Why Your Cat Might Be Bored With Dinner -- And What Science Says to Do About It

Purina Behaviorist Explains the Multi-Sensory Science Behind Feline Food Preferences

ST. LOUIS, July 8, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- If your cat has suddenly turned up their nose at a food they used to love, the answer isn't pickiness. It's science.

Dr. Annie Valuska is a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist and Principal Scientist on the Pet Behavior Team at Purina. According to Dr. Valuska, cats experience food through a complex combination of taste, odor, texture, shape, and mouthfeel. It's the interaction of those sensory factors, not flavor alone, that determines whether a cat keeps coming back to their bowl. It's also one of the reasons Fancy Feast incorporates variety across its lineup of more than 150 recipes.

"What cats are responding to is much more nuanced than taste," said Dr. Valuska. "Variety across texture, shape, and aroma can be just as meaningful to a cat as variety across flavors."

Fancy Feast offers flavor diversity as well as many different forms, including wet cat food — patés, shredded or flaked textures — along with dry meals, broths, meal toppers and treats. That variety lets cat owners mix things up safely within one brand of cat food without the risk of digestive upset that can come with switching between different brands.

Cats are considered "neophilic" — naturally preferring new stimuli over familiar ones — but they don't seek variety for variety's sake. When offered both, cats will consistently choose a high palatability food over a lower palatability option, even if they've been eating the higher palatability diet for several days. The key for cat owners is offering variety across sensory dimensions.

"With Fancy Feast, cats don't have to choose between variety and a food they love," said Dr. Valuska. "Cat owners can offer genuine sensory variety across taste, texture, aroma, and shape at every meal."

Fancy Feast is available at pet specialty, grocery, and online retailers. For more information, visit purina.com/fancy-feast.

About Purina
Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations.

Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Fancy Feast, Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Friskies and Tidy Cats. Our more than 11,000 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 46 million dogs and 68 million cats every year. Nearly 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than $150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit **purina.com** or subscribe **here** to get the latest Purina news.

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