



Effective Strategies to Communicate Science

A crucial challenge food scientists face is communicating the value of food research to consumers, regulatory agencies, media and scientists in other fields. The complexity of food science advances, multifaceted consumer demands, and misinformation about food science and technology require the use of effective communication skills.

Dr. Carolyn J. Kroehler, associate director of the Center for Communicating Science at Virginia Tech, offers the following ideas for effective communication:

- **Listen to and involve your communication partners.** Foster their curiosity and be curious about them. Know the people you want to connect to--and remember there is no "general audience." There are individuals and groups of people who've been as committed to the things they believe to be important as you are to your work. Find something you have in common.
- **The environment, proximity, lighting, and visuals impact our perceptions** of what is being communicated and what is possible to communicate.
- **Non-verbal communication matters**, and about 93 percent of what is received is non-verbal.
- **Use shared words and language** that can be understood. Clarify and simplify your messages.
- It is most effective to **make your communication personal**. Share your humanity, joys, frustrations, errors, and struggles--because emotional connection is more powerful than logic.
- **Tell your story.** "A story is the shortest distance between two people."
- **To bring underrepresented groups into the conversation**, be present in communities outside of your field--not as a "presenter" but as a person.
- Remember, the majority of people trust you and your expertise, so you **don't have to be defensive**.
- **Improving science communication requires practice of specific skills, including listening and being personal, direct, spontaneous, and responsive.**