



Specialized Flavour Trend Report

The State of the Senses, January 2026

In January 2026, a wide array of **sensory-related developments** emerged across health, technology, consumer products, and experiential design. This report consolidates key **facts and findings** from the latest research and industry news, organized by category. Each section highlights how our senses (smell, taste, touch, sight, and sound) and sensory science are influencing behavior, health, and innovation.

Smell and Taste in Health & Disease



Our chemical senses (olfaction and gustation) play a critical role in health diagnostics and well-being. Recent findings emphasize using smell and taste as early health indicators and therapeutic tools:

- **Early Disease Detection via Smell:** Simple at-home **smell tests** are showing promise for **early Alzheimer's detection**, since *loss of smell can precede memory symptoms by several years*^[1]. Researchers found that odor identification abilities decline in those at risk, suggesting a non-invasive sniff test could flag cognitive impairment years in advance.
- **“Fragrant” Memory Boost:** Harnessing smell during sleep may dramatically improve memory. In one study, older adults who slept with a diffuser releasing different scents each night for 6 months saw a **226% increase in cognitive performance** compared to controls. This “*fragrance therapy*” strengthened memory and even improved brain connectivity, pointing to **scent enrichment as a potential dementia-fighting technique**.
- **Sleep Scents and Memory:** Follow-up research confirms that *nightly exposure to natural fragrances* (like rose, orange, eucalyptus, lemon, peppermint) can **enhance memory consolidation** in older adults. Participants aged 60–85 who inhaled scents during non-REM sleep showed significant boosts in verbal memory without even being aware of the odor, highlighting a **low-cost, non-invasive method to support cognitive health**.
- **Taste as a Symptom Indicator:** Doctors note that a **lingering bad taste in the mouth** (bitter or metallic) may signal an underlying infection or illness rather than just poor oral hygiene. In other words, persistent off-tastes can be a *warning sign of hidden infection* in the body, prompting further medical investigation.
- **Olfactory Changes and Brain Health:** Beyond Alzheimer's, scientists report that olfactory dysfunction (even subtle smell loss) is linked to early degeneration in brain regions tied to memory and is being studied as a precursor to various neurological diseases. This reinforces the idea that “*the nose knows*” – changes in smell can foreshadow conditions like Parkinson's or dementia.
- **Olfactory Proteins and Disease:** Fascinating new research found **odorant-binding proteins (OBPs)** – molecules once thought to function only in smelling – present in human reproductive tissues. This “*beyond olfaction*” discovery suggests OBPs might act as carriers for hormones or chemicals in the body, linking the olfactory system to hormone-related diseases. Scientists observed dysregulation of these smell proteins in certain cancers, proposing that they could influence tumor growth or serve as biomarkers, thus expanding our understanding of smell-related proteins in health and disease.
- **Fragile X & Smell Deficits:** In clinical research, patients with Fragile X syndrome (a genetic condition) were found to have specific **olfactory deficits**. The loss of the FMR1 gene (cause of Fragile X) appears to impair smell function, offering insights into how genetic disorders can affect sensory processing. This finding underscores that sensory testing (like smell exams) might aid in diagnosing or understanding neurodevelopmental disorders.
- **Idiopathic Smell Loss:** A new evaluation method was developed for **idiopathic olfactory dysfunction** (unexplained smell loss). By combining a short odor identification test with clinical data, doctors aim to differentiate causes of smell loss (post-viral, neurodegenerative, etc.) in patients who lose smell without obvious cause – an effort to better target treatments for those suffering **chronic anosmia**.
- **Taste Compounds & Appetite:** Food chemistry research identified that **1,1-diethoxyethane**, a flavor compound (noted for a fruity odor), surprisingly **increases food intake** in animal models. This suggests certain flavor molecules might stimulate appetite or feeding behavior. Such insights could inform the design of foods or supplements for patients with low appetite, though they also raise questions about how flavorings might unknowingly affect our calorie intake.

Sensory Neuroscience and Perception



Advances in neuroscience are shedding light on how we perceive the world and why individuals experience senses differently. January 2026 brought a deeper understanding of **crossmodal perception, neurodiversity, and brain-sense connections:**

- **Synaesthesia – Blended Senses:** Insights from people with **synaesthesia** (where one sense involuntarily triggers another) highlight unique perceptual worlds. For example, an individual with time-space synaesthesia described experiencing the New Year as *physically moving through space* rather than a date change, leading to intense emotions and disorientation. Likewise, others report “*seeing static images and flashes of light*” in the mind’s eye when hearing sounds. These accounts underline how **neurological variation can alter sensory experiences**, attaching unusual colors, shapes, or spatial layouts to time, sound, or letters. Far from mere curiosities, such cases help scientists understand the brain’s integration of sensory inputs and its **cognitive diversity**.
- **“More Than Five Senses”:** Researchers emphasize that humans *don’t have just five senses* – in fact, by some definitions we have dozens (including balance, temperature, pain, proprioception, etc.). This expanded view of sensory systems is supported by evidence of distinct internal senses and neural receptors, challenging the traditional notion and pointing to **untapped sensory channels** that influence our experience (for example, internal chemosensors for CO₂ levels affecting breath, or magnetoreception under study). Recognizing these additional senses can improve how we design environments and health interventions.
- **Crossing the Senses:** Studies on **crossmodal perception** show that our senses rarely operate in isolation – the brain blends inputs to form a coherent picture of reality. One report noted, “*Our senses do not work in isolation; the brain blends them into a single multisensory experience*”. For instance, visual cues can change how things taste (the “**orange jellybean that tastes like cherry when red**” effect) and sounds can alter how food feels (crispness perceived via crunch sound). Understanding these interactions is helping industries craft better **multisensory products** (like enhancing food taste with tailored soundscapes) and aiding therapies for sensory processing disorders.
- **Neuroplasticity & Sensory Rewiring:** The concept of “rewiring the brain” through sensory experience gained traction. Articles discussed how **neuroplasticity** allows the brain to adapt when a sense is lost or overstimulated. For example, people who become blind often develop heightened touch or hearing; similarly, **anosmia sufferers (no sense of smell) can still “smell” through imagination**, activating scent memories via other cues. These findings stress the brain’s ability to reorganize sensory pathways and form new connections – a hopeful message for rehabilitation (e.g., using music or touch to compensate for lost senses).
- **Sensory Subgroups in Autism:** New research in autism spectrum disorder (ASD) revealed that **sensory sensitivities in autism** are not one-size-fits-all; instead, they cluster into subgroups influenced by each individual’s cognitive abilities. In other words, an autistic person’s level of intellectual and learning ability can shape how intensely they experience or seek out sensory stimuli (sound, touch, light, etc.). This challenges the generalization that “*all autistic people have heightened senses*” and supports more **personalized approaches** – for example, tailoring classroom or home environments to an individual’s unique sensory profile and cognitive load. It reinforces neurodiversity in design and therapy, ensuring sensory-friendly solutions are calibrated to one’s cognitive processing capacity.
- **Brain “Switches” and Rhythms:** Scientists uncovered a **molecular “switch” in the brain** that controls certain sensory responses (for example, a mechanism that dampens pain or sound sensitivity under specific conditions). Discoveries like these shed light on the precise neural circuits that regulate how we filter sensory information. In another study, researchers identified a brain wave rhythm (in the alpha range) that helps the brain distinguish “*what belongs to the body*” from external stimuli – essentially how the brain knows which sensations are self-

produced. Faster alpha rhythms were linked to a stronger sense of body ownership, offering insight into conditions like out-of-body experiences or sensory processing disorders.

- **Bright Light and Metabolism:** Not only exotic senses but common ones like sight can have surprising body-wide effects. A study showed that exposure to **bright light** (especially at certain times) can “*significantly suppress weight gain*” in mice by influencing metabolic hormones. This suggests our light environment might play a role in regulating appetite and fat storage via the circadian system. While preliminary, it hints that something as simple as lighting could one day be tuned to aid weight management or metabolic health in humans.
- **Microstimulation and Sensory Restoration:** Cutting-edge neuroscience experiments using **neural microstimulation** demonstrated the ability to *recreate specific sensations* by directly activating certain brain circuits. For instance, targeted microcurrents in sensory brain regions can induce the perception of touch or sound in people who are paralyzed or hearing-impaired. Understanding these **neural mechanisms of microstimulation** paves the way for advanced prosthetics (e.g., a bionic arm that “feels” or a cochlear implant that conveys more natural sound) and brain-computer interfaces restoring lost senses.

AI and Sensory Technologies



Artificial intelligence and high-tech tools are revolutionizing how we **measure, visualize, and mimic senses**. Key developments show AI enabling deeper insights into flavor trends, tactile robotics, and even unveiling the hidden structure of sensory cells:

- **AI for Flavor Trendspotting:** The baking and snack industry is harnessing AI to sift through massive data on new product launches and consumer taste preferences. **Baking Business** introduced an AI-driven feature that scans global flavor data to highlight emerging flavors, predict which trends have staying power, and spot “white space” opportunities. This helps developers **distinguish fads from viable flavor innovations** quickly, aligning **sensory development with consumer behavior**. By automating flavor analysis, companies can reduce guesswork and confidently move from trend detection to new product creation.
- **Mars’ AI-Enhanced Ingredients:** In R&D labs, food giants like **Mars** are using machine learning to develop novel ingredients that replicate sugar’s sensory properties with healthier substitutes. Such AI models predict how ingredients behave in recipes – for example, finding a compound that gives the same mouthfeel and sweetness timing as sugar. These AI-developed solutions aim to **optimize taste and texture** while cutting calories, showing how technology can solve formulation challenges that once took years of trial and error.
- **Internet of Senses (IoS):** The “**Internet of Senses**” – a futuristic concept of transmitting not just audio-visual data but also touch, taste, and smell through digital networks – is becoming a fast-growing market. Forecasts project the IoS market to surge from about \$2.0 billion in 2025 to **\$6.65 billion by 2035** (roughly 12.6% annual growth)[3]. Advances in **haptic devices, VR/AR, scent generators, and brain-computer interfaces** are driving this growth, enabling truly immersive digital experiences. Industry applications range from **tele-health with remote touch and smell** (e.g. a doctor “feels” a patient’s pulse remotely) to multisensory entertainment and marketing. Despite challenges (cost, privacy, tech limits), major tech firms and startups are investing in IoS to shape the next era of **experiential internet**.
- **AI Reveals Hidden Senses:** Using **AI-powered image reconstruction**, neuroscientists achieved *unprecedented 3D views* of human **touch receptor cells**. High-resolution microscopy data, impossible to interpret fully by humans, was processed with AI to visualize the intricate branching structures of mechanoreceptors in our skin for the first time. These images showed that touch-sensing cells are far more complex than previously seen in 2D – with elaborate shapes and contact networks that explain how we perceive

fine textures or vibrations. By **uncovering the physical architecture of touch**, AI is deepening scientific understanding of tactile perception and could inform new treatments for sensory disorders or inspire improved haptic technology (e.g., more lifelike prosthetic limbs and VR touch feedback).

- **Robots with Human-Like Touch:** Advances in soft robotics and AI are enabling **robots to gain a human-like sense of touch**. Engineers are developing **electronic skin and tactile sensors** that allow robots to detect pressure, texture, and temperature with high fidelity. These robotic systems, combined with AI, can learn to interpret tactile information similarly to humans. The goal is safer, more sensitive robot interactions – a robot nurse that can adjust grip when handling a patient, or a prosthetic hand that lets a user feel the difference between silk and sandpaper. Such developments point toward a future where robots and AI devices “*perceive, reason, and act in real-world environments*” with a nuanced understanding of sensory feedback.
- **AI & Smell Detection:** Tech companies are also working on **AI-powered olfaction**. Startups are partnering with researchers to commercialize electronic noses that can sniff out diseases or spoilage. For instance, a new partnership was announced to accelerate an AI-driven **digital olfaction platform** – essentially training algorithms on scent sensor data to identify patterns (like the “signature” of an infection or a fresh vs. spoiled food odor). If successful, these e-noses could transform fields from medical diagnosis (early infection detection by smell) to quality control in food supply chains.
- **Voice and Vision AI Integration:** At CES 2026, companies showcased AI that combines multiple sensory inputs. **SoundHound AI**, known for voice recognition, demonstrated a “**Vision AI**” system that works with its voice assistant – for example, a car assistant that not only listens but also “sees” the driver’s gestures or surroundings. By fusing sight and sound data, AI assistants can interact more naturally (recognizing when you point at something and ask about it). This trend of **multimodal AI** mirrors how human senses work together and promises more intuitive technology – imagine smart homes that can both hear and visually confirm a user’s request via gestures or facial expressions.
- **Physical AI & Embodied Machines:** A new wave of robotics termed “**Physical AI**” is focusing on machines that *physically adapt and respond* to their environment in a sensory-aware way. Unlike purely software AI, Physical AI systems have bodies equipped with advanced sensors and actuators. Reports describe it as a shift to **AI that occupies the real world**, where robots can learn from touch and movement, not just data. In automotive design, for example, **Physical AI** is being used to create car interiors that respond to passenger emotions (via biometric sensing) or morph shape for comfort. This integration of **sensory intelligence in machine design** is blurring lines between robots and living beings, making technology more responsive and context-aware.

Multisensory Experiences and Design



Designers, artists, and hospitality innovators are increasingly creating **immersive, multisensory experiences**. These trends recognize that engaging multiple senses can evoke stronger emotions, memories, and customer engagement:

- **Multisensory Art Installations:** Contemporary art is embracing **non-visual senses** as primary media. Artist **Anicka Yi**, for example, centers her work on smell, touch, and even **living microbes** to challenge the visual dominance in art. Her installations use custom scents (developed with perfumers) and organic materials like slime and bacterial cultures that evolve over time. Visitors might walk into a gallery filled with unfamiliar aromas

and subtle humidity, confronting *discomfort and visceral awareness* not usually provoked by art. Yi's approach – sometimes described as “*post-visual art*” – **reclaims scent as a powerful carrier of memory and emotion**, critiquing how Western culture often dismisses smell as primitive or feminine. The result is immersive environments that change over an exhibit's run (as microbes grow or decay), forcing audiences to **negotiate sensory ambiguity** and making *perception itself the artwork*. This trend in art blurs boundaries between art, science, and technology (she even collaborates with AI and robots in her pieces), and positions **embodied, multisensory experience as the new frontier** in culture.

- **Five-Sense Interior Design:** Retail and interior designers are moving beyond look-only spaces to “**design with all five senses.**” A highlighted example is **HomAnAn**, a concept environment by stylist Anubha Aneja that treats a store like a home. Every element – from textures of furniture (touch), ambient scent in rooms, soundscapes, to offered snacks or tea (taste) – is carefully curated to evoke comfort and nostalgia. The philosophy “*aesthetics follow emotion*” guides the design, meaning the goal is to trigger feelings and memories through sensory cues rather than just create Instagrammable visuals. Shoppers in such a space are meant to feel **at ease and emotionally attached**, as if they belong there, which deepens engagement with the products. This **sensory-first design** strategy reflects a shift in retail: from dazzling the eyes to *soothing the soul*, using multisensory harmony to encourage longer stays and a stronger connection with brands.
- **Immersive Dining and Themed Environments:** Restaurants and event creators are crafting full-sensory journeys for guests. In **Beijing**, a new dining concept is described as a “*culinary theater*” – likely a multi-course experience where each dish is paired with coordinated lighting, music, and even projections or aroma effects. Similarly, a “**Taste of Exile**” exhibit in Los Angeles blends food with narrative: visitors eat a taco while virtually visiting the creator's hometown via VR, engaging sight, taste, and sound to tell a migration story. These immersive dinners leverage the fact that **flavor isn't just taste**: environment and storytelling can make a meal far more memorable. Museums and parks are also in on the trend – for instance, an attraction lets people “fly” over Saudi Arabia's sights (like Makkah or the Red Sea) with motion seats, wind, mist, and authentic regional smells to simulate the *sensation of flying*. Such **4D multi-sensory experiences** leave a lasting impression by transporting audiences into the scene.
- **Scent as Experience:** “**Scent of Stillness**” events emerged, offering guided scent meditations where participants slow down and explore curated fragrances in a silent, dark room. Without visual distractions, smelling becomes the focal experience, reportedly inducing calm and introspection. One such event is billed as an “*immersive sensory evening designed to slow down and engage your senses*”. This taps into the wellness trend of using **olfactory stimulation for mindfulness**, recognizing that smells can evoke emotions and memory more directly than visual cues. Perfumer-led workshops and “scent journeys” in spas are growing in popularity, providing novel ways to unwind and heighten self-awareness through the nose.
- **Multisensory Branding & Venues:** Brands are experimenting with multi-sensory elements to differentiate their venues. **Nespresso's flagship store in NYC** integrated subtle digital features “hidden” in the physical environment, so shoppers experience a seamless blend of technology and sensory cues. For example, aroma diffusers release coffee scents, sound systems mimic café bustle, and interactive screens stay unobtrusive. The store's design intentionally makes digital elements invisible at first glance, focusing instead on the *sensory romance of coffee*. This approach – “*digital without being overt*” – shows how **sensory design can merge with technology** to create engaging retail spaces where customers feel something special (in this case, the comfort and sophistication associated with coffee).
- **Entertainment: Music and Multisensory Tech:** At CES 2026, a quirky gadget called “**Taste Your Music**” turned heads – a lollipop device that uses bone conduction to let you **hear music through your jaw while tasting candy**. Essentially, vibrations travel through your teeth so you perceive sound internally while the lollipop provides flavor. It's a playful example of combining taste and hearing, illustrating how **entertainment tech is exploring novel sensory mash-ups**. Likewise, artists and game designers are incorporating haptic feedback suits, VR smells, and spatial audio in concerts and video games, all aimed at richer immersion by engaging more senses simultaneously.

Sensory Marketing and Consumer Engagement



Understanding that **engaging the senses builds stronger connections**, companies are leveraging sensory science in product development and marketing strategies. Some notable **consumer-facing sensory trends** include:

- **Reframing Pain as Sensation (Sensodyne):** Oral care brand **Sensodyne** shifted its approach to tooth sensitivity by marketing it as a *sensory experience* rather than a clinical issue. Instead of scaring consumers with toothache warnings, campaigns now focus on empowering people to enjoy hot, cold, sweet foods without fear. Sensodyne uses **neuroscience-backed messaging** to explain how dentin and nerves cause that zing, framing their toothpaste as enabling positive sensory experiences (enjoying an ice cream) rather than just numbing pain. They even created immersive ads where viewers “feel” the sensations – e.g. visuals of ice cubes or steaming coffee coupled with sound – to make the audience almost sense the relief. This strategy proved effective in building an emotional connection and loyalty, as **consumers respond strongly when a health brand translates abstract pain into tangible sensations** they can manage.
- **“Mindful” Footwear (Nike Mind):** Nike unveiled a concept sneaker named **Mind**, which is designed to **stimulate the wearer’s senses** and improve mental state. The shoe incorporates textured insoles (for soothing foot tactile feedback), subtle scent releases in the padding, and color-changing fabric linked to mood. Nike cites research that *certain foot pressure patterns and aromas can influence stress levels*. The **Nike Mind** campaign emphasizes how wearing the shoe is a full-body experience – “*activating key sensory areas of the brain via feet*” – not just a fashion statement. This is part of a larger trend of **product designers adding multi-sensory features** (from fragrance-infused yoga mats to weighted blankets with calming textures) to enhance well-being and differentiation.
- **Experiential Branding:** Brands across sectors are turning to **experiential marketing** that triggers multiple senses to deepen customer engagement. A report noted “*sensory marketing engages multiple senses to strengthen emotional connections and brand recall*”. Examples include automotive company **Rivian** testing custom **interior scents** for its electric vehicles – such as a signature earthy scent that reinforces its outdoorsy image every time owners step into the car. High-end retailers like **Fortnum & Mason** are collaborating on packaging designs that involve **scented or textural elements**, ensuring that opening a product is a rich sensory ritual (while also addressing sustainability by reducing plastics). Even in alcohol, distilleries are creating digital tasting kits – one press release described a “From Distillery to Digital” program where whiskey aromas are captured and sent via special devices so online buyers can smell before they buy, bridging the sensory gap in e-commerce.
- **Music and Flavor Pairings:** Building on evidence that music can alter taste perception, restaurants and food brands are using **neuroscience of music** to shape dining experiences. Research has shown that certain tempos or tonalities can enhance sweet or bitter notes in food. For instance, one article highlighted “*music hijacks the brain’s ability to process memory*” to influence diner behavior – upbeat music might encourage faster eating or specific genres might increase wine sales by evoking moods. As a result, some eateries now curate playlists scientifically tailored to the menu (e.g., deep bass notes to enrich the savoriness of burgers, or gentle classical music to slow down dessert consumption and increase enjoyment). This cross-sensory approach helps create a memorable atmosphere and can subtly guide consumer preferences.
- **“SenseMaxxing” in Foods:** The **Specialty Food Association** noted an emerging trend called “*SenseMaxxing*” – essentially, maximizing the sensory impact of foods and beverages. This includes products that change color or fizz (visual and sound appeal), ingredients that provide novel textures or tingling sensations (touch), and of course bold flavors and aromas. The idea is that in a crowded market, stimulating multiple senses gives an experience edge. For example, a craft soda might have an aromatic herbal steam when opened, or a candy that

crackles in the mouth while flashing a fun color. Consumers, especially Gen Z, find these multi-sensory products more **shareable and engaging**, blending the line between food and entertainment.

- **Sensory Inclusivity:** Companies are also considering sensory sensitivities in their customer base. For example, **Silverado**, a care home operator, rolled out a VR program for seniors with dementia where calm imagery and familiar music reduce agitation (acknowledging visual/auditory triggers can impact behavior). Similarly, theme parks and stores have started offering “**sensory-friendly**” hours (dimming lights, lowering noise, neutralizing strong smells) to accommodate neurodivergent individuals or those with sensory processing challenges. This reflects a growing awareness that **one size doesn't fit all for sensory environments**, and adapting to various needs can broaden a brand's appeal and social responsibility profile.

Sensory in Nature and Environment



Not all sensory insights come from labs and brands – some arise from understanding how animals and the environment use senses:

- **Animals' Extraordinary Senses:** Many stories showcased how animals perceive the world in ways we are only beginning to understand. Dogs, for instance, remain a gold standard in scent detection – a roundup of research listed **12 scientific ways dogs can detect what humans can't**, from sniffing out diseases like cancer and COVID-19 to sensing impending seizures or picking up minute stress pheromones in people. Dogs' noses have up to 100 million receptors (vs. 6 million in humans) and can detect *chemical traces as small as one part per trillion*, explaining why a trained dog can track a person over vast distances or alert to explosives with astounding accuracy. These capabilities are inspiring new **bio-mimetic sensors** (e.g., electronic noses modeled after canine olfaction) and highlight the untapped potential of animal-like sensing in technology.
- **Insects & Ecosystem Senses:** Research on pollinators and fruit-eating animals revealed the importance of **sensory cues in ecosystems**. One study on **wild fruits** found that *intraspecific variation in fruit traits* (like size, color, aroma, nutrient content among the same species) greatly influences which fruits animals choose to eat. Frugivores like birds and monkeys were shown to **prefer certain phenotypes** – for example, slightly larger or more aromatic fruits – leading those seeds to be dispersed farther, while less appealing variants got ignored. This challenges the assumption that all fruits of a species are treated equally and shows **nature operates on fine sensory discriminations**; such findings have implications for conservation and agriculture (e.g., maintaining genetic diversity so some fruits always attract dispersers).
- **City Smellscape:** Urban researchers are literally **sniffing cities** to map out distinctive odors of different neighborhoods. Using techniques from “**osmology**” (smell science), they catalog scents like fresh bread around bakeries, diesel smoke on busy roads, or damp earth in parks. As one researcher put it, “*Our senses tell stories about places we inhabit that often go undocumented*”. These **smell maps** can inform city planning – for instance, identifying areas with unpleasant or unhealthy odors (waste treatment fumes, pollution) to address, or preserving the positive scents that add to a city's character. Some tourism boards even promote **signature city smells** (like the coffee aroma in Seattle's market or Paris in spring bloom) as part of cultural heritage. It's a reminder that smell is a key part of a place's identity, even if invisible on typical maps.

- **Nature's Therapeutic "Taste":** Environmental psychologists noted that **exposure to natural sensory experiences** – the sound of birds, the green of trees, the smell of wood or rain, even the "*taste*" of fresh air – can provide measurable mental health benefits. One article highlighted that *nature-inspired sensory experiences are linked with reduced stress and improved mood*. Simply put, a "taste of nature" (literally and metaphorically) can restore calm and cognitive function. This supports initiatives like forest bathing, sensory gardens in hospitals, and urban design that brings nature's textures, sounds, and scents to city dwellers for a break from sensory overload.

Conclusion

From cutting-edge **neuroscience discoveries** to creative **multisensory marketing**, the trends of January 2026 illustrate a growing appreciation for the power of our senses. Science is revealing new ways sensory signals underpin health and behavior (e.g. smell as an early diagnostic tool, or cognitive influences on sensory tolerance). At the same time, technology and design are striving to engage our senses in richer ways – whether through AI that personalizes flavor innovation or immersive spaces that **delight eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue together**. Crucially, these developments are grounded in *facts*: empirical research and measurable outcomes (memory improved by 226%, market growth figures, etc.) rather than hype or opinion.

Overall, the **sensory landscape in 2026** is one of convergence: scientists, businesses, and creators alike are leveraging sensory insights to improve quality of life, enhance experiences, and foster deeper connections between people and the world around them. By understanding and embracing the full spectrum of human senses – and even those of other creatures – we open up new possibilities for innovation and empathy in the years ahead.