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Olfaction and food: an unforgettable experience

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Memory is omnipresent in our life. All actions are regulated and influenced by memory, which constantly provides information necessary to manage and resolve the tasks of everyday life. One of the main functions of food memory is to recall previous experiences associated with food. Therefore, it guides food choice and intake. However, we are often unaware of using our memory. Actually, much of the knowledge about food is acquired incidentally, without any explicit attention or learning, and stored implicitly.

The sense of smell is closely linked with memory, probably more than any of our other senses. Starting from the discussion of the processes involved in the memorization of the “higher”(i.e. vision and audition) and “lower” senses (i.e. olfaction, taste and touch), the present talk is aimed to describe how food memory functions in everyday life, how it can be ecologically measured and how it influences food liking, preference and selection. Age- as well as gender-related differences in the memorization of sensory stimuli are presented and discussed.

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