

Tears With Them, Tears Without: Onion Prices Make India Cry

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Why do you cry?

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Have you ever cut into an onion, and all of a sudden, start to cry? Do you ever wonder why this happens? Well, you don't cry because of the smell of the onion. You cry because when you cut into the onion, you are releasing a strong sulfur compound that goes upward towards your eyes. When the gas reacts with the moisture in your eyes, it begins to burn and create tears.

Explanation

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The chemical reaction occurs when the inside of the onion is exposed to oxygen.(Fox news). When you cut an onion, you are breaking cells, releasing their contents. The enzymes that were kept separate are now free to mix with the “sulfenic-volatile sulfur compound that wafts upward toward your eyes.” (Helmenstine)

Tips

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The sulfuric acid burns, stimulating your eyes to release more tears to wash away the irritant. A really cool thing that you can do is to refrigerate your onions before cutting them, because it will slow down the reactions and change the chemistry inside the onion. Pretty cool right?

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Tears

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Tears have a mind of their own. Rose-Lynn Fisher studied 100 different tears and found out that basal tears “(the ones that our body produces to lubricate our eyes)” (Be). are very different from the tears that flow when we are chopping onions. Each emotion that flows through our body creates a different tear. Joseph Stromberg explains that there are 3 major types of tears which are basal, reflex, and phychic.

Tear structure and meanings

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All tears contain organic substances including oils, antibodies, and enzymes. Different types of tears have distinct molecules. Emotional tears have “protein-based hormones like the leucine enkephalin, which is a natural painkiller that is released when we are stressed.” (Be). We know that different tears are caused by different emotions because when we look at dried up tears under a microscope, the tears are crystallized salt and can make different shapes and patterns.

More about tears!

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Each tear you shed, has it's own pattern and meaning. Each tear is unique. No tear is the same. Just like snowflakes! When you cry because you are sad, the pattern is very spread out and scattered. Tears from onions, the pattern is very squished.

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Pictures!

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