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You've tried sweet, sour, bitter and salty... now tubes of the 'fifth taste' to be sold in supermarkets

By NEIL MILLARD
Last updated at 9:36 AM on 10th February 2010

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Many a connoisseur has tasted a dish only to declare that something is missing.

What follows is the inevitable excursion through the larder looking for that magic ingredient.

But the days of this culinary lottery appear to be numbered as a substance first known only to science - bottled 'deliciousness' - is coming to the High Street.

Umami was discovered 102 years ago by a Japanese scientist but until now has only graced the shelves of Michelin-starred restaurants.

It is the secret to making anything taste fantastic, so much so it is known as the 'fifth taste'.

And pretty soon you will be able to add it to absolute everything as tubes of the wonder stuff go on sale in 197 branches of Waitrose for £2.99 a tube.

Named Taste No 5, evoking the added allure of a high-class perfume, it triggers the sensation of delight in the brain when at least one of the primary tastes of sweet, sour, bitter and salty is also present.

Food writer Laura Santini, who developed the purée, said: 'I wanted to get away from the notion that umami is something of interest to scientists that no one else can really understand.

'The truth is that umami should be of interest to anyone who has a tongue. Umami is part of our everyday eating lives. It is just that many of us don't know what to call it. It is what gives depth of flavour to food.

Every food culture has its umami-rich ingredients, whether it is seaweed in Japan or Parmesan in Italy.'

The ingredients in her recipe for umami, literally meaning 'taste', include pulped anchovy and porcini mushrooms.

The umami revolution began in 1908 when Tokyo chemist Kikunae Ikeda identified it as a flavour present in foods high in glutamate.

He had first been alerted by the distinctive taste of seaweed, or kombu, which itself is high in the chemical.

His work led him to crystallise monosodium glutamate (MSG), the controversial flavour enhancer which has since become famous all over the world.

Then in 2000 researchers at the University of Miami discovered the tongue had taste receptors dedicated to sensing glutamate, which signals the presence of proteins in food that the body needs.

The opportunities presented by umami have since been exploited by the restaurant world and celebrity chefs including Heston Blumenthal who purposefully plates up dishes brimming with umami at his Fat Duck restaurant in Bray, Berkshire.



Tube of Umami paste

Umami - the fifth sense of taste

Umami is the Japanese word for the fifth basic sense of taste, after bitter, salty, sour and sweet.

Despite being known in the East for more than 100 years, particularly Japan, it is a relatively new concept to the West where only the four primary tastes are recognised.

Umami means deliciousness in Japanese, but translates best as 'savouriness' and provides the 'meaty' flavour in meat.

It is formed from glutamates being detected by receptors on the tongue and is the reason why monosodium glutamate (MSG) is used as a flavour enhancer.

It is also found naturally in meats, cheeses and mushrooms.



Buna Shimeji mushrooms and steak are high in umami



Alamy



Alamy



Alamy

The fifth taste is also present in seaweed and Parmesan cheese

Far from being a Japanese phenomenon there are examples of foods high in umami in every culture.

Worcestershire Sauce and Marmite are two British standard bearers. Human breast milk is also high in umami.

Taste No 5 will be stocked in 197 branches of Waitrose from next week and will go on sale at the Booths supermarket chain in northern England next month.

HOW TO USE IT

Taste No 5 can be used in pasta sauce, risotto, soup, stew, burger patties, salad dressing and gravy. Or try using it as Laura Santini does, in her delicious chicken recipe:

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 4 skinless chicken breasts
- 8 slices of prosciutto crudo
- 4 small sprigs of fresh rosemary, plus one more sprig chopped
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- Marsala or white wine
- Taste No.5™
- Generous grinding of black pepper

METHOD

Remove the chicken from the fridge half an hour before cooking. Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6.

Roll each piece in a mixture of the Taste No.5, chopped rosemary and pepper until well coated.

Wrap each chicken breast in two overlapping slices of prosciutto, tucking a rosemary sprig inside each parcel.

Place in a roasting pan and splash with some oil. Add more black pepper and a sprinkling of salt flakes.

Pop in the oven for 20-25 minutes. Three quarters of the way through, splash the wraps with some more olive oil and Marsala (if the chicken starts looking dry at any point during cooking, add an extra splash of olive oil and Marsala).

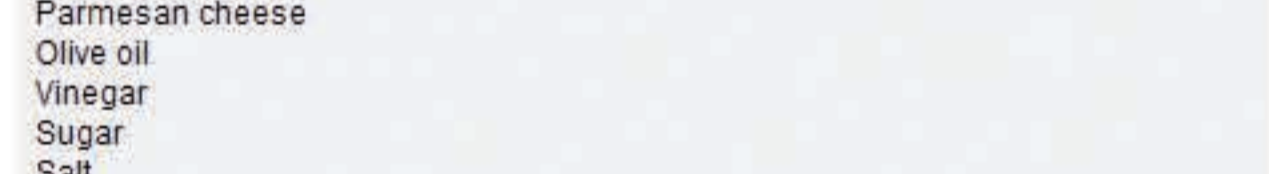
Remove from the oven when the prosciutto looks dark and delicious, and the chicken is firm to the touch.

For a glossy sauce, whisk a large knob of butter into the pan juices. Adjust the seasoning, pour over the chicken and serve.

TOP TIP: For a deliciously quick crust, simply mix Taste No.5 with breadcrumbs, chopped fresh herbs and some grated Parmesan cheese and pack on top of meat, fish or vegetables. Drizzle with oil and bake at 180 degrees.

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Newest	Oldest	Best rated	Worst rated
View all			

The only ingredients in this paste are:

- Tomato purée
- Garlic
- Anchovy Paste (anchovies, salt, sunflower oil)
- Black Olive
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Porcini mushrooms
- Parmesan cheese
- Olive oil
- Vinegar
- Sugar
- Salt

Forgive me, but what is there to complain about in this mixture of NATURAL ingredients?

- Sally Baxter, London, 11/2/2010 17:40
[Report abuse](#) [Click to rate](#) [Rating](#) **16**

Useless recipe, does not state how much to use!
- Mike, Truro, UK, 10/2/2010 9:48

Dear me... wonder so many people claim they can't cook these days. Do the words "according to taste" mean anything to you?
- Helen, Cardiff, UK, 11/2/2010 13:06
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I do not understand how this product can have so many negative comments surely you try it first. I am looking forward to trying it, anything that makes our food more tasty has to be good.
- Mary Massey, Caterham Surrey, 11/2/2010 12:23
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This is just MSG and its associates (glutamate forms) dressed up as a new fad. MSG is being put in more and more of our processed foods in ever increasing amounts (typically 10 times that which was used in the 70's - it's called over dosing). MSG and is a neuro-toxin. It is responsible for tachycardia and heart rhythm disturbances and elevated levels of anxiety. It is responsible for what used to be called "Chinese Restaurant Syndrome". Farmers are now spraying this onto vegetables and fruit, so even prepare the earth with it - sheesh. It is sold to farmers as "auxigrow" among other names. Mad, they are completely mad. Along with GMO's, animal antibiotics (many residues are highly cardio-toxic in pigs), ractopamine (Paylean - highly cardio-toxic) and now chemical castration in humans with its concomitant effect in humans - given to animals just before slaughter.
- Annie Linux, Sheffield, 11/2/2010 10:05
[Report abuse](#) [Click to rate](#) [Rating](#) **16**

Umami is a Japanese cultural thing, heard about it over a year ago. You can not package it!

If they are, its a rip-off!
- Phil, USA, 11/2/2010 07:15
[Report abuse](#) [Click to rate](#) [Rating](#) **6**

This article has its facts completely wrong. Umami is supposed to mean "meaty" in flavor profile and mouth reception, as in steak, grilled portobellos, fried tofu, reconstituted shiitakes, wheat gluten, or any meat-like food or flavor that ignites specific taste receptors in the mouth that were not previously recognized by western nutritionists, in the way other ones do: sweet, sour, salty, etc.

As a vegan, I can attest to it. So do the Japanese.
- Mark, Ventura, California, 11/2/2010 06:11
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FEMAIL TODAY

Glowing Cheryl Cole puts health fears behind her as she sparkles for dinner date with Derek Hough
Couple went to Nobu in Los Angeles



Lily's pregnant! She's expecting her first child Singer said she's delighted after revealing that she's three months pregnant



Jennifer Metcalfe reveals her golden tan and stunning figure in gold chain red bikini
Hollyoaks star on holiday in Spain



'I wouldn't wish my upbringing on anyone': Mary-Kate Olsen breaks her silence
She says she and twin sister were like 'performing monkeys'



Lourdes speaks four languages, gets up at 6am to learn dancing and is ultra polite. Is this the 13-year-old REALLY behind those RIESE fashions?



The Talibanisation of British children
Swimming lessons and music classes banned as anti-Islamic by hardline parents, reports YASMIN ALIBHA-BROWN



Me and my heaves: Michelle Obama goes walkabout in Martellia after 'racist' Spaniards gaffe
Two's company for First Lady... and we're a crowd



Coleen Rooney follows husband Wayne's lead as she gets a tattoo in tribute to son Kai
New inking is on her left wrist



So where's my next date? Jennifer Aniston tags along with Courteney Cox and her husband
Actress clutched arm of her former co-star



Aye aye Captain Kiara! Heidi the model mother peels down to a bikini on family holiday
The mum of four looks stunning



Katy Perry suffers spot breakout as she struggles with stress of wedding planning
The singer tries to cover up by wearing a hoodie and sunglasses



Lindsay Lohan poses for fashion designer... but that's not her body
Keen-eyed fans might notice something strange about Marc Eckō's secret Muse campaign



That's what I think of you! Pax sticks out his tongue as the Jolie-Pitts visit Moneyball set
His father Brad is filming in California



What wrong with your leg, Meg? Ryan's calf appears disfigured by swollen blood vessels
Age may finally have caught up with 48-year-old



How do you get into this thing? Danny Cipriani struggles as he attempts to climb into a Lamborghini
Rugby star ended up slumping into seat



That's right, Alesha, keep covered up and there can be no further wardrobe malfunctions
Singer's dress rode up during performance



Kelly Brook: Finding clothes that suit my curvy shape has been a struggle
Model, actress and TV presenter opens her wardrobe



NEW AT M&S

TODAY'S POLL

What do you think of Gisele's comments on breastfeeding?

Earth mother Model idiot

All polls [All polls](#)

DON'T MISS

After racy bikini shoot
Kardashian sister Kendall, 14, covers up... in leather
She's now signed to famed modelling agency Wilhelmina



Amy Winehouse recovers from marathon pub crawl to attend restaurant launch
Singer was in a very revealing LBD



Kimberley Walsh: Friends put me under pressure to have teen sex?
Girls Aloud star recently said she's only ever had two lovers



Eddie Cibrian denies cheating on LeAnn Rimes with his ex-wife
He accuses ex-Brandi Glanville of trying to 'sabotage' his relationship



Why I refuse to get Botox, by Eat Pray Love star, Julia Roberts
Actress, 42, says she wants her face to 'tell a story'



Ahhey there! Stunning Liz Hurley lifts her bikini ban... and who can blame her?
The 45-year-old had vowed never to wear a two-piece again



Pixie Lott gets very touchy feely with her best friend in Spain
At one point the bikini clad teenage girls looked like they were going to kiss



Bah, humbug! Paloma Faith looks just mint in black-and-white ensemble
Singer tries out one of her trademark kooky outfits



Mel C spices up Edinburgh music festival... but will jazz lovers think it is 'sacrilege'?
Her inclusion has caused some serious backlash



I'm a desperately busy housewife! Eva Longoria cooks and gets her hair done at once
Address posted photo on her Twitter account



How does SamCam stay so glam with a baby on the way?
ALEXANDRA SHULMAN says PM's wife deserves her place in Vanity Fair's best-dressed list



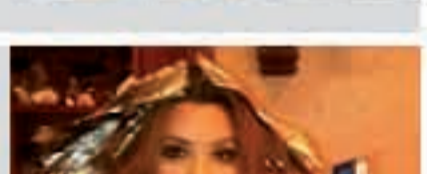
Sting and wife Trudie Styler embrace la dolce vita selling organic wares from their estate in Tuscany
It's been home from home for 15 years



I lay paralysed and unable to speak for 18 months... but my family's unyielding love brought about a true miracle
Kerry had locked-in syndrome



Keying the honeymoon? Alicia Keys' husband celebrates married life with a boys' night out
There was no sign of his new wife



The dress that thinks it's a skirt... and a top... and a belt
Wolford's seamless tube of stretchy fabric is a bargain at £89



Jessica Alba enjoys a mid-shop struggle with adorable daughter Honor
Sin City actress was restocking after month long European jaunt



It's over (for good this time): Sean Penn and Robin Wright finalise divorce
The on-again, off-again pair have officially parted ways



Don't look, Katy! Russell Brand locks lips with film co-star
First picture of Arthur leading lady Greta Gerwig



Snooki snuggles with a new guy on Jersey Shore date at Muscle Maker Grill
In Jersey Shore speak, he looks like a perfect 'gonilla juicehead'



Tom Hanks flies the green flag for electric cars as he cruises around LA in his eBox
Actor won't get any stars for style though



Eeee! There's a mouse!
Where? In Demi Moore's hair (not to mention her cleavage)
Creature crawled over her during photoshoot in Malibu



Two doctors deny supplying Anna Nicole Smith with 'hospital heroin' before her death
The trial of the pair and her ex-boyfriend Howard K Stern starts



Humbugi! Big Brother's Corin plays Scrooge in new look as Dave goes up for eviction
The house was infested with human-sized bugs yesterday



Best Read

Best dressed bump! Vanity Fair's voted her a fashion icon - so how does SamCam stay so glam with a baby on the way?

I lay paralysed and unable to speak for 18 months... but my family's unyielding love brought about a true miracle

Beauty Confidential: How can I bring my hair back to life after two weeks on the beach?

LIZ JONES MOANS: Forget the gym, lets just bring back the girdle

The dress that thinks it's a skirt... and a top... and a belt

Why do I keep apologising for having just one child?

As Lourdes launches her own risqué fashion range, how Madonna is grooming her daughter to eclipse her stardom

Au pairs hate us? It's mutual (and I should know, I've had 12)

Kelly Brook: Finding clothes that suit my curvy shape has been a struggle

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