

The secrets of taste

If you have a cold and your nose feels blocked, you might notice that the things you eat taste strange. On these pages, you can investigate why this happens – and what else affects your SENSE of taste.



Test your nose

You'll need two small pieces of apple...



- 1 Eat one piece while pinching your nose shut.



- 2 Let go of your nose before eating the next piece.

Does the taste change?

What's going on?

Your mouth can only detect simple tastes, such as sweet and sour. For complicated flavours, you need your sense of smell, too...

Chewing food releases chemicals.

They move from the back of your mouth, up into your nose where you smell them.



Now confuse it...

- 1 Fold up a piece of kitchen paper into a wad.
- 2 Drip a few drops of vanilla extract onto the wad.
- 3 Hold it near your nose while you eat another small piece of apple.



What flavour can you taste?

The chemicals CAN'T reach your nose when it's pinched or blocked.

I'm a vanilla pod!

Vanilla chemicals are very strong. They go into your nose and overpower the apple in your mouth.



Do you taste with your eyes?

Test a group of people to see how much they rely on what they see when they eat. Set up the experiment beforehand – and keep what you've done secret.

- 1 Put some vanilla yogurt into three bowls. Add food dyes to turn each one a different colour.
- 2 Write words for flavours onto eight strips of paper.
- 3 Now ask the group to taste each bowl of yogurt and pick the strip that describes its flavour.

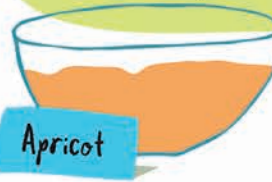


This must be raspberry.

Are you sure?

How many people are tricked by this experiment?

Do you think anyone chooses flavours based on the way the bowls of yogurt look?



That's because your brain makes decisions about the way food should taste – EVEN BEFORE you eat it.

