

In the last video we learned about the six key flavors, sweet, umami, salty, sour, bitter, and pungent. These six flavors fit into three larger categories; dominant, enhancing, and intriguing. Today we're going to talk about the first category, Dominant flavors.

First we'll look at what these flavors are, next we'll talk about the role they play in a salad, and last we'll explore some excellent salad ingredients from each flavor.

Our two dominant flavors are sweet and umami. We're all pretty familiar with sweet, but what the heck is umami? Technically umami is a specific taste that stimulates designated receptors on your tongue when glutamates or nucleotides are present. However, for our purposes I like to group umami and savory flavors together and use the words interchangeably. This group of flavors is meaty, robust, and earthy. It is distinct from other categories like salty, bitter, sweet, or sour. For example, asparagus is savory where parmesan cheese is salty. Walnuts are savory where onions are pungent. Whole food ingredients have complex flavors that exhibit characteristics of multiples categories. In these lessons, we're talking about the ingredient's most dominant flavor.

Sweet flavors are easier to define. They're sweet! The point I want to make here is that there is more to sweetness than refined sugar. Sweet flavors are found in many whole, real foods and can be a lovely addition to any salad. We'll explore some ingredient ideas at the end of this video.

The dominant flavors, sweet and umami, play two main roles in a salad. They provide a framework to showcase other flavors and they create balance when used together.

Let's talk about that first role, providing a framework to showcase other flavors. Sweet and Umami flavors can provide a foundation, for other flavors to shine. My favorite example of this is a caprese salad. It's only three ingredients, tomato, mozzarella, and basil. Well, 6 ingredients if you want to count olive oil, salt, and pepper. The savory tomato acts as the perfect framework for the salty mozzarella and pungent basil to shine. Without the tomato, the basil would overpower the mozzarella and the dish would taste one dimensional. The tomato bolsters the subtle flavor of the mozzarella and grounds the pungent intensity of fresh basil, creating a beautifully complex, yet utterly simple dish.

Sweet ingredients generally take more of a starring role, but they can also provide a framework for other flavors to shine. One of my favorite salad ingredients are roasted beets. An undeniably sweet ingredient. But their sweetness provides a backdrop to play around with highly pungent and sour flavors like radishes, pickled onions, kalamata olives, capers, and tangy vinegars. Ingredients that could otherwise overpower a dish, but are grounded by the sweetness of the beets.

In addition to providing a framework for other flavors, sweet and umami ingredients create balance in a dish when used together.

Many recipes call for both sweet and savory ingredients. Even a classic lasagna has a little sugar added to the tomato sauce. And salads are no exception. That combination of sweet and savory is captivating. And there are dozens of fantastic ingredients you can use to play around with that balance.

You can also use this balance to course correct if you're salad gets a little too far to one side. See, sweet and savory flavors are opposites. When your salad feels a little one sided, adding ingredients from the opposite end of the flavor spectrum can create balance. If you've already put together your salad, the dressing is the perfect place to apply this principle. We'll look into this idea deeper when we get to module number 4 and our lesson on using salad dressings to fix flavors gone wrong.

Next up, let's explore some sweet and savory salad ingredients!

Sweet ingredients as we mentioned before, there is more to sweetness than refined sugar. Many whole foods have subtle sweet undertones that can be accentuated in a salad. And sweetness in whole foods' isn't limited to fruit. There are plenty of veggies that also have sweet flavors.

- Beet
- Bell Pepper
- Butternut squash
- Carrot
- Corn
- Parsnip
- Peas
- Pumpkin
- Rutabaga
- Snap peas
- Sweet potato

Of course, fruit is a classic way to add sweetness into a dish.

- Cantaloupe
- Fig
- Mango
- Peach
- Plum
- Raspberry
- Strawberry
- Watermelon

Even meat ingredients can add a hint of sweetness

- ham
- scallops

Crab  
shrimp

You can also find lots of toppings and nuts that have sweet undertones. This will vary person to person, you might want to put all the nuts in umami, or if you like them all roasted with salt, you can put them under salty. For me, there are few nuts that have just enough sweetness to count them in this category.

Hazelnuts  
Macadamia  
Pecans  
Cashews

Coconut flakes

Honey  
Jam / Jelly / Preserves  
Maple syrup  
fruit juice

### Umami ingredients

Umami has the largest selection of veggie ingredients. Now, depending on your sensitivity to bitterness, you might want to recategorize a few of these over to bitter. For the most part, these ingredients have a nice savoryness to them, especially when cooked.

Artichoke  
Asparagus  
Broccoli  
Brussels sprouts  
Cabbage  
Cauliflower  
Celery  
Green beans  
Kohlrabi  
Mushrooms  
Okra  
Potato  
Spaghetti squash  
Tomato  
Turnip  
Zucchini  
Squash, Crookneck

It's no surprise, umami also has the largest selection of meat.

chicken  
Sausage  
bacon  
tuna  
salmon  
sardines  
anchovies  
smoked oysters

Fun fact, anchovies are one of the key ingredients in Cesar salad dressing. They seem like a strange ingredient to include at first, but they add tons of richness and meaty flavor.

There are lots of small umami ingredients that play background roles while adding tons of flavor.

Walnuts  
Sundried Tomatoes  
Brazil nuts  
Chestnuts  
Peanuts  
Blue Cheese  
Soy Sauce  
Worcestershire Sauce  
Ketchup  
anchovy paste  
Peanut butter  
Salsa

These lists are full, but definitely not complete. Remember, your tastes will evolve over time. At the moment, ingredients like scallops and cashews may not seem very sweet. Try to keep an open mind each time you eat and really think about the flavors. Real ingredients are much more complex than just sweet or salty, but simply asking yourself questions like, ‘does this taste sweet?’ or ‘What category does this fit in?’ your brain will begin to reconsider ingredients that you’ve probably been eating your whole life and it will start to form new and interesting connections. Now that we’re more familiar with sweet and umami ingredients, lets talk about salad #1