

For tastier food, try a dash of workplace injustice

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(Phys.org) —A new UBC study from the Sauder School of Business reveals that experiencing unfair treatment at work can sharpen the taste buds, providing evidence that stress has a physiological effect on people.

"Our perception of the world is altered by stress – and we show how significant the mistreatment of our fellow humans impacts us, physiologically," says lead author and UBC Sauder School of Business Professor Daniel Skarlicki. "This is just a glimpse into the kinds of physical effects workplace stress has on us. Managers really need to foster fair environments for employees."

The study, to be published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, involved a number of experiments. The first had participants recalling fair or unfair workplace events, followed by a test in which they rated how strong a food tasted.

Those who recounted a situation of injustice rated the taste as much as 10 per cent stronger compared to those who recounted an act of fairness.

In a second experiment, participants watched scenes from the UK version of the TV show *The Office* involving clearly unjust and neutral situations. Participants who viewed the unjust treatment again reported food tasting as much as 10 per cent stronger.

The authors found that experiencing or observing injustice led to feelings of moral [disgust](#), which subsequently related to a stronger [sense](#)

[of taste.](#)

"For example, if patrons see a chef abusing staff, a la Gordon Ramsey, their senses will become heightened, and their food will taste more intense," says Skarlicki. "I'm not recommending abuse as a form of seasoning, of course – but this study shows just how strongly workplace abuse affects us."

The paper is titled "Does injustice affect your sense of taste and smell? The mediating role of moral disgust."

Provided by University of British Columbia

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