

Book review

Reineccius Gary, Flavor Chemistry and Technology (second ed.), 2005, CRC Press, 520 pp, £85.

Those of us working in the area of food flavour can be divided into two basic types: flavour chemists, who are trying to take the flavour out of food, in order to identify its components, and flavour technologists, who are using this knowledge, in order to produce flavourings, which enhance our eating pleasure. Originally published by Henry Heath and Gary Reineccius in 1986, “Flavor Chemistry and Technology” has been revised and updated by Professor Reineccius, who has worked in the field of food flavour for nearly 40 years. Having worked in both academia and the flavour industry, he is ideally qualified in writing a book of use to both flavour removers and flavour adders.

The book is helpfully divided into a flavour chemistry section and a flavour technology section. The flavour chemistry section contains chapters on flavour formation, flavour analysis and off-flavours, as well as chapters on flavour perception and flavour release. The larger flavour technology section covers flavouring materials, both natural and artificial, flavour enhancers, flavouring production, quality control, legislation and the role of the flavourist.

The two sections inevitably overlap but are discrete enough to exist as books in their own right. Each chapter contains recent research, the writing is clear and all concepts are thoroughly explained.

Obviously not all foods can be comprehensively covered, with regards to their flavour chemistry. Reineccius chooses to discuss foods eaten raw in one chapter, cooked foods in another and food taints in a third chapter. Strangely, the taints chapter is larger than both of the other chapters and staple foods, such as meat and bread, are barely mentioned. Numerous figures and tables contain misspelled chemical names (e.g., 3-methyl butanol, 4c-hcptnal), undermining the text, which is generally well written and informative.

For a student studying food chemistry for the first time, or a trainee flavourist, this book would be a useful introduction. However, I hope we do not have to wait another twenty years for a third edition with the correct chemical names!

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