

Good news for veggies: Personal values deceive taste buds

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Many heavy meat eaters believe they eat a lot of meat because of the taste. But according to groundbreaking new research in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the reason that a beef burger tastes better than a veggie burger to some people has more to do with values than actual taste.

Authors Michael W. Allen (University of Sydney), Richa Gupta (University of Nashville), and Arnaud Monnier (National Engineer School for Food Industries and Management, France) conducted a series of studies that examined the symbolic meaning of foods and beverages. They found that when it came to tasting meat or soft drinks, what influenced participants was what they thought they had eaten rather than what they actually ate.

The authors note that meat has an association with social power, and people who scored high in the authors' Social Power Value Endorsement measure believed that a meat-containing item tasted better than a vegetarian alternative, even when both products were actually identical (one was mis-represented). Similarly, participants who supported the values symbolized by Pepsi (Exciting Life, Social Power, and Recognition) gave a more favorable rating to the product they thought was Pepsi—even though they were drinking the low-price Woolworth cola.

Participants were told that they would taste either a beef sausage roll or a vegetarian alternative roll, and that they would drink either a Pepsi or a

Woolworth Homebrand cola. Some received the item they were told they would receive and some were given the similar-tasting item. Then they filled out a questionnaire about values and taste, along with their current food and soft drink consumption.

Source: University of Chicago

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