

Precise Sensory Language: From Impression to Reviewable Description

A proposal by Ahmad Issam Maadarani for culinary criticism connecting experience to evidence

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“Heavy,” “flat” and “unbalanced” can mean different experiences to different readers. This article proposes descriptions identifying property, location, timing and relevance to the task, separating description from preference and causal interpretation. It is a professional proposal, not an accredited universal dictionary or a method making personal experiences identical.

1. Impressions are legitimate but need boundaries

“I did not enjoy the finish” describes a response but does not tell the cook what to examine. “A bitter effect persisted at the finish and dominated the acidic effect required by this task” identifies its basis. This clarifies rather than removes the impression. When the property cannot be identified, preserve the impression as such instead of turning it

into an unsupported technical accusation.

2. Four levels that should remain distinct

Description states an observation; assessment relates it to a criterion; preference states the taster's response; explanation proposes a cause. "The sauce leaves a mouth-coating sensation" describes; "it obstructs the required transition" assesses; "I dislike it" expresses preference; "it results from excess ingredient X" needs further evidence. All may appear in one report, but readers must recognise the transitions. Confident wording does not replace missing evidence.

3. A five-part description

The proposed form identifies a property, location, appearance in time, declared reference and effect on a requirement. Not every sentence needs all five, but missing parts identify what needs clarification. "Low crispness" needs a reference; "the component declared crisp bends where it touches sauce during sampling" locates examination. Naming the location does not establish the cause of softness.

4. Hypothetical case: what does heavy mean?

Three judges call a dish heavy. One means an oversized bite, another a persistent fatty sensation, the third too many components obscuring the experience's sequence.

Agreement on a word conceals different subjects. Rewrite three independent descriptions and examine each against the brief. Size may be required in one service, while persistent sensation conflicts with a declared transition. Do not penalise three times merely because a word recurs; also examine whether different descriptions concern the same effect.

5. A bounded working vocabulary

A task-specific vocabulary can define a term, its exclusions, an appropriate example and an example needing revision. Review it on new cases without prohibiting unexpected descriptions. Explain unfamiliar terms rather than forcing them into the nearest available label. Across languages, translate meaning and examples rather than words alone: elegant translation may strengthen or weaken the original judgment.

6. Training through rewriting

Ask trainees to rewrite five general notes without altering their content or inventing unobserved details. Another reader identifies the examination subject and a possible action; revise if this remains unclear. Compare description-only and assessment-inclusive versions to check whether the transition to a criterion is visible. Length earns no reward: a specific short sentence is preferable to jargon unconnected to the bite.

7. Testing usefulness

Compare reports before and after training on different cases using predefined indicators: clear properties, separation of inferred causes, understandable recommendations and avoidance of counting one effect as several independent defects. Clear language does not establish correct tasting; a precise observation may fail to recur. Sample quality, criteria and documentation remain separate questions, and linguistic improvement cannot establish overall judging fairness.

8. Conclusion: precision a cook can use

Sensory language strengthens when readers know what was tasted, how it was assessed and which causes remain unknown. Its value rests on clear relationships between words, experience and task. Criticism then becomes discussable and correctable, while personal differences remain visible rather than masquerading as final technical facts.

9. A concise working sheet

Field	Review question	What to record
Property	What was observed?	Replace generalities with describable evidence without inventing detail.
Place and time	Where and when?	Specify bite, component and effect timing.
Level	Description, assessment, preference or cause?	Make transitions visible.
Meaning	Can another reader understand the term?	Explain with a task-relevant example.
Correction	Which examination is possible?	Match review to observations and their limits.

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