

The Art of Flavor
Hedonistic Herbalism: A Sensory Experience

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hedonism

n. he·don·ism

(hēd'n-iz'əm)

1. Pursuit of or devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasures of the senses.
2. *Philosophy* The ethical doctrine holding that only what is pleasant or has pleasant consequences is intrinsically good.
3. *Psychology* The doctrine holding that behavior is motivated by the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain.

[Greek hēdonē, *pleasure*; see swād- in the Appendix of Indo-European roots + -ism.]

he'don·ist *n.*

he'don·is'tic *adj.*

he'don·is'ti·cal·ly *adv.*

[2016. American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language. Fifth ed. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.]

Flavor = scent + taste

Scents & malodors

The olfactory epithelium of *Homo sapiens* is limited to 10 basic dimensions or odor groups.

Fragrant (*e.g.*, florals and perfumes) = roses, rose scented geraniums, lavender

Fruity (all non-citrus fruits) = peach sage, pineapple sage, alpine strawberry

Citrus (*e.g.*, lemon, lime, orange) = lemon verbena, lemon balm, lemon thyme, orange mint

Woody and resinous (*e.g.*, pine or fresh cut grass) = rosemary, oregano

Minty and peppermint (*e.g.*, eucalyptus and camphor) = mints, bay

Sweet (*e.g.*, chocolate, vanilla, caramel) = sweet woodruff

Toasted and nutty (*e.g.*, popcorn, peanut butter, almonds) = cumin, sesame seed

Chemical (*e.g.*, ammonia, bleach) = curry leaf, catnip

Pungent (*e.g.*, blue cheese, cigar smoke) = cilantro, rau ram

Decayed (*e.g.*, rotting meat, sour milk) = orach [actually flavor is earthy, beet-like, but closest that we have to a “decayed” scent in herbs]

* = perfumers * & * = flavor chemists

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Tastes

Traditional tastes = sweet, sour, salty and bitter, however, this is constantly expanding.

Sweet

stevia, anise, anise hyssop, fennel, French tarragon, lemon balm, sweet cicely, wild cicely,

Sour

sorrel, oxalis, purslane

Salty

[e.g., seaweed, celery, most prepared foods] [fortunately most herbs are low in salt]

Bitter

hops, dandelion, endive/chicory

Add:

Umami

[e.g., amino acids, MSG, fermented foods, soy & fish sauces, seafood, cured meats, dried mushrooms, seaweed, cheeses, dried tomatoes, capers] = rosemary, thyme

“Mouth-feel”

[e.g., coconut] = violet leaves, malva, purslane [mucilaginous]

Cool

= peppermint

Hot/pungent

= capsicum peppers, garlic, horseradish, arugula, mustard, nasturtium

Starchy

[e.g., potatoes] = arrowroot [fortunately most herbs are low in starch]

References

Belsinger, S., and A. O. Tucker. 2016. *The Culinary Herbal: Growing & preserving 97 flavorful herbs*. Timber Press, Portland, OR. [ISBN 978-1-60469-519-9]

Tucker, A. O., and T. DeBaggio. 2009. *The Encyclopedia of Herbs: A comprehensive reference to herbs of flavor and fragrance*. Ed. F. DeBaggio. Timber Press, Portland, OR. [ISBN 978-0-88192-994-2]