

1.4.2 Sensorial quality

Sensorial quality is a secondary quality, in that it is the effect produced by certain primary qualities on our sense organs. The primary qualities in question (organoleptic attributes, according to ISO 5492) are to be tracked down to those chemical and/or physical properties of food – such as taste, aroma, texture, aspect (e.g. colour), maybe sound (e.g. crunchiness) – that impact on consumers' exteroception, namely on the senses of gustation, olfaction, haptic (tactile) sensitivity, vision and audition.

Sensorial quality can be defined as the ability of a product to satisfy the hedonic needs of consumers. It is, therefore, subjective as it is assessed through an interpretation by each consumer and cannot be measured in an absolute sense.

Despite this, products that most consumers like are considered quality products. As a consequence, the only means of defining the sensorial quality of a product is to bear in mind the tastes and views expressed by consumers. These opinions are influenced both by the individual characteristics of the sense organs of each person and each individual's ability to use them, and by the customs and traditions of the various regions in the world influenced by culture, ethnic groups, religion and social class.

Sensorial quality varies both in time and in space. Moreover, food products are very complex, which makes it difficult to attribute a particular sensorial quality to one or more easily analysed constituents. A way to solve this difficulty is to define accurately the ingredients used and the processes applied, as this is done with typical or registered products, and to proceed to the quality control of the finished product by means of sensorial analysis.

Consumers attach a great deal of importance to sensorial quality, indeed it can be said that this is what sells a product. This is due to the fact that, at least in the West, there is no longer a need to appease hunger; the Western diet is varied and 'complete' foods are no longer needed. Moreover, Western society, which takes care to guarantee consumer safety, ensures that only products of high nutritional quality are commercialized.

1.4.3 Service content

The lifespan of the packaged and/or opened product, the cooking time, the availability, how easy it is to transport, the quantity and quality of information that accompanies the product, the encumbrance of the