

In the West, we have identified four basic tastes—sour, sweet, salty, and bitter—that, through skillful combination and technique, create delicious foods. Yet in many parts of East Asia over the past century, a fifth taste—umami—has entered the culinary lexicon. Umami is savory, complex, and wholly distinct. Combining culinary history with research into the science, preparation, nutrition, and culture of food, this book encapsulates what we know to date about the concept of umami, which, when harnessed, enables us to become more intimate with the subtleties of human taste and make better food choices for ourselves and our families.



“This book will be your go-to umami resource. The content is cleverly layered with molecular-level explanations of how we taste, alongside rich cultural perspectives and beautiful recipes. With its stunning illustrations, this book is eye candy.”

—Amy Rowat, founder of *Science & Food*

“In his earlier books *Sushi* and *Seaweeds*, Ole Mouritsen weaves together biological, chemical, and gastronomical perspectives, creating a rich portrait of these intriguing foods. In *Umami*, writing with the chef Klavs Styrbæk, he does the same for this much celebrated yet enigmatic ‘new’ taste. *Umami* is a wide-ranging and welcome progress report on our understanding of taste and deliciousness.”

—Harold McGee, author of *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*

“A remarkably comprehensive account of umami taste and one in which the science is not only accurate but accessible and interesting.”

—John Prescott, author of *Taste Matters: Why We Like the Foods We Do*

“In this comprehensive and accessible book, Mouritsen and Styrbæk demystify the science of umami and clarify many Japanese elements that have not been explained in English before. Along with Mouritsen’s other publications, *Umami* will be referred to time and time again.”

—Yukari Sakamoto, author of *Food Sake Tokyo*



Ole G. Mouritsen is a distinguished scientist and professor of biophysics at the University of Southern Denmark. His books include *Life: As a Matter of Fat*; *Sushi: Food for the Eye, the Body, and the Soul*; and *Seaweeds: Edible, Available, and Sustainable*.

Klavs Styrbæk is a chef who, for more than twenty years, has owned and run the highly regarded Restaurant Kvægtorvet (The Cattle Market) in Odense, Denmark, and is a passionate advocate for the renewal of classical Danish cuisine.

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PERSPECTIVES ON CULINARY HISTORY

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Umami

Unlocking the Secrets of the Fifth Taste

Ole G. Mouritsen and Klavs Styrbæk



Umami

Unlocking the Secrets of the Fifth Taste

This unique volume is the product of an unusual, ongoing collaboration between a chef and a scientist, who undertook a joint project to unlock the secrets of the fifth taste. They describe their experiences along the way and present a wide range of recipes and good advice about how anyone can impart more umami to food prepared at home. The book can be used as a cookbook, but to an equal extent it can be thought of as an incentive to discover more about the subtleties of taste and as a source of inspiration.

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www.umamibook.net

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Klavs Styrbæk is a celebrated and award-winning Danish chef and owner of Restaurant Kvægtorvet (“The Cattle Market”) in Odense. His book *Mormor’s mad* (“Grandmother’s Food”) was honored with a special jury prize at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in 2007.

