What is Taste Perception?
It’s the sensation that results when taste buds on the tongue and throat convey information about the chemical composition of a soluble stimulus. For example, “The apple is tart and sweet” or “The diet soda left an aftertaste in my mouth.” There are many factors that influence how we taste different foods. Here is a look at several of them:

Age
Taste discrimination tends to decrease with increasing age. Around the age of 45, taste buds begin to degenerate. Taste loss becomes apparent in your late 50s with sour less affected than the other tastes. In the elderly, taste thresholds for sweet, salt and bitter are two and one-half times higher than in the young. For example, at age 20 or 30, you use one teaspoon of sugar in your coffee, and at age 75 you may need 3 teaspoons of sugar to get the same perceived sweetness.

Meals
Sensitivity is reduced for between one and four hours after a meal, depending on what the meal included. A spicy/hot meal such as enchiladas will have a greater effect than a bland meal such as oatmeal and milk.

Hunger
Hunger affects how food tastes by making hungry people more sensitive to sweetness and saltiness. Bitterness is not affected. Hunger is the downfall of many dieters, causing them to reach for the closest, but not necessarily the healthiest foods.

Smoking
When it comes to smoking a cigarette or cigar, the smoker places the taste buds in contact with chemical compounds that tend to blunt the ability of the buds to register the four basic tastes that the system is designed to recognize. The chemicals do not completely destroy the ability of the taste buds to recognize salty, sweet, sour and bitter tastes, however, the degree of recognition is greatly decreased.

Obesity
Children and adolescents who are obese have less sensitive taste buds. That means for obese children sweet foods taste less intensely sweet, bitter foods are milder and salt is not as readily perceived.
Pregnancy
During pregnancy, nearly two-thirds of women experience changes in taste. Pregnant women have been found to have a reduced sensitivity to salty tastes, which may be the body’s way of ensuring increased salt intake during pregnancy.

Colds/Flu/Allergies
Obstruction of air passages reduces olfactory perception. During a cold, the nasal mucosa swells up blocking the nasal passage. When suffering a cold, individuals frequently complain that they have lost their sense of taste. In reality, what they have lost is their sense of smell. This phenomenon serves to verify that the combination of taste and aroma is required to produce flavor.

Disease
Cancer and anorexia victims all have reduced taste sensitivity. This is considered to be the result of their malnourished physical condition. (During chemotherapy, patients reported taste changes, but after chemotherapy, perceived tastes returned to normal.)

Temperature
Influence of temperature on taste is not uniform. Taste buds can be put out of action by both high and low temperatures. Increasing temperature appears to increase the response to sweetness and decrease it to saltiness and bitterness.

Adaptation
Reduces sensory acuity, thus preventing you from detecting differences between stimuli. Tasting Order – an order of first strong then weak results in adaptation. The opposite order, first weak then strong, should not affect taste sensitivity. With short waits between samples (3 minutes or so), most effects of adaptation should dissipate. There are almost no issues when two stimuli have different taste qualities.

Conclusion
There are many factors that can affect your taste perception. Don’t fret if your favorite food in the world tastes a little different today, it could be you have a cold and you cannot smell or you burned your taste buds on a hot cup of coffee or tea.

TASTE MEDIUM - SOLID VS. LIQUID
The taste buds can only detect flavors that are dissolved in a liquid. You cannot taste a dry substance with a dry tongue. Water is the best medium for sensitivity tests. Taste thresholds are lower in water than in tomato juice.

TASTE MEDIUM - VISCOSITY
The increased viscosity reduces tastes sensitivity. It is easiest to detect tastes in liquid state, harder in foams and more difficult in gels.