Using Your Senses

There are five senses used when tasting food and drink: sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch. The senses help to develop food preferences (likes and dislikes) and evaluate foods through preference or discrimination tests.

**Taste receptors**

Our tongues are covered with taste buds, which are designed to sense chemicals in the mouth. Most taste buds are located in the top outer edges of the tongue, but there are also receptors at the back of the tongue as well as on the walls of the mouth and at the back of the throat. As we chew food, molecules mix with saliva, enter taste pores and interact with gustatory hairs, also known as taste receptors. This triggers nerve impulses that are transmitted to the brain.

**Olfactory system**

This is the sensory system used for olfaction, or the sense of smell. As we breathe in, the olfactory receptor cells are stimulated by odours and the olfactory membrane sends neural messages up the olfactory nerve to the brain.

**Intensity**

Foods may be described by association, e.g. meaty, minty or fruity. The intensity (low, medium or high) can also be recorded, e.g. garlicky or salty.