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Standard Practice for Sensory Evaluation of Edible Oils and Fats¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the recommended procedures for the sensory evaluation of edible oils and fats.

1.2 This practice covers techniques for evaluating odor and flavor in fats and oils, for determining overall odor and flavor intensity, and the intensity of individual odors or flavors.

1.3 The techniques used in this practice are applicable to oils (liquid at room temperature) and liquified fats (solid at room temperature).

1.4 The values in SI units are to be regarded as the standard.

1.5 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.* Specific precautions are given in Section 7.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

E1346 Practice for Bulk Sampling, Handling, and Preparing Edible Vegetable Oils for Sensory Evaluation

3. Terminology

3.1 A lexicon specific for descriptors of odors and flavors in oils and fats is included in Appendix X2.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 This practice addresses the procedures for screening and training of oil panelists; rating and scoring samples; and data collection, handling, analysis, and interpretation.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The application of this practice will help ensure consistency in procedures used for the sensory evaluation of edible oils.

5.2 This practice is designed for use by oil processors or research laboratories for evaluations by a trained, experienced sensory panel under the supervision of a sensory professional or for use by quality control and quality assurance personnel for the sensory evaluation of edible oils and fats.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Glass Vial*, 30-mm outside diameter by 57-mm height, wide-mouth threaded top. Use amber glass for odor/flavor evaluations; clear glass for visual examination.

6.2 *Circulating Waterbath*, with automatic timer, thermostat, and rack.

6.3 *Waterbath Thermometer*, with range from 20 to 100°C in 1°C divisions, calibrated for 76-mm immersion, 305 mm long.

6.4 *Hard plastic threaded caps* with liners, or tape (PFTE pipe thread tape), to cover top of vial opening before capping with new, nonmetallic screw-type caps. Tape should completely cover vial opening or multiple strips of tape should be used.

7. Precautions

7.1 Panelists and sample servers should avoid introducing extraneous odors during testing by use of products, such as scented hand soap, hand creams, perfume, etc., or odorous writing instruments or inks. Panelists should avoid exhaling into sample vials.

8. Procedures for Recruitment and Screening Panelists

8.1 For basic information on conducting sensory tests, see MNL26³ and STP 758.⁴

8.2 For normal sensory acuity for basic tastes, see STP 758.⁴

8.3 *General Odor or Flavor Recognition Relating to Oils*—Present prospective panelists with a series of samples and a list of applicable oil descriptors specific for the type of oil to be tested (see Appendix X1). Appendix X2 contains definitions, reference standards, and examples of each descriptor. Test prospective panelists for general discrimination and the ability to describe samples and demonstrate familiarity with terms.

8.4 For general interest and availability, see STP 758.⁴

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E18 on Sensory Evaluation of Materials and Products and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E18.06 on Food and Beverage Evaluation.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ *Manual on Sensory Testing Methods*, ASTM MNL26, ASTM International.

⁴ *Guidelines for Selection and Training of Sensory Panel Members*, ASTM STP 758, ASTM International, 1981.

9. Procedures for Training Oil Panelists

9.1 See STP 758⁴ for information on panel training.

9.2 Determine training based upon test objective. Tests may include intensity ranking, attribute recognition, or difference tests, or a combination thereof (see MNL26³).

9.3 *Terminology/Characteristics (See 3.1):*

9.3.1 Examples of odor, flavors, and tastes predominately characteristic of various oil types are presented in **Appendix X2**. Attributes are identified as typical of an unprocessed or partially processed oil (U), freshly processed oil (F), deteriorated oil (D), or origin unknown (X). The appendix is a general guideline based on the attributes typically identified for each oil type; however, other attributes may be noted.

9.4 Prepare training samples characteristic of various odors or flavors and various intensity levels. Use **Appendix X1** and **Appendix X2** as guides.

9.5 Evaluate a series of concentrations starting with easily distinguished samples and proceed to more difficult discriminations.

9.6 Evaluate panelists' consistency on repeated tests as recommended in STP 758.⁴

10. Procedures for Oil Sample Handling, Preparation, and Presentation

10.1 For information on serving containers, sample size, heating methods, sample temperature, and presentation methods, see Practice **E1346**.

10.2 Oils should not be held at serving temperature for more than 60 min to prevent deterioration from oxidation.

10.3 If samples are presented in pairs or other multiples, it is recommended that a method be used to maintain uniform sample temperature of the oils during testing. Aluminum blocks, with recesses to hold vials, heated at a temperature of 5°C higher than the serving temperature of the oil will keep the sample at the proper serving temperature for 10 min. Molded styrene (styrofoam) blocks, with recesses to hold vials, will help minimize temperature loss. Vials should fit into the recesses or cavities in the blocks deep enough so the oil line in the vial does not extend above the top of the recess. The diameter of the aluminum block recess should not be more than 1 cm wider than the diameter of the vial to allow adequate heat transfer.

11. Instructions to Panelists for Odor Evaluations

11.1 Evaluate the oils for odor in the order presented from left to right.

11.2 Pick up the vial containing the oil; hold the vial as close to base as possible.

11.3 Swirl the covered vial; lift to nose; remove the cover; sniff the headspace above the oil (use short, "bunny" sniffs); replace the cover quickly.

11.4 Sniff in the same manner—distance from nose, number of times, length of time—for each sample.

11.5 Smell back of hand before testing samples and between samples to help "zero" your nose and to prevent adaptation to oil odors.

11.6 If testing oils with weak odors, smell an empty container to facilitate adaptation to extraneous odors and to allow for better discrimination between oils.

12. Instructions to Panelists for Flavor Evaluations

12.1 Rinse mouth well with warm filtered water ($50 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$) before starting the flavor evaluation.

12.2 Taste the samples in the order presented from left to right.

12.3 Put the entire 10-mL sample of warm oil into the mouth; swish through the mouth thoroughly; cup mouth and draw air in through mouth and exhale through nose to enhance perception of aromatics.

12.4 Expectorate the sample; do not swallow the oil.

12.5 Rinse the mouth well with warm water ($50 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$) between samples for a predetermined amount of time to clear mouth of residual flavors.

12.6 Wait a predetermined amount of time before tasting subsequent samples to prevent taste fatigue; be consistent.

12.7 Additional methods to clear the mouth include unsalted soda crackers, 50:50 blend of warm water and sodium-free carbonated water ($50 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$).

12.8 If residual flavors persist, repeat the procedure of rinsing and resting.

13. Procedures for Data Collection

13.1 Discrimination tests, for example, Triangle, Duo-trio, A not A, etc., are used to determine if a difference exists between two samples. Uses include qualifying alternate ingredient suppliers; confirming quality control in the plant, determining end of shelf-life; and reformulation of existing brands (see Chapter 2 of MNL26³).

13.2 Descriptive or scalar scoring tests are used to rate the overall intensity of a sample and to describe characteristic odors and flavors of samples. Use to find sensory differences between competitive products, aged products, new formulas, etc., and to interpret results of consumer tests and understand the effects of technical variables on product attributes (see MNL 13⁵).

13.3 Quality tests are used to rate the overall quality of a fat or oil with moderate to strong characteristic flavors such as olive or peanut oil (see MNL26³).

14. Data Handling

14.1 Statistical analysis of the data will depend on the type of test and test design. MNL26³ contains statistical analysis appropriate for various sensory tests. Data handling methods for descriptive tests are presented in MNL 13.⁵

15. Data Interpretation

15.1 Action criteria will depend on the policy of the laboratory or company and will be product specific. Policies will determine the intensity levels of specific flavors that are desired or will be permitted. The intensities allowed will vary based on the attribute and its positive or negative contribution to the oil or fat. Customer complaints will validate decisions over time.

16. Keywords

16.1 descriptive testing; discriminative testing; flavor; odor; scaling; sensory analysis; taste

⁵ *Manual on Descriptive Analysis Testing, ASTM MNL 13, ASTM, 1992.*