Chocolate is the number one indulgence food today, just as it was when it was first consumed in the equatorial Americas as an exhilarating frothed drink. Americans eat three billion pounds of chocolate products each year. We love chocolate not only because it stimulates those feel-good nerves, or as recent data on antioxidants has indicated, because it does a body good, but because it tastes good. We are first and foremost food manufacturers and flavor is what we sell. Let’s explore the language of chocolate by focusing on the sensory method of descriptive analysis — or simply describing how food tastes. We will discuss why we should taste chocolate, how we should taste chocolate, basic chocolate flavor influences and the common language used to describe chocolate. This is at the very basic level of sensory evaluation. One must learn how to describe food in a common language before one can proceed on to any difference or preference tests.

**WHY SHOULD WE TASTE CHOCOLATE?**

We should taste our product for reasons of quality control. Is the product ok or not ok? Is this what our product should taste like? If the chocolate tastes like it should when coming out of the conche, does it still taste like it should just as it is going into the package? Assume nothing, as your product may pass through many pumps, tanks and valves before ending up in the package. The easiest way to check for gross error is to simply taste your product. Another objective in tasting product is to evaluate product reformulation.

If a formula or a supplier of a raw ingredient is changed, or there is a change in equipment or a process, you need to taste your product for flavor changes and make adjustments accordingly to maintain consistent flavor. An example in chocolate manufacture would be different chocolate liquor milling equipment. Some systems generate more heat than others and may further roast or change the flavor profile of the resulting chocolate liquor.

Another objective for tasting may be related to product development. Most targets of a new product are at least partially