



## Umami Flavor = Savory Taste We All Enjoy

Everyone from famous chefs to devoted home cooks loves the idea of preparing tastier foods, and umami – the secret fifth taste – is widely recognized as the way to do it. Because the modern understanding of umami originated in Japan, you can undoubtedly find products aware of it at your favorite [Asian grocery store](#). But it's present in foods from all cooking traditions, and some of the most beloved items like baked goods are rich in its irresistible taste. If you haven't heard a lot about umami, it's a fascinating topic to research the next time you are browsing online. You'll find a lot to read about it.

The fundamental understanding (and scientific acceptance of) umami is a fifth taste best described as savory. Food historians feel there is evidence that ancient Europeans were aware of it and added it to their foods. The evidence is the existence of a fermented fish sauce called garum. In terms of the flavor it adds, it's a cousin to soy sauce created and popularized in Asia for similar reasons. But it wasn't until a Japanese scientist isolated the flavor in kelp during the early 20th century that the road to umami's scientific acceptance began. Biologically in humans, umami taste tells us what to eat.

As people have begun to learn more and science has accepted or proven it, there have been fascinating discoveries about umami flavor. One of the major ones is its presence in breast milk. It's high in amino acids that are the foundations of the umami flavor. It's a taste most common in savory-salty foods and found in some other ones like baked goods. Butter and the outer browning on baked items have those amino acids, and they taste delicious. Umami turns up in many of the world's favorite foods, regardless of the cooking tradition in which they originate. Chefs work hard to add it to their food.

No conversation of umami is complete without the mention of the food additive monosodium glutamate. It is frowned upon in the United States but is the chemical version of umami. Some people refer to it as a chemical flavor enhancer. Because it can trigger allergies, nearly everyone today tries to add or bring out umami flavor in natural ways. It means selecting recipes with care and finding ways to boost the savory flavor. You can also read up on foods and ingredients rich in the needed amino acids to achieve the best taste. When you do, your cooking will be more savory than ever.