

temperature of the food, but beyond that it cannot go. All the more subtle and varied 'flavours' that we respond to so sensitively are not, in fact, tasted, but smelt. The odour of the food diffuses up into the nasal cavity, where the olfactory membrane is located. When we remark that a particular dish 'tastes' delicious, we are really saying that it tastes and smells delicious. Ironically, when we are suffering from a heavy cold and our sense of smell is severely reduced, we say that our food is tasteless. In reality, we are tasting it as clearly as we ever did. It is its lack of odour that is worrying us.

Having made this point, there is one aspect of our true tasting that requires special comment, and that is our undeniably prevalent 'sweet-tooth'. This is something alien to the true carnivore, but typically primate-like. As the natural food of primates becomes riper and more suitable for consumption, it usually becomes sweeter, and monkeys and apes have a strong reaction to anything that is strongly endowed with this taste. Like other primates, we find it hard to resist 'sweets'. Our ape ancestry expresses itself, despite our strong meat-eating tendency, in the seeking out of specially sweetened substances. We favour this basic taste more than the others. We have 'sweet shops', but no 'sour shops'. Typically, when eating a full-scale meal, we end the often complex sequence of flavours with some sweet substance, so that this is the taste that lingers on afterwards. More significantly, when we occasionally take small, inter-meal snacks (and thereby revert, to a slight extent, to an ancient, primate scatter-feeding pattern), we nearly always choose primate sweet food objects, such as candy, chocolate, icecream, or sugared drinks.

So powerful is this tendency that it can lead us into difficulties. The point is that there are two elements in a food object that make it attractive to us: its nutritive value and its palatability. In nature, these two factors go hand in hand, but in artificially produced foodstuffs they can be separated, and this can be dangerous. Food objects that are nutritionally almost worthless can be made powerfully attractive simply by adding a large amount of artificial sweetener. 170