

Genetics of eating

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The genetics of eating behaviors: research in the age of COVID-19

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39 **Abstract**

40 How much pleasure we take in eating is more than just how much we enjoy the taste of
41 food. Food involvement – the amount of time we spend on food beyond the immediate
42 act of eating and tasting – is key to the human food experience. We took a biological
43 approach to test whether food-related behaviors, together capturing food involvement,
44 have genetic components and are partly due to inherited variation. We collected data
45 via an internet survey from a genetically informative sample of 419 adult twins (114
46 monozygotic twin pairs, 31 dizygotic twin pairs, and 129 singletons). Because we
47 conducted this research during the pandemic, we also ascertained how many
48 participants had experienced COVID-19-associated loss of taste and smell. Since these
49 respondents had previously participated in research in person, we measured their level
50 of engagement to evaluate the quality of their online responses. Additive genetics
51 explained 16-44% of the variation in some measures of food involvement, most
52 prominently various aspects of cooking, suggesting some features of the human food
53 experience may be inborn. Other features reflected shared (early) environment,
54 captured by respondents' twin status. About 6% of participants had a history of
55 COVID-19 infection, many with transitory taste and smell loss, but all but one had
56 recovered before the survey. Overall, these results suggest that people may have inborn
57 as well as learned variations in their involvement with food. We also learned to adapt to

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58 research during a pandemic by considering COVID-19 status and measuring

59 engagement in online studies of human eating behavior.

60 **Keywords:** food involvement, survey, twins, COVID-19-associated taste loss, COVID-

61 19-associated smell loss, engagement.

62 **Abbreviations:** EQ – Engagement Questionnaire; FIS – Food Involvement Score; MZ –

63 monozygotic; DZ – dizygotic

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65 **1. Introduction**

66 The pleasure and perils of food start not on the tongue but, rather, well before the
67 meal. Human eating behavior is more than the act of tasting, chewing, and swallowing
68 food in the moment of eating – it also involves many preparatory and subsequent
69 behaviors (Bell & Marshall, 2003), such as planning a meal, food shopping, cooking, and
70 cleanup afterward. Drawing on studies demonstrating genetic effects on food
71 preferences (Reed, Bachmanov, Beauchamp, Tordoff, & Price, 1997) and taste
72 perception (Reed, Tanaka, & McDaniel, 2006), we took a biological approach to ask
73 whether aspects of these other food behaviors have a genetic component. We tested this
74 hypothesis using a genetically informative sample of adult human twins who answered
75 questions about their own involvement with food via an online survey. These twins had
76 participated in prior research projects about the sense of taste and smell (Knaapila, et
77 al., 2012; Lin, et al., 2020; Wise, Hansen, Reed, & Breslin, 2007).

78 This research was conducted during the summer of 2020, when most research
79 laboratories were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, by necessity, we
80 conducted the survey remotely. We also considered whether participants might have
81 been ill or were currently ill with COVID-19 and how this might affect their responses.
82 We knew at that time that taste and smell loss were cardinal features of COVID-19
83 illness (Parma, et al., 2020), more predictive of infection than other more general
84 symptoms like fever (Gerkin, et al., 2021; Menni, et al., 2020), and that for some people

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85 the sensory loss lingers (Boscolo-Rizzo, et al., 2021). Therefore, it was reasonable to
86 suspect that COVID-19 status, including the current state of a person's ability to taste or
87 smell, might affect responses to questions about food involvement (Hannum & Reed,
88 2021; Weir, Reed, Pepino, Veldhuizen, & Hayes, in review).

89 We were also concerned that participants who had participated in past research
90 in a face-to-face setting, with supervision from investigators, might be less facile with
91 remote research procedures. To address this concern, we included questions about
92 engagement, drawing on a newly developed engagement scale, the Engagement
93 Questionnaire (EQ), to discern the qualities of their responses: how active they were in
94 thinking about the question, how much importance they attributed to the process, and
95 how much they enjoyed taking the survey (Hannum & Simons, 2020). We could thus
96 interpret participants' responses about their food involvement by considering both their
97 current or past taste and smell loss with COVID-19 and how well they adapted to the
98 remote testing procedures.

99 **2. Methods**

100 **2.1 Participants.** We previously conducted research with human participants as part of
101 the Twins Days Festival held annually in Twinsburg, Ohio (Knaapila, et al., 2012; Lin, et
102 al., 2020; Wise, et al., 2007). As part of this research, the twins provided their contact
103 information, including email addresses to be recontacted for future studies. Protocols
104 compiled with the Declaration of Helsinki and were approved by the University of

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105 Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board (Protocol #843798). For data collection, we
106 used this contact information to invite each twin to complete an online survey
107 (described below) via REDCap, an electronic data capture tool used often in biomedical
108 research (Harris, et al., 2009). The survey invitations were sent in waves starting
109 September 3, 2020, and ending June 5, 2021; prospective participants who did not
110 respond to the first message were sent an email reminder. All adult twins with internet
111 access who could be reached by email were eligible to participate. All subjects provided
112 informed consent to the research before starting the online survey. We collected
113 demographic data from each participant, including their sex, age, race, and whether
114 they were a current or former smoker or had never smoked in their lifetime.
115 Participants received compensation for their time spent completing the survey.

116 **2.2 Zygosity status.** All twins surveyed had been previously genotyped as part of other
117 research projects [4-6], and with appropriate consent, we used these genotypes to
118 establish zygosity as monozygotic (MZ) or dizygotic (DZ). To establish zygosity, we
119 relied on four methods. The twins self-reported on their zygosity, we took facial
120 photographs which were rated for zygosity by two independent investigators, we typed
121 all genomic DNA samples with a small panel of taste-related DNA markers, and for
122 cases in which there was any uncertainty about the zygosity status using the first three
123 methods, we genotyped the genomic DNA with the OmniChip from the Human
124 OmniExpressExome-8v1.2 from Illumina Inc. (USA). In total, we genotyped 154

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125 samples with the Omni-Chip and the remaining 265 samples using the first three
126 methods.

127 **2.3 Food involvement.** Participants were asked to complete the Food Involvement
128 Survey [1] (see **Table 1**), rating each item on a 7-point scale (1 = disagree strongly; 7 =
129 agree strongly), as recommended in the original reference. The overall food
130 involvement score has a theoretical range between 12 and 84, with higher numbers
131 indicating more food involvement. The scale has two subscales: (1) presentation of the
132 table and disposal of food and (2) preparation and eating of the food itself, in which
133 certain items are summed into a final subscale score (see Table 1 for specific items).

134 **2.4 Engagement.** We measured engagement as the degree to which participants enjoyed,
135 paid attention to, and made their best effort to respond to the questions in the survey.
136 Our past research with these participants had been conducted in person, in an
137 environment where they received face-to-face and individual instruction and
138 supervision. Thus, in our view engagement was especially important to quantify for
139 this internet survey, necessitated by our inability to conduct in-person research during
140 the COVID-19 pandemic. We chose the newly developed Engagement Questionnaire
141 (EQ) because it was developed specifically for sensory research and because of the
142 expertise of the co-authors, one of whom developed it (Hannum & Simons, 2020). This
143 tool as three subscales: active involvement (how vigorously they applied themselves to
144 the task), purposeful intent (how they evaluated the importance or value of the survey),

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145 and affective value (how much they enjoyed the survey experience). We computed the
146 average engagement scores from the subscales as described in the original report
147 (Hannum & Simons, 2020).

148 **2.5 COVID-19.** This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic
149 (September 3, 2020-June 5, 2021). Because cardinal symptoms of COVID-19 are loss of
150 taste, smell, and chemesthesis (e.g., the burn of chili pepper or the cool of menthol)
151 (Parma, et al., 2020), it was important to establish whether participants had an active
152 infection, or had been sick and lost their sense of taste or smell, because these senses
153 affect food enjoyment (Hannum & Reed, 2021; Reed, et al., 2020). We therefore
154 evaluated COVID-19 history using modified survey questions originally designed by
155 members of the Global Consortium for Chemosensory Research (Parma, et al., 2020).
156 We collected other measures for projects unrelated to the hypothesis tested here, and
157 these measures are not reported.

158 **2.6 Data analysis.**

159 **2.6.1 Data cleaning and descriptive analyses.** To analyze the resulting data, we removed
160 implausible age data, which we defined as having an age of >120 or <18 years (e.g., they
161 provided the current date as their birthday). We next performed descriptive statistics on
162 the food involvement total score, subscale scores, and individual item scores;
163 engagement scores, subscale scores, and individual item scores; and COVID-19
164 measures, reporting the data as medians and interquartile ranges. Additionally, we

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165 calculated coefficient alpha (α) (Cronbach, 1951) to determine the internal reliability and
166 consistency of each instrument, e.g., the Food Involvement Scale and Engagement
167 Questionnaire).

168 *2.6.2 Covariate determination.* Our goal was to establish the heritability of the food
169 involvement traits, but first we needed to establish the appropriate covariates. To that
170 end, the data from all participants were included in a linear regression to establish the
171 influence of covariates on food involvement total score and individual items using age,
172 sex, race, COVID-19 status, past chemosensory loss with COVID-19 (coded yes or no),
173 and engagement subscale scores as dependent variables (Carlin, Gurrin, Sterne, Morley,
174 & Dwyer, 2005). The participants who reported having had COVID-19 and past
175 chemosensory loss did not differ in any food involvement scores compared to those
176 without COVID-19 (**S1 Table**). Therefore, we dropped those COVID-19 factors from the
177 model and reconducted the analysis. Sex, age, and engagement subscale scores were the
178 most influential covariates ($p < 0.05$) for at least some of the individual items on the Food
179 Involvement Scale and were therefore included as covariates in the heritability analysis
180 below. See **S2 Table** for details.

181 *2.6.3 Heritability analyses.* Heritability was calculated using data from all 419 twin
182 participants (114 MZ twin pairs ($N=228$ participants) and 31 DZ twin pairs ($N=62$), 129
183 singletons), using structural equation methods (Posthuma, et al., 2012). In this method,
184 quantitative variation is parsed into variance attributable to additive genetic, shared

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185 environmental, and unique environmental effects using the *mets* package (version 1281)
186 of R statistical software (Holst, Scheike, & Hjelmberg, 2016; Scheike, Holst, &
187 Hjelmberg, 2014).

188 **3. Results**

189 **3.1 Participants.** We invited 1,742 twins to participate, and 434 (24.9%) responded by
190 clicking the website link and attempting to complete the survey. We removed from the
191 downstream data analysis anyone who did not consent ($N=3$), and those who provided
192 implausible ages ($N=12$). After these data-cleaning steps, in total there were 419
193 participants (145 twin pairs ($N=290$) and 129 singletons). The participants were mainly
194 female nonsmokers of European descent, with a median (IQR) age of 33 (29-46) years
195 (**Table 2**). While 27 participants indicated they had COVID-19 at some point prior to the
196 survey, and more than half of those had experienced taste and/or smell loss when they
197 were ill, only one person indicated problems with current ability to taste or smell.
198 Regardless, food involvement scores did not differ significantly between those infected
199 with SARS-CoV-2 and experienced chemosensory loss and those that did not (**S1**
200 **Table**).

201 **3.2 Food involvement scores.** Median scores and their IQRs for total food involvement
202 and the individual items are provided in **Table 1**. Items are coded on a 7-point scale (1 =
203 disagree strongly; 7 = agree strongly). The median scores were 5 or 6 for most positive
204 items (e.g., *I enjoy cooking*) and 2 for most negative items (e.g., *Cooking or barbequing is*

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205 *not much fun*). The most variable trait based on the IQR was food shopping (*I do most or*
206 *all of my food shopping*). The median total food involvement score, calculated by
207 reversing the scores for the negative items and then summing scores for all items, was
208 63, with an IQR of 55–69. Overall, the Food Involvement Scale had a Cronbach's α of
209 0.77 (95% CI: 0.73-0.80), demonstrating acceptable internal reliability.

210 **3.3 Effects of engagement.** Participants' engagement scores showed that most had made
211 their best effort (active involvement, median = 5.7 and IQR = 4.7-6.0), considered the
212 research important (purposeful intent; median = 5.5 and IQR = 5.0-6.0), and enjoyed
213 answering the questions (affective value; median = 4.7 and IQR = 4.0-5.3). With a
214 Cronbach's α of 0.84 (95% CI: 0.82-0.87), the Engagement Questionnaire has internal
215 consistency. Overall, participant's level of engagement was significantly related to their
216 level of reported food involvement (Table 3). Specifically, whether participants thought
217 the research and their role as a participant were important (captured via the purposeful
218 intent subscale) had the strongest effect on their reported food involvement score and
219 sub-scale score (coefficients >1, Table 3). Whether subjects were actively involved in the
220 task did not influence their reported level of involvement with set and disposal
221 procedures of consuming food. Including questions about engagement allowed us to
222 assess the participant's level of engagement in the online task, and control for lack of
223 attention, increasing the accuracy of the heritability estimates.

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224 **3.4 Heritability of the food involvement scores.** About 40% of individual differences in
225 food involvement scores was explained by additive genetic variance (additive genetics;
226 $a^2 = 0.39$; 95% CI = 0.24–0.55, $P < 0.001$). However, although food involvement could be
227 considered a single entity, each item from the scale contributed to this result in a
228 different way (**Figure 1** and **S3 Table**). The traits for cooking (“*I enjoy cooking for myself*
229 *and others*”; $a^2 = 0.40$; 95% CI = 0.25–0.56, $P < 0.001$) and especially chopping (“*I do not like*
230 *to mix or chop food*”; $a^2 = 0.44$; 95% CI = 0.30–0.58, $P < 0.001$) were the most highly heritable
231 as measured by additive genetics, which points to a heritable component for food
232 preparation. We observed a similar but weaker effect for the trait ‘dishes’ (“*I do not wash*
233 *dishes or clean the table*”; $a^2 = 0.17$; 95% CI = 0.01 - 0.32, $p < 0.001$].

234 The effects of a shared environment, for which twins are the most similar
235 regardless of zygosity, are captured by questions assessing thinking ($c^2 = 0.37$; 95% CI =
236 0.22–0.52, $P < 0.001$) and talking about food ($c^2 = 0.41$; 95% CI = 0.27–0.55, $P < 0.001$) and
237 interest in food during travel ($c^2 = 0.26$; 95% CI = 0.12–0.41, $P < 0.001$). The trait most
238 influence by the unique environment unshared among twins was cleanup (“*I do most or*
239 *all the cleanup after eating*”; $e^2 = 0.87$; 95% CI = 0.70–1.04, $P < 0.001$). Drawing on the
240 subscales to help summarize these results, food preparation is more heritable
241 (Preparation and Eating subscale, $a^2 = 0.40$; 95% CI = 0.38–1.18, $P < 0.001$) and cleanup
242 afterward is generally less so (Set and Disposal subscale, $a^2 = 0.17$; 95% CI = -0.01–0.34,
243 $P < 0.001$).

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4. Discussion

245 While much research into the biology of human food behavior focuses on the moment
246 of eating – how much is eaten and the types of food chosen, e.g., (Grimm & Steinle, 2011;
247 Pallister, Spector, & Menni, 2014) – or even being fearful of new foods (Knaapila, et al.,
248 2007), other types of behavior are also important parts of the total food experience,
249 including the selection and preparation of food, ruminating about food, looking
250 forward to eating in new places, and the cleanup afterward (Bell & Marshall, 2003). The
251 results of our online survey of twins show that there is a genetic determinant to at least
252 some aspects of these food behaviors, with cooking and food preparation the most
253 heritable (i.e., genetically identical twins were more similar in these types of behavior
254 than were fraternal twins).

255 However, while cooking, and especially the chopping and mixing of food, had a
256 heritability component, other types of food behaviors were affected more by shared
257 common environment, and twins were thus similar regardless of their degree of genetic
258 relatedness (i.e., genetically identical twins were as similar in these types of behavior
259 than dizygotic twins). The most striking examples of this effect of shared common
260 environment are the scores for talking and thinking about food, with more than 40% of
261 the variance in these traits accounted for being raised in a shared household.

262 Some aspects of food and eating were unaffected either by genetics or by shared
263 common environment and thus appeared to be determined by each person's own

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264 experience. The most prominent examples of this were the results for setting the table
265 and cleaning up afterward, which were unrelated to shared experience or genetics
266 between the twins.

267 These results suggest that the proclivity for cooking may be more determined by
268 genetic variation, whereas the centrality of food in the family – how much importance is
269 attached to it – may be more learned in the family home. Taken together, it appears that
270 love (or dislike) of cooking may be difficult to modify but that the centrality of food
271 (e.g., as topic of conversation) may be influenced by the family environment and that
272 the willingness to set up and clean-up is entirely amenable to change (e.g., through
273 learning or instruction, or by the encouragement of certain behaviors).

274 This research was conducted in unusual circumstances because of the pandemic.
275 We learned from this research that, while a handful of the participants had COVID-19 at
276 some point immediately before the survey, only one person still had problems with
277 taste and smell at the time of their survey response. We saw no differences in food
278 involvement scores based on whether the participants had past or active COVID-19
279 infection, and it is encouraging that people recovered with little or no effect in their
280 food behaviors. While only one person reported problems with taste and smell, studies
281 of recovery suggest that 10% or more of people have sustained taste and smell loss after
282 many months (Boscolo-Rizzo, et al., 2021). Though not tested presently, we hypothesize
283 that people with long-haul COVID-19 symptoms and sustained taste and smell loss

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284 might have much less food enjoyment (Boesveldt, et al., 2017; Temmel, et al., 2002),
285 however, its resultant effect on food involvement has yet to be determined. Since food
286 involvement is thought to be a stable individual characteristic (Bell & Marshall, 2003), it
287 would be of interest to explore how sudden and *sustained* loss of taste and/or smell
288 might affect someone's overall level of food involvement. Regardless, questions about
289 COVID-19 and its effect on taste and smell should be included in human food research
290 in future, as a basic demographic question like age or sex.

291 We quantified engagement because we were concerned about the abrupt change
292 of testing procedures from in person to remote, owing to the laboratory lockdowns
293 during COVID-19. This decision proved to be more fruitful than we anticipated. Not
294 only did participants' scores reassure us that most had made their best effort,
295 considered the research important, and enjoyed answering the questions, but we found
296 that aspects of engagement – whether participants thought the research and their role as
297 a participant were important – were strongly related to participants' food involvement
298 scores. An aspect of individual food involvement encompasses a higher level of
299 cognitive interest in a task related to food, such as explaining the differences between
300 products or discussing food in general (Bell & Marshall, 2003). Thus, participants who
301 reported a higher level of food involvement additionally reported higher levels of
302 purposeful intent during the survey suggesting they found value in discussing food-
303 related topics. This supports the converging (e.g., similar) aspects between engagement

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304 and food involvement, an important aspect to using validated scales in research
305 (DeVellis, 2016). In general, including questions about engagement allowed us to
306 validate using a remote survey tool and increase the accuracy of the heritability
307 estimates, similar to using age and sex as covariates.

308 This research has at least two limitations. First, because of our recruitment
309 strategy – former attendees and research participants from an annual festival for twins –
310 we had more genetically identical than fraternal twin pairs, which might reduce our
311 power to detect additive genetic variance. Second, some twins responded but their co-
312 twin did not. We attribute this situation to two factors (neither of which was in our
313 immediate control): some contact information was outdated, so we could not reach the
314 co-twin; and the vicissitudes of COVID-19 and the pandemic, with constant upheaval
315 and changes, made it hard for some to prioritize participating in research. These
316 singletons are not without value, because they provided information for estimating the
317 effects of covariates and also about variation when computing heritability. However,
318 we recognize that it would be more valuable from a genetics perspective to have all
319 twin pairs in our sample rather than include singletons.

320 The heritable variations we identified in interest and liking for cooking and food
321 preparation are not surprising, if we consider that cooking is often a recreational or
322 leisure activity, like competitive or team sports, which are often related to heritable
323 traits (e.g., (van der Zee, Helmer, Boomsma, Dolan, & de Geus, 2020)). However, this

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324 observation takes on new importance in the realm of health, because the willingness to
325 cook and prepare food at home is related to better overall health (Wolfson & Bleich,
326 2015) and people who have high food involvement scores have a healthier diet (Barker,
327 Lawrence, Woadden, Crozier, & Skinner, 2008; Marshall & Bell, 2004). Our results on
328 the genetics of food involvement have implications for personalized nutrition and how
329 much behavior change is likely to occur when people who do not like to cook at home
330 are encouraged to do so. These genetic aspects on the enjoyment of cooking may
331 constrain behavior change. However, more research is needed to explore this
332 hypothesis.

333 In contrast, how much people are preoccupied with thinking and talking about
334 food is highly affected by shared family environment, which suggests that the
335 standards set in the childhood home will persist into adulthood. Some families are more
336 focused on food as a hub of life, whereas others are less so, and level of parental
337 emphasis on food may have effects into adulthood. We hasten to add that the questions
338 on the Food Involvement Scale do not address pathological preoccupation with food,
339 such as with eating disorders including anorexia and bulimia, which have a strongly
340 heritable component (Thornton, Mazzeo, & Bulik, 2011). Rather, social discussion and
341 interest in food are affected by shared environment, at least in this population of human
342 twins.

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343 Looking to the future, as the collective data from genetic studies bring larger and
344 larger databases and more available genotyping information, we will learn about how
345 inborn variation affects what people choose to eat (Cole, Florez, & Hirschhorn, 2020;
346 May-Wilson, et al., 2021). Our hope is that, as the capacity for this type of research
347 grows, behaviors such as those studied here, which are key parts of the full human
348 experience of food, will be included in future research. Although ultimately human
349 health is improved directly by what and how much people eat, these decisions are
350 made as people shop, cook, linger over one meal, and anticipate the next.

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Table 1. Food involvement questions and descriptive statistics

Item	Trait	<i>n</i>	Question	Median	IQR
All	Total food involvement score ^a	406	All items scored and summed (range: 12-84)	63	55-69
Sub	Set and Disposal	412	Items 6, 11, 12 summed (range: 3 to 21)	16	14-18
Sub	Preparation/Eating	408	All other items summed (range: 9 to 63)	47	41-52
			Individual items (range: 1-7)		
1*	Thinking about food	413	I don't think much about food each day	2	2-4
2*	Cooking	412	Cooking or barbequing is not much fun	2	2-4
3	Talking about food	413	Talking about what I ate is something I like to do	5	4-6
4*	Choice importance	410	My food choices are not very important	2	2-4
5	Travel	413	When I travel, one of the things I anticipate most is eating food there	6	5-7
6	Cleanup	413	I do most or all the cleanup after eating	6	4-6
7	Enjoy cooking	411	I enjoy cooking for others and myself	5	4-6
8*	Eating out	413	When I eat out, I don't think or talk much about how the food tastes	2	2-3
9*	Chopping	413	I do not like to mix or chop food	2	2-4
10	Food shopping	413	I do most or all of my own food shopping	6	4-7
11*	Dishes	412	I do not wash dishes or clean the table	1	1-2
12	Setting table	412	I care whether or not a table is nicely set	4	3-5

IQR=interquartile range. Some questions are paraphrased for brevity. Items are rated on a 7-point scale (1 = disagree strongly; 7 = agree strongly) and ordered by as they appeared in the original paper describing the Food Involvement Scale.

^a The total food involvement score was generated by reversing the scores for items with an asterisk (*) and then summing all scores.

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Table 2: Participant characteristics

Characteristic	N	%
Total participants	419	100
Currently able to taste/smell	418	99.8
Age [median (IQR), years]	33 (29-46)	
Sex		
Female	346	82.6
Male	72	17.2
Prefer not to say	1	0.2
Ancestry		
European	368	87.6
African	22	5.3
Asian	12	2.9
Other	17	4.1
Smoking		
Never	329	78.5
Ever	77	18.4
No response	13	3.1
Twin status		
MZ	114	54.4
DZ	31	14.8
Singleton	129	30.8
COVID-19 infection history		
Taste change	19	4.5
Smell change	17	4.1

MZ=monozygotic, DZ=dizygotic.

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Table 3: Engagement scale significantly correlated with food involvement scores (Coefficient [95%CI]).

Items	n	Active involvement	Purposeful intent	Affective value
Food involvement score	391	***1.76 [0.89 - 2.63]	***3.93 [2.52 - 5.35]	***2.61 [1.49 - 3.74]
Preparation and eating	393	***1.52 [0.74 - 2.30]	***2.78 [1.60 - 3.95]	***1.81 [0.88 - 2.74]
Set and disposal	395	0.24 [-0.03 - 0.50]	***1.14 [0.67 - 1.60]	***0.77 [0.43 - 1.12]
Thinking about food	397	-0.14 [-0.31 - 0.02]	0.06 [-0.17 - 0.29]	0.06 [-0.12 - 0.25]
Cooking	396	** -0.23 [-0.37 - -0.09]	*** -0.51 [-0.71 - -0.3]	*** -0.33 [-0.51 - -0.15]
Talking about food	397	0.03 [-0.13 - 0.19]	** 0.3 [0.07 - 0.52]	*** 0.29 [0.12 - 0.46]
Choice importance	396	*** -0.33 [-0.46 - -0.2]	*** -0.42 [-0.63 - -0.22]	** -0.23 [-0.39 - -0.07]
Travel	397	-0.05 [-0.19 - 0.09]	0.01 [-0.20 - 0.22]	0.02 [-0.14 - 0.18]
Cleanup	397	* 0.14 [0.02 - 0.25]	*** 0.39 [0.20 - 0.58]	*** 0.28 [0.13 - 0.42]
Enjoy cooking	395	*** 0.29 [0.14 - 0.45]	*** 0.61 [0.40 - 0.83]	*** 0.41 [0.22 - 0.6]
Eating out	397	-0.07 [-0.19 - 0.05]	-0.18 [-0.36 - 0.00]	-0.08 [-0.24 - 0.07]
Chopping	397	** -0.21 [-0.35 - -0.08]	** -0.32 [-0.52 - -0.13]	* -0.2 [-0.37 - -0.02]
Food shopping	397	* 0.19 [0.04 - 0.34]	*** 0.42 [0.19 - 0.64]	* 0.22 [0.04 - 0.41]
Dishes	396	** -0.15 [-0.26 - -0.04]	*** -0.35 [-0.55 - -0.15]	* -0.19 [-0.34 - -0.03]
Setting table	396	-0.04 [-0.19 - 0.10]	*** 0.38 [0.16 - 0.60]	** 0.3 [0.10 - 0.49]

Note: Bolded values are significant; *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001; Coefficient [95% CI] was determined in the twin regression model for each single engagement sub-scale separately.

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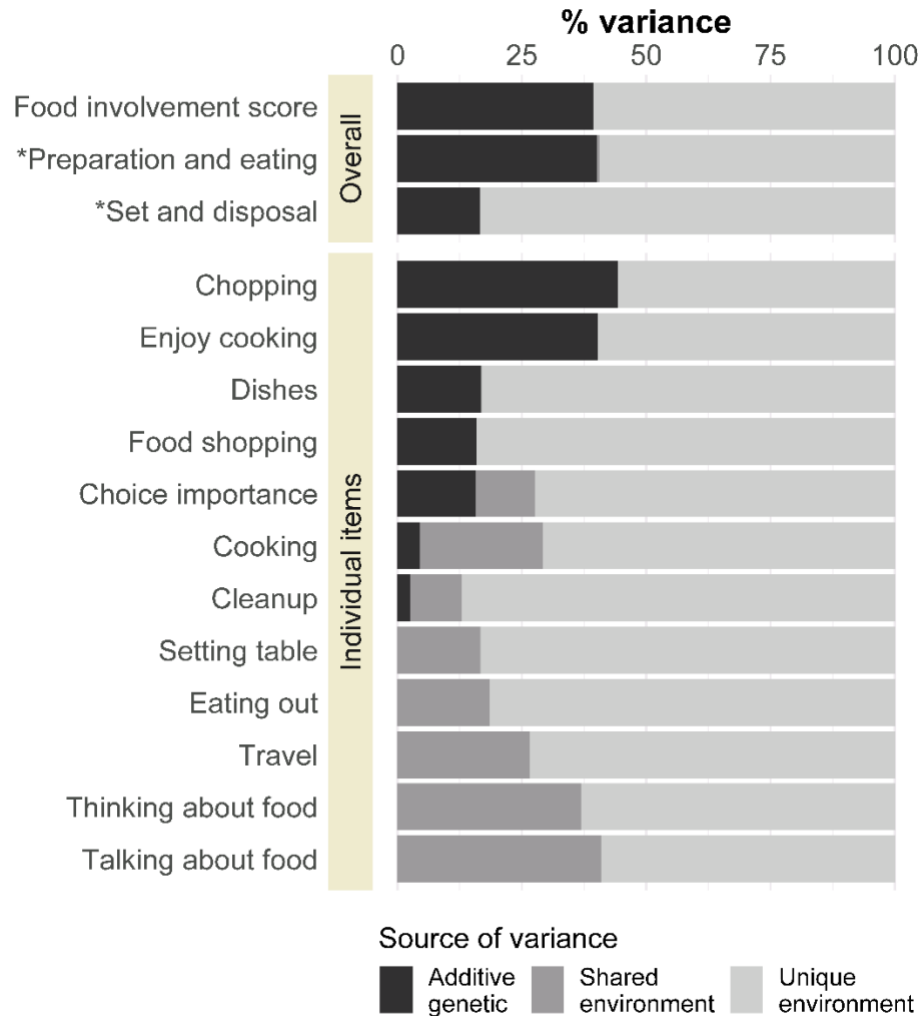


Figure 1. Variance in food involvement, by additive genetic, shared environment, and unique factors. Food involvement score refers to the total score, computed as described in section 1.3. Scores for the two subscales (labeled with *) and the separate items are below (for fuller description, see Table 1), ordered from more to less additive genetic variance.

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Figure Caption

Figure 1. Variance in food involvement, by additive genetic, shared environment, and unique factors. Food Involvement Scale refers to the total score, computed as described in section 1.3. Scores for the two subscales (labeled with *) and the separate items are below (for fuller description, see Table 1), ordered from more to less additive genetic variance.

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Author Contributions: MEH designed the study, cleaned the data, assisted in the statistical analysis and contributed to the writing of the manuscript, CL performed the statistical analysis and contributed to the writing of the manuscript, KB, AT, and RK collected data and edited the manuscript, TG contributed to the design of the study, AN contributed to the design of the study, assisted in data collection and assisted in the

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writing of the manuscript. DRR assisted in the design of the study, assisted in data analysis, and wrote the manuscript. PJ designed the study and assisted in the writing of the manuscript.

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Ethical statement: The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board (Protocol #843798). The procedures performed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the committee. Electronic informed consent was obtained from all respondents before commencement of the study.

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