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Why Do Two Culinary Judges Disagree on the Same Dish?

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Article author أحمد عصام المعدراني	**Article number** 8511
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Reference
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A reference for interpreting divergent culinary scores, from differences in the sampled portion to differences in criteria and weighting.

Did they taste the same part?

One judge may describe a crisp crust while another records softness. In an illustrative case, the first sampled the edge and the second the part in contact with sauce. The review starts with the sampled portion and service conditions before it considers differences in perception.

Agreement on an attribute may still produce different scores

Once both judges agree that the edge was crisp, the question shifts to the criterion. Was crispness intended, and how much does it count alongside other attributes? Competition scores are interpreted under the organiser’s published criteria.

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Reading the disagreement

A useful review traces the sample, the language used to describe it and the weight given to the attribute. If the cause remains unclear, that uncertainty belongs in the record.

Similar words can hide different meanings

One judge may use “strong” to describe acidity, while another uses it for a lingering flavour. The notes look similar on paper, but the underlying observations can affect different criteria. Comparing descriptions before comparing scores reveals this gap. When an ambiguous word recurs across records, clarifying it is more useful than recalculating the average.

How disagreement remains visible

Suppose judges diverged on texture alone. Keeping their original notes and recording the review preserves the difference. One judge may have considered consistency across the servings while the other described only the portion received. Each observation has its own scope. A combined score produces a result and leaves the reason for divergence to the written record.

Agreement on description and agreement on the scale

Two judges may describe a texture as firm and place it at different points on an intensity scale. Before attributing the gap to taste, consider what the scale levels mean to each person. If “moderate” has two different working definitions, the gap extends to how a description becomes a number. Shared examples can clarify the scale before judging, while each judge still records an independent observation when the dishes are served.

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