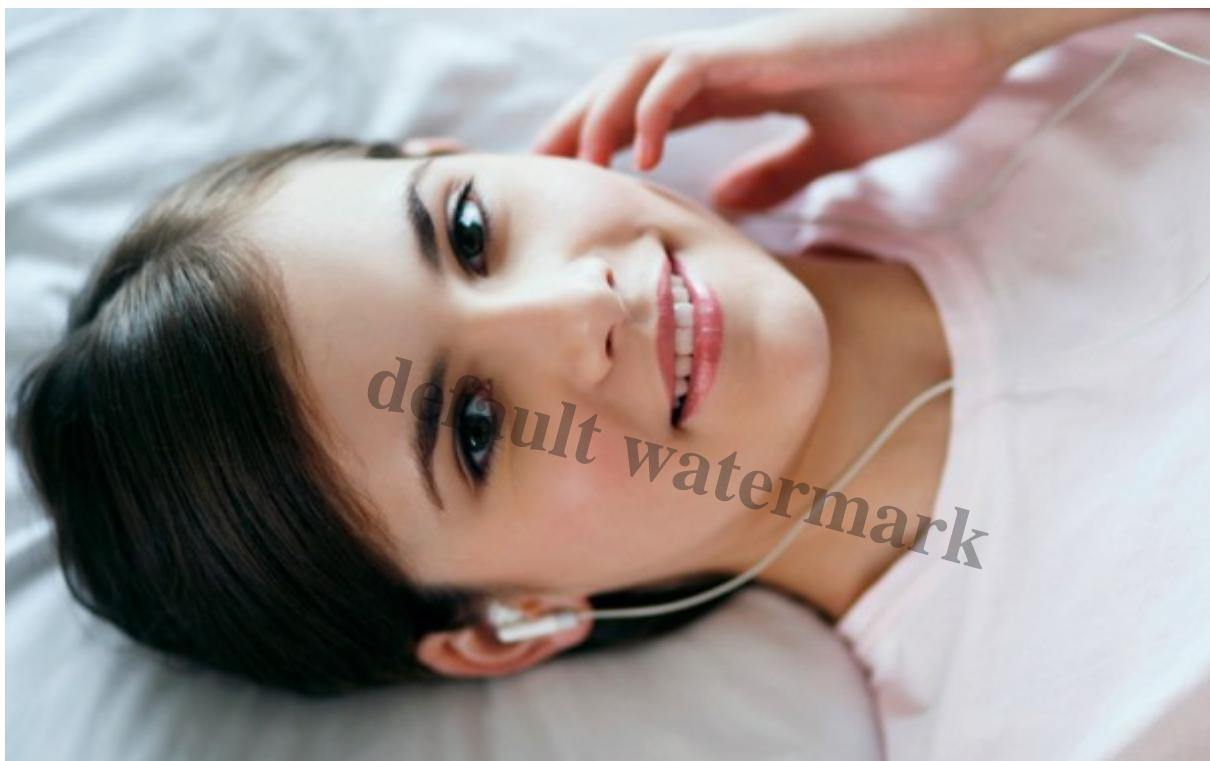


Listening to different sounds or music while eating chocolate can change its flavour

Description



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Listening to different sounds or pieces of music while eating chocolate can change how the sweet treat tastes, according to new research.

Food scientists at the University of Oxford have found they can alter the sensation of creaminess in a piece of chocolate by playing different sounds to people as they eat.

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A series of soft flute notes could make a piece of dark chocolate taste more creamy while short, sharp notes plucked on a violin can make the same chocolate taste sharper or bitter.

Mouth Music

The researchers are now working with a consortium of chocolatiers in Belgium to produce a box of confectionary that can be eaten along with an accompanying soundtrack.

They claim chocoholics will be able to increase their enjoyment of the snacks by listening to music and sounds that have been matched to them.

Professor Charles Spence, an experimental food psychologist at the University of Oxford who led the study, said: "It seems we find it difficult to keep our experiences separated."

"What we feel about one thing carries over to influence what we think about others we experience at the same time."

The researchers, whose work is published in the journal *Appetite*, gave 116 volunteers small squares of dark chocolate with either 71 per cent or 81 per cent cocoa.

They were asked to taste the chocolates and report how they tasted. Each time they had a chocolate, they either ate in silence or while listening to a series of musical notes.

When listening to long legato notes from a flute they reported the chocolate tasted creamier and when listening to dissonant staccato notes from a violin they described it as rougher or bitter.

Felipe Reinoso Carvalho, a food scientist and psychologist at Vrije University Brussels, who was the first author of the study, said it appeared the musical notes altered the perception of texture.

He said: "It is totally about textures. It is not in the scope of taste anymore, it is in the scope of flavours, which are much more complex."

"Creaminess is much more related to consonant harmonics, legato and reverberation. Roughness is an opposite auditory universe."

Mr Carvalho is now working with Belgian chocolatiers including Leonidas, Passion Chocolat and Frederic Blondeel to produce a range of pralines that have been paired with music.

They hope to have the chocolate boxes, which will come with their own soundtracks played by local musicians.

Bitter Sweet Music

A Cadbury's chocolate scientist reveals how to make one of their signature treats suggesting the idea is to play with different musical notes and instruments to alter how people enjoy their chocolate.

He said: "Even though people liked the creamy 'soundtrack', this didn't seem to affect their pleasure related to the chocolate."

The research is raising the prospect that other foods could also come matched with music to enhance their experience.

Professor Spence added: "There are challenges certainly " imagine in a restaurant when everyone is eating a different course at a different time or a mixed box of chocolates when everyone takes one at the same time.

â€œBut moving forward one might think of providing tracks that include both a bitter, a sweet and creamy notes or riffs so whatever you are eating you can get something out of the experience.â€•

[Shaun Wooler and Richard Gray](#)

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