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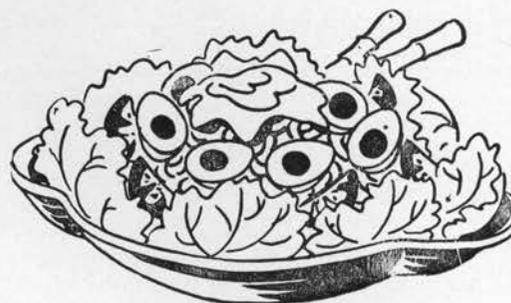
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There's a Career For You In

Taste Testing

If discovering a new taste treat in food is a thrill for you, read on—this could be your future.



BY JO ANN BRECKENRIDGE

SO YOUR favorite salad dressing is on the nippy side. But your roommate likes her salad with a sweet dressing and the salad you eat at your aunt's is tossed with a salty dressing. "Well," you shrug, "everyone to his own taste."

But what would you do if you were making a dressing for the public? You'd want a dressing that would sell—to your mother, your roommate's mother and your aunt. It's a big job to please the tastes of Mrs. America and her family—a job you might have as a professional taste testing director.

Miss Irene McCarthy, former director of a testing service in California, says taste testing director is a job in which your life is ever busy, but never dull. From the minute you dash into your office until you lock up and head for home your day is filled with food photography, baking quantities of cakes and pastry, writing information for advertising and checking nutritional copy for label use. But the biggest part of the job is taste testing in which the effect of a food is measured according to the senses of sight, smell and taste.

The Taste Test Panel

Before you smack your lips in anticipation, you'd better know you won't be doing much tasting yourself. Instead you'll choose a group of 6 to 12 tasters to make up your taste test panel. They are your most important tool and must be chosen with care. Each candidate must meet certain qualifications and pass a series of tests.

First, your prospective taster must recognize the importance of the work, be interested in the project,

and physically well, not fatigued or worried. You'll be wise to choose both men and women for your panel as their tastes and opinions sometimes vary.

Learn How To Taste

Amateurs must be taught how to taste. Silly? Not at all. There are certain techniques essential to good tasting. For instance: sometimes odor is to be judged because if it smells better, it sells better. In this case the food must be sniffed and the sensation recorded before it is tasted. When tasting, the taster should rotate the position of the sample in his mouth to get all sensations. The sides of the tongue give the sour and salty sensation, the tip the sweet, and the back the bitter—hence the "bitter after-taste" of some foods. After each sample is tasted, the mouth is cleared with water or a special clearer such as celery or raw apple for fatty foods, olives for beer and dill pickles for fish. Never use a mouth wash. Instruct your tasters not to smoke for 2 hours before tasting.

In your position as director you must set up a suitable scoring sheet on which your taster will record his reactions. The simplest methods are by numerical score or word description. If rating is by numerical score, as on the frozen strawberry score sheet, a sliding scale of five is used, with two-and-one-half considered acceptable. It should be graphically presented with acceptable scores indicated above the line, unacceptable below.

Simplified word rating, as on the coffee score sheet, is popular with tasters. You, as director, must determine a numerical value for all words before presenting such a score sheet. Word it with care so that the

taster will not be influenced or biased by any opinion you may have. Indicate space for comments on each factor involved.

Everyone thinks he is a good taster, but quite to the contrary, there are many poor tasters. Some may excel in one food and fail in others. If your company is testing a new salad dressing, you must pre-test your panel for accuracy in judging salad dressing. You will use one or all of these methods. In the first you'll set three samples before the candidates at the same time—two identical. They are to select the like samples. This is the triangle test. Use it again the next day as a check repeat test. The most severe test—the test that determines the keenness of sense—is the degree-of-difference test. You'll present one sample as a standard along with two others in which an ingredient, such as mustard, is added in known varying proportions. The taster, of course, must recognize these proportions.

You now know which tasters recognize quality food, can concentrate on the tasting job, react to taste differences and remember taste impressions. Your panel is ready. You can begin the test.

Giving the Test

Arrange to taste the food at the time of day when it would normally be eaten. You'd always test hot cakes in the morning; steak in the afternoon. Place the samples before your panel, marked with blind coding to eliminate any prejudice. Using a, b and c or 1, 2 and 3 is discouraged as "a" and "1" are first choice in many minds. You might use a code symbolic of the product as j-a-m for jam samples. After you've been on the job awhile, you'll learn things about presentation of food, too. You'll learn never to pre-

FROZEN WHOLE STRAWBERRY SCORE SHEET

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade each sample, using the numerical key and make any comments necessary to clarify your ratings.

- Acceptable { 5—Excellent
4—Good
3—Fair
- Not Acceptable { 2—Poor
1—Very poor
0—Repulsive

Factor and Standard of Reference	Sample O	Sample K
APPEARANCE Bright, uniform, typical color. Fleshy, firm, holds shape. No defects, undeveloped or damaged berries.	Score:	
	Comments:	
TEXTURE Firm, tender; not hard, tough, or mushy.	Comments:	
	Score:	
FLAVOR Typical or fresh—not too sweet nor too tart. Syrup blends.	Score:	
	Comments:	

COFFEE SCORE SHEET

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please rate the aroma, color, and taste of these samples using the following descriptive words:

Make any additional comments necessary to clarify your rating: e.g.—

- Excellent
Very Good
Good
Fair
Poor

Color	Good. Like it darker.
Aroma	Fair. Seems stale.
Taste	Poor. Bitter.

Factor	Sample H	Sample E
Color		
Aromaa		
Taste		

Which sample do you prefer? _____ Why? _____

- Did you use Cream? Yes No
Sugar? Yes No

sent more than four foods per test; that natural daylight is preferred; that there should be enough for two or three bites from each sample; and that hot food must be served hot, cold food cold. Did you ever decide you disliked a food because the girl across the table made a face after her first bite? Because facial expressions do influence a taster, each member of the panel should work in a separate booth.

By the time you've gone this far, you'll know how to interpret the comments on the score sheets. If a taster detects a bitey after-taste in products made with imitation vanilla flavoring, you, as a home economist, should know that the solvent propylene glycol is probably at fault. Of course, all comments are not that intelligent. Miss McCarthy conducted a coffee panel recently after which one taster wrote that both samples under question, when combined, made a "pretty good cup of coffee." This sort of comment doesn't help.

Opportunities for You

How do you get into the field of taste testing? According to Miss McCarthy, the time is ripe. More and more companies are realizing the importance of consumer acceptance for their products. Most openings are with large food manufacturing concerns interested in developing new products.

While in college, get a sound background in education or dietetics, Miss McCarthy recommends. All the chemistry a foods major is required to take is important for a taste testing job, too. Any additional mathematics and statistics you can squeeze into your schedule as electives will also be helpful. Learn all you can about food and flavoring.

If taste testing sounds complicated and a lot of hard work, it's consoling to know that man has 3,000 taste buds, cows have 15,000 and an antelope has 50,000. Aren't we lucky to be feeding a mere man?