

Beer: more a brain than a taste thing

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A U.S. study suggests differing zests for beer might reveal more about alcohol's effect on the brain than inherent differences in taste sensitivity.

Researchers at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee -- led by Associate Professor Judy Grisel of Furman University -- are using a mouse model to map genes responsible for differences in beer consumption.

"In our preliminary study, we have two critical findings," said Grisel, a professor of psychology and neuroscience. "There is no significant correlation between the drinking patterns and the allelic status of the taste receptor on Chromosome 2, and many strains of mice voluntarily consumed enough alcohol to become dependent."

By studying self-administration of beer, the researchers have been able to decrease the influence of taste sensitivity that's been a big factor in previous studies in which scientists measured the consumption of alcohol mixed with water.

The ongoing research is funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Furman Advantage Program and South Carolina independent colleges and universities.

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