



Neurogastronomy: How the Brain Creates Flavor and Why It Matters

By Gordon M. Shepherd

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Leading neuroscientist Gordon M. Shepherd embarks on a paradigm-shifting trip through the "human brain flavor system," laying the foundations for a new scientific field: neurogastronomy. Challenging the belief that the sense of smell diminished during human evolution, Shepherd argues that this sense, which constitutes the main component of flavor, is far more powerful and essential than previously believed.

Shepherd begins *Neurogastronomy* with the mechanics of smell, particularly the way it stimulates the nose from the back of the mouth. As we eat, the brain conceptualizes smells as spatial patterns, and from these and the other senses it constructs the perception of flavor. Shepherd then considers the impact of the flavor system on contemporary social, behavioral, and medical issues. He analyzes flavor's engagement with the brain regions that control emotion, food preferences, and cravings, and he even devotes a section to food's role in drug addiction and, building on Marcel Proust's iconic tale of the madeleine, its ability to evoke deep memories.

Shepherd connects his research to trends in nutrition, dieting, and obesity, especially the challenges that many face in eating healthily. He concludes with human perceptions of smell and flavor and their relationship to the neural basis of consciousness. Everyone from casual diners and ardent foodies to wine critics, chefs, scholars, and researchers will delight in Shepherd's fascinating, scientific-gastronomic adventures.

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Editorial Review

Review

Neurogastronomy is a personal yet magisterial account of the new brain-based approach to flavor perception. Gordon M. Shepherd's panoramic view of science, culture, and behavior is that of a true pioneer of the chemical senses.

(Avery Gilbert, Author of *What the Nose Knows: The Science of Scent in Everyday Life*)

Cooking? It is first love, then art, then technique. Chefs and food lovers alike can benefit from a better appreciation of the phenomena at play throughout the culinary process, from the field to the fork and beyond. This is why flavor is so important, and why Gordon M. Shepherd's well-named *Neurogastronomy* is such a welcome addition to the literature.

(Hervé This, author of *Molecular Gastronomy: Exploring the Science of Flavor*)

Those who make the effort will be rewarded: they'll never look at eating the same way again.

(*Library Journal*)

Shepherd makes an excellent case for neurogastronomy as an important cross-disciplinary field that is likely to motivate a variety of imperatives for our health and well-being.

(Chris Loss *Nature*)

Although written for lay readers, this excellent summary of everything people currently know about flavor perception must be considered the latest and most valuable review of research on the chemical senses.

(*Choice*)

Stimulating and informing.

(Israel Rosenfeld and Edward B. Ziff *New York Review of Books*)

A work that has the potential for breaking new ground and developing a whole new direction of study.

(*Yum.fi*)

Review

Neurogastronomy is a path-breaking account of flavor from how we perceive it to how it affects society.

Gordon M. Shepherd's explanation of our food preferences is a tour of the intellectual senses and a model of brain science.

(Richard Wrangham, Harvard University, author of *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human*)

About the Author

Gordon M. Shepherd is professor of neurobiology at the Yale School of Medicine and former editor in chief of the *Journal of Neuroscience*. He has made fundamental contributions to the study of brain microcircuits, as summarized in his highly regarded edited reference work *The Synaptic Organization of the Brain*. His current research focuses on olfaction at the level of microcircuits and how they construct the spatial patterns of smell, which are essential to the perception of flavor.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jason Carr:

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