I thought I was the world’s most adventurous eater, but as it turns out, I just have no taste buds.

Well, I have a few, but probably not as many as you.

I’m what’s known as a nontaster, among the 25 percent of the population genetically insensitive to many bitter and strong flavors.

I figured this out recently after swabbing the tip of my tongue with blue food coloring and having my boyfriend use a magnifying glass to count my fungiform papillae, the tiny pink bumps that house one to five taste buds each and supposedly resemble teeny mushrooms.

My boyfriend, whom I routinely bully for what I consider his babyish aversion to things like grapefruit and cabbage and his fondness for diluting his coffee with liberal lashings of milk, has more than thirty fungiform papillae per square centimeter, while I have only eight. Which makes him a supertaster, one of those culinary neurasthenics sent aflutter by strong flavors.

This has all thrown me into a bit of a crisis.

All the things I once took pride in—enjoying “gross” foods like salted licorice, Brussels sprouts, and Vegemite, ordering the “are-you-sure-you-want-the-very-spicy-curry-it’s-really-very-very-spicy-ma’am?” curry—are now merely evidence of my numb and undiscerning palate.

“Wilted flowers!” I thought, trying to act all delicate, like those movie stars who, when interviewed in People, claim to “naturally gravitate toward healthy foods.”

Then I read that supertasters are exquisitely sensitive to fatty textures. When I gulp down a bolt of fresh, heavy cream while baking a pound cake, it feels like a silk sheet settling over my tongue. To a supertaster, slurping straight cream may be more like drinking hydrogenated snot—fatty, slimy, cloying.

Nontasters tend to be heavier than normal tasters or supertasters.

Dull-tongued AND thick-waisted! Yarrrr!

Looking for someone to blame, I took my blue food coloring to my parents’ house and had Mom and Dad stick out their tongues in the name of science.

As expected, Dad (loves Scotch, anchovies, onion sandwiches) was a nontaster and Mom (hates coffee, would be happy eating pasta three meals a day) was a normal-verging-on-super-taster.

I began to fantasize about creating an experiment in which I’d fly from continent to continent, dropping food coloring on the tongues of the great chefs of the world and counting their fungiform papillae.

In doing so, I’d discover the ideal number of taste buds for a palate both sensitive and adventurous. But until the National Science Foundation funds my study, I’ll be living in the middle of my self-created Taste War zone.

Now, when I try to coax my boyfriend into eating a forkful of radish salad or adding some peppery arugula to his steak sandwich, he raises one eyebrow and reminds me that he’s a supertaster.

And when he fusses at me for making the stir-fry too spicy, I hang my head so he can’t see my smile and say, “I can’t help it, I have no taste buds.”