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Abstract No. 4

PaperTitle **When is a Descriptive Sensory Panel Properly Trained?**

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**ABSTRACT**

Descriptive sensory evaluation identifies, describes and quantifies the sensory attributes of food products using human subjects trained for this purpose. The individuals are selected as panel members only if they have the ability to consistently and reliably identify and quantify individual sensory characteristics in a specific product category or set of products using selected descriptors.

Trained panellists should be calibrated to perform similarly but often the ratings given by the individuals vary. Lack of enough or appropriate training may lead to panellists misunderstanding descriptive terms or using scales differently. Some factors e.g. differences in human sensitivity levels, variability in sample material and the test methodology used may lead to random variation or error, an important reason for the differences between individual ratings observed.

The value of the results provided by a descriptive sensory panel depends on consistent performance of the different members. Monitoring panellists' performance is an important quality control step before using the trained panel to evaluate the samples. This presentation will highlight, using case studies, the assessment of panel training levels and strategies to improve this.