

Guide to Developing Taste and Flavor



1. USE A VARIETY OF INGREDIENTS: FRESH WHEN POSSIBLE

Eating a variety of food increases a person's chance of getting all the nutrients that they need. A lack of variety can also lead to sensory boredom because eating food with the same taste or flavor over time will cause the palate to get bored. Try a contrast of flavors, tastes, and textures.



2. TRANSFORM WITH TASTE – TASTE INTERACTIONS

Assess the taste profile of the ingredients you are using in order to determine which tastes you are working with. This is essential in deciding what to pair with certain foods or beverages. *See "Taste-Taste Interactions" resource for the interactions that tastes play amongst each other.



3. ADD ACID

Acidic foods are sour foods and a little goes a long way in brightening up a dish. Adding a source of acid (lemon, lime, pickles, wine, vinegar, mustard or cultured dairy products) helps to brighten and balance flavors in both cooked and raw dishes. *See "Guide to Acids Effects on Foods" resource for more information on adding acids to foods.



4. WORK WITH TEXTURES

Adding contrasting textures to a dish can add more pleasure to the eating experience. If all the tastes or textures are the same within a dish or meal, flavor fatigue may set in.



5. CHOOSE A COOKING METHOD

Cooking contributes a lot to the flavor profile as heat allows for the breakdown of cell walls and with it, aromas, nutrients, and taste are released. *See "Guide to Cooking Methods" resource for more information about cooking methods.



6. ADD HERBS AND SPICES

Herbs provide new aromas and thus enhance the flavor profile of food and beverages. Toasting, blooming, and making an infusion of herbs and spices are ways to alter and enhance their flavor potential. It is best to add spices in stages during the cooking process; add fresh herbs at the end.



7. PLATE FOR IMPACT

To increase the chances of someone switching from a diet full of processed food to one that contains plants, plating becomes an essential strategy. Some techniques for plating include selecting various dish sizes, colors, and shapes, maximizing height, leaving negative space, using contrasting textures and colors, and garnishing the finished dish with fresh edible materials.



8. USE SALT INTENTIONALLY

When using salt, the 'when to add it' and 'how much' is especially important. In appropriate amounts, salt can be a friend, not a foe. The most effective way to ensure that your salt intake is ideal is to avoid processed foods. Try adding a small pinch of salt during the multiple stages of cooking and taste the food throughout the process.



9. SERVE FOOD AT A TEMPERATURE TO IMPROVE FLAVOR

The temperature at which a food is served can make a difference in how the food tastes. It is best to serve food between 72-105°F/ 22-41°C, depending on the food. Clear hot soups are best served at 210°F/ 99°C, whereas hot creamy soups are best at 190-200°F/ 89-93°C, and cold soups at 40°F/ 4°C or lower. See "Guide to Food Serving Temperatures" for more info.



10. USE FAT TO ENHANCE FLAVOR

Fat plays an important role in the flavor and texture of a dish. Fat carries flavor and provides a mouthfeel. It's helpful to know which type of fat (e.g. olive oil versus butter) is best to use in which cooking scenarios. Oftentimes there is nothing better than first pressed olive oil to heighten the flavor of a dish.

