

The UK's 'taste dialects' defined for the first time

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Where we are born not only determines how we speak but also how we taste our food and drink.

The [taste](#) preferences of the UK's major regions have been analysed by Professor Andy Taylor, an expert in flavour technology at The University of Nottingham and Greg Tucker a leading food psychologist.

Professor Taylor of the Flavour Research Group said: “Taste is determined by our genetic make-up and influenced by our upbringing and experience with flavours. Just as with spoken dialects, where accent is placed on different syllables and vowel formations, people from different regions have developed enhanced sensitivities to certain taste sensation and seek foods that trigger these.”

The Flavour Research Group in the School of Biosciences studies the link between the flavour in a food and the way it is sensed when we eat the food. This involves chemical, physical, psychological, sensory and brain imaging studies.

Professor Taylor and Greg Tucker were interested in the development our taste preferences. Greg Tucker, from the Marketing Clinic, conducted a detailed programme of face to face interviews as well as consulting the company's database built up from over ten thousand interviews on numerous food and drink studies. Together they analysed the data.

The research, commissioned by Costa Coffee, proved that each region in the UK has its own unique 'Taste Dialect' of flavours and textures which have been forged by culture, geography and the environment.

Their key findings were:

- The UK's favourite regional foods stem from the West Country. Nearly a third of people polled preferred foods traditional to the South West, particularly Cheddar Cheese and Devonshire Cream Teas.
- Scots are the slowest eaters and contrary to folklore, prefer Yorkshire Pudding and Italian Ice Cream because of their mouth-melting properties, dispelling the myth that all Scots love foods like Haggis and Kippers.
- People from the North East seek tastes that offer immediate satisfaction, borne from a history of hungry heavy industry workers demanding foods that offer immediate sustenance.
- The Midlands is known to be the Balti centre of the UK, but the research proved that people from the area were predisposed to enjoy Asian [food](#) long before it arrived in the UK. The region's taste dialect is for soft, suckable foods that impact the front of the tongue, have a slightly sweet dimension and can be eaten with their hands like naan.
- The South: A melting pot of people and cultures from all round the UK and abroad, the South/South East of England has the least defined taste dialect of all the regions. Foods such as jellied eels and Whitstable Oysters are still redolent of the area but no longer represent mainstream choices or underpin a regional palate.
- Coffee is the earliest recalled taste memory for under eighteens. In all regions, people noted the importance of getting a 'good' rather than

'average' cup of coffee.

- A quarter of Brits said that London was where they'd had their worst taste experience.

The researchers also discovered that each region's taste dialect was found in different parts of the tongue. For instance the Scots specifically seek rich, creamy flavours that are sensed at the back of the tongue and [people](#) from the North East prefer tastes which impact on the tip of the tongue.

Provided by University of Nottingham ([news](#) : [web](#))

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