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## ESL Podcast 353 – Describing the Taste of Food

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### GLOSSARY

**that is** – a phrase used to introduce new information, or to provide additional information about something

\* Melissa always thought that it would be fun to live alone, that is, until she had to start paying her own bills.

**bland** – without very much flavor; dull and uninteresting

\* The salad is very bland if you don't pour enough salad dressing onto it.

**lumpy** – with small, hard, solid pieces floating in a liquid

\* The hot chocolate will be lumpy if you don't stir in the powder well enough.

**delicious** – tasty; with a very good taste; flavorful

\* We ate some delicious lemon pie for dessert.

**flavor** – the way that something tastes; the distinct taste of a certain type of food

\* Vanilla is her favorite flavor, and she puts it in almost everything she bakes.

**salty** – with the taste of something that has a lot of salt in it

\* The chips were very salty and they made us thirsty!

**spicy** – with a strong, hot taste that seems to burn one's tongue even if the temperature is not hot

\* Mexican food from some parts of the country uses lots of spicy jalapeño peppers.

**overcooked** – cooked too much; dry and/or burnt from having been cooked with too much heat and/or for too much time

\* The pie was overcooked and black on the bottom.

**raw** – uncooked; not cooked

\* I never thought I would like to eat raw fish, but I love sushi!

**texture** – the way that the surface of something feels when one touches it

\* This cotton blanket has a smooth, soft texture, but that wool blanket has a rough texture.

**bite** – the volume of food that one tears off with one's silverware or teeth and puts into one's mouth at one time

\* Rafael took a huge bite of his hot dog and almost choked!



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**sweet** – with the taste of something that has a lot of sugar in it

\* Lynn likes to drink very sweet tea, and usually puts three or four teaspoons of sugar into her teacup.

**sour** – with the taste of something that has a lot of lemon or unripe fruit in it

\* This lemonade is too sour! We need to put more sugar in it.

**taste buds** – the small areas on one's tongue that let one know what something tastes like

\* After his illness, he didn't enjoy eating as much because he had lost a lot of his taste buds and he couldn't taste his food as well as before.

**yummy** – delicious; tasty; nice to eat

\* Those cookies are really yummy! May I please have another one?

**it's the thought that counts** – a phrase used to mean that intentions are more important than the results of one's actions; a phrase used to mean that what a person meant to do is more important than what he or she actually did

\* I tried to get you a reservation at your favorite restaurant for your birthday, but there weren't any tables available. But it's the thought that counts, right?



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is Elaine’s opinion about the soup?
    - a) It has very little flavor.
    - b) It has a smooth texture.
    - c) It is very tasty.
  
  2. How did Elaine feel at the end of the meal?
    - a) She hated having to eat Steve’s food.
    - b) She thought it was nice of him to have cooked for her.
    - c) She thought that all the food was very yummy.
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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **raw**

The word “raw,” in this podcast, means not cooked: “Did you know that you can get sick if you eat raw chicken?” The word “raw” is also used to talk about things that have not been processed and are still in their natural state: “This country imports raw materials and exports finished products.” When talking about emotions, the word “raw” means something that is not controlled or limited: “He glared at her with raw anger that made her feel frightened.” When talking about information, the word “raw” is used to talk about numbers or other types of data that have not yet been organized or analyzed: “The Hubble telescope sends raw data to NASA, where programmers try to understand what it all means.”

#### **bite**

In this podcast, the word “bite” means the volume of food that one tears off with one’s silverware or teeth and puts into one’s mouth at one time: “Here, try a bite of this pasta – it’s delicious!” A “bite” can also be any strong, pleasant flavor: “This casserole has a nice bite to it.” Sometimes a “bite” is a strong feeling of being cold: “That wind has a nasty bite, so be sure to wear a heavy jacket.” In other contexts, a “bite” is something that makes something very powerful or effective: “The new law puts a bite into the government’s efforts to reduce drug use.” Finally, a “bite” can be an injury made by the mouth of an animal or insect: “Quincy got at least 20 mosquito bites when they went camping last weekend, and now they’re all red and itching.”



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### CULTURE NOTE

One of the great pleasures of eating is appreciating the flavors and textures of different foods. As discussed in this podcast, foods can be bland or “flavorful” (with many strong flavors). Flavorful foods can be salty, sweet, spicy, sour, “tangy” (having a sharp taste, like lemons or other acidic foods), or “bitter” (having a strong, unpleasant taste like that of coffee or dark beer).

Regarding textures, many foods are “crunchy” (making a loud noise when crushed between one’s teeth), like carrots and toast. Other foods are “chewy” (needing to be moved between one’s teeth many times before they can be broken into smaller pieces and swallowed), like caramel candies. Meats are often “tender” (very soft and easy to cut and chew) or “tough” (difficult to cut and chew). Thick sauces and “spreads” (things that are put onto other things in a thin layer), like peanut butter, can be “chunky” (lumpy, or with many small pieces) or “smooth” (with a consistent texture).

Many people like “home-cooked” foods that taste like the foods their mothers used to make. Other people prefer “gourmet” foods that are very fancy and prepared by professional “chefs” (cooks). Recently “ethnic foods” (foods from other cultures) have become increasingly popular. People in a hurry, however, often prefer “fast food” (food prepared very quickly in restaurants, and often eaten while one is driving) or “processed foods” (manufactured foods).

“Food scientists” (people who create new foods in laboratories) and “flavorists” (people who specialize in creating flavors) spend a lot of time developing new flavors and textures for processed foods. They use many “natural flavors,” which are “derived” (taken from) natural foods, and “artificial flavors,” which are derived from chemicals, to create new food products that people will like. They also use many natural and artificial colors to make foods more attractive.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – a; 2 – b



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 353: Describing the Taste of Food.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 353. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

You can visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com). While you're there, take a look at our ESL Podcast Store that contains several premium courses on business and personal English I think you'll be interested in.

This episode is called "Describing the Taste of Food." It's a dialogue between Steve and Elaine, where Elaine is going to talk about what she really thinks of Steve's food, and also what she actually says to Steve – they're not the same. Let's listen.

[start of story]

Steve, my new boyfriend, decided to cook dinner for me. I was really excited, that is, until I tried his cooking.

Steve: What do you think of the soup?

I thought: This is so bland, and what are these little lumpy things in the soup? Of course I didn't say that aloud.

Elaine: It's delicious. It has a very interesting flavor.

When Steve served the main course, a baked chicken, he asked,

Steve: What do you think of the chicken? Is it too salty or spicy?

I thought: Yes! It's too salty and it's so spicy I can hardly eat it without breathing fire. The outside of the chicken is overcooked and the inside is raw! But out loud, I said,

Elaine: No, not at all! It has an interesting texture and I'm enjoying every bite.

I thought: Oh, no. Is there more? Steve went into the kitchen and brought dessert.



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Steve: What do you think of this cake?

I thought: This cake should be sweet, but it has a strange sour taste. Could there be something seriously wrong with Steve's taste buds? But aloud, I said,

Elaine: It's yummy. It's the best cake that anyone has ever made for me.

And it was true. I didn't care how bad the meal was. It's the thought that counts.

[end of story]

Our story begins with Elaine saying that Steve, her new boyfriend – I'm not sure how many boyfriends Elaine has had – is going to cook dinner for her. She says she's "really excited, that is, until I tried his cooking." "That is" is a phrase we use to introduce additional information, usually new information. It would be possible for Elaine to say, "I was really excited until I tried his cooking." The reason she uses "that is" is it creates sort of a pause – a stop, a break – because what she's going to say next is sort of funny; it's different, it's the opposite, really, of the first part of the sentence. So, she says, "I was really excited, that is, until I tried his cooking."

Steve asks what Elaine thinks of the soup, and Elaine tells us what she really thinks in her own mind. She's not saying this to Steve, she's just telling us, the listeners. She says, "I thought, 'This soup is so bland.'" Something that is "bland" (bland) doesn't have very much flavor; it's dull, it's uninteresting. To describe food as "bland" means it doesn't taste like anything very specifically; it doesn't have a lot of flavor. She also says, "what are these little lumpy things in the soup?" "Lumpy" (lumpy) is an adjective; it comes from the word "lump" (lump), which is usually a small, hard ball that you find in some sort of liquid, especially for soup. "Lumpy," then, is not a good adjective; it's usually considered a negative thing.

Elaine, out loud, says to Steve, "It's delicious." So, she's doing what millions of people do when someone asks them how their food is and it doesn't taste very well, they lie. She says, "It's delicious," meaning it's very flavorful, it's very tasty – it has a very good taste. She then says, "It has a very interesting flavor." A "flavor" is the way that something tastes; it's the specific taste of a food. The expression "interesting flavor" is sort of a joke; when someone says "it's interesting," that usually means they don't like it but they don't want to tell you they don't like it.



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Steve then served the main course – the main part of the meal, which was a baked chicken. He asks Elaine, “What do you think of the chicken? Is it too salty or spicy?” Something that is “salty” (salty) – comes from the word “salt” – it means having a lot of salt in it, usually too much salt. “Spicy” is something that is hot, something that causes a burning or a hot “sensation,” or feeling, in your mouth when you eat it. Peppers and chilies are spicy.

Elaine says, once again to us, not to Steve, “Yes! It’s too salty and it’s so spicy that I can hardly eat it (I can barely eat it) without breathing fire.” To say you “can hardly do something” means it’s very difficult; you can almost not do it. “To breathe fire” is a joke, meaning the food is so hot – so spicy – it’s like she had fire in her mouth. She says, “The outside of the chicken was overcooked (meaning it was cooked too much), and the inside was raw” (raw), meaning not cooked. “Raw” is the opposite of “cooked.” “Raw” has a couple of different meanings; take a look at our Learning Guide for some more explanations.

Once again, Elaine tells us which she thinks, but then she says something different to her boyfriend Steve. She says, “No, not at all,” meaning it’s not too salty or spicy. “It has an interesting texture and I’m enjoying every bite.” Once again, notice the use of the word “interesting” here, because she doesn’t want to “criticize,” or say something negative to Steve about his cooking. The “texture” (texture) of cooked food would be the way that it feels on the outside. We use this word, “texture,” for all sorts of materials. You can talk about a shirt, for example, that has a certain texture – a certain feel. When you put your hand on it, it has a certain feel to it. Food, also, can have a certain texture.

Elaine says she’s “enjoying every bite” (bite). A “bite” is the amount of food that you can put in your mouth to eat at one time, usually a small amount of food. She says she’s “enjoying every bite,” every piece of food that she’s eating. Then she says to us, “Is there more?” meaning she doesn’t want any more.

Steve comes out with dessert, and asks her what she thinks of the cake that he’s made. Elaine says to us the “cake should be sweet, but it has a strange sour taste. “Sweet” is the opposite of “sour,” it’s a way of describing the way something tastes. Usually, something that is sweet has a lot of sugar, or something that is like sugar in it. “Sour” is something that has a lot of lemon, for example, or some other fruit in it; it’s the opposite taste of sweet. There is a type of Chinese cooking in the United States called “sweet and sour,” it’s a combination of both of these tastes, or at least that’s the idea.

So the cake, and most desserts, should be sweet, but this one is sour. “Could there be something seriously wrong with Steve’s taste buds,” Elaine asks. Your



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“taste buds” (buds) are the small areas on your tongue that allow you to know what the taste of something is. It’s the part of your tongue that gives you the ability to taste something – your “taste buds.” She’s saying is there something wrong with his tongue – is there something with his body that he doesn’t taste things that are not very good?

Once again, that’s what she says to us, but to Steve she says, about the cake, “It’s yummy” (yummy). “Yummy” is another term meaning tasty, delicious, very good to eat. She says, “It’s the best cake anyone has ever made for me.” She ends the story saying, “And it was true. I didn’t care how bad the meal was. It’s the thought that counts.” This is an expression we use, “it’s the thought that counts,” to mean that our intentions are more important than our actions. It’s a phrase that expresses the idea that what a person means to do is more important than what he or she actually did. So if someone gives you a gift, and you don’t like the gift, you say to yourself “it’s the thought that counts,” meaning it was the idea that the person gave you a gift – wanted to give something nice to you that is important, not the actual gift itself – except when that gift is money!

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

Steve, my new boyfriend, decided to cook dinner for me. I was really excited, that is, until I tried his cooking.

Steve: What do you think of the soup?

I thought: This is so bland, and what are these little lumpy things in the soup? Of course I didn’t say that aloud.

Elaine: It’s delicious. It has a very interesting flavor.

When Steve served the main course, a baked chicken, he asked,

Steve: What do you think of the chicken? Is it too salty or spicy?

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Elaine: No, not at all! It has an interesting texture and I’m enjoying every bite.





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I thought: Oh, no. Is there more? Steve went into the kitchen and brought dessert.

Steve: What do you think of this cake?

I thought: This cake should be sweet, but it has a strange sour taste. Could there be something seriously wrong with Steve's taste buds? But aloud, I said,

Elaine: It's yummy. It's the best cake that anyone has ever made for me.

And it was true. I didn't care how bad the meal was. It's the thought that counts.

[end of story]

The script for this episode was written by the sweet Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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