Food is to enjoy and taste is a top motivator of our food choices. Taste, smell, and sensation interact closely to give us what we generally refer to as taste. Read on to learn more about flavors, aromas, and mouth-feel, and how they relate to our choice of foods and fats.

**The Flavors, Scent and Sense of Taste**

Food is to enjoy and taste is a top motivator of our food choices. Taste, smell, and sensation interact closely to give us what we generally refer to as taste. Read on to learn more about flavors, aromas, and mouth-feel, and how they relate to our choice of foods and fats.

Taste buds in our mouth convey flavors of sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and savory, also known as umami. The human tongue has about 10,000 taste buds. As we age, the number of taste buds declines, our sense of taste may decline, or we may experience stronger or weaker signals of the five tastes. Smoking and some medications or diseases may also detract from the sense of taste.

Perhaps up to 90% of what we think is taste is smell. We have the olfactory system to thank for smell. Aromas come to us that we may describe as floral, fruity, or medicinal, to name just a few. Here is a simple experiment that you can do. Put one small bite of chocolate (1 tablespoon grated fresh lemon or orange rind, 2 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg) in your mouth while gently pinching your nostrils closed. Savor the flavor and again note the taste. Release your nostrils and again savor the flavor and note the taste. Notice a difference?

The sensation of how food feels in the mouth, called mouth-feel, also influences taste. A particular nerve called the trigeminal nerve receives and sends this information. The sensations of heat from chilies, or peppers, coolness from mint or carbonation, and smoothness from fats are examples of mouth-feel.

Maintaining and enhancing a low-fat dietary pattern may seem daunting if fats give you a desirable taste sensation! Much of the research suggests that when we eat less fat we want less fat. However, you may find yourself occasionally missing fats so consider exploring the following flavoring options.

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**Recipe from Current Gift Ideas**

**Spice Tea Mix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Ingredient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>tea leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 tsp</td>
<td>ground nutmeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>whole cloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>tea leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>cinnamon sticks, broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>tablespoon grated fresh lemon or orange rind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To Brew: Rinse teapot with hot water. Heat fresh water to a boil and fill teapot. Add 1 teaspoon tea mixture for each teacup of boiling water. Steep for 3-5 minutes or to desired strength. Strain into teacups. Sweeten to taste.

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THE FLAVORS, SCENT AND SENSE OF TASTE
Continued from p. 1

Ways to flavor foods without fats
Dried plum (prune) puree, which is essentially fat-free, has a similar mouth-feel as fat. Prune puree can substitute for fat in some baked products, like brownies. It can also be used to enhance the moisture of lean ground beef and serve as a base for many favorite sauces.

Adding spices to foods can help increase the flavor. Try using pepper, lemon juice, bay leaves, cinnamon, orange, pomegranate, tarragon, cumin, or curried mixes to add flavor to foods.

A double-plus for some spices is that they contain flavonoids. Flavonoids are naturally occurring substances in plants. They are being actively studied for their possible role in protecting against inflammation and oxidation in the body, which are processes that might be linked to cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

Spices that have flavonoids include chili peppers (capsacin), cinnamon (cinnamarin), turmeric spice (curcumin), and cocoa powder (epicatechin). As a side note, a good way to increase your intake of flavonoids and nutrients is to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.

Flavonoids. What Color Is Your Diet? (Paperback) 2002 (ISBN 0588 By David Heber, MD, PhD (WHI Investigator at the University of California, Los Angeles)

Dried plum (prune) puree as a fat substitute. You can find recipes at the California Prune Board website: http://www.californiadriedplums.org or write or call the California Dried Plum Board; 3840 Rosin Court, Suite 170; Sacramento, CA 95834; Phone: (916) 565-6232


The American Institute of Cancer Research. Website: www.aicr.org

Tips for Eating Low-Fat
Thank you for sending us your tips for eating low-fat! We are pleased to be able to share them and hope you find the tips as inspiring as we do.

Read the Label! “Having attended classes in low-fat eating for 6 years, I now never buy any new product without examining its fat content or the label!” — From a participant in Teaneck, New Jersey

Choose lean cuts of meat and poultry. “I buy chicken breasts [without skin] and never buy fatty cuts of meat. My habits are strong; I don’t have the desire to change [away from low-fat eating].” — From a participant in Owatonna, Minnesota

Keep counting those fat grams! “For breakfast, I have ⅛ cup of an oat cereal for 2.5 grams of fat with 1 cup of vanilla soy milk for 3.5 grams of fat, and frozen mixed berries for 0 grams of fat.” — From a participant in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Be aware. “…the awareness is present. I’ve continued many habits begun during the program, such as eating many more fruits and vegetables and always drinking skim [fat-free] milk.” — From a participant in Arlington, Massachusetts

Use reduced fat products, in moderation, of course. “I like Heart Smart Bisquick®. It is made with canola oil and half the fat of regular Bisquick®.” — From a participant in Bayonne, New Jersey

Involve your friends and family. “As a result of being in the dietary study, my children and their families continue to follow my example in lowering their fat intake and increasing daily servings of fruits, vegetables, and grains.” — From a participant in Waukesha, Wisconsin

Try a new vegetable or fruit! “I enjoyed the Fall 2007 WHIse Choices, Rooting for Vegetables. Burdock and lotus root were strangers to me. As a child I had to root out prickly burdock from our garden, but had never eaten it. Lotus root was something I saw pictures of in a magazine. At 91 years old I may as well learn how to cook them!” — From a participant in Portland, Oregon

Remove temptation. “I do not keep cheese, peanut butter or any sweets in the house. So I avoid temptation.” — From a participant in Roseville, California

Note: The information provided in this section is not an endorsement by WHI of specific products.

Jot down your taste tips for enhancing the flavor of foods.