



## Taste as Experience: The Philosophy and Aesthetics of Food (Arts and Traditions of the Table: Perspectives on Culinary History)

By Nicola Perullo

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**Taste as Experience: The Philosophy and Aesthetics of Food (Arts and Traditions of the Table: Perspectives on Culinary History)** By Nicola Perullo

*Taste as Experience* puts the pleasure of food at the center of human experience. It shows how the sense of taste informs our preferences and relationship to nature, pushes us toward ethical practices of consumption, and impresses upon us the importance of aesthetics. Eating is often dismissed as a necessary aspect of survival, and our personal enjoyment of food is considered a quirk. Nicola Perullo sees food as the only portion of the world we take in on a daily basis, constituting our first and most significant encounter with the earth.

Perullo has long observed people's food practices and has listened to their food experiences. He draws on years of research to explain the complex meanings behind our food choices and the thinking that accompanies our gustatory actions. He also considers our indifference toward food as a force influencing us as much as engagement. For Perullo, taste is value and wisdom. It cannot be reduced to mere chemical or cultural factors but embodies the quality and quantity of our earthly experience.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Philosophers have historically held the senses of gustation and olfaction in bad odor and have regarded eating and drinking as unworthy subjects for those living the Life of the Mind. Perullo manages the difficult task of writing philosophically, and very seriously, about food and wine with only a minimum of defensiveness. His subject is the *experience* of eating and drinking, and his book is essential reading for anyone wanting to reflect on what that experience is. (Steven Shapin, author of *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*)

Nicola Perullo analyzes food aesthetics and the nature of taste in more detail than anyone else has ever done. Taste as Experience moves comfortably across the disciplines, drawing equally from philosophy, literature, culture, and history. This is a lively and entertaining read, full of insights and interesting examples. (David M. Kaplan, editor of *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*)

With its wealth of wide-ranging philosophical and gastronomical knowledge, *Taste as Experience* illuminates the richly meaningful complexity of our ordinary ways of eating, while suggesting a path to somaesthetic wisdom through our culturally and cognitively embodied encounters with food. (Richard Shusterman, author of *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*)

With *Taste as Experience*, Nicola Perullo has set a new standard for studies of the sense of taste, delivering a sophisticated and multifaceted approach to understanding gustatory experience. His innovative perspective blends the contributions of biology and culture and adjudicates the roles of pleasure and cognition in eating and drinking. Perullo's intriguing study culminates in a theory of taste as a kind of aesthetic wisdom that discloses the depth and complexity that gustatory experience can achieve. (Carolyn Korsmeyer, author of *Making Sense of Taste: Taste, Food, and Philosophy*)

The book is engaging and packed with stimulating thoughts and tidbits to chew on (pun intended, of course). (*Huffington Post*)

This book is short but packed with provocative ideas. . . . It is recommended . . . that one start at the beginning and read through to the end, a worthwhile journey because of Perullo's enjoyable development of a perspective that is distinctive, well-informed, and thoughtful. (Carolyn Korsmeyer *Philosophy in Review*)

#### About the Author

Nicola Perullo is professor of aesthetics at the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, Italy. He is the author of several books in Italian and teaches courses on aesthetics and the philosophy of taste, wine evaluation, and the ethics and aesthetics of food.

Massimo Montanari is professor of medieval history and the history of food at the Institute of Paleography and Medieval Studies, University of Bologna. His Columbia University Press books include *Let the Meatballs Rest: And Other Stories About Food and Culture* (2012); *Cheese, Pears, and History in a Proverb* (2010); *Food Is Culture* (2006); *Italian Cuisine: A Cultural History* (2003); and *Food: A Culinary History* (1999).

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