fifth taste**.

Humans do have receptors for L-glutamate and when something is really, really yummy in a non-sweet, sour, bitter or salty way, that's what you taste. **In 2002, this became the new view**. It's in the textbooks now and scientists decided to call this "new" taste, in Ikeda's honor, "**umami**."] Now, back to Mr. Knapp.

THE OTHER SENSES

"Our experience with food - which we call **taste** - **is actually a multi-sensory adventure**," Stuckey says.

To illustrate how **sight affects taste**, Stuckey tells of an experiment done with beer experts asked to taste nine cups of beer, three each of three different brands.

Unbeknownst to the tasters, the experimenters added a flavorless dye to the beer in order to present the cups in three color groupings: light, medium and dark. The experts tasted the beer and arranged them by color, attributing different taste characteristics to the "dark" beer than the light one.

When the experiment was repeated under conditions that hid the color of the beer, they instead grouped them by brand. That is, **when their eyes could not mislead them**, they grouped the beers by flavor.

As for **hearing's effect on taste**, a study funded by Unilever found that **as the level of background noise decreases, diners were better able to perceive sweet and salty tastes**. This is one reason why airline food always seems bland - the roar of the jet engines **actually blocks the perception of taste**.

Part of **the impact of the sense of touch on flavor comes from mouth feel**.

Stuckey explains how an ice cream maker used the concept to develop one of the most successful brands in the category: **Ben & Jerry's**, whose products have **a chunk-in-every bite texture**.

Offer **portioned sizes ... (affect taste)**. Large portions of uncooked meat are daunting to consumers inexperienced at cooking. Providing right-sized portions can make meal preparation less intimidating.

Consider umami. Cost concerns dictate that most producers cook the meat for prepared items as quickly as possible, “which is **the worst way to develop flavors**,” Stuckey says. (Slow cookers take note.)

Age meat. In an industry that is all about freshness, no one wants to talk about “old” meat. But consumers have grown to accept aged wine and aged cheese, so **there is an opportunity to market aged beef**. ...

Consumers are less afraid of fat. Low-fat and no-fat foods are losing popularity. If food is healthful and nutritious, consumers consider those benefits just as much as they consider fat content.

IN CLOSING BY UNCLE BOB

There is more to learn about how we savor our food...hopefully, with this intro, you now have a better understanding about why **Lil' PONDEROSA BEEF** tastes ---not only different...*but better and has more aroma*... **That's umami!**

Down home we'd pronounce it...**Your Mammy!**

Bon Appetite!