
THE GLUTAMATE
ASSOCIATION
UNITED STATES

**The Glutamate Association points out that you
can't fake the Taste of Umami**

Washington, DC (August 25, 2009) - When Professor Kikunae Ikeda coined the term "umami" to describe the taste of glutamate, he created a word that describes the special contribution that this amino acid makes to our experience of food and drink.

Glutamate is a natural part of our diet, and gives ripe tomatoes, Parmesan cheese and mushrooms their appealing tastes. Our bodies make glutamate and do not distinguish between glutamate in food and glutamate in seasoning. Umami is the fifth basic taste and glutamate is nature's most abundant source of umami in foods. As the sodium salt of glutamic acid, monosodium glutamate or MSG, is the natural choice for imparting umami.

Claims made last week by Givaudan, the Swiss flavor producer, promoting the company's flavor compounds are misleading. They ignore the role that glutamate plays in diet and nutrition and encourage food companies to stigmatize a safe and beneficial ingredient.

Givaudan's announcement also ignores the science that confirms umami as the fifth basic taste. Since the discovery of the umami taste receptor, its mechanism has been defined in detail. Umami taste receptors are especially sensitive to glutamate - the purest taste of umami - whether it derives from corn-on-the-cob, Serrano ham or seasoning. Furthermore, recent work on umami receptors shows that the reason ribonucleotides, such as inosinate, increase umami taste when consumed with glutamate, is that there are specific sites on the umami receptors for these ingredients. Glutamate and ribonucleotides work synergistically not only in delicious food combinations, like tomato and beef in Bolognese sauce, but at a molecular level. An objective evaluation of Givaudan's flavors shows that they cannot match nature's source of the umami taste.

Consumer research has identified, not surprisingly, that people tend to "shoot the messenger" - products that carry claims that they do not contain MSG may seem like a good idea to a marketer under pressure, but in fact reduce the overall standing of the brand in the eyes of consumers. In any case, if Givaudan's compounds were to deliver a true umami taste, they would, ironically, have to be listed in the product's ingredients declaration under their common or chemical name.

People all over the world enjoy the taste of umami, and glutamate is pure umami. Givaudan's attempt to sell its flavors by stigmatizing glutamate ignore both the scientific facts and the market-place realities.

For more information about MSG: www.msgfacts.com

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The Glutamate Association seeks to provide an effective channel of communication for its members, the public, the media, the scientific community, food professionals, and government officials about the use and safety of glutamate. The Association also seeks to assure that relevant research and information on the safety and efficacy of MSG are made available to all interested parties.