

Title: Mastering the flavor of rapeseed: materiality, management, and the senses at Margarinbolaget 1926-1964

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Abstract:

The paper is within the project *Masters of Flavor: Food Invention in High Industrial Sweden*, which examines how science and engineering transformed food flavor in Sweden from the 1930s to the 1970s, the so-called "high-industrial" period in which the food industry developed rapidly. We focus particularly on the emerging field of "flavor science" that applied methods from for instance chemistry, psychology, biology, medicine and statistics to understand flavor characteristics and they are perceived by the human olfaction, gustation, somatic sensation, vision and audition. Our main methodology is to do "biographies" of a range of food products, i.e. how they were developed and how the flavor of food was formed by different technoscientific practices in the experimental system of flavor science. In this case we follow how managers of the Swedish margarine manufacturer AB Margarinbolaget gradually introduced flavor assessment in their managerial routines from the 1920s to the 1960s, a time when markets, consumer cultures and geopolitical conditions were transforming rapidly. Following the role of Gunnar Wode, a chemist responsible for scientifically analyzing and evaluating margarine and the laboratory he was in charge of we study the gradual efforts of deodorization and aromatization of margarine turning the product into stable and predictable in regard to flavor. By close empirical examinations of this "sensory management", the paper describes an overall transformation of the managers' appreciation of sensory properties as means for competition –a shift materialized in the mid-1960s by the launching of the "super brand" Flora, designed as a "modern" flavorsome margarine seriously competing with natural butter.

Keywords: Margarine, materiality, management, flavor, sensory science