Finding Fuller Flavor

Helpful Hints

- Focus on the basic tastes taste is the main gateway to initial acceptance of food and its comprised of fewer elements that can be perceived separately even in a mixture.
- Taste as you go as flavor changes over the course of cooking and you don't know what something tastes like until you taste it. Just make sure it's OK to eat it (e.g., don't taste something that might make you sick!).
- Do Tiny Tests with a small bit of what you're making mixed with what you want to add and/or if you're adding something aromatic, do a quick small of the ingredient near the dish you're making to see if you like it.
- Add Acidity as it is a taste that generally elevates other flavors and is easy to access (e.g., vinegar, citrus juice, fermented foods).
- Add Aroma using herbs, citrus zest, spices and other "smelly" ingredients, especially immediately before eating. Although this requires some trial and error (i.e., Tiny Tests), this can quickly increase the flavor of any food.

Washoku: Japanese Culinary Theory

- Declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO
- Well presented by Elizabeth Andoh (see Readings and www.washokucooking.com)
- I recommend using it because it's simple and seems to agree with research in flavor science and neurogastronomy.

- *Base Principles*
  - There are 5 basic tastes, colors and preparations.
    - Tastes = sweet, sour, bitter, salty, savory.
    - Colors = white, red, yellow, green, black.
    - Preparations = simmered, steamed, grilled, fried, raw.
  - When constructing a meal, all the basic tastes, colors and preparations should be present.
  - Eating should be mindful, being thankful and considerate of the time, environment and community surrounding food.
- Japanese cuisine is an excellent source of how to find and employ savory (aka. *umami* in Japanese), and the use of seaweed is particularly worth investigation.

Tastes: Where to Find Them

This table is from Barb Stuckey's Taste What You're Missing.

Counterpoint Ingredients for Your Pantry

Ingredients for Adding Complexity	Basic Tastes: Sweet	Sour	Bitter	Salt	Umami	Aromas	Great for
Seasoned rice vinegar	X	X		X		Pungent, fresh	Salad dressings, soups, sauces, salsas
Soy sauce				X	X	Ferment-y, wine-y	All savory food
White wine	X	X				Citrus, apple, butter, vanilla, oak, floral	Salad dressing, finishing sauces
Fish sauce	X	X		X	X	Fishy, ocean-y, funky	Just a dash livens up all savory dishes
Ketchup	X	X		X	X	Warm spices (clove, allspice, cinnamon), onion, garlic, celery	Smoothing out harsh sour and bitter edges by adding a warm umami roundness
Coffee (soluble)			X			Roasty, toasty, peat-y, earthy, bean-y	Sauces, chilis, confections, baked goods
Cocoa				X	X	Chocolate-y, fermented, peat-y, earthy, bean-y	Sauces, chilis, confections, baked goods
Celery				X	X	Vegetal, fresh, ocean-y	Adding a light, fresh savory note to sauces, soups, etc.
Parmesan cheese (or other aged cheese)	X	X		X	X	Cheesy, lactic, dairy, nutty, meaty	Adding umami complexity to almost everything savory (at low levels)
Bitter greens			X			Fresh, green, peppery, sulfury	Side dishes, to add contrast to rich foods
Red wine	X	X	X			Cherry, strawberry, woody, smoky, leather, tobacco	Adding a richness and depth to sauces, soups, and dressings

Flavor Inhibition

Aroma is a major part of flavor, so taking care of your nose is crucial to maximizing your experience of it. Barb Stuckey (see Taste What You're Missing) provides a helpful table of drugs that can inhibit olfaction.

Drugs That Can Cause Smell Disorders

Drug Group with Potential to Cause Smell Disorder(s)	Examples
Calcium channel blockers	Nifedipine, amlodipine, diltiazem
Lipid-lowering	Cholestyramine, clofibrate, statins
Antibiotic and antifungal	Strepromycin, doxycycline, terbinafine
Antithyroid	Carbimazole
Opiate	Codeine, morphine, cocaine
Antidepressant	Amitriptyline, clomipramine, desipramine, doxepin, imipramine, nortriptyline
Sympathomimetic	Dexamphetamine, phenmetrazine
Antiepileptic	Phenytoin
Nasal decongestant	Phenylephrine, Pseudophedrine, oxymetazoline*
Miscellaneous	Smoking, argyria, cadmium fumes, phenothiazines, pesticides, flu vaccine, Betnesol-N
Organic solvents	Formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide, hydrogen selenide, hydrogen sulfide, n-methylformiminomethyl ester, sulfuric acid, zinc sulfide, pepper and cresol powder, phosphorus oxychloride, sulfur dioxide gas, chromium, lead, mercury, nickel, silver, zinc cadmium, manganese, cement dust, lime dust, printing powders, silicon dioxide, carbon disulfide, carbon monoxide, chlorine hydrazine, nitrogen dioxide, ammonia, sulfur dioxide, various fluorides, acetophenone, benzene, chloromethane, acrylates, pentachlorophenol, trichloroethylene
Over-the-counter cold remedies	Zicam Zinc Cold Remedy Nasal Gel, Swabs, and Kids-Size Swabs

*Damage probably requires long-term use.

Source: Christopher H. Hawkes and Richard L. Doty, *The Neurology of Olfaction,* Cambridge University Press, 2009.