



Neurogastronomy: How the Brain Creates Flavor and Why It Matters

Gordon M. Shepherd

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Gordon M. Shepherd, a leading neuroscientist at Yale University, embarks on an eye-opening trip through the human brain's "flavor system," establishing the parameters of a new field: neurogastronomy. Challenging the belief that humans' sense of smell diminished as they made the leap from primate to human, Shepherd contends this sense, the main element of flavor, is far more powerful and important than we think.

Shepherd begins with the mechanics of smell, the way it stimulates the nose as it hits the back of the mouth. From the food we eat, the brain represents smells as spatial patterns, and out of these, it constructs flavor. He then considers the effect of the flavor system on many contemporary social, behavioral, and medical issues. He analyzes flavor's engagement with the brain regions controlling emotion, food preferences, and cravings, and he even devotes a section to food's role in drug addiction and, building on Proust's iconic tale of the madeleine, its ability to evoke deep memories. Shepherd discusses the link between his research and trends in nutrition, dieting, and obesity, particularly the challenge to eat healthy. He concludes with human perceptions of smell and flavor and their insight into the neural basis of consciousness. Everyone from casual diners and amateur foodies to wine critics, chefs, scholars, and researchers will be thrilled by Shepherd's scientific-gastronomic adventures.

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