Cilantro Preference

Some people like the taste of cilantro and others think it tastes like soap.

Charles, you have a slightly higher chance of disliking cilantro

Your DNA isn't the key to cilantro preference.

Nature vs. nurture

People seem to either love or hate cilantro. But how much of this preference is controlled by nature (genetics) vs. nurture (other environmental factors)? Some studies estimate that 38% of cilantro preference is controlled by genetics,[3] but the place in your DNA that we looked at only

contributes a little to your cilantro preference.[1] This trait is influenced by other genetic and non-genetic factors.

Culture, ancestry, and ethnicity

People from Europe, East Asia, and Latin America are more likely to have a genetic predisposition to dislike cilantro.[4] But our culture and ethnicity, which refers to the group of people with which we share language, culture, and religion, also play important roles in our relationship with food.[5]

People with Middle Eastern genetic ancestry and Hispanic ethnicity are the least likely to dislike cilantro, even though Hispanics have a higher genetic likelihood of disliking it. This may be because cultural exposure to cilantro through cuisine may override a genetic tendency to dislike it. People from Africa, East Asia, and Europe are more likely to dislike or not yet to have tried cilantro.[2]

Smell and taste, a delectable relationship

Our sense of smell

The inside of our nose has special cells that interact with things in the environment that produce odors.[6] Slight differences between olfactory receptor neurons allow us to smell more than 10,000 different compounds.[7]

Smell and taste work together.

We often associate a food's flavor with our ability to taste it, but flavor is much more than that. In addition to taste, the mouth registers temperature, texture, and pain (spiciness). These sensations are communicated to the brain. Then, these messages are combined with smells sensed by our nose to produce complex and memorable flavors.[8] The genetic change we test for modifies cilantro's smell for some people and therefore contributes to taste preference.

Aldehydes make cilantro soapy for some.

Aldehydes, a type of compound, give cilantro its smell. There are many kinds of aldehydes. Many common foods like vanilla, cinnamon, lemongrass, and oranges get their characteristic smells from aldehydes. Aldehydes are also found in soap and give stinkbugs their odor. Some people interpret cilantro's aldehydes as fragrant and citrusy, while others perceive them as soapy or stinky.

You got it from your mom.

What we looked at and why

We looked at a place in your DNA that influences if you have a slightly higher chance of liking or disliking cilantro.[1] The percent of people across the world who dislike cilantro ranges from 3-21%.[2]

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- People who have slightly higher chances of liking cilantro may find it fragrant and citrusy.
- People who have slightly higher chances of disliking cilantro may find it soapy or moldy.

This place in your DNA only predicts a small amount of your chances of liking or disliking cilantro. Environmental and other genetic factors also play a role.

Scientific details

OR6A2 makes a sensor in the nose that helps us perceive smells. Changes near *OR6A2* may impact whether you find cilantro fragrant and citrusy, or soapy or moldy.[1]

DNA marker	Gene	Your result*
rs7926083	Near *OR6A2*	AA

*Each of your parents provides you with a nucleotide at this position, but we don't know which parent gave you which nucleotide.

Don't like cilantro? Try crushing the leaves or eating the seeds.

"I trust my cilantro preference results shown above." Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Continue

Let us know what you think

Important Information

This test does not tell you if you dislike cilantro.

There are other things that might affect whether you like cilantro.[2, 3] This information is based on science that could change over time as scientists learn more about genetics. We looked at a place in your DNA that research studies have found to be linked to cilantro like or dislike.[1] Scientists understand cilantro preference better in some populations than others.

This science is based on studies of people with European and East Asian genetic ancestry.[1] This information shouldn't be used to make any medical decisions.

Talk to a doctor before making any major lifestyle changes, or if you have any concerns about

your health.

References

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