



For Immediate Release
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HEALTH BENEFITS OF UMAMI, INCLUDING SODIUM REDUCTION, ADDRESSED AT THE WORLD UMAMI FORUM

TOKYO (October 18, 2018) – Known as the savory taste, umami is currently celebrating a year-long recognition of its 110th anniversary since its remarkable discovery in 1908. As part of the commemoration, food science experts, notorious researchers, journalists, registered dietitians, and culinary professionals from different parts of the world gathered for two days in New York, September 20-21 to share the current knowledge behind umami taste and educate consumers about how monosodium glutamate, also known as MSG, contributes to health by giving better taste to low salt foods.



With an extraordinary line-up of expert presenters and panelists, the World Umami Forum ([WUF](#)) began with the opening remarks of the CEO and President of the [Ajinomoto Company](#) Takaaki Nishii. He defined MSG as “the purest form of umami” and explained that MSG “was introduced in the U.S. market in 1917 with a vision of a new way to bring taste to everyone’s kitchen”. Today, umami has become a familiar term and thanks to “continued research efforts in the last few decades”, Mr. Nishii reminded everyone that “umami is recognized as a basic taste perception, much like the classic basic taste: sweet, salty, sour and bitter.” Nowadays, many are happy to eat umami rich savory foods, such as cheese or tomatoes, but few realize that the glutamate responsible for the umami taste from these foods is exactly the same as the glutamate of the seasoning MSG. The TV personality and celebrity chef Andrew Zimmern ([@andrewzimmern](#)) gracefully lead the event for researchers and experts to expand the knowledge of umami and its important function in international cuisines.

Although universal, umami has unique properties that: the ability to increase taste intensity, a lower content of sodium than table salt, and the ability to increase salivation and induce a mouthfeel or tongue coating sensation. Participants at World Umami Forum experience these effects by themselves tasting a low-salt vegetable soup, dried tomato, and fermented cheeses.

It was in Japan that [110 years ago](#) Professor and Chemist Kikunae Ikeda identified the taste of glutamate after skillfully isolating it from the Japanese kelp broth. He was the first researcher to find the exceptional taste properties of glutamate. Dr. Kikunae resolved to name the taste of glutamate ‘umami’ from Japanese “delicious taste” which is a distinctive taste different from sweet, sour, bitter and salty. Dr. Ikeda’s driving goal was to improve the nutrition of the Japanese with his umami seasoning.



The International Glutamate Information Service (IGIS) is a non-profit organization communicating science-based information about umami, glutamate, and monosodium glutamate (umami seasoning). For more information, contact Ana San Gabriel, IGIS secretariat, at glutamate.info@gmail.com, and visit glutamate.org.

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