

# 'Flavor pairing' engenders strange plate-fellows and scientific controversy

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Wine and cheese. Sour cream and salsa. A burger and fries. Humanity's age-old preoccupation with food pairing is turning a new corner — and fostering some very strange new plate-fellows — as scientists and chefs try to make sense of an idea called "flavor-pairing theory." That controversial theory about why some foods taste good together is the topic of an article in the current edition of *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN), the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society.

C&EN Associate Editor Carmen Drahl explains that cooks and some chemists have teamed up in a new endeavor termed "flavor pairing" to find foods with similar flavor and smell molecules. It originated when a flavor chemist at a Swiss firm and a British chef realized that some of the avant-garde pairings they were creating — like pork liver and jasmine flower or white chocolate and caviar — had key flavor compounds in common. Drahl reports that flavor-pairing theory quickly spread through the culinary world, fostering efforts to develop more sophisticated ways for identifying good pairs.

The article describes one such effort by the company Sense for Taste, which consults with chefs, bartenders and food companies about innovative combinations. To develop foods like an almond sponge cake with poached banana, or chocolate and ketchup ice cream, the firm uses proprietary algorithms, as well as analytical techniques, that are also being used to find life-saving drugs and search for life on Mars. Sense for Taste publishes foodpairing trees that show the best matches to make

surprising new dishes. The article also discusses the considerable skepticism over whether a valid scientific basis exists for flavor pairing.

**More information:** "Strange Plate-Fellows"

[cen.acs.org/articles/90/i25/Mo ... s-Strange-Plate.html](http://cen.acs.org/articles/90/i25/Mo...s-Strange-Plate.html)

Provided by American Chemical Society

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