Umami
Food
Ingredients

Drawing out the unique richness of each ingredient

With a distinctive richness, umami draws out the flavor of ingredients.

"Umami," which appears in the presence of other foods, represents the "Fifth Taste" essential to Japanese cuisine. Umami is one of the five tastes in Japanese cuisine and is said to be the fifth taste after sweetness, sourness, saltiness and bitterness. Fermented foods like cheese and vegetables like tomatoes contain high levels of umami. In Japanese cuisine, using the umami contained in seafood, seaweeds, mushrooms and fermented foods extracts the natural flavor of the respective ingredients and provides an excellent seasoning even in foods with low fat content. Umami represents the cornerstone of healthy Japanese food.

A variety of ingredients containing Japanese "umami."
To use the umami element in Japanese cooking, water and dashi ingredients must be used to obtain dashi stock. Mostly dried ingredients are used to make dashi stock. The umami elements increase during the drying and processing stages and nutrients are also concentrated. Miso paste or fermented soybean paste and soy sauce, both essential ingredients in Japanese cooking, also gain added umami during processing. It is well known that sushi and sashimi is eaten with soy sauce as the umami of soy sauce enhances the flavor of fish with minimal salt. Japan is blessed with a wealth of umami food ingredients that extract the natural taste of the raw ingredients.

Secrets behind the flavor of dashi stock - its constituents.
The constituents of dashi stock include inosinic acid and glutamic acid, types of amino acids. It is known that these produce a stronger umami effect when used in combination. Just as meat flavor improves when simmered together with vegetables, savoring Japanese dashi stock in conjunction with food ingredients creates a masterpiece of flavor.

Using favorite Japanese seasonings in world cuisine.
Unusual combinations are delicious.
An increasing number of chefs around the world are using distinctive Japanese seasonings like soy sauce, miso paste and yuzu pepper. The unique aroma and sensory stimulation of these ingredients are popular among diners. They make ideal seasonings for vegetable dip, pasta sauces and stir-fried vegetables and enable diners to discover completely new flavors.

"Cuisine without dashi stock is unimaginable."

Japanese dashi stock has the power to extract the maximum innate flavor from food. It delivers low calorie cuisine finished with a rich taste.

Christopher Dawson
(Importer of Organic and Traditional Japanese Foods in London
Recipient of Award for Overseas Promotion of Japanese Food 2007)
The best ways of enjoying Japanese food

A feature of Japanese food is that it draws out the flavor of the ingredients. In order to realize this, it is important to identify the unique features of each ingredient and then prepare dishes to reflect these features. The visual appeal of each dish is also important. I make sure that the season is expressed in each dish that I create so that the meal has both visual appeal and flavor.

Kenmi Nakamura, Chef
Owner of "Kenmi Ariake." One of Japan’s leading chefs of Japanese-style cuisine who gained popularity on television as an "Iron Chef."

Information-packed website "Oishii Japan"
http://www.maff.go.jp/e/oishii/
http://www.maff.go.jp/e/japan_food/