



Flavor & the Menu
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Making Sense of **FLAVOR**

From umami know-how to optimum fruit ripeness and the best cooking techniques, commodity boards are leading the way to better sensory awareness

BY KATHY HAYDEN

QUANTIFYING CRAVE

Another umami-loving board is the Mushroom Council, which published an industry white paper on the subject in 2007. And, it seems, the more the industry knows about umami, the better: The flavor-building effect is enhanced when umami-rich ingredients like beef and mushrooms are used together. Or, as explained in the Mushroom Council's white paper, subtitled "If You've Got it, Flaunt it," compounding umami with beef and mushrooms and the cooking process creates an "umami sensation."

The Mushroom Council is also using umami know-how to address foodservice challenges

posed by the recent National Salt Reduction Initiative, which aims to reduce sodium in 25 classes of restaurant food, explains Claudia Pesce, account representative for Edelman, which handles the Mushroom Council's foodservice communications.

"According to Dietician Jacqueline Marcus, when properly used, umami counterbalances saltiness and can contribute up to a 50 percent salt reduction without compromising desirability," says Pesce.

The Beef Checkoff's Zino points out that understanding umami also helps chefs avoid flavor pairings that aren't effective.

"We learned more about what flavors compete with beef. Some fresh herbs, like rosemary, can be tough, and sweet-and-sour sauces are better suited to chicken and pork. We found that it's best to avoid stronger flavors."



Doubling up on umami, as in this mushroom-and-salmon pairing, creates the kind of taste sensation that the Mushroom Council hopes to boost.