

Anatomy of Culinary Error: From Describing a Defect to Testing Its Cause

A proposal by Ahmad Issam Maadarani for diagnostic criticism that supports correction

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“The dish is unbalanced” may describe an impression but gives the cook no clear corrective path. This article proposes diagnosis beginning with a specific observation, moving through competing explanations, an appropriate test and a reviewable corrective step. It is a proposed professional reasoning model, not a tool that establishes causes through tasting alone.

1. A defect relates to a criterion

An assessable culinary error requires stating what was expected. Crumbly texture may be intended in one dish and incompatible with another's function. Link the problem to the brief: “The component disintegrated before reaching the mouth, contrary to the requirement for a cohesive bite.” This is more precise than absolute failure. Separate the problem's experiential impact from the assumption that it reveals a general weakness in

the creator's skill.

2. A proposed diagnostic ladder

The article proposes four verbal levels, not a numerical scale: documented observation, possible explanation, explanation supported by a specific comparison, and explanation supported by repeated tests under declared conditions. Use matching language: "observed," "may be," "the comparison supports," and "the effect recurred." The final level is not absolute truth; untested factors may remain. The aim is to prevent jumping from a visible defect to one certain cause without showing the reasoning path.

3. Competing explanations before correction

A problem may concern component formulation, preparation, interaction, service or variation in the sampled bite. Write a few specific, examinable alternatives, not every imaginable cause. If bites vary within the dish, distribution may deserve examination before changing the recipe. If the problem appears only on arrival, review service without eliminating a pre-existing weakness. Do not favour a cause simply because it makes blaming the cook easier.

4. Hypothetical case: lost crispness

A declared crisp component is soft where it touches sauce. Initial hypotheses concern its structure, moisture at contact or waiting after assembly. Begin a training examination by comparing the component alone with the component plus sauce, standardising preparation and time as far as practicable. Then compare waiting intervals. If structure, sauce and time all change together and the dish improves, the combined modification succeeds, but no individual factor has been established as responsible.

5. A test that could weaken the explanation

A useful explanation permits a question that could challenge it. If contact alone is said to explain softness, softness in a separate component under the same condition requires revision. If the separate component stays crisp, the comparison supports contact's role in this test without automatically identifying every mechanism. Repeat independent preparations, record contrary results and avoid selecting only bites that confirm the idea.

Variation in results is information needing explanation.

6. A corrective recommendation, not a universal recipe

Recommendations specify the problem, proposed change, conditions held constant, success indication and verification method. For example: “Test placing the component only at service, keeping the recipe unchanged, then compare crispness in a representative bite.” This is not automatically suitable for every operation and may conflict with real constraints. Examine whether the change removes the defect without creating another, such as disconnected flavour or difficulty taking the bite.

7. Assessing criticism itself

A professional training exercise could give identical cases to two groups, one using the diagnostic model. Examine whether another cook can understand the problem and propose a suitable test, whether unsupported causal accusations decrease and whether successful correction can be identified. Define these criteria before reading reports. More words or terminology cannot establish stronger criticism, and a training design does not establish broad professional outcomes without appropriate repetition.

8. Conclusion: criticism as a path to learning

Criticism becomes stronger when unsupported claims decrease and examinable questions increase. Judges need not solve every kitchen problem; they should describe the defect clearly, separate its proposed cause from its observed effect and give the cook a workable question. Responsible diagnosis preserves rigorous assessment and turns a result into the beginning of correction rather than a judgment of the person.

9. A concise working sheet

Field	Review question	What to record
Defect	What differs from the requirement?	Write its effect on a specified bite.
Alternatives	What explanations compete?	Choose a few examinable possibilities.

Field	Review question	What to record
Test	Which outcome would weaken the hypothesis?	Define the comparison before conducting it.
Correction	What change and success indication?	Check both repair and side effects.

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