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Rethinking Taste: A Didactical Model for Teaching Sustainable Food Consumption in Home Economics

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Abstract

This article examines how the concept of taste can be employed in Home Economics education to challenge normative frameworks surrounding sustainable food consumption. Drawing on theoretical perspectives that view taste as a relational and dynamic activity, we argue that taste offers a valuable lens for engaging students in critical reflection on food practices. In addition, we introduce a preliminary didactical model intended to support teachers in planning, implementing, and reflecting on their teaching. The model is based on insights from a small-scale pilot project, which also highlights certain limitations in terms of scope and generalizability. Nevertheless, the findings offer promising directions for further development and research in sustainability education.

KEYWORDS: TEACHING TASTE, SUSTAINABLE FOOD CONSUMPTION, A TRANSACTIONAL TASTE, NORMATIVE TEACHING, PILOT STUDY

Introduction

Sustainable development—and more specifically, sustainable food consumption—holds a prominent position in Home Economics curricula globally. The subject in compulsory school in Sweden is called Home and Consumer studies, but we have chosen to use the international term Home Economics consistently throughout this text. In Sweden, this is expressed in the National curriculum for compulsory school (National Agency for Education, 2024) where knowledge of consumer issues and domestic work is framed as essential for promoting sustainable development. As stated in the curriculum:

> Knowledge of consumer issues and work in the home gives people important tools for creating a functional everyday life and promoting sustainable development by being able to make informed choices as consumers with regard to health, finances, and the environment (National Agency for Education, 2024, p. 51).

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One of three principal goals of the subject is to provide students with the conditions necessary to develop "the ability to evaluate choices and actions that occur in a home based on how they affect health, finances, and the environment" (National Agency for Education, 2024, p. 51). This objective reflects a holistic approach to sustainability, encompassing its three core dimensions: social, economic, and environmental.

Internationally, sustainability has also been identified as a guiding principle in Home Economics education. Maguire and McCloat (2017) highlight several countries—including Malta, Japan, Finland, Sweden, and Ireland—where sustainability is embedded within a curricular framework. For instance, in Malta, sustainability is one of four main foundational principles intended to inspire students to act toward a sustainable future. In Japan, sustainability is a central theme, with "Daily consumption and the Environment" designated as a key area of learning. Maguire and McCloat (2017) further argue that "Around the world, teachers of Home Economics use a variety of active learning strategies as well as practical activities to engage students and prepare them for a sustainable and healthy future" (p. 167).

Within the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), numerous scholars (Lönngren & van Poeck, 2021) have characterized the global challenges related to climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion as *wicked problems*—a concept originally introduced by Rittel and Webber (1973). Wicked problems are inherently complex, lacking definitive solutions or universally agreed-upon approaches. They involve multiple stakeholders with conflicting goals. They are examined through various academic disciplines, encompassing both past and present, as well as local and global dimensions—making universally accepted solutions unattainable (Block et al., 2019; Hjälmeskog et al., 2024).

In Home Economics education, examples of wicked problems include decisions related to food choices and cooking methods. Teaching such issues is inherently complex. Consequently, there is a tendency within ESD to simplify these problems, which can result in normative teaching. This tendency has been problematized in research (e.g. Jickling & Spork, 1998; van Poeck & Östman, 2020), as it may lead to students being taught "the right way" to think and act for example, being encouraged to choose specific foods deemed sustainable or healthy.

Historically, Swedish Home Economics teachers have held a normative role. In a study on health promotion over time, Palmblad and Eriksson (1995) describe the Home Economics teacher as an extended arm of the state: "The School Kitchen seminars and Home Economics schools are said to be of great importance for public health work; here is a corps that can be used in the propagandist activities" (pp. 31–32). This normative tradition is also evident in later national curricula and textbooks from the 1960s onward, as shown by Oljans (2020) and Gelinder (2020). In a single-case study following one class during a full school year, Berg et al. (2023) present current examples of normative teaching. For instance, students emphasized the importance of food appearance in lessons, noting that their teacher "eats with her eyes" (p. 5). The teacher also spoke positively about homemade food, while prefabricated alternatives were problematized. One student commented: "You're supposed to understand that it's better to cook homemade food" (p. 6). This suggests that the historical task of guiding students toward certain values and behaviors persists, despite the current national curriculum (National Agency for Education, 2024) clearly stating that teaching should be factual and versatile. Students are expected to develop "their ability to critically examine information, facts and conditions and to recognize the consequences of different alternatives" (p. 7). While values such as democracy, equality, and sustainability are to be conveyed, teaching should not be normative. For example, discussing how to choose food—including aspects such as eco-labels—can support students in making informed choices, but it is not the teacher's role to prescribe specific decisions (Håkansson, 2019).

In addition, research in environmental and sustainability education has shown that there is no simple connection between knowledge and behavioral change (Boeve-de Pauw et al., 2015; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Instead, aspects such as values (Bamberg, 2013) and motivation (Legault & Pelletier, 2000) play a decisive role. Simply providing information about which foods are "good" or "bad" does not significantly influence students' choices. In fact, such cognitive approaches may have limited or even counterproductive effects (Marty et al., 2018).

This suggests that Home Economics teachers, rather than relying on traditional normative approaches—as Bohm (2023) argues they often do—could explore new ways of planning and conducting lessons. One possible approach is to start from students' interest in taste during cooking. A study of Swedish Home Economics lessons shows that taste is the primary factor guiding students' choices during foodwork, even when the lesson's purpose relates to sustainable development and students are encouraged to consider health, economy, and environmental perspectives (Gelinder et al., 2020). Similarly, Bohm (2023) demonstrates that students express dissatisfaction when a focus on health compromises taste, and they question the importance of healthy choices when these conflict with personal preferences. According to Bohm, students only actively consider health when it is explicitly stated as a lesson goal. Even when students are trained to follow health recommendations, they report preferring to base their food choices on taste outside the classroom (Berg et al., 2024).

It becomes clear through the research mentioned above that taste is a content relevant to sustainability education. Not only because students themselves prioritize taste, but also because taste is generally the most influential factor in food choice (Belasco, 2008; Højlund, 2020; Schmidt & Mouritsen, 2020). Wistoft and Qvortrup (2019) offer further arguments. They have developed a didactics of taste and argue that taste should be central in Home Economics education. Based on a study of cookbooks, they argue that taste has historically been important and remains so. Taste also represents a qualitative dimension of food education and can enhance student engagement and expectations. This is supported by Christiansen (2019), who, based on an observational study in Danish schools, concludes: "It is essential for teachers to reflect didactically on how the sense of taste can be activated when teaching the subject food education" (p. 17). The relevance of taste in ESD is stated by Weiser et al. (2026) in their scoping review concerning sensory activities for children in educational settings. Food-related sensory activities are promising tools not just for nutrition education, but for cultivating holistic, sustainable learning experiences. At the same time, only a few studies in their review explicitly link sensory activities to sustainability, which indicates a research gap.

Aim and research question

This article explores how the concept of taste can be utilized in Home Economics education to challenge normative approaches to sustainable food consumption. Furthermore, we propose a preliminary didactical model intended to support teachers in the planning, implementation, and reflection of their teaching practices concerning sustainable food consumption.

Taste, More Than Just the "Taste"

Taste in relation to food, mainly refers to the sensory experience perceived in the mouth during eating. It can be both about describing and evaluating what is consumed (Mouritsen & Styrbæk, 2017). Furthermore, taste is one of the five human senses—alongside sight, smell, hearing, and touch—and it helps to distinguish the five basic tastes: sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and umami. Simply put, it is the collection of cells located within the taste buds on the tongue that enables us to perceive the basic tastes. Humans have approximately 9,000 taste buds, and each taste bud consists of around 100 renewable cells. When these cells come into contact with oral fluids, the taste dissolves. When eating, not only basic tastes are felt, but also a lot of other flavours that can be understood as aromas. Aromas are perceived with the help of the sense of smell (Mouritsen & Styrbæk, 2017). When having a cold, the experience is that the food does not taste like anything, which is because the nose is blocked and aromas of what is eaten cannot be perceived. It can easily be tested how smell and the sense of taste work together by holding the nose and, for example, putting a candy, a fruity one, in our mouth and chewing. Only the sweet taste can be identified while holding the nose. When the fingers are released experience of several flavors occurs. Furthermore, the mouth feel of the food, i.e., the texture and the heat are experienced when eating something. It is a complex interaction between our senses that leads to the total taste experience (Prim et al., 2024).

Taste plays a decisive role in food selection, as individuals tend to choose foods perceived as pleasurable, in other words, what tastes good (Belasco, 2008; Højlund, 2020; Schmidt & Mouritsen, 2020). Just as eating is a learned behavior, the appreciation of new tastes and flavors also requires learning. At birth, humans exhibit an innate preference for umami and sweet tastes—flavors that signal nutritional richness and are evolutionarily linked to survival (Schmidt & Mouritsen, 2020).

Educational approaches to taste, particularly sensory-based methods such as the Sapere technique, have demonstrated positive effects on children's consumption of fruits and vegetables (e.g., Kähkönen et al., 2018; Sepp & Höijer, 2016). These methods emphasize curiosity and sensory exploration, aiming to enhance both motivation and knowledge through experiential engagement. However, research by Leer and Wistoft (2018) highlights a reductive portrayal of taste within pedagogical contexts and a prevailing mistrust of children's own sensory preferences. Their findings suggest that taste education often seeks to guide children toward socially constructed notions of "correct" eating, thereby positioning taste as an obstacle rather than as a vital sense—a source of pleasure and a meaningful way of engaging with the world.

A different perspective is to understand taste as an activity (Teil & Hennion, 2004). Taste is then understood as an active process, an action and not something that is defined beforehand. It will be further developed in the following section using John Dewey's understanding of how meaning is created in transactions.

A transactional understanding of taste

A transactional understanding of taste builds on a pragmatist view (Teil, 2025; Teil & Hennion, 2004) and on Dewey's (1983) transactional methodology (Gelinder, 2020). In this perspective, taste gets its meaning in the *encounter* between the one who tastes and what is tasted. This interplay constitutes the transformative process that constantly takes place between people and their environment (Dewey & Bentley, 1991). Taste gets its meaning in the transaction, in the encounter.

To illustrate, imagine that you have an apple in your hand, and before you have tasted the apple for the first time, the taste of apple has no meaning. It is when you take a bite of the apple, in the encounter with the apple, that the taste is created and gets its meaning. However, next time you eat an apple, your earlier experiences will affect your expectations in the new meeting with the apple, and hence the meaning of the apple flavor. To understand what influences the experience and meaning-making of taste, Teil and Hennion (2004) use four factors: body, object, social context, and situation.

1. **Body**

   It is through our body, mouth, and how our different senses work together that we can experience taste. It matters how many times the body has previously tasted the raw material/food, that is, what our own body has previously experienced and learned. For example, the taste of a strong espresso is experienced in different ways, whether you are an experienced barista or if you have barely drunk any coffee before in your life. The body can be trained to become more competent, skilled, and sensitive to what is happening in the encounter between body and object.

2. **Object**

   The ingredient/food/dish contributes to the encounter between the object and the one who tastes. It must be understood as the raw material itself, the food or the dish, and this object also contributes to what the taste becomes in the encounter with the taster. A Parmesan cheese, for example, will contribute to different flavors depending on how long it has been stored. When the package for the Parmesan cheese has been opened and it gets old and moulds, it also affects how it tastes when eaten. The object changes, for example the temperature, and that affects the taste experience. Is the Parmesan cheese fridge cold, or has it been at room temperature for two hours before you eat it?

3. **Social context**

   The social context always influences the development of new experiences and the ability to experience taste. Do you eat Parmesan cheese in a small, intimate restaurant in Italy with your sweetheart, or do you eat the cheese alone at home in front of the TV because it was the only thing in the fridge to eat? The people around you influence and contribute to the experience and taste perceived.

4. **Situation**

   The taste is influenced by the situation and material, such as time, space, tools, rules, and different techniques. An example is that a lesson in Home Economics affects what the taste will be through various circumstances, such as the purpose of the lesson, teacher's actions, available kitchen items that the students can use when working with food, whether the students know the method of preparation, and the length of the lesson.

Teil and Hennion (2004) argue that taste is a way of forming relationships—both with objects and with people. It is not merely a property of goods, nor simply a skill possessed by individuals. What they emphasize is that taste is an activity: it is dynamic and subject to change. Four key factors can deepen our understanding of what taste truly is, and help explain why we experience taste in a particular way within a specific context.

Methodology

The present study builds upon a pilot project designed to examine the educational potential of taste—particularly from a transactional perspective—as a central component in teaching sustainable food consumption. The pilot project, which engaged a small group of educators and researchers, was originally conceived as a preparatory step toward securing funding for a more extensive research endeavor. However, the pilot project itself yielded valuable insights and experiential knowledge that have proven instrumental in informing and advancing the didactic framework of Home Economics. The findings underscore the relevance of taste as a dynamic and educable construct, capable of fostering student engagement, shaping food preferences, and promoting sustainable consumption behaviors within educational settings.

The Idea of the Pilot Project

Promoting sustainable food consumption through education requires more than the transmission of factual knowledge—it necessitates experiential learning that engages students' senses, values, and habits. This pilot project was designed to investigate how *a transactional perspective on taste* can inform practices in Home Economics, fostering sustainable food choices among students. Central to this approach is the understanding that taste is not merely a biological or static preference, but a dynamic construct shaped within social, cultural, and educational interactions. By encouraging students to *experience unfamiliar ingredients*, *learn how to prepare them in appealing ways*, and *develop new taste preferences*, educators can cultivate curiosity and intrinsic motivation to explore sustainable food options.

Material

Three Home Economics teachers working in secondary education, along with three educational researchers, participated in a collaborative project. The teachers were responsible for teaching Home Economics to students in grade 6 (age 12–13) and grades 8 and 9 (15–16 years of age). The group convened on four occasions—once each month—from February to May 2021. Each meeting took place in a Home Economics education classroom, and lasted between two and three hours. Before the first meeting with the teachers, the researchers developed preliminary plans regarding the content and the structure of the project. Decisions were made about the focus of the initial session and the necessary preparations. Selected literature was provided to the teachers to serve as both inspiration and a foundation for discussion. In addition, the researchers prepared drafts of a reflection protocol for teachers to use after implementing classroom tasks, a model or reflection tool titled “What will be the taste” and a student activity referred to as “A food memory”.

To document the process, both in terms of teacher reflections and lesson implementation, a variety of methods were employed. During the joint meetings, the researchers took field notes, which were later compared and synthesized. The teachers contributed written reflections and reports based on their classroom experiences, describing how they applied the ideas discussed during the meetings. These reflections included commentary on lesson execution, their own teaching practices, and student responses and feedback.

Ethical Considerations

Although the scope pilot project is limited, ethical research practices were carefully observed. The three participating teachers were fully informed about the purpose of the study and were asked to provide their consent. They were also made aware that they could withdraw from the project at any time without facing any consequences. In accordance with established ethical guidelines (Swedish Research Council, 2024), a clear division of responsibilities was maintained throughout the project. The teachers agreed to participate in four meetings held outside of regular working hours and committed to reading selected texts. It was explicitly stated that they could explore and test ideas in their own teaching, provided that this did not result in an increased workload. As a result, students were only indirectly involved in the project, participating solely through their regular classroom activities. Their involvement was mediated through the teachers' reflections, which included accounts of teaching experiences, student activities, and observed reactions.

Summary of the Four Collaborative Meetings

At meeting number 1, the study, the background, and the purpose were introduced. Researchers presented a transactional understanding of taste and explained the Sapere method, which emphasizes sensory education. Participants engaged in basic sensory exercises, including tasting colored vanilla yoghurt (pink, blue, green, and white) to explore how visual cues influence perceived taste. A discussion followed on the interplay of the senses, particularly the role of sight in shaping taste experiences.

Another exercise involved tasting water solutions to identify the five basic tastes (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, umami), culminating in the creation of "The world's best sandwich", a dish designed to incorporate all five tastes. Vocabulary related to taste was discussed, along with strategies for teaching students to balance flavors. For the next meeting, teachers were asked to read about the transactional perspective on taste in Gelinder's (2020) thesis and a shorter text about value-conflicts in relation to food choices (Höglund, 2020). Teachers were also tasked with implementing the sensory exercises in their own classrooms and documenting their experiences using a reflection protocol.

Meeting number 2, focused on teachers' reflections from their classroom implementations. This was followed by testing a testing session with various peas and beans, examining their taste, texture, smell, appearance, and pedagogical potential as sustainable ingredients. Participants prepared a shared meal using these legumes and discussed how they could be integrated into Home Economics teaching. The preread texts were revisited, with discussions centered on their relevance to education for sustainable food consumption and taste. The group also began creating a lesson plan for future classroom use, based on the insights gained.

During meeting number 3, participants prepared several recipes featuring peas and beans, including pasta bolognese, bean patties, pea hummus, and brownies. The dishes were tasted and evaluated for their suitability in student-centered lessons. It was agreed that the teachers would conduct a lesson in which students prepared meals using beans, peas, or lentils as sustainable alternatives to meat. Teachers were also asked to implement the task "A food memory" and integrate it into the "What determines the taste" reflection model.

At meeting number 4, the last meeting was dedicated to summarizing and evaluating the pilot project. Teachers shared their experiences and insights, reflecting on both the practical and pedagogical aspects of the project. A key topic of discussion was the type of knowledge and competencies Home Economics teachers need to effectively teach about taste—particularly as a dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon, in line with a transactional perspective.

Findings—Experiences of Teaching Taste

The participating teachers expressed that the project was both engaging and enriching. Their involvement provided them with new perspectives, enhanced knowledge, and inspiration for future lesson planning. They were particularly struck by the students' narratives when sharing food-related memories and deeply appreciated the students' high level of engagement. The project was also perceived as a form of professional development, offering an opportunity to deepen their understanding of how to teach sustainable food consumption.

In summary, the teachers reported that students responded positively to the tasks, describing them as enjoyable and stimulating. The students actively participated in discussions and explored their sensory perceptions. The activities titled "Basic tastes" and "Colored yogurt" were considered by the teachers to be quick, easy to implement, and well-suited to the students' abilities and previous experiences.

Discussions within the project group revealed a need to support students in articulating and conceptualizing taste and texture. This was seen as essential to ensuring that sustainable food consumption is not perceived merely as a sacrifice of pleasurable taste. In response, a prototype model—"What determines the taste"—was developed, grounded in a transactional understanding of taste. Teachers applied this model by asking students to describe a food memory, which led to nuanced classroom conversation. Students reflected on factors such as location, social context, and atmosphere, particularly in relation to cooking with legumes like peas and beans. Teachers noted that, for some students, the assignment sparked interest in unfamiliar ingredients and new culinary possibilities. Overall, the transactional approach to taste successfully broadened classroom discussions and fostered student curiosity.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were noted by the teachers. First, they expressed it challenging to connect individual taste-related activities to broader themes, such as sustainable food consumption. They questioned how to make these connections explicit and meaningful for students. Secondly, the teachers expressed uncertainty about how to address and manage differing value-conflicts when teaching about food. Thirdly, there was a growing awareness among teachers of the risk of adopting a normative stance in their teaching. They sought strategies to maintain a pluralistic approach (inclusive approach). To address these challenges, teachers requested support in the form of structured lesson plans that could help them integrate taste education with sustainability themes, manage value-based discussions, and avoid normative teaching practices.

A Didactical Model for Teaching Sustainable Food Consumption in Home Economics

The teachers involved in the pilot project identified several challenges: 1. contextual integration, 2. navigating value conflicts and 3. avoiding normativity. In response to these concerns and aspirations, a didactical model comprising five strategies for integrating taste education in Home Economics was developed. These ideas were initially discussed with the participating teachers and have since been further refined to better align with classroom realities and curricular goals.

1. Developing taste awareness and conceptualization

To cultivate culinary competence, students must first acquire a foundational understanding of the five basic tastes—sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami—and how these interact to create balanced and nuanced dishes. This foundational knowledge not only supports technical skill development but also facilitates personal taste awareness. Through sensory exercises such as “Colored yogurt” and “Identifying basic tastes,” students begin to articulate their preferences and reflect on their taste experiences. The *Sapere method* offers a valuable pedagogical framework, encouraging multisensory exploration and verbalization, thereby fostering the ability to conceptualize and communicate individual taste profiles.

2. Recognizing taste as changeable

Taste should not be understood as something fixed and static, but rather as something changeable. Drawing on Teil and Hennion’s (2004) proposed model, educators can guide students to consider how taste is shaped by four interrelated factors: the body, the object (food), the social context, and the situation. Activities such as “A food memory,” enable students to analyze how these factors influence their taste experiences. Furthermore, experimental cooking tasks—such as varying raw materials or cooking methods—highlight how taste evolves through repetition, prior exposure, and environmental influences. This approach encourages students to adopt a more fluid and reflective understanding of taste.

3. Exploring food-ethical values

Food choices inherently involve ethical considerations and value conflicts among stakeholders, including consumers, producers, animals, and the environment (Höglund, 2020). While pleasant taste often dominates consumer decision-making, reflective practice can reveal competing values such as animal welfare, environmental sustainability, fair labor conditions, and health. Educators can facilitate this ethical inquiry by introducing tools such as value hierarchies or value ladders, prompting students to identify and rank relevant values. When values conflict or hold equal weight, ethical dilemmas arise. In such cases, students can engage with ethical theories—such as deontology, consequentialism, care ethics, and virtue ethics—to navigate complex decision-making. Guiding questions may include:

- What obligations do I have toward myself, others, and animals?
- What kind of food consumer do I aspire to be?
- Whom or what do I wish to show care for in my food choices?
- What are the short- and long-term consequences of my choices, and for whom?
- Experimenting with taste to influence food habits

A broadened and reflective understanding of taste can serve as a catalyst for evolving food preferences and habits. To support this transformation, educators must create opportunities for students to engage with both familiar and unfamiliar ingredients through repeated exposure and experimentation. Emphasis may be placed on plant-based foods, aligning with recommendations from the Eat-Lancet Commission and national dietary guidelines. Experimental tasks—such as preparing tasting menus with varied cooking methods (e.g. roasted vs. steamed carrots) or comparing pasta sauces made with different protein sources (e.g. lentils, vegetables, soy, meat)—can foster curiosity and motivation. Students are encouraged to assess dishes in terms of taste, texture, aroma, and sustainability across economic, social, and ecological dimensions.

4. **Reflecting on taste experiences preferences**

   The final step involves sustained self-reflection on taste development and its implications for food choices. Students are invited to consider how their preferences have evolved, whether these changes have influenced their consumption patterns, and how they envision their future food choices. This reflective process can be supported through the use of a "Taste diary," which serves as a tool for documenting sensory experiences, tracking changes, and visualizing personal growth. Reflection is not confined to this final stage but is interwoven throughout the entire model, reinforcing the importance of introspection in shaping ethical and sustainable eating practices.

Discussion

When teaching sustainable food consumption, the aim is to create knowledge about possibilities for action, a desire and willingness to participate in sustainability work, and to create preparedness, so that the students can feel that they have the opportunity to influence and act for change (e.g. Almers, 2009; Caiman & Lundegård, 2014; Jensen & Schnack, 2006).

In this article, we show that one fruitful way to teach sustainable food consumption is to use the pursuit of food that tastes good and food enjoyment as a positive force rather than a problem (cf. Christiansen, 2019; Wistoft & Qvortrup, 2019). This includes the development of students' familiarity with taste, and with different foods, without there being a conclusion, a "right" (or "wrong") way to experience food. By focusing on taste, the students are met where they are, the teaching can be built on the students' own perspectives and questions (Sporre & Osbeck, 2022), and they get the opportunity to explore possible paths towards sustainable food choices themselves. Normativity is avoided by not valuing the students' opinions and thoughts. The overall aim of sustainable food consumption becomes visible for the students by experimenting with food items in accordance with recommendations for better health and sustainable development (EAT-Lancet, national and international recommendations, e.g. Blomhoff et al., 2023). Students should also be given the opportunity to discuss complex sustainability problems, i.e. wicked problems (Block et al., 2019), that do not have given solutions and answers, and where conflicting voices or ethical values are confirmed and allowed to be expressed (Gelinder, 2024). The focus also needs to be on conceptualizing taste and the positive aspects of food, to arouse interest and desire to try new foods and flavors, as an important part of the work with sustainable food consumption.

Recent research underscores the educational potential of sensory food education in fostering sustainable food consumption among students. The didactical model developed in this study responds to teachers' expressed need for concrete lesson planning tools and integrates five strategies that emphasize taste education, ethical reflection, and experiential learning. This model is situated within a growing body of literature that highlights the value of sensory engagement in Home Economics. Notably, Weiser et al. (2026) demonstrate how sensory activities can promote healthy eating habits and support the development of competencies such as empathy, self-awareness, and critical thinking. Similarly, Bohm (2025) emphasizes the importance of sensory reflection and autonomous decision-making in the development of cooking literacy. Together, these studies provide a theoretical foundation for the model and validate its relevance in contemporary educational contexts.

In light of recent findings, the proposed didactical model offers a holistic and practice-oriented framework for teaching sustainable food consumption in Home Economics. By integrating taste exploration, ethical inquiry, and reflective practice, the model addresses both curricular goals and broader sustainability competencies. The alignment with Weiser et al. (2026) and Bohm (2025) further reinforces its educational legitimacy. A transactional approach to taste can extend beyond taste acceptance to encompass critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and personal growth. As such, this model contributes to the evolving discourse on sustainability education and provides educators with actionable strategies to engage students in meaningful and transformative learning experiences.

Conclusions and Implications

This study shows that a transactional view on taste, is useful when teaching sustainable food consumption in Home Economics. It helps the teacher to keep the sustainability problems "wicked", not looking for simple right or wrongs, instead highlighting value-conflicts and supporting students to make independent and informed food choices. The study also contributes with a didactical model that not only gives the teachers tools to avoid normativity. It also integrates emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of taste and food consumption and thus offers a more holistic and reflexive approach to sustainable food consumption.

In this article, we present a limited study with just three teachers testing some teaching elements with their students. The study indicates that using a transactional taste and a more experimental approach could arouse students' interest, help them to conceptualize their own taste, and broaden their understanding of taste, as well as arouse an interest in unfamiliar food items. But there is a need for further research on teaching transactional taste and on the use of more experimental teaching methods in Home Economics. Furthermore, the didactical model needs to be further tested, evaluated, and investigated.

Biographies

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