taste, n.1

Pronunciation: /teɪst/

Forms: ME–17 tast, ME taast, ME–15 (Sc.–16) taist, (15 Sc. test), ME– taste.

Etymology: < Old French tast touching, touch, = Italian tosto a feeling, a touch, a trial, a taste (Florio); < Old French taster (modern French tâter), Italian tastare: see TASTE v. Compare also Old French taste, Italian gusta, a surgical probe.

I.

†1. The sense of touch, feeling (with the hands, etc.); the act of touching, touch. Obs.

[1292 Britton III. ii. §13 Et puis soynt chargez qe eles ·· enquergent de la femme qe se fet enceynte par tast de soen ventre et de ses mameles.]

13. Cursor M. 542 (Cott.), Þis vnder wynd him gis his aand, Þe erth Þe tast, to fele and faand.

c1430 Pilgr. Lyf Manhode (1869) I. lxxii. 42 At the taast, and at the sighte, at the smelinge, and at the saououringe, bred and wyn it may seeme.

a1500 (1422) J. Yonge tr. Secreta Secret. (Rawl.) (1898) 208 The taste is a commyn witte, Spraden throgh the body, but hit Shewyth hym most by the handys ··; by that witte we knowen hote, colde, dry, moyste, and other Suche thynges.

†2.

a. A trying, testing; a trial, test, examination.

1377 Langland Piers Plowman B. XII. 131 Kynde witte cometh of alkynnes siȝtes, ·· of tastes of treuth, and of deceytes.

1586–7 Queen Elizabeth I in W. B. Scoones Four Cent. Eng. Lett. (1880) 30
To make tast of the greatest witz amongst my owne, and then of French and last of you.

1608  **SHAKESPEARE King Lear** I. ii. 46,  I hope for my brothers justification, he wrot this but as an essay, or tast [1623 taste] of my vertue.

1663  **J. HEATH Flagellum** (1672) 155  To appoint a Tast or Recognition of the Government.

†b. A trial, an attempt. *Obs. rare*.

c1330  **R. MANNYNG Chron. Wace** (Rolls) 5400  He wende haue taken þe toun in hast, Bot he failled of his tast.

II.
†3.

a. The act of tasting, or perceiving the flavour of a thing with the organ of taste (sense 4); the fact of being tasted. *Obs.*

1340–70  **Alex. & Dind.** 357  Þere-of we taken a tast what time þat vs nedeþ.

1393  **LANGLAND Piers Plowman** C. i. 228  Tauerners ‘a tast for nouht’ tolden þe same.

a1400  **Coer de L.** 3075  When he has a good tast, And eeten weel a good repast.

1578  **J. LYL Euphues** f. 76,  For before y° tast of the gospell I was worse then a beast.

1599  **SHAKESPEARE Romeo & Juliet** II. v. 13  The sweetest honey Is loathsome in his owne deliciousnesse, And in the taste confoundes the appetite.

1667  **MILTON Paradise Lost** I. 2  The Fruit Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast Brought Death into the World, and all our woe.

1766  **J. ENTICK Surv. London** in **New Hist. London** IV. 367  They obtained a grant of ⋅⋅ the taste and assize of bread.

b. *transf.* The means of tasting; hence, such a small
quantity as admits of being tasted; a very small quantity (esp. of alcoholic drink), a sip; spec. (U.S. slang), an alcoholic drink; alcohol.


1546 Aberdeen Reg. (Jam.), And send one taist of the wyne to the yerll of Rothes.

1723 S. Sewall Diary 4 Apr. (1973) II. 1007 My wife sent them a Taste of her Dinner.

1888 ‘R. Boldrewood’ Robbery under Arms xxxviii, Bring me a taste of grog, will ye?

1904 in Eng. Dial. Dict. [from Scotl., Irel., N. Engl.].

1919 E. O’Neill Rope in Moon of Caribbees 202 Will ye have a taste? It's real stuff.

1966 New Yorker 25 June 33 Why don't you stop up Wednesday, and we'll have a taste.

1973 T. Kochman Rappin’ & Stylin’ Out 162, I view such terms as ‘pluck’ for wine and ‘taste’ for liquor as embodying an action element retained from its more conventional use as a verb.

1976 New Yorker 1 Mar. 84/2 He said, ‘Take me for a taste.’ We went into a bar, and I thought he’d settle down for a few, but he only had two shots.

1978 Maledicta 1977 1 224 Had a complete and unabetting weakness for taste (liquor).

c. fig. A slight experience, received or given; a slight show or sample of any condition or quality.

1390 J. Gower Confessio Amantis II. 373 Whanne I beclippe hire on the wast, Yit ate leste I stele a tast.

1526 W. Bonde Pylgrimage of Perfection III. sig. OOOiii, That is none other thyng, but a tast, how swete our lord Iesu is.

c1595 Capt. Wyatt in Voy. R. Dudley to W. Indies (1899) 40 Most of them
having some little taste of the Spanish tounge.


1669 W. PENN No Cross, No Crown xxi. §39 A soul Mortified to the World, and quickned to some Tasts of a Supernatural Life.

1825 C. LAMB Superannuated Man in London Mag. May 68 Where was the promised rest? Before I had a taste of it, it was vanished.

1897 A. MORRISON Dorrington Deed-box i, My first taste of grouse-shooting was a complete success.

d. a taste (advb.): colloq. to a small but perceptible degree; slightly; a little. Cf. BIT n.² 5.

1894 T. H. HALL CAIN Manxman I. v, Aisy! Your legs a taste higher, sir, just to keep the pickle off your trousers.

1894 T. H. HALL CAIN Manxman III. xii, ‘Nancy will tidy the room a taste’, she said coaxingly.

4.

a. The faculty or sense by which that particular quality of a thing described in sense 5 is discerned, the organs of which are situated chiefly in the mouth; one of the five bodily senses.

c1380 Eng. Wycliffite Serm. in Sel. Wks. I. 87 Whan þer tast is freishe, for to juge þe goodnesse, and after whan þei ben drunken and þer taist failiþ, þanne he puttiþ wers wyn.

c1394 P. Pl. Crede 537 Þanne haue y tynt all my tast touche and assaie!

1398 J. TREvisa tr. Bartholomew de Glanville De Proprietatibus Rerum (1495) III. xx. d vj b/2, The taast is a wytte of knowynge sauours.

1587 L. MASCALL Bk. Cattell: Horses (1627) 111 Sometimes a horse will loose his tast, which commeth of sorrow.

a1616 SHAKESPEARE As you like It (1623) II. vii. 166 Second childishnesse,
and meere obliuion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

1680 R. MORDEN Geogr. Rectified: Germany (1685) 119 Fruits more pleasant to the sight or tast.


1884 Cornhill Mag. Dec. 620 Taste ⚸ is not equally distributed over the whole surface of the tongue alike.

b. out of taste, not able to distinguish flavours.

a1542 T. WYATT Coll. Poems (1969) xxx. 13 And if that I have after suche bitternes Any thing swete, my mouth is owte of tast.

1646 W. JENKYN Reformation's Remora 20 The palat ⚸ is put out of taste.

1745 SWIFT Direct. to Servants 55 Your Mistress will confess that her Mouth is out of Taste.

5.

a. That quality or property of a body or substance which is perceived when it is brought into contact with certain organs of the mouth, etc., esp. the tongue; savour, sapidity; the particular sensation excited by anything in this manner.

a1382 Bible (Wycliffe, E.V.) (Douce 369(1)) (1850) Jer. xlvi. 11 Therfore abod stille his tast in hym, and his smel is not chaungid.

c1400 Mandeville’s Trav. (1839) xxvii. 273 Full gode fissch ⚸ of right goode tast.

c1430 LYDGATE Minor Poems (Percy Soc.) 15 Damysyns wiche withe her taste delyte.

1535 Bible (Coverdale) Wisd. xvi. 2 A new & straunge taist.


19 Diuers kindes of saltes :: haue diuers tastes.

1714 J. PURCELL *Treat. Cholick* 87 The acid Taste of this Recrement, and its coagulating of Milk, are undoubted.

1800 tr. E. J. B. Bouillon-Lagrange *Man. Course Chem.* II. 74 Iron :: has a styptic taste, very sensible.

1857 W. A. MILLER *Elements Chem.* (1862) III. 161 Sometimes a wine acquires a peculiar flavour known as the ‘taste of the cask’.

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†b. Odour, scent, smell. *Obs.*

?c1475 *Sqr. lowe Degre* 850 Frankensence and olibanum That whan ye slepe the taste may come.

c1540 *Destr. Troy* 1668 Pat smelt is & smethe, smellis full swete, With taste for to touche the tabull aboute.

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c. In fig. phr. **a bad (or nasty) taste in the mouth** and varr., a lingering feeling of repugnance or disgust left behind by a distasteful or unpleasant experience.

1857 E. C. GASKELL *Life C. Brontë* II. viii. 186 They [sc. Balzac's novels] leave such a bad taste in my mouth. [Quoting C. Brontë in conversation.]

1899 R. WHITEING *No. 5 John St.* II. xxv. 255 Never before have I heard such a speech. :: ‘Sort o’ gives yer a nasty taste in the mouth,’ says Low Covey.
1904 *Daily News* 14 Dec. 5 The poems leave a nasty taste in the mouth; the
taste of a snarl and a sneer.

1943 *Sun* (Baltimore) 22 Apr. 18/1 A decidedly sour taste was left by the
opening number.

1969 R. HARPER *World of Thriller* ii. 71 When all the characters are corrupt
or shoddy, the reader goes away with a bad taste in his mouth.

1979 R. PERRY *Bishop's Pawn* iv. 70 It had taken me nearly an hour to go
through the dossier and when I'd finished reading I had a nasty taste in
my mouth.

III.

†6. Mental perception of quality; judgement,
discriminative faculty. *Obs.* exc. as in 8.

13.. *Cursor M.* 11327 (Cott.), ṭis symeon ṭat had his tast Toched o ṭe haligast.

a1425 *Cursor M.* (Trin.) 18889 De salmes seiþ bi good taast His wonynge
shulde be wilde & waast.

?1504 W. ATKINSON tr. *Ful Treat. Imytacyon Cryste* (Pynson) i. xxii. 171
Thou hast no spirituall tast.

1692 tr. C. de Saint-Évremond *Misc. Ess.* 350 If so be they demand of
me · · more than discretion in Commerce, and a taste in Confidence.

7.

a. The fact or condition of liking or preferring
something; inclination, liking *for*; †appreciation.

1477 CAXTON tr. R. Le Fèvre *Hist. Jason* (1913) 96 Therfore wille
thou · · employ thy corage after the taste of our desires.

we · · may have some taste and feeling for it in our hearts.

?1572 T. PAYNELL tr. *Treasurie Amadis of Fraunce* X. 236 She hath somwhat
a regarde to things that are agaynst my owne taste.
1630 R. NORTON tr. W. Camden Hist. Princesse Elizabeth II. 40  From the time that I had any taste of Religion.

1711 J. ADDISON Spectator No. 93. ¶13  A Man that has a Taste of Musick, Painting, or Architecture.


1728 SWIFT Intelligencer No. 3. ¶3  Whoever hath a taste for true humour.

1791 E. INCHBALD Simple Story III. v. 70  She had acquired a taste for those amusements.

1838 E. BULWER-LYTTON Alice I. i. ix. 75  The other girl is more amusing, more to my taste.

1880 L. STEPHEN Alexander Pope iv. 86  Every opportunity for the indulgence of his favourite tastes.

tb. Enjoyment, pleasure, ‘relish’. Const. in, of.

1604 E. GRIMESTON tr. J. de Acosta Nat. & Morall Hist. Indies III. ix. 150  He found not in himselfe any disposition to goe to any other place, nor to take any taste in any thing.

1707 O. BLACKALL Blessedness of Poor in Spirit 14  The Happiness of a Man's life consists not in the Abundance of the things that he possesses, but in the Taste and Relish that he has of them.

c. transf. The object of one's liking or preference.

1739 G. STONE in Buccleuch MSS (Hist. MSS Comm.) (1899) I. 392  White beauties · · are the taste of the Irish nation.

8.

a. The sense of what is appropriate, harmonious, or beautiful; esp. discernment and appreciation of the beautiful in nature or art; spec. the faculty of
perceiving and enjoying what is excellent in art, literature, and the like.

1671 Milton *Paradise Regain'd* IV. 344 Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling, Where God is prais'd aright.

1694 W. Congreve *Double-dealer* I. i. 3 No, no, hang him, he has no tast.

1712 J. Addison *Spectator* No. 409. ¶1 Rules · how we may acquire that fine Taste of Writing, which is so much talked of among the Polite World.

1768 W. Gilpin *Ess. Prints* 160 There is a fine taste in his landskips.

1776 J. Reynolds *Disc. Royal Acad.* (1778) 311, I have mentioned taste in dress, which is certainly one of the lowest subjects to which this word is applied.

1806 J. Barry in R. N. Wornum *Lect. on Painting* (1848) 108 The word taste, as applied to objects of vision, · means · that quick discerning faculty or power of the mind, by which we accurately distinguish the good, bad, or indifferent.

1834 S. T. Coleridge *Treat. Method* i. (1849) 16 A fine Musical taste is soon dissatisfied with the Harmonica, or any similar instrument of glass or steel.

1835 A. Ure *Philos. Manuf.* 254 Taste is displayed both in the forms and grouping of the figures, and the disposition of the colours.

1849 W. Irving *Oliver Goldsmith* (rev. ed.) xxvii. 238 The latter part of the year 1768 had been made memorable in the world of taste by the institution of the Royal Academy of Arts.

1872 W. Minto *Man. Eng. Prose Lit.* Introd. 29 The word *taste* · in its wider sense is equivalent to artistic sensibility, · in its narrower sense it may be expressed as artistic judgment.

**b. Style or manner exhibiting æsthetic discernment; good or bad æsthetic quality; the style or manner favoured in any age or country.**

1739 C. Labelye *Short Acct. Piers Westm. Bridge* 44 The People who
design'd and executed London-Bridge, and other Bridges in the same Taste.

1755  *Compl. Let.-writer* (1759) 227  Her own old-fashioned breast-plate in the taste of the last century.

1819  *Scott* *Ivanhoe* II. xiv. 264  A rich habit, which partook more of the eastern taste than that of Europe.

1826  B. *Disraeli* *Vivian Grey* I. ii. xiii. 182  Nothing could be more moderate, or, as Miss Gusset said, ‘in better taste’.

1843  G. *Borrow* *Bible in Spain* II. xviii. 377  It was ••• built something in the Moorish taste.

**COMPOUNDS**

**C1.** General *attrib.*

a.

**taste-area n.**

**taste-centre n.**

1891  *Cent. Dict.*,  *Taste-center*, the gustatory nervous center, located by Ferrier in the gyrus uncinatus of the brain.

**taste-fibre n.**

1899  T. C. *Allbutt* et al. *Syst. Med.* VI. 793  Whether the taste-fibres pass by the second or third divisions of the nerve.

**taste goblet n.**

1879  Taste-goblet [see *taste-bud n.* at Compounds 2].
**taste-leader** *n.*


**taste-maker** *n.*

1961 *New Left Rev.* Jan.–Feb. 34/2  These areas of work are excluded, by the tastemakers, from the concept of ‘serious’ art.

1978 *Jrnl. Royal Soc. Arts* **126** 725/2  Federigo’s artistic patronage did prove a tastemaker, though of a limited kind.

**taste-meter** *n.*

1814 S. T. COLERIDGE in J. Cottle *Remin.* (1837) II. 211  This taste-meter to the fashionable world, gives a ludicrous portrait of an African belle.

**taste-organ** *n.*

1927 J. B. S. HALDANE & J. S. HUXLEY *Animal Biol.* i. 25  A number of very small taste-organs are scattered over certain parts of the tongue [of the frog].

1970 G. ORDISH tr. R. Chauvin *World of Ants* vii. 175  The taste organ is situated in the antennae.

**b.**

**taste-pleasing** *adj.*

1586 SIR P. SIDNEY *Arcadia* (1590) i. iii. sig. C1v,  A place cunninglie set with trees of the moste tast-pleasing fruites.

**C2.**
taste-beaker *n.*

1901  E. B. Titchener *Exper. Psychol.* I. iv. 64  Each papilla carries a number of taste-beakers, clusters of taste-cells and supporting cells, which constitute the specific end-organs of taste.

taste-blind *adj.*

1934  *Jrnl. Heredity* 25 189/2  There is less likelihood of finding a group entirely taste blind.

1975  *Nature* 6 Feb. 442/1  The designation ‘tasters’ for the more sensitive individual and ‘non-tasters’ or ‘taste blind’ for the less sensitive.

taste-blindness *n. Biol.* (see quot. 1934).

1934  *Jrnl. Heredity* 25 190/1  Taste blindness is an inherited inability to taste certain thiocarbamides as crystals or in cold diluted solutions as bitter.

1965  M. A. Amerine & V. L. Singleton *Wine* ii. 112  Based on studies of families and twins, ‘taste blindness’ was first reported to be a simple recessive character.

taste-bud *n.* a group of cells in the epithelium of the tongue etc., through which the faculty of taste operates; also *fig.*

1879  J. Fulton *Text Bk. Physiol.* (ed. 2) xiv. 365  Peculiar structures, known as taste buds, or taste goblets, have been discovered in the circumvallate papillae.

1951  V. Nabokov *Speak, Memory* ii. 30  It is ··· to the lowly and ugly agarics, that nations with timorous taste-buds limit their knowledge and appetite.

1963  *Listener* 3 Jan. 40/1  Vested interests and pressure-groups work upon everything from our political opinions to our taste-buds.
A few taste buds are found also in the palate and epiglottis.

taste-bulb n.

The taste-bulbs, numbering 700 or more, lying in the papillary wall of the valla.

taste-cell n. see quot.

Taste-cells, spindle-shaped or staff-shaped cells in the interior of the taste-bulbs.

taste-corpuscle n. = taste-cell n.

taste-cup n.

taste-goblet n. former names for the taste-bud n.

The terminal organs of taste consist of peculiar bodies named taste-bulbs or taste-goblets.

taste-hair n. one of the setæ or bristles, near the mouth of an insect or other arthropod, supposed to be organs of taste.

Taste-hairs, homologous with Kræpelin's taste-hairs in Muscidæ, are found in various orders of insects.

† taste-paper n. Obs. in the (old) Greats examination at Oxford, the paper in which passages were set from
the classical authors for critical and exegetical treatment.

1860  T. HUGHES *Tom Brown at Oxf.* II. viii. 134 In the taste paper ⋅⋅, as they compare notes, he seems to have almost struck the bull’s-eye in his answers.

1898 Taste-pit [see taste-pit n.].

taste-pit n. one of the minute pits found on the epipharynx of an insect, having in the centre a peg, the termination of a nerve.

1898  A. S. PACKARD *Text-bk. Entomol.* 45 The structure and armature of the epipharyngeal surface even besides the taste-pits, taste-cups, and rods, is very varied.

taste-test v. (trans.) to test (something) by tasting it, to test the taste of (something); also absol.

1979  *Wichita* (Kansas) *Eagle* 23 May 1- B/4 If you’ve never cooked with fresh ginger ⋅⋅ taste-test before adding more.

1980  D. WILLIAMS *Murder for Treasure* xx. 198 He found himself staring into the eyes of a gargantuan dog whose giant tongue was taste-testing his chin.

taste-tested adj.


taste-tester n.

1969  *Listener* 24 July 127/3 Game would be virtually tasteless if taste-testers
succeeded in eliminating all its off-flavours.

taste, n.1