

Check against delivery

Master Umami & Transform Your Food!
Opening Remarks by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi
at the Embassy of Japan
on Wednesday 15 July 2015

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome you all to the Embassy of Japan and to thank you for joining us here for this special event, *Master Umami and Transform your Food*, where the guests will experience the secrets of Japanese cuisine and *umami*, the ‘fifth taste’. *Umami* is not easy to define, but you know it when you taste it. And I can’t help wondering whether there is perhaps some mystical reason why *umami* rhymes with the colloquial English term “yummy”, as no single English word could better capture the wonderful sensation it imparts!

At the outset, I would like to express my special thanks to the grand master chefs Mr Yoshihiro Murata and Mr Jason Atherton, who have agreed to come here to offer us their inspired insights into *umami*. It also gives me great pleasure to welcome a leading authority on *umami*, Dr Kuniko Ninomiya, as the Keynote presenter and moderator.

I would also like to thank Mr Tetsuro Hama and other members of the Japanese Culinary Academy UK for their enthusiasm and hard work in making this event possible.

The popularity of Japanese cuisine is steadily increasing in the UK. In London alone there are 518 Japanese restaurants, a sixfold increase since 2001. But thankfully, due to the healthy balance that Washoku provides, we have not seen a similar increase in our waistlines.

The charm of *umami* was one of the contributing factors that led to the inclusion of Washoku on the Unesco list of the world’s intangible cultural heritage in 2013. It is this appeal that has led many high-end restaurants, even those serving non-Japanese cuisine, to incorporate elements of *umami* into their dishes.

Many famous chefs, including today’s speaker Mr Atherton, Heston Blumenthal, who spoke at our Washoku event last year, and others such as Gordon Ramsey, are great proponents of *umami*. Today, our three experts will explain the foundations of *umami*, and you will hear how it can help you to transform your own cooking. We hope that in the coming years we will be able to hear the word *umami* in the humblest of English kitchens, not only those of celebrity chefs.

During today’s seminar, you will have the opportunity to taste the bento-style samples prepared by the Japan Culinary Academy UK members’ top London restaurants. I’m sure many of you are salivating already at the prospect, and as if that weren’t tantalising enough, at the following reception you will be able to try sushi and Japanese dishes

from London's finest restaurants and some award-winning sake provided by Sake Samurai. Alas, I will not be able to stay for the reception, but I'm sure none of you will need any encouragement to sample some sushi and sake on my behalf.

I truly hope that this seminar provides you with a full appreciation of *umami*, and have no doubt you will enjoy sampling all the gastronomical delights on offer.

Thank you very much.