

Flavour that adds magic to any dish

YOU might not know exactly what it is, but by now you might have heard of umami.

Because the flavour — described as the fifth basic taste after salty, sweet, sour and bitter — is starting to make an impact in the UK as a food condiment.

It is available as a paste and a powder and adds an intensely savoury note to dishes.

Demand for umami has grown by 25 per cent in the past year, partly down to celebrity endorsements from chefs like Jamie Oliver and Nigel Slater.

Discovered in Japan, it is present in a lot of Oriental cooking as well as foods as different as anchovies, Parmesan, soy sauce, Marmite, mushrooms, shellfish, Worcester Sauce and balsamic vinegar.

People taste umami through glutamate receptors on the tongue — the most abundant amino acid in nature, glutamate is found in meats, cheeses, fish and certain vegetables.

Tesco started stocking its first umami powder nearly three years ago and originally put it on sale in a handful of

... AND CUT-PRICE ASIAN INGREDIENTS AT LIDL

RICE cookers for £9.99, sushi knives for £5.99 and woks for £8.99 each...yes, it's Lidl's Asian week, starting Thursday.

There are fantastic deals on all sorts of food products, too.

Dried herbs and spices are just 49p a pot, soy sauce, fish sauce and oyster sauce are 79p a bottle, and red or green curry pastes are 59p a jar.

Fresh food is included, too, with duck breast fillets at two for £8.



My absolute favourites, though, are the bamboo chopping boards — a steal at £7.99 for a large one, and just £2.99 for the small.



stores. Now it has three varieties — Santa Maria natural Umami paste at £2.99, plus Easy Tasty Magic Umami Pepper and Easy Tasty Magic Umami Rush, both £3.50 — on sale in more than 800 of its stores across Britain. And that number is set to grow this year.

Waitrose, Sainsbury's and Morrisons sell their own paste, and the largest brand of umami products is Laura Santtini, which sells

widely available pastes and powders.

Tesco herbs and spices buyer Cate Kirk said: 'When umami first became available in the UK it was only real foodies who were really buying it. Now it is gaining fans around the country. Once you've tried it you want it again and it is a taste that really excites the senses.'

'Originally shoppers in the UK bought it to add a touch of authenticity to Oriental cooking but now we're hearing that it is being used to add extra

excitement to dishes as different as spaghetti, soups, stews, and various meat and fish creations.'

Umami was 'discovered' in 1908 by Japanese chemist Ikumae Ikeda, who found that this new flavour profile was able to excite every part of the tongue and transmitted a pleasurable feeling to the brain.

The Japanese word umami can be translated as 'pleasant savoury taste'.

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