

Let's get started with flavor! First we're going to talk a little bit about what flavor is, why we need to pay attention to it, and then we'll define the 6 types of flavors.

We all know that food is nourishment. But why do we seek it out the way we do? If all we need is calories, why do people all over the world have such a deep affinity for the food they grew up with? Why do people celebrate big life events by going out to eat? Why do we get cravings for food? That strange sensation when we're hungry, but only for a certain kind of food. People generally have a negative association with food cravings. Whether you've experienced them yourself or you've read warnings online about the ravenous cravings for unhealthy foods that come in the night. But cravings aren't limited to unhealthy food and they aren't always a symptom of weak self control. The inkling that you'd rather eat hummus instead of yogurt for a snack, isn't going to get the same media attention as a harrowing sugar craving. But it's still meaningful and worth your attention. Learning how to observe and analyze the signals your body is trying to send, makes a huge difference in creating a healthy, enjoyable relationship with your food over the long haul.

Our body knows what it needs but it needed a way to get that message into our thoughts so that we can take action. Over thousands, possibly millions of years, the human species has learned to detect and seek out nutrients using a specific language. The language of flavor.

Before companies stripped food down to its blandest and most basic state and covered it with synthetic flavor powders, flavor used to be the language of nourishment. Biting in to a juicy sweet strawberry sent instant signals to the brain and the gut that a wave of sugars, carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins, and minerals were on their way. And until 70ish years ago, flavor backed up its promise. Food tasted like nutrients and it delivered nutrients.

This is no longer the case when it comes to processed food. A Dorito may taste like a taco but it doesn't come with any of the protein, healthy fats, antioxidants, phytochemicals, vitamins and minerals that you would find in a real tortilla filled with beef, tomato, lettuce, sour cream, and just a squeeze of lime. But the promise of nutrition with flavor is still true when it comes to real food.

There is a belief in America that healthy food tastes bland. And yeah, when you walk down the snack aisle in your grocery store and compare the intensely flavored processed snacks with the "healthy" whole wheat, whole grain, high fiber, low fat processed snacks, there's a gap in flavor, for sure.

But when you eat whole, real, unprocessed, straight from the ground food, healthy and delicious are one in the same.

Anyone who has ever eaten a peak season, organic heirloom tomato can tell you. Real flavor is really good!

You're probably familiar with the 4 main flavors. Salty, Sweet, Bitter, and Sour. Those are the most well known flavors and they correspond with known receptors on your tongue.

I remember in kindergarten learning that there were sections on your tongue for each flavor; sweet flavors were tasted at the front, sour on the sides, and so on.

That theory has now been debunked and it turns out that receptors for each flavor are scattered over every part of your tongue and there even receptors in your gut lining. In addition to these four flavors, you also have receptors for a flavor called Umami. Here in the states some folks call it savory and to keep things simple, I'm going to use Umami and Savory interchangeably.

Umami seems like a new flavor, I only learned about it a few years ago, but it was actually discovered in 1908 by a professor in Japan who discovered that the glutamic acid that naturally forms in fish broth accounted for its rich, meaty flavor. Fun fact, that professor promptly started a business manufacturing and selling a synthetic form of glutamic acid called MSG.

But the true flavor of Umami from glutamic acid occurs naturally in many whole foods. We'll explore Umami more in depth in the next video. For now, think of umami as that rich, savory flavor you taste in a good homemade bone broth or a grilled mushroom.

The sixth flavor we'll learn about it isn't technically a flavor in the way the others are. There are no receptors on the tongue for this, and in fact, it's actually a category that contains many different and unique flavors.

I call it Pungent, and although it's not a true flavor, it's an important piece of the puzzle to create salads that have interest and depth. Pungent flavors are often aromatic and intense. For example, rosemary, oregano, basil, all of these ingredients are pungent flavors.

So all together, the six types of flavors are sweet, umami, salty, sour, bitter, and pungent.

Usually when people learn about the six main flavors, they want to set up rules for which flavors go best together. That's normal, we humans love following systems, strategies and patterns. Well, the fact is, there are no rules because they all go together.

Every possible combination of these six flavors can create an amazing recipe. Salty and bitter might look like a pistachio and Brussels sprout salad. Pungent and sweet could be a classic honey mustard vinaigrette.

The trick to creating great flavor combinations isn't in following rules, it's about understanding the role each flavor plays and then letting your senses and creativity guide you.

Let the smell and aroma of each ingredient bring up ideas for new combinations. Don't sensor yourself by saying 'I'm not a chef I can't do this' or 'gee I've never seen that combination in a recipe it must not be any good'. Try it!

# Build A Better Salad

## Module 2 – The 6 Key Flavors

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Let yourself be creative and approach these flavors fearlessly. No one was born a great cook. Even Julie Child couldn't boil water when she first got married. It's by getting in the kitchen and having fun that you'll develop a deep sense of taste and composition.

In the next three lessons we'll go more in depth on each flavor and you'll get the chance to play around in your first three salad activities.

For now, I'd like you to start working your categorization muscle in project #3.