

# TASTING EXPERT

13-15 year old



[1 OF 3]

## SUGGESTED DURATION

± 60 minutes (at activity leader's discretion). Ideally there should be one activity leader for every 8 to 10 teens, to encourage discussion (depending on group size and available material).

## GOALS

- Help teens learn to discover foods using all 5 senses
- Discover aromas and the memories they can trigger, discover textures, be able to identify flavors, learn that the sense of smell plays a role in the taste of foods in your mouth (flavors), discover what are known as trigeminal sensations (e.g., spicy, bubbly, refreshing, fiery)
- Learn more about their own personal tastes
- Develop an appropriate vocabulary to talk about different foods and their sensory characteristics.
- Experiment with interactions between different flavors and try to create their own recipe using their 5 senses to cook it.

## MATERIAL

### For the group:

- 1 **Sensory chart, Age 13–15** to be laminated (p. 3 of 3).

### Per group of 4–5 teens:

- A sampling plate with bite-size portions of 2 or 3 variations of each of the following food types (p. 2 of 3): one "grain product" base, one spread, one texture-rich food, one aromatic food (8 to 12 foods in all)
- One platter with the same 8 to 12 unportioned foods (adapt quantities)
- Dishware appropriate for the foods being tasted (small cups and plate, paper napkins, and utensils, as needed)

### Per teen:

- A pencil and a sheet of paper to note down their reactions and recipe, as needed



**IMPORTANT: CHECK BEFOREHAND  
WHETHER ANY OF THE TEENS HAVE  
ALLERGIES.**

## HOW TO PROCEED

The teens separate into small groups of no more than 5 each.

### 1. Food discovery:

- The activity leader hands out one tasting platter per group.
- The activity leader follows the **Tasting steps** (p. 2 of 3) to guide the teens in their sensory discovery of each type of food (the different variations are sampled at the same time and can be compared).

### 2. Creative cuisine:

- The activity leader gives each group a platter containing the ingredients the teens have just explored, in larger quantities.
- Each group can choose to either prepare a spread that they invent together by discussing the ingredients and arriving at a consensus, or each teen can prepare his or her own. The participants can write down their recipe then test their ingredient combination using their 5 senses. Sweet, salty, sweet & salty—any combination is possible!
- Festive sampling of the participants' spreads and recipe swapping for those who desire!

For each step the activity leader proposes two tasting phases:

- 3. Individual tasting:** Each teen samples the food calmly, on their own. The activity leader asks questions to help them. This individual phase allows teens to explore foods without being unduly influenced by the others and to learn to trust their own instincts when it comes to their perceptions and preferences. Among 13 to 15-year-olds, this phase can last several minutes, during which time they can jot down their comments on each ingredient (description and preferences: "*Will I put this in my recipe?*").
- 4. Group discussion:** The activity leader asks the teens the questions again and invites them to answer out loud in front of the group. They can refer to the laminated **Sensory chart** as needed. When they don't agree with the way others describe a tasting sensation, the activity leader can lead a group discussion to try and get them to agree on a common word to describe it while keeping in mind that each person perceives things differently!

## KEY MESSAGES TO REPEAT DURING THE ACTIVITY

*"There is no right or wrong answer! Taste is personal—it varies from one person to the next. You may like, love, or hate a food. The important thing is to explore it with whatever senses you choose—your eyes, nose, fingers...!" Urge teens to try a food, **but never force them.***

## TAKING IT ONE STEP FURTHER

Repeat the same activity with other foods from the list, select fewer food categories, offer more than 2 variations, come up with a recipe other than a spread (pizza, muffin, or other).



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# TASTING EXPERT

13-15 year old



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## SUGGESTED FOODS

**Grains:** piece of sandwich loaf, white bread, brown bread, pumpernickel bread, pita bread, naan, rice cake, etc.

**Spreads:** butter, honey, mustard, plain yogurt, horseradish sauce, maple butter, jam, hummus, baba ghanouj, tapenade, blue cheese, goat cheese, dessert tofu, etc.

**Texture-rich foods:** endive leaf, roast pepper, wasabi pea (fiery sensation), pickled pork tongue, hot pepper-flavored dark chocolate (fiery sensation), a few kernels of corn, pickle, ground cherry, etc.

**Aromatic foods:** fresh or dried herbs (coriander, basil, mint, etc.), ground spices (cinnamon, cumin, coriander, ginger, etc.), arugula leaf (spicy sensation), rapini (Italian broccoli, raw or cooked), fish sauce (nuoc-mam), pickled banana peppers, piece of persimmon (fully ripe), sun-dried tomatoes, grapefruit, apple, raw fennel (aniseed flavor), smoked eel, smoked salmon, etc.

**Note:** The foods aren't necessarily limited to one sensory category. They are simply grouped according to one dominant category, for information purposes.

## TASTING STEPS

At each step the teens can refer to the **Sensory chart** or come up with other words that spring to mind during the tasting.

### 1. Look at it!

- Have you ever seen this food before? Does it look appetizing?
- How would you describe it (color, shape, size, look, etc.)?

### 2. Touch it with your fingers, lips, and tongue!

- Do you like the texture?
- How would you describe what you are touching?

### 3. Smell it!

- Do you like the smell of it? Why?
- How would you describe the smell? Does it remind you of anything, like a food or dish, a place you've been before, a person?

### 4. Taste it!

- Pinch your nose while tasting the food. Continue chewing, then unpinch your nose. Does it taste different now? What you tasted as soon as you unpinched your nose is called the "aroma." It's the smell of the food that you experience when you put food **in** your mouth.
- Did you like the flavor(s)? Why? Did you notice that you can taste the flavors just as well when your nose is pinched as when it is unpinched? That's because it's your tongue that registers taste. Did you think it tasted salty? acidic? bitter? sweet?
- What other feelings did you notice in your mouth? Was it spicy? refreshing? bubbly? fiery? These sensations are neither aromas nor flavors, but they are part of the way we taste. They're called trigeminal sensations. Fancy word, eh? 😊
- Did you like the texture? Why? Did you recognize the same texture you described in Step 2?
- Did you notice that your mouth (lips, tongue) was more sensitive to the touch of the food than your fingers?

### 5. Survey (show of hands)

- Who liked this food? Who didn't like it?
- For each type of food, which variation would you likely choose for your recipe?

## ACTIVITY LEADER'S ATTITUDE

The activity leader creates a calm and welcoming atmosphere, is smiling and pleasant, encourages group discussion and individual participation, and makes sure each teen's tastes are respected, whatever they may be.

The activity leader respects the pace of each teen. For example one teen may spontaneously taste the food while for another, just touching it with their fingers may already be a challenge.

The activity leader samples the foods together with the participants, to help put them at ease, and expresses her appreciation. If she doesn't like the food, she should feel free to say so, but should show her willingness to use her other senses to set an example, e.g., "I don't really like this food, but I'm going to get a sense of it by smelling it with my nose."



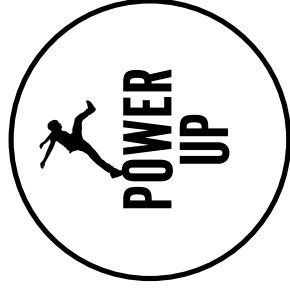
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# TASTING EXPERT SENSORY CHART

Age  
**13-15**

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APPRECIATION OF FLAVOR*	DESCRIPTION OF FLAVORS AND OTHER SENSATIONS	DESCRIPTION OF TEXTURES	
I don't like it 	<b>SALTY</b>	<b>LUMPY</b> texture like oatmeal	<b>DRY</b> texture like crackers
	<b>SWEET</b>		
	<b>SOUR</b> like lemons		
	<b>BITTER</b> like dark chocolate		
I like it a bit 	<b>UMAMI</b> like soy sauce	<b>CRUNCHY</b> texture like carrots	<b>FLESHY</b> texture like cantaloupe
	<b>METALLIC</b>		
	<b>FATTY</b>		
I like it a lot 	<b>SPICY</b> like radish	<b>STRINGY</b> texture like celery	<b>CRISPY</b> texture like chips
	<b>BUBBLY</b> like sparkling water		
	<b>FIERY</b> like Dijon mustard		
I love it! 	<b>IRRITANT</b> like onions that make you cry	<b>MELT-IN-YOUR-MOUTH</b> texture like chocolate	<b>JUICY</b> texture like watermelon
	<b>ASTRINGENT</b> like over-brewed tea	<b>SOFT</b> texture like bread	<b>CREAMY</b> texture like yogurt
	<b>REFRESHING</b> like peppermint	<b>RUBBERY</b> texture like shrimp	<b>SMOOTH</b> texture like pudding

\*The flavor of a food is an experience that involves all the senses.

Note: Participants can also describe the smell, which may remind them of Grandma's cottage, Christmas cookies, a walk in the woods in the fall, or other memories. They can also name the source of the smell (it smells like mint, roses, toast, etc.) These are all ways to help kids express and develop their tastes!