

# nutripro<sup>®</sup>

NESTLÉ PROFESSIONAL NUTRITION MAGAZINE

The Taste  
of Nutrition

Color  
& Food

Mindful  
Eating



The Pleasure  
of Eating  
& Drinking

# *nutrition*

## What does taste bring to the table?

Food. We talk so much about its origins, safety, and contributions to our health that sometimes we forget what a pleasure it can be. Sitting down to a meal can be a wonderful way to indulge all five senses, and when it comes to nutrition, that experience is too important to overlook.

As an article in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* explains “In recent years, many health professionals (including dietitians) have focused on health and nutrition, often at the expense of pleasure and taste.<sup>1</sup> However, appealing to the senses can play an important role in whether food actually gets eaten and we get the balanced nutrition we need. It’s no surprise that if food doesn’t taste good people won’t eat it. And we know that nutrition is only as good as it tastes. When consumers are asked if they think healthy food can taste good, over half believe that food can be healthy and tasty at the same time. When asked, people in Japan, Spain, the Netherlands, and South Korea are noticeably less likely to believe that healthy food can be tasty.<sup>2</sup>

Taking time to experience the pleasures of eating can also contribute to healthier eating habits. Multitasking throughout the day seems to be necessary to accomplish all that you need to do. With a business to run, employees to manage and a personal life to foster, it’s no wonder so many of us eat on the run, while driving, or placing tomorrow’s order. However, if you’re just eating to refuel your body, you might be missing all the pleasures of food. You might even miss the signals when you have eaten too much.

We’re lucky enough to live in a time when we have access to a global village of flavor. Why not embrace it, and enjoy the pleasures of food?

## The power of mindful eating

Mindful eating is being present, moment by moment, for each sensation that happens during eating, such as chewing, tasting and swallowing. If you’ve ever practiced mindfulness in any way (such as meditation, relaxation or breathing exercises), you are familiar with how easily our minds wander. The same happens when we eat. When you begin to practice mindful eating, one important thing to remember is not to judge yourself when you notice your mind drifting off the experience of eating. Instead, just keep returning to the awareness of that taste, chew, bite or swallow.



DID YOU  
KNOW?

A person begins life with about 10,000 taste buds. They transfer information to a region in the brain that processes pleasure, memory, motivation, reward and desire.





# The Science of the Senses

Taste. Over time, we've developed complex perceptions of flavor to help us get the nutrients we need to survive.

## Sweet

The flavor of milk and ripe fruit, both tremendous sources of energy and nutrients.

## Salty

The taste of foods that can ensure proper electrolyte balance (crucial for maintaining heart and brain function).

According to *Nutrition and the Brain*, published by the Corporate Wellness Unit of Nestlé, these divisions existed long before scientists had a name for them.

## Sour

The mouth-puckering taste of acid foods. Sometimes you can reduce salt in foods by adding a bright flavor spark from acidic foods instead.

## Umami

The flavor enhancing taste profile from amino acids naturally found in proteins.

By sensing the five taste modalities, our sensory apparatus acts like an analytical chemical laboratory making independent measurements of ionic equilibrium, toxicity and nutritional value.

## Bitter

The sense of bitter sometimes can be used to provide a warning against potential toxins or unripe foods.





## DID YOU KNOW?

Babies can discern flavor in utero. The amniotic fluid surrounding a baby in the womb is flavored by the foods and beverages the mother has eaten, and after 21 weeks the developing child swallows several ounces each day.

## The surprising influence of other senses

The way we experience flavor can be impacted by a food's smell, texture, temperature, color and appearance. Even the room temperature, the lighting, and the comfort of your chair can play a role in the pleasure of eating. Consider these interesting findings:

### Sound

Excess noise can elevate blood pressure, increase breathing rates, intensify the effects of alcohol, depress the appetite and make sleep difficult—even after the noise ceases.

The average noise level of a typical restaurant during a dining rush is 80 dB (some reach as much as 110 dB), the equivalent of a road construction site or a lawnmower.<sup>a</sup>

### Smell

Much of what we call taste is actually smell. A piece of apple and a piece of onion can taste the same if you hold your nose while eating them.

The 2004 Nobel Prize was awarded to scientists who found that smell helps us detect all the good qualities we attribute to good taste.

### Sight

Research in the late 1970s showed that we eat with our eyes first: When we find food more visually appealing, we enjoy it more and absorb more nutrients from it.

Preparing the environment properly is an important part of providing an optimal dining experience. Here are some strategies to try:

Green, brown, and red are the most popular food colors. Red is often used in restaurant decorating schemes because it is an appetite stimulant.<sup>3</sup> Different lighting levels can set different moods. While orange or yellow tones can create a warm environment, dim lighting or candles can create a romantic atmosphere.



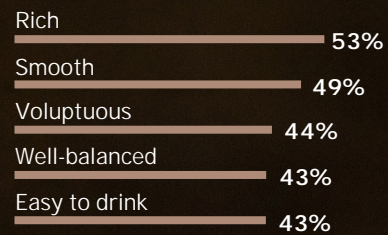


# coffee

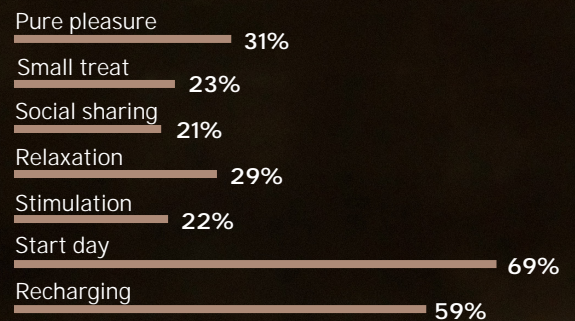
Now serving  
more demanding  
consumers



What are consumers looking for from their coffee?



Why do people drink coffee when out of home?



Customers enjoy learning about new types of coffee, an interest shared by:

70% of black coffee drinkers

68% of creamy coffee drinkers<sup>4</sup>

DID YOU  
KNOW?

Humans are born with all of the senses we need to find nourishment in the world around us.



# The professional barista's take

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## Cappuccino

A cappuccino is a beverage of ratios, producing a harmonious balance of espresso, steamed milk and frothed milk. A traditional cappuccino is a five- to six-ounce beverage, served in a porcelain cappuccino cup.

The foam should be creamy, smooth, and silky with micro bubbles.

The taste balance should blend the sweetness of the milk and the espresso as a building block. The drink should not be too milky: a distinct taste of espresso should be present.

The word cappuccino came from the long pointed hood worn by the Capuchin order of friars in the 1500s. The name of this pious order was later borrowed as the English name for a type of monkey with a tuft of black cowl-like hair. In Italian, "cappuccino" went on to mean an espresso coffee mixed or topped with steamed milk or cream—a drink that resembled the color worn by Capuchin friars.



## Latte Macchiato

Latte Macchiato is a coffee beverage, literally translated as stained milk. This refers to the method of preparation, where the milk gets "stained" by the addition of espresso.

A latte macchiato may be prepared simply by frothing milk to produce generous foam, pouring it into a glass, and adding espresso. The frothing yields significant light, "dry" foam, with a layer of liquid milk underneath.

Alternatively, it may be prepared as a layered drink, with the espresso poured gently out of a small pitcher, over the back of a spoon so that it forms a layer between the denser milk below and the lighter foam above. A glass is essential for the layers to be visible.

The espresso may be brewed into a standard espresso cup or shot glass and then swiftly dumped in, or into a specialized espresso brew pitcher to make pouring and layering easier.



# The biological basis of cravings

Researchers have found that cravings for certain foods may be the body's way of asking for the nutrition it needs. For example:

Certain alkaloids in chocolate may stimulate the production of serotonin, known to enhance feelings of well-being.

A pregnant woman's desire for salty foods like a pickle or olives may be linked to her body's need for additional minerals, particularly sodium.

A craving for fruit may signal low blood sugar or a need for carbohydrates, whose primary function is to provide energy, especially for the brain and nervous system.



All over the world, food plays a central role in society. While each culture treats eating differently, we all value well-being and enjoyment of food.

The French, for instance, would never consider multi-tasking while eating. In *French Women Don't Get Fat*, author Mireille Guiliano suggests that sitting down and eating mindfully is a key factor in the French woman's ability to stay slim. In the land of leisurely meals, savoring food deliberately increases the feeling of satisfaction, which helps control overeating and portion size.

Chinese believe that foods can play significant roles in body health and vitality. Ingredients are described as "hot," "cold" or "neutral," and depending on people's body status, foods of the opposite nature are eaten to bring the body back to balance. It's also believed that eating certain foods together can be detrimental to the body, but eating seasonal food has great benefits, as seasonality coincides with nature. The Chinese saying "Yi Shi Yang Sheng" means eat well, stay healthy.

To Italians, family is everything, and the whole household sits down together to eat. Multiple generations may be involved in preparing food, and recipes are passed down through the family like heirlooms. No one eats until everyone is present and seated. As one regional proverb goes, *Chi mangia e non invita, possa strozzarsi con ogni mollica* (He who eats alone and invites no one, may choke with every crumb).

# Food +



## The art of kaiseki

The traditional Japanese multi course meal known as kaiseki is the ultimate experience in the pleasure and beauty of food. Dishes of exquisitely prepared food, chosen to honor the season with the ingredients selected and the individual bowls and vessels used to present them, build into a meal that approaches perfection. As Vaughn Tan wrote in his 2009 article "Understanding Kaiseki," for *The Atlantic* magazine, "By meal's end, I was satisfied in the broadest sense of the word: fantastically delicious food made with care and thought eaten in the company of people who feel strongly about food often does that to me. But beyond that, kaiseki's underlying structure is part of what makes it so rich and satisfying to compose, prepare, and consume."





## The French paradox

The French Paradox lies in the belief that while the average French person eats more saturated fat in the form of butter and cheese than the average American, the incidence of coronary heart disease is much lower—could it be all that red wine? While the science has since been called into question, the real secret could be mindful eating. Eating more slowly, and with full awareness of the food as the French do, provides time to savor each bite.

# Culture

## "The Meaning of Food"

This PBS.org documentary series explores our relationships to food and reveals food's connections to our personal, cultural, and familial identities. As host and chef Marcus Samuelsson says, "Food is powerfully symbolic and really complex. Through food we express love. We bring comfort and hope. We forge new relationships and strengthen old bonds. Food reaffirms not only our humanity but the joy of being alive."

Just a few of the cultural differences and similarities the program reveals:

Pork is the most widely eaten meat in the world. Wild pigs, found worldwide, have been domesticated since the Stone Ages.

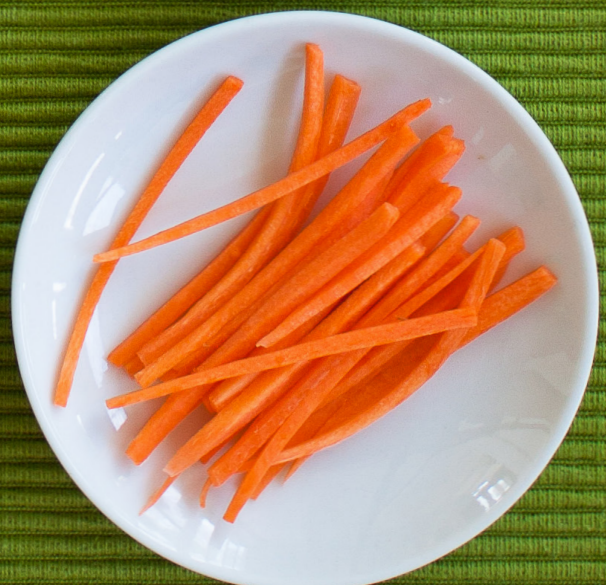
A typical Japanese mother spends almost an hour crafting every lunch into a healthful, beguiling blend of cartoon characters, flora and fauna that will make the food appeal to her child.

Salt was used as a method of exchange for Roman soldiers, giving rise to the word salary and the root of the expression "worth his salt."

The durian, a delicious fruit with a putrid smell, has been banned from public transportation in some countries.



# The Pleasures of the Table





The Greek philosopher Epicurus believed in trying to achieve the greatest amount of pleasure possible during one's lifetime. His emphasis was on pleasures of the mind, not physical pleasures. To Epicurus, the company you keep at meals matters more than what you eat. His name is the origin for the word epicure.

### **A good meal is about more than taking food into the body**

Eating can be an act of pleasure, a time for relaxation, and a way to stimulate all the senses, not just the taste buds. It's also a wonderful way to spend time with people and enjoy their companionship. Metaphorically, "breaking bread" means to have a meal together, and it is a phrase that has long been associated with building relationships.

A recent study found that college students who regularly share a meal with those of different backgrounds had a more positive experience of the cultural climate on-campus, and their interactions with others in the dining hall were more positive and enriching than they were in the classroom and the dormitory.<sup>5</sup>

As renowned chef and restaurateur Lidia Bastianich says in the video *Food is Love*, sharing food establishes deep connections with others. "I think collectively, we should be together at the table much more often than we are," she says, "beginning with the family eating together, to the leaders, eating each other's food at the table and maybe discussing the poignant issues over a nice bowl of pasta."

### **Table talk: Let's eat together**

A new grassroots startup called The Family Dinner Project ([thefamilydinnerproject.org](http://thefamilydinnerproject.org)) is dedicated to the idea that food, fun and conversation about things that matter is important for families.

"Over the past 15 years researchers have confirmed what parents have known for a long time: Sharing a family meal is good for the spirit, the brain and the health of all family members. Recent studies link regular family dinners with behaviors including lower rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy and depression, as well as higher grade-point averages and self-esteem. Studies also indicate that dinner

conversation is a more potent vocabulary-booster than reading, and the stories told around the kitchen table help our children build resilience. The icing on the cake is that regular family meals also lower the rates of obesity and eating disorders in children and adolescents."

What works for families works for any group of people—and any meal. The global success of Starbucks is due in part to its convivial atmosphere that encourages conversation. And many cultures are known as much for the social aspects of wine or cocktails as they are for the food, including Spain's tapas bars, Italy's penchant for meeting for an aperitif before dinner, and Japan's izakaya, where workers can stop for a drink with friends and colleagues before heading home for dinner.

Of course, dining out can provide all the benefits of dinners at home—without the distractions of food preparation and clean-up. Just remind everyone to turn off their mobile phones.

### **Dinner: A conversation starter**

The magic that happens at family dinners isn't the food on the table, but the conversations around it. Three in four teens report that they talk to their parents about what's going on in their lives during dinner; and eight in 10 parents agree that by having family dinner they learn more about what's going on in their teens' lives.<sup>6</sup>



# Cooking for Pleasure

## The principles of flavorful cooking

Today's chefs, nutritionists and menu makers today have a dizzying variety of ingredients and techniques for coaxing out every last bit of pleasure from a meal. And today's customers are sophisticated enough to demand and understand the value of a flavorful meal, skillfully and thoughtfully prepared.

The following trends point to the growing importance of making food more flavorful. While many of them are naturally healthy, the focus is on the flavor and the pleasure of the experience, not on the nutrition.

### 1. The bolder, the better

Spicy, high-impact flavors and ingredients are becoming more common on menus of all kinds, from ginger and wasabi to chiles—not just the more familiar jalapeno and chipotle, either, but also guajillo and habanero, serrano and malagueta. “Hot” flavors are even showing up in unexpected places, like chocolate desserts and cocktails.





## 2. Flavor layering

Along with naturally flavorful ingredients, chefs are using multi-step preparations to build more complex flavors. Instead of simply roasting a pork loin, we rub it with spice paste, sear it on the grill, caramelize it in the oven, then sauce and accessorize with distinctive sides and garnishes. This complexity makes every bite taste a little different, keeping the palate from becoming fatigued.

## 3. Top-shelf quality

Wagyu beef. Cailler chocolate. Sushi-grade tuna. Café-style coffee... premium foodstuffs spell luxury and satisfaction, and they also support the trend toward ingredient-driven menus. In many cases, a little bit of something delicious—like caviar or a delicious specialty cheese—goes a long, long way.

## 4. Global flavor exploration

What's next on the ethnic flavor front? South America is a new hot spot, from Brazilian steakhouses to Peruvian ceviche bars. Indian flavors and ingredients—especially complex spices—are being tapped for their appetite-enhancing appeal. And now that every school kid eats sushi, interest in other kinds of Japanese food is growing, from robatayaki-style marinated and grilled foods to ramen noodles.

## 5. Sweet, meet savory

From grilled salmon with honey-citrus sauce and maple-glazed pork, to caramels with sea salt and bay leaf crème brûlée, sweet and savory are mixing it up. Cooks are borrowing from the dessert pantry, and pastry chefs are sampling the spice rack to find surprising new sweet and savory flavor combinations.

# Texture, temperature & taste

Adding variety in texture or temperature is an interesting way to boost the appeal of food. Think of a classic Nicoise salad and its array of contrasting flavors and textures—the brininess of olives and anchovies, the crispness of cucumber, the juiciness of tomatoes and the soft,

luxurious mouthfeel of tuna. Or a hot fudge sundae with its cool ice cream and warm chocolate sauce, and the way these ingredients continue to change each other as the ice cream melts and the chocolate sauce cools, made even more interesting by the crunch of nuts

and the pillowy softness of whipped cream. Neither of these iconic dishes would be quite the same without the rich experience added by texture and temperature elements.



# So good together

There's a sweet spot where the pleasures of food overlap with the healthiness of eating well. By partnering a chef who knows how to please the senses with a nutritionist who knows how to supply the body's needs, we can bring together two worlds of expertise that all too often remain separate, letting each enlarge the other's world.



## These restaurants have found the sweet spot between nutrition and taste

### **Seasons 52 ([seasons52.com](http://seasons52.com))**

Billed as a "fresh dining experience that celebrates living well," this U.S. restaurant/wine bar offers fresh, seasonal menus and all-natural cooking techniques that just happen to be lower in calories.

### **MIX ([mix-world.com](http://mix-world.com))**

The largest healthy-concept chain in Hong Kong promises "healthy indulgence" with smoothies, juices, sandwiches, salads and other tasty, good-for-you items.

### **Insalata Ricca ([insalataricca.it](http://insalataricca.it))**

Focusing on salads and other light, produce-intensive offerings, this hot spot in Rome is popular for its fresh, healthy food.

### **True Food Kitchen ([truefoodkitchen.com](http://truefoodkitchen.com))**

With its globally inspired cuisine, TFK challenges the American "eat this, don't eat that" paradigm, offering a balance of flavor, freshness, variety, quality, and nutrition.





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# Further reading

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