

The One with the Green Spot Sorbet

Alice Eugeni, thank you so much for chatting to me.

Eugeni Thank you Alice. It's a pleasure. Thanks for calling.

Alice Now my kids are loving learning about taste buds, and I thought I'd come to you, as a taste expert, to talk a little bit more about the science of what it means to taste stuff.

Eugeni It's about science, and it's about nutrition, understanding what taste means, and what taste means is actually the nutritional quality of our food. That's what taste is all about. So when we talk about taste, we talk about the five, maybe six, if you consider fatty acids, different taste types.

Alice So sweet, salty, sour, bitter, umami, and fat now, right?

Eugeni Nowadays it's well accepted that we can taste fatty acid

Alice That's fat with a Ph, Eugeni! And so it's a bit of a bonus, then, that it also tastes good to us.

Eugeni Not everything tastes good to us, right? We learn to like bitter. Bitterness is supposed to be identifying potentially toxic compounds, right? So there's innate taste that we like, sweetness. Innately we're born with it, but in general, bitterness is about caution, it is about rejecting the food, that is the initial feeling about bitterness that's across all kids, right? But then we like bitterness only after we learn that it's a good potential food.

Alice Your taste buds are like a muscle, and the more you flex the muscle, the more that you challenge it, the bigger it gets. Is that a good way to describe it?

Eugeni So there's some aspects that we can train or modulate through environmental and external factors, but then there's a part of it that we will not be able to train well, which is the genetics of it, and that brings me to, for example, the very popular topic on taste, which is the super taster. There's one particular gene that will allow us to sense these compounds that we call thioureas, and I think what's important about these compounds is that they are present in some fruits and some vegetables. Nowadays we believe that roughly 40 to 50% of the population will be able to taste these thiourea compounds as really bitter. So if you're a super taster, chances are that some of these vegetables you'll find them really bitter.

Alice But that's not to say that if you're a super taster you're always going to dislike bitter, or if you're a non-taster, you're always going to be okay with bitter. What's the research around that?

Eugeni When we talk about taste in general, we probably think about what 30, 40 genes involving taste perception. So each one of us, we have a slightly different profile of taste. There's

not two of us which are actually the same. So because of all the different combinations of all these different genes, makes us all perceive taste a little bit different.

Alice Eugeni, I could talk to you all day, but I've gotta get to class. I'm so grateful for your time.

Eugeni I'm really happy to anytime.

Alice Gracias and adios.

Maddy Mmm, I love the beetroot from Lily's story, and I love the chocolate from Lucy's story. Wait, and I love ice cream. So if we mix them together, could we make an ice cream?

Alice Heck, yes you could.

Group Ice cream!

Maddy Blood and bone.

Jonathan Jack o'lantern.

Joseph Slimy snot.

Maddy What flavour would you like? We have blood and bone, jack o'lantern, and slimy snot.

Child Jack o'lantern.

Maddy One jack o'lantern. Here you go.

Child Can I please also get a snotty slime?

Maddy Sure thing. Thank you.

Child Um, can I please have the purple one?

Maddy Blood and bone. Oh, okay, definitely. Thank you.

Child What flavours are there?

Joseph Guys, did you like the ice cream?

Child It's delicious.

Children Yes. It's absolutely delicious.

Joseph Really? Did it taste different to normal ice creams that you have?

Child Yeah. Yeah, a bit.

Joseph Well was it a better?

Child Yes, it's a much better. You don't really know, is it some sort of chocolate and raspberry?

Joseph And so a mix? It tastes slightly different.

Jonathan A better different or a worse different?

Child A better different.

Jonathan Do you know what's in it?

Child No.

Joseph Do you have any idea?

Child No. Um, was it green snot, or something? Snot?

Joseph This was the slimy snot.

Children Yes, slimy snot. Yeah, slimy snot. I have no clue what's in mine. Pumpkins? Chocolate?

Joseph Do you wanna know?

Child Uh, I don't think so.

Joseph Surprise, surprise, it's beetroot. Do you like beetroot?

Child I love beetroot.

Joseph Can I just ask you a question, do you like beetroot? Because that had beetroot in it.

Child Really?

Joseph Yeah, do you like it?

Child It's okay, but not usually, but this is actually really good.

Joseph You guessed right, pumpkin. The yellow one. The yellow one.
Do you like cucumber?

Child Yeah.

Joseph Well you just tasted an ice cream cucumber. It's actually cucumber inside. Do you like cucumber?

Child No

Joseph Cucumber and ice cream. What a good combination. You liked it. Well you got two things you love, put together to make a better sort of ice cream, and a better sort of beetroot.

Jonathan Happy Halloween, and I'll see you guys later. See ya.

Joseph See ya.