

## Measures to Enhance Corporate Brand Value (1): World Umami Forum

### World Umami Forum

# Promoting the benefits of umami to the world

#### Details of the forum

Dates: September 20 – 21, 2018  
Venue: Conrad Hotel, New York City  
Attendees: About 200



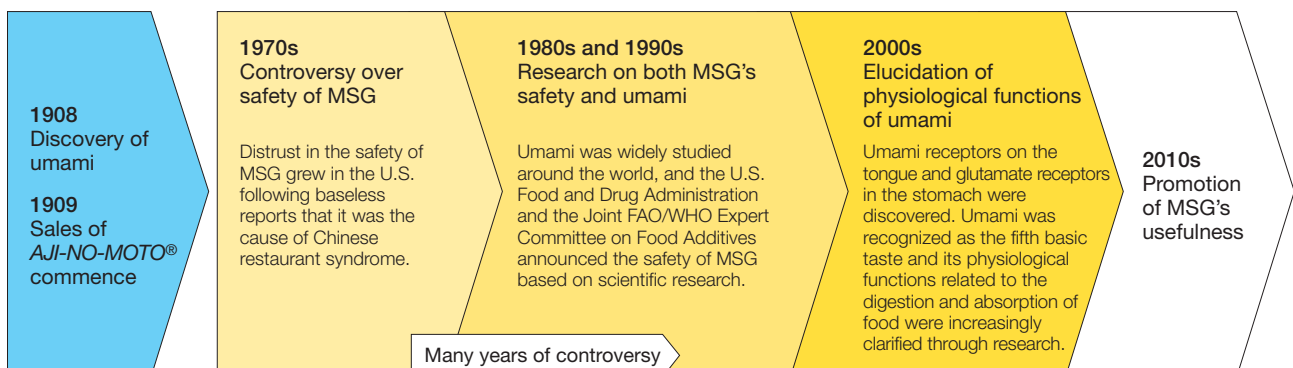
A panel discussion at the event

Marking the 110th anniversary of the discovery of umami by Dr. Kikunae Ikeda, the Ajinomoto Group held the World Umami Forum (WUF) in New York City in 2018 as a venue for providing accurate information about monosodium glutamate (MSG) and umami taste, and clearing up misconceptions among consumers around the world.

#### Combatting baseless rumors about MSG

In the 1970s, an increasing number of consumers in the U.S. became concerned over the safety of MSG following baseless rumors that it was the cause of so-called “Chinese restaurant syndrome,” a group of symptoms including numbness, weakness and palpitations experienced by some people after eating Chinese food. To this day, some restaurants and food manufacturers declare that no MSG is used in their food, especially in the U.S. and Europe.

Against that backdrop, the Group held the WUF in September 2018, recognizing that interest in food safety and health is on the rise today now that consumers all over the world are using the internet. Held in the U.S., the world’s primary information hub, the two-day event featured fact-based discussions and presentations about MSG by prominent influencers in the food community, including dietitians, chefs, journalists, and academics.



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### Shedding light on umami from various viewpoints



#### Sarah Lohman

American Gastronomy Historian and Author

At the forum, Ms. Lohman noted that since the 1960s, MSG has been regarded as bad for health without any scientific evidence. In recent years, however, large-scale clinical studies have proven that there are no harmful effects on the body. She discussed how awareness is changing among Americans as they have more opportunities to try MSG, especially through food prepared by young chefs and Asian chefs.



#### Dr. Gary Beauchamp

Distinguished Member, Emeritus Director and President, Monell Chemical Senses Center

Dr. Beauchamp explained that umami is a distinct taste from the four basic tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter), and although its taste is not enjoyable on its own, it enhances the flavor of the foods it is added to. He also noted that more research is needed in the future to understand why MSG makes food taste good and the mechanisms underlying such phenomena.

### Discussions by experts in a wide range of fields

About 200 people attended the WUF. In the opening address, Ajinomoto Co., Inc.'s President and CEO, Takaaki Nishii, emphasized the company's desire to more actively share fact-based information with consumers through transparent means.

Presentations were then given by experts in various disciplines, including a researcher of flavor and aroma, a flavor scientist, a historian of gastronomic culture, as well as leading chefs. From a wide range of viewpoints, they disproved the misinformation about MSG's safety and discussed its benefits, such as improving the taste of low-sodium foods.

In a panel discussion entitled "Debunking the Myths and Mysteries Behind MSG," five experts exchanged views on how to repair MSG's negative image and public misconceptions. They agreed on the importance of education and providing accurate information about MSG, including the fact that it is naturally contained in food and breast milk in the form of glutamate, and is useful for enhancing the flavor of food and making delicious low-sodium dishes.

### Fostering an understanding of umami and MSG globally

According to a survey conducted after the WUF, the image of MSG among dietitians and food forward consumers

	Responses to questions	January 2018	November 2018
Dieticians	Have a positive image of MSG	52%	63%
	Understand that MSG is a source of umami taste	50%	62%
Food-forward consumers	Have a negative image of MSG	39%	33%
	Have a positive image of MSG	65%	68%

improved compared with a previous survey before the event as shown below.

American dieticians who attended the forum seemed most impressed by the usefulness of MSG for reducing salt intake, a finding that they widely disseminated via social media. Attendees also had an impact outside the U.S. In Nigeria, for example, social media influencers provided correct information about MSG, especially in the southern part of the country where negative images have persisted. Moreover, a video about the benefits of MSG independently produced by doctors who attended the forum was shown at Brazil's largest nutrition-related conference, Ganepão 2019, which was attended by about 2,000 physicians and dieticians. In Japan, Ajinomoto Co., Inc. has been actively involved in public communications, and has held press conferences to address the consumer issue of "additive free" labels and signs.

Looking ahead, the Ajinomoto Group intends to continue sharing accurate information with consumers so that people around the world can enjoy delicious and healthy food without misplaced concerns over MSG's safety.

#### Umami cooking competition

One of the highlights of the WUF was an umami cooking competition, in which six top culinary students from the U.S. demonstrated their skills through original dishes rich with umami. The winner was awarded a culinary immersion trip to Japan.



# Building an effective system to address the social issues of undernutrition and overnutrition

In July 2017, the Ajinomoto Group established the Group Shared Policy on Nutrition and the Nutrition Strategy Guideline based on the policy. These provide a foundation for the Group's business activities to promote "health and well-being." Since FY2018, a cross-organizational task force headed by a Corporate Senior Vice President has been formulating a comprehensive nutrition strategy with specific commitments along with a system to ensure the strategy is effectively executed.

The Group is currently constructing the Ajinomoto Group Nutrient Profiling System (ANPS), which it plans to use as a tool for reformulating existing products, developing new healthier products in the global product portfolio, and developing healthier menus. The ANPS will clarify upper and lower intake limits of sensitive and positive nutrients based on the World Health Organization recommendations. The Group will be particularly seeking

to manage sodium, saturated fat, added sugars, protein, and fruits and vegetables. The ANPS is unique in that it covers not only products but also menus.

The Group will reflect the nutrition strategy and commitments in its medium-term management plan starting from FY2020, and the ANPS will be sequentially installed in all Group companies.

## We are building collaborative relationships with stakeholders and stepping up our activities to improve nutrition.

The Ajinomoto Group is unique in its ability to provide solutions based on deliciousness for the worldwide public health issues of the nutritional double burden: undernutrition and overnutrition. We are using our expertise combining amino acid function with various food technologies to strengthen efforts throughout the Group to improve nutrition and contribute to realizing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Our products are currently sold in over 130 countries in all regions of the globe, and we are deeply aware of the importance of maintaining active and collaborative relationships with governments, local communities, and other stakeholders in each country and region. Based on external evaluations such as the Access to Nutrition Index (ATNI)\*, the Group will focus on and continue advancing its nutrition improvement activities.

\*The ATNI is a nutrition access index developed by the Access to Nutrition Foundation (ATNF), an independent non-profit organization based in the Netherlands, created to objectively evaluate and improve companies' efforts to address global nutrition issues.



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▶ For details, please see the Ajinomoto Group Sustainability Data Book 2019.  
<https://www.ajinomoto.com/en/activity/>