

In the last lesson we learned about the two dominant flavors, sweet and umami. Today let's take a look at another flavor category, the enhancing flavors, salty and sour.

First we'll look at what these flavors are, next we'll talk about the roles they play in a salad, and last we'll explore some excellent salty and sour salad ingredients!

The first flavor needs almost no introduction. I'm sure you're familiar with salty. Salt, or more specifically, sodium, is an essential nutrient. It's what helps our body regulate blood pressure and helps fluid pass in and out of cell walls. When we talk about salty flavors in a salad, we're talking about both seasoning ingredients by adding salt and using ingredients that are naturally salty, like brined olives or parmesan cheese.

Sour ingredients are tangy and acidic. They're tart and have a puckering affect. Sour ingredients come in a range of intensities, allowing you plenty of room to play around with their effects. We'll look at specific ingredients at the end of this lesson.

So what do salty and sour ingredients do? Why would we make a point to include them in a salad? These two ingredients are called Enhancing flavors, meaning that their presence enhances the flavor of other ingredients. Specifically, Salt intensifies and sour brightens.

Lets start with salty. There's a great quote from Alton Brown that sums it up perfectly, "Salt makes food taste more like itself". That is so true. If you've ever eaten a piece of plain avocado and then ate a salted piece, there's a huge difference! Suddenly the avocado has a richer, deeper, more avocado-y flavor. And this affect is true for any ingredient. There are two ways you can achieve this intensifying affect in a salad. First by seasoning ingredients with salt, and second, by incorporating ingredients that have a predominantly salty flavor.

Many home cooks will cook each item plain, combine them into the finished dish, and serve the dish with a salt shaker on the table for people to season themselves. What you end up with is a small amount of salt sitting on top of the dish, which you then have to mix together and hope that all of the ingredients got enough. Many chefs believe that you should season each element of a dish separately as you cook and then combine them. With this method, a tiny bit of salt appears in layers throughout the dish, helping to intensify the flavor of each ingredient

Properly seasoning ingredients is a skill that takes time to develop. There is no exact ratio of salt per ingredient that indicates when something has been properly seasoned. Instead, there is a spectrum. Start with just a little bit, taste, and adjust.

I definitely believe in seasoning ingredients separately, but it's also a lot of fun to experiment with adding salty ingredients. This route gives you a big punch of saltiness that plays really well with other strong flavors. One of my favorite flavor combinations is salty and sweet. There's something about it that I just cannot get enough of! Now when you use a heavily salty ingredient, we'll use prosciutto as an example, it's important to recognize that the saltiness from the

prosciutto will add to the overall saltiness of the dish and so you'll want to season other ingredients lightly so that you get the enhancing affect without overwhelming the whole salad.

Sour flavors act in a similar manner; they also enhance the natural flavor of ingredients. But rather than intensifying the flavor, they brighten the flavor. So what do I mean by that? Well, adding lemon to a dish is a great example. A quick squeeze of lemon adds energy, and wakes everything up. It elevates and enlivens the dish.

Just like our salty flavor, you can create this energetic, brightening affect by seasoning the dish with something like lemon juice or vinegar, or you can use whole ingredients that contain sour flavors. Again, the trick is to consider all of your ingredients and decide how much extra flavor you need to add.

Next up, let's explore some ingredients!

Salty ingredients

There aren't too many vegetables that have a predominantly salty flavor, but we're starting off this list with two interesting ones

Sea beans
seaweed nori

Then of course we've got salty meats.

lox
prosciutto

And our cheeses

Feta Cheese
Cheddar Cheese
Parmesan
Mazithra

My favorite salty ingredients are these small topping ingredients that don't add a ton of substance, but they add so much flavor!

Capers
nutritional yeast
Olives
Pistachios
Pumpkin Seeds
Fish Sauce

Sour ingredients

We start off our list of sour with some tart fruits.

- Blackberry
- Cherry
- Grapefruit
- Kiwi fruit
- Lemon
- Lime
- Orange
- Persimmon
- Pineapple
- Pomegranate
- Rhubarb

There are also lots of interesting condiments that make lovely additions to a salad and add a burst of sour flavor.

- Dill Pickles
- Fermented veggies
- Kalamata olives
- Pickled onions
- Sauerkraut

And of course, we can't talk about sour ingredients without talking about vinegar! Now we'll look at vinegars specifically more in depth in Module 4. There is so much variety in vinegar flavors and I've added my favorites to this list.

- Rice vinegar
- Red wine vinegar
- Fruit Vinegar
- Balsamic vinegar
- Apple cider vinegar
- Kombucha

So now that we have a better idea of salty and sour ingredients that are available to you, lets talk about salad activity #2.