

Layers of Knowledge in Culinary Judgment: What Did We Observe, Infer and Prefer?

Culinary Judgment and Taste Chemistry — Ahmad Issam Maadarani

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Ahmad Issam Maadarani separates sensory observation, causal interpretation and normative judgment. A defensible decision begins by identifying the kind of statement being made. This is a philosophical argument and proposed method, not a report of experimental findings.

1. Three statements, three responsibilities

“I felt roughness at the end of the bite” reports an experience. “Insufficient hydration caused it” proposes an explanation. “It reduces the quality of the dish” applies a criterion. The observation may be accurate within one experience while the explanation is wrong and the judgment inappropriate to the dish’s function. Combining the statements lends interpretation and evaluation a certainty that observation alone has not earned.

2. Evidence suited to the question

Documenting an experience requires description, timing, location and tasting conditions. Explaining it requires preparation information or a comparison capable of separating competing causes. Evaluating it requires an account of success in the task. Agreement about roughness does not establish its cause; establishing a cause does not automatically make the effect a defect. Evidential demands depend on the strength of the intended conclusion.

3. Hypothetical application

A crisp component breaks into dry fragments. The judge describes fragmentation and dryness persisting after swallowing. Flour type, thickness or storage might explain it, but the bite alone cannot settle the cause. If the task requires brief contrast with a sauce, the opening may succeed while the finish is tiring. Identify both effects and retain the causal explanation as provisional until an appropriate comparison becomes available.

4. A three-column record

First record the perceived effect without naming unseen processes. Then give a leading explanation, an alternative and the information that could distinguish them. Finally connect the effect to an announced criterion. The causal column may remain empty: that acknowledges a knowledge boundary rather than professional incompetence. A limited quality decision need not pretend to reconstruct everything that happened in the kitchen.

5. The objection from tacit expertise

Experts rapidly recognise familiar patterns. Not every judgment needs a laboratory experiment, but expertise makes an explanation plausible rather than immune to alternatives. When an explanation supports an accusation or exclusion, independent evidence becomes more important. A judge can say that a pattern suggests a cause without presenting the suggestion as direct observation.

6. What the separation contributes

A reviewer can accept the description while rejecting its explanation, or accept the

explanation while questioning its evaluative weight. “I experienced” does not become “I proved”, and “I prefer” does not become “everyone should”. The proposed reference point is a traceable transition between levels, rather than authority attached to the final sentence. Its practical benefits still require evaluation.

7. A Discussion Worksheet

Field	Question	What to Record
Observation	Where and when did the effect occur?	A description bounded by bite conditions.
Interpretation	What alternative is possible?	A plausible cause and required discriminating evidence.
Evaluation	Why does it affect quality?	A link to the task criterion.

Philosophical arguments belong to the author. Applications and worksheets are unvalidated proposals, and examples are hypothetical. This article presents no new experimental dataset, claim of worldwide priority or claim that this text has undergone peer review.

8. References and Source Limits

A philosophical analysis by the author; its arguments are not attributed to experimental findings.

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