



Mere exposure effect



Should you encourage children to eat things they don't like at first? For some parents, it's a question that they ask themselves almost every day. In fact, there is good evidence that it's worth continuing to offer children food they don't like, and being persistent. This is because people learn to love things they encounter repeatedly - what's known as the mere-exposure effect. It happens with fashion (you might hate platform shoes when you first see them, but sooner or later you find yourself wearing them), music (when you hear a song over and over on the radio, sooner or later your foot starts tapping along), and indeed with food. Obviously, manufacturers take advantage of this effect to introduce their new creations to kids, especially with food. But it also works with vegetables, potatoes and the like. It's claimed that, on average, you need to try something 16 times before you develop a liking for it, although sometimes it happens sooner. Adults can also use the mere-exposure effect to train their palates. So if you don't like oysters because you never became familiar with them in childhood, regular consumption will help you acquire a taste for them. Assuming, of course, that you want to acquire such a taste.