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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 *tasto* 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 *tasta*, 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 ·· enquerent 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 smellinge, and at the sauouringe, bred and wyn it may seeme.

a1500 (1422) J. YONGE tr. *Secreta Secret.* (Rawl.) (1898) 208 The taste is a commyn witte, Spraden throughe 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 siztes, ·· of tastes of treuthe, 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 amongs my owne, and then of French and last of you.

- 1608 SHAKESPEARE *King Lear* I. ii. 46, I hope for my brothers iustification, 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*⁻¹.

- c1330 R. MANNYNG *Chron. Wace* (Rolls) 5400 He wende haue taken þe toun in hast, Bot he failed 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 nedep.
- 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. LYLY *Euphues* f. 76, For before y^e 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.

- 1530 in W. H. Turner *Select. Rec. Oxf.* (1880) 91 He sent for the tast of wyne ·· dew to him of every hoggshed.
- 15.. *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. OOOiiii, 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

- havinge some little tast of the Spanish tounge.
- 1599 A. DAY *Eng. Secretorie* (rev. ed.) Ded. sig. A2^v, Socrates in his cradle had no taste of his after wisdome.
- 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 CAINE *Manxman* I. v, Aisy! Your legs a taste higher, sir, just to keep the pickle off your trousers.
- 1894 T. H. HALL CAINE *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 puttþ 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 euery thing.

- 1680 R. MORDEN *Geogr. Rectified: Germany* (1685) 119 Fruits more pleasant to the sight or tast.
- 1861 R. T. HULME tr. C. H. Moquin-Tandon *Elem. Med. Zool.* II. I. 49 Taste is a species of touch of still more delicate character.
- 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* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(1)) (1850) Jer. xlvi. 11 Therefore abod stille his tast in hym, and his smel is not chaungid.
- c1400 *Mandeville's Trav.* (1839) xxvii. 273 Full gode fisch ·· 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.
- 1594 H. PLATT *Diuers Chemicall Concl. Distillation* 11 in *Jewell House*, A far more liuely & penetratiue tast.
- 1605 T. TYMME tr. J. Du Chesne *Pract. Chymicall & Hermeticall Physicke* I. v.

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'.

fig.

14.. T. HOCLEVE *Compl. Virgin* 213 Ther-in fynde I a bittir taast; For now the taast I feele & the streynge Of deeth.

1578 J. LYLY *Euphues* f. 76, How comfortable is the feelyng & tast of grace.

a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Macbeth* (1623) v. v. 9, I haue almost forgot the taste of Feares.

1720 D. MANLEY *Power of Love* III. 187 All the Favours upon Earth, from the greatest Beauties could have no Taste for Roderigo.

†**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.

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.) , Þis symeon þat had his tast Toched o þe hali gast.
- a1425 *Cursor M.* (Trin.) 18889 Þe salmes seiþ bi good taast His wonynges 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 Therefore wille thou ·· employ thy corage after the taste of our desires.
- 1552 *Godly Prayers* in W. K. Clay *Liturg. Services Q. Eliz.* (1847) 253 That we ·· may have some taste and feeling for it in our hearts.
- ?1572 T. PAYNELL tr. *Treasurie Amadis of Fraunce* x. 236 She hath somewhat 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.
- 1727 POPE et al. *Peri Bathous* in Swift et al. *Misc.: Last Vol.*, The Taste of the Bathos is implanted by Nature itself in the Soul of Man.
- 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.

†**b.** 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 *Bucclench 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.
- a1806 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.
- a1834 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-centren.

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

taste-fibren.

- 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.*

1952 D. RIESMAN *Individualism Reconsidered* (1954) 207 The problem ·· of becoming a possible taste-leader.

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.*

a1586 SIR P. SIDNEY *Arcadia* (1590) I. iii. sig. C1^v, 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 papillæ.
- 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.

1970 T. S. LEESON & C. R. LEESON *Histol.* (ed. 2) xiv. 274/2 A few taste buds are found also in the palate and epiglottis.

taste-bulb *n.*

1883 *Science* 1 232/2 The taste-bulbs, numbering 700 or more, lying in the papillary wall of the valla.

taste-cell *n.* see quot.

1890 J. S. BILLINGS *National Med. Dict.* at *Taste*, *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.*

1888 J. G. M'KENDRICK in *Encycl. Brit.* XXIII. 79/2 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.

1905 *Jrnl. Royal Microsc. Soc.* Apr. 180 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.*

1960 *Time* (Atlantic ed.) 11 Apr. 58 Critically taste-tested piles of free cigarettes.

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

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