

USDA researchers recruiting food testers in New Orleans

Calling all foodies! The [Agricultural Research Service](#), part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is recruiting panelists to serve on its Food Sensory Evaluation Panel. Panelists will help scientists at the USDA develop new food products that meet the needs of consumers.

Panelists undergo extensive training at the Southern Regional Research Center in New Orleans, where they learn to consistently score the aroma, taste, and/or texture of foods and ingredients. After being trained, groups of panelists will be assembled throughout the year based on research needs. Food evaluation sessions last from one to two hours, and panelists are compensated for their time.

The evaluations help scientists develop new ways to make foods more nutritious. The Food Sensory Evaluation Laboratory in New Orleans studies catfish, rice, and plant-based meat substitutes. USDA scientists are also collaborating with researchers at Tulane University School of Medicine to [study whether plants under stress are healthier to eat](#).

The sensory panel is a critical part of our research,” said Ryan Ardoin, a research food technologist for the USDA. “Machines can’t truly tell us what people experience from a food product. Only people can do that.”

To get more information about becoming a panelist, contact Ryan Ardoin at (504)286-4459 or ryan.ardoin@usda.gov; or Jeanne Lea at (504)286-4567 or jeanne.lea@usda.gov.