

# The Role of Organoleptic Descriptive Analysis in the Training of Creative Flavorists

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If you aspire to become a flavorist, you will have a lot of work ahead of you. Like an aspiring painter, you must learn the tools of the trade, the myriad natural and artificial ingredients contained in the ever growing FEMA and GRAS lists. Like a musician, you must spend countless hours rehearsing the various combinations of notes that, when completed, will yield a viable flavor.

If you aspire to become a flavorist, you will become one of two types, depending upon the type of company you work for and the assets that the organization will expend for your training. You will become either 1) a matching flavorist, one that identifies as a flavorist yet can only reverse engineer what his or her GC/MS has chromatographically deconstructed, or 2) a creative flavorist, one who knows the organoleptics of the organic ingredients, the building blocks used to create flavors.

Unfortunately, matching flavorists are all that a lot of companies require and the only type they can train. While flavor matching offers a quicker payback, the commercial gratification of becoming the secondary and lower cost supplier of any flavor is not an enviable

marketing position to which most flavor companies aspire. Flavor companies that employ matching flavorists do so out of necessity. They have no suitable program with the required, experienced mentors that can undertake the costly, lengthy and arduous task of transforming a flavor technician into a creative flavorist. Creative flavor companies aspire to be the primary supplier of any flavor and maintain that position by providing flavor trainees with the required mentoring as well as the requisite technical instrumental backup and flavor applications.

In order to be considered for membership as a creative flavorist, the Society of Flavor Chemists (SFC) has published the following definition of a member on its Web site (*www.flavorchemist.org*):

Society members are primarily chemists and food scientists, but there are also members from other backgrounds as well. Flavor chemists (also known as flavorists) develop flavors for a wide variety of food and pharmaceutical products, using creative and artistic talents along with various analytical tools including gas and liquid chromatography. To become a certified member of the society, the candidate must complete an approved seven year apprenticeship period as stipulated by our by-laws and then pass a review by the membership. Apprentice members must complete an approved five year apprenticeship period with a review.

The society also provides the following syllabus of material that the flavorist applicant should know after the required mentoring period (T-1).

As one can see, this syllabus is quite extensive; it reflects the knowledge that a candidate should possess prior to applying for either an apprentice or professional membership. The membership requirements are stringent. Verification of the requirements is a two-part process: First is getting the written certification of a certified member that can attest to the candidate's possession of the suitable basic requirements and their ability to creatively employ those abilities for a specific period of time. Second is a requirement to present oneself for a verbal examination dealing with the knowledge that a member should possess. One should think of the flavor mentoring

## T-1. The Society of Flavor Chemists' syllabus

*Material quoted herein is available at [www.flavorchemist.org](http://www.flavorchemist.org).*

This document is an elaboration of Article II, I, c, of the Society of Flavor Chemists' by-laws which state that applicants for certified membership "must exhibit a working knowledge of...raw materials, laboratory procedures, production processes, legal/regulatory consideration and the economics involved in the creation, production, and utilization of flavors."

The syllabus is intended to provide support and guidance to training programs. It is the expected knowledge from which the Membership Review Board draws their interview questions.

No attempt has been made to divide the subject matter into Certified and Apprentice SFC membership categories. It is expected that Certified members will have broader and deeper knowledge than Apprentice members, but it is not the intention here to elaborate who should know what. It is not unlikely that anyone will know everything. Since there are no formal courses in Flavor Chemistry, most of a candidate's knowledge and training must come from work experience, trial and error and the counsel of more experienced practitioners of the art. In addition, most people will find it useful or necessary to supplement their experience by consulting various published sources. Some examples of these are:

1. *Fenaroli's Handbook of Flavor Ingredients I and II*
2. *Morrison and Boyd - Organic Chemistry 3rd ed.*
3. Industry periodicals including:
  - \*Cereal Foods World
  - \*Food Chemical News
  - \*Food Engineering
  - \*Food Processing
  - \*Food Technology
  - \**Perfumer & Flavorist* magazine
  - \*Prepared Foods
  - \*Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry
4. Steffan Arctander - *Perfume and Flavor Chemicals, Perfume and Flavor Materials of Natural Origin*
5. *Food Chemicals Codex*
6. Ernest Guenther — *The Essential Oils*
7. Henry Heath — *Source Book of Flavors*