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TRAVEL

The best in-flight beverage is a bloody mary or tomato juice

- JAMES DURSTON
- CNN
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It's all in the secret ingredient. *Source:* ThinkStock

IF YOU often order a Bloody Mary or tomato juice on a plane, yet rarely order them elsewhere, science may have just explained your bizarre in-flight urge.

A Bloody Mary could be one of the few drinks that actually tastes as it's supposed to in the air, according to the authors of a paper in the online journal *Flavour*, entitled "Airplane noise and the taste of umami."

Previous studies have shown that loud noises, such as an aircraft engine, can reduce our ability to taste flavours by up to 30 per cent.

YOUR SAY: What's your favourite in-flight drink? Tell us below.

“Umami, however, is immune to this effect,” authors Charles Spence, Charles Michel and Barry Smith write.

“There is even some evidence to suggest that it ... may actually boost some of the other basic tastes.”

Umami has been called “the fifth taste,” after salty, bitter, sweet and sour, and has been likened to a “savory” flavour.



It's all about the fifth taste. Picture: susan@kingstreetmarketinggroup. *Source: Flickr*

Umami effect

Spence et al suggest this might explain the popularity of tomato-based drinks on flights.

“A key feature of tomatoes is that they are rich in umami ... perhaps all those travellers who order a Bloody Mary after the seatbelt sign has been turned off have figured out intuitively what scientists are only now slowly coming to recognise empirically.”

They also say this could help chefs and diners plan their meals.

“One might also want to recommend an umami-rich menu — that is, foods such as Parmesan cheese, tomatoes, and mushrooms — to all those vocal restaurant critics out there, especially it seems in North America, who have been complaining that the background noise in many restaurants is simply too loud nowadays.”

But don't forsake water for Bloody Mary marathons just yet. The authors say more work is required to confirm their hypothesis.