

Experience the Power of Umami! Try a Tasting Test.

This sampling activity is to illustrate the power of Umami and how some flavors go better with beef than others.

Activity 1 - Flavor or Taste?

Taste may be defined as the basic taste receptors: sweet, sour, salty, bitter and umami. Flavor is a combination of taste and aroma, texture, juiciness, mouthfeel and color.

Preparation: Purchase assorted Jelly Belly jelly beans.

To illustrate the difference, give each person a Jelly Belly jelly bean. Have them hold their nose with thumb and fore finger while they eat a jelly bean. Ask what they taste? The answer should be “sweet”. As they release their noses, ask what they taste? They should taste the “flavor” of the jelly belly.

Activity 2 – What is Umami?

While it is difficult to describe umami as a “taste” like sweet or salty, one can distinguish its presence in a cheese tasting activity.

Preparation: Purchase a young Cheddar cheese (off the grocery shelf, but not Sharp flavor) and an aged Cheddar (at least 6 months) such as a Cabot Vermont Cheddar. Cut the cheese into small cubes and have each person take one of each.

The aging process results in the development of more umami compounds in foods. Sample each cheese – the aged cheese should be richer, fuller in flavor – with more umami!

Activity 3 – Flavor Pairings

Some flavors go better together than others. This activity will show how a combination of umami-containing foods can create powerful flavor. Steak will be paired with four flavored sauces.

Preparation: Purchase enough beef top loin or sirloin steak for each person to have a portion. Grill to medium or less in doneness and keep hot. Prepare / purchase the following sauces: Sweet & Sour Sauce; Catalina Salad dressing; Mushroom sauce (see recipe) and Blue Cheese Butter (see recipe). Each person should have a plate, knife, fork and four tasting cups. Place a small portion of each sauce in a tasting cup (or pass the sauces for each to take a small portion). Serve each person a portion of hot steak and let them cut up the steak and sample a bite of steak dipped into each sauce in the following order:

- *Sweet and Sour*
- *Catalina Dressing (optional)*
- *Mushroom Sauce** (serve warm)
- *Blue Cheese Butter*** (should be at room temperature, or put on a hot steak so it melts)

Talk about each of the sauces and flavor reaction:

- Sweet & Sour – does nothing for beef; better on chicken and pork than beef.
- Catalina Dressing – has a bit of umami with the tomato, but sweetness makes it go better with chicken or pork than beef.
- Mushroom sauce – blends well. An example of the 1+1= 8 concept with the beef, mushrooms, red wine and tomato that all contain umami flavors
- Blue Cheese Butter – another example of the umami effect with beef and blue cheese.

The flavors should progress in acceptability and intensity as you proceed in the above order.

* **MUSHROOM SAUCE**

Total preparation and cooking time: 20 minutes

- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 2 ounces cremini mushrooms, sliced**
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic**
- 1 can (13-3/4 to 14-1/4 ounces) ready-to-serve beef broth**
- 1/3 cup dry red wine**
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch**
- 1 tablespoon sun-dried tomato spread**
- 1/4 teaspoon coarse grind black pepper**
- Salt**

Heat butter in small saucepan over medium-high heat until hot. Add mushrooms and garlic to pan. Cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes or until mushrooms begin to soften. Remove mushroom mixture from pan; set aside.

Combine broth, wine and cornstarch in same pan; bring to a boil. Cook and stir 1 minute or until slightly thickened. Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes or until mixture is reduced to 1-1/2 cups.

Stir in mushroom mixture, sun-dried tomato spread, pepper and salt, as desired to sauce. Serve with beef. **Makes 1-1/2 cups sauce.**

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****BLUE CHEESE STEAK BUTTER**

- ¼ cup butter, softened
- ¼ cup blue cheese crumbles, softened
- 1 to 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives or green onion tops

Combine butter and blue cheese crumbles. Stir to blend well. Add fresh chives or green onion tops. Serve on hot steak – it should melt!

Activity 4 – prepare a beef recipe with Umami Power!

These recipes were developed by the Culinary Center at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

1. Sesame-Soy Steak Stir-Fry in Wonton Cups
2. Grilled Ranch Steak Kabobs with Garlic-Pepper Seasoning & Balsamic Caramelized Red Onion Relish
3. Roasted Beef Shoulder Petite Tender Crostini with Wasabi Sour Cream
4. Mini Steak Tacos with Spicy Pico De Gallo

SESAME-SOY STEAK STIR-FRY IN WONTON CUPS

Total preparation and cooking time: 30 minutes

Marinating time: 30 minutes

- 1-1/2 pounds beef top blade (flat iron) steaks**
- Marinated Cucumbers (*recipe follows*)**
- Toasted Sesame Seeds (*recipe follows*)**
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil**
- 12 frozen wonton wrappers, thawed**
- 1 medium red bell pepper, thinly sliced (optional)**

Sesame-Soy Marinade:

- 1/4 cup soy sauce**
- 1/4 cup finely chopped green onions**
- 2 tablespoons water**
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar**
- 1-1/2 tablespoons dark sesame oil**
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic**
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger**
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper**

1. *Prepare Marinated Cucumbers and Toasted Sesame Seeds.*

2. Cut beef steak lengthwise in half, then crosswise into 1/4 inch strips; set aside. Combine Sesame-Soy Marinade ingredients in medium bowl. Place beef strips and marinade in food-safe plastic bag; toss to coat. Close bag securely and marinate in refrigerator 30 minutes.
3. Meanwhile heat 1/2 cup oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Fry 3 wonton wrappers 15 seconds per side or until crispy; drain on paper towels. Repeat with remaining wonton wrappers.
4. Remove beef strips from marinade; discard marinade. Heat pan over medium heat until hot. Add 1/2 of beef; stir-fry 1 to 2 minutes or until outside surface of beef is no longer pink. (*Do not overcook.*) Repeat with remaining beef. Evenly divide beef strips over wonton crisps; top beef with 1 tablespoon Marinated Cucumbers and 1/2 teaspoon Toasted Sesame Seeds. Garnish plate with red bell pepper strips, if desired.

Makes 12 appetizer servings.

Cook's Tip: Frozen wonton wrappers can be found in the freezer section of the supermarket.

Nutrition information per serving: 188 calories; 13 g protein; 8 g carbohydrate; 12 g fat; 230 mg sodium; 26 mg cholesterol; 2.2 mg niacin; 0.2 mg vitamin B₆; 1.5 mcg vitamin B₁₂; 1.8 mg iron; 4.2 mg zinc.

MARINATED CUCUMBERS

Total preparation and cooking time: 10 minutes

Marinating time: 1 hour

2 tablespoons sugar
1/2 cup rice vinegar
1 cup diced seedless cucumber

1. Whisk together sugar and vinegar in medium bowl until sugar is dissolved. Stir in cucumbers; place mixture in food-safe plastic bag. Close bag securely and marinate in refrigerator 1 hour. Drain cucumbers in large colander; discard marinade.

Makes 1 cup.

Toasted Sesame Seeds: Heat large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add 1/4 cup white sesame seeds. Cook and stir 5 minutes or until seeds are lightly toasted and golden. Set aside until ready to use.

GRILLED RANCH STEAK KABOBS WITH GARLIC-PEPPER SEASONING & BALSAMIC CARAMELIZED RED ONION RELISH

Total preparation and cooking time: 1 hour

**1-1/2 pounds beef shoulder center (ranch cut) steaks,
cut 1-inch thick**
1/2 teaspoon garlic-pepper seasoning blend
Basil leaves, for garnish

Red Onion Relish:

1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 teaspoon coarse salt
1/8 teaspoon cracked black pepper
1 large red onion, cut into 1/2 inch thick slices

5. Heat oven to 400° F. Soak twelve 6-inch bamboo skewers in water 10 minutes; drain. Combine balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, olive oil, salt and pepper, in medium bowl, until well blended.
6. Place onion slices in bottom of 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan. Drizzle balsamic mixture over onions and roast in 400°F oven, 20 to 25 minutes or until onions just become soft. Let stand 10 minutes to cool. Coarsely chop onions; set aside until ready to use. Carefully pour balsamic mixture into small nonreactive saucepan; cook and stir over medium heat 4 to 5 minutes or until mixture reduces slightly. Pour over onions just before serving.
7. Cut beef steak into 1-1/4 inch pieces. Thread 3 beef pieces onto each skewer. Place kabobs on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill, uncovered, 8 to 10 minutes for medium rare to medium doneness, turning occasionally. Serve each kabob with 1 tablespoon Red Onion Relish. Garnish with basil leaves; as desired.

Makes 12 appetizer servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 122 calories; 12 g protein; 7 g carbohydrate; 5 g fat; 93 mg sodium; 28 mg cholesterol; 1.5 mg niacin; 0.1 mg vitamin B₆; 1.3 mcg vitamin B₁₂; 1.6 mg iron; 2.7 mg zinc.

ROASTED BEEF SHOULDER TENDER CROSTINI WITH WASABI SOUR CREAM

Total preparation and cooking time: 30 to 35 minutes

**2 pounds beef shoulder tender petite roasts
(8 to 10 ounces each)
1 teaspoon pepper**

Garlic Bread:

**6 tablespoons butter, melted
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1 (12-inch) baguette, cut into 24 (1/2-inch thick)
slices**

Wasabi Sour Cream:

**1 container (8 ounces) dairy sour cream
1 tablespoon prepared wasabi paste**

8. Heat oven to 425° F. Press pepper evenly onto beef roasts.
9. Place roasts on rack in shallow roasting pan. Do not add water or cover. Roast in 425° F oven 20 to 25 minutes for medium rare to medium doneness. Remove roasts when instant read thermometer inserted into thickest part of roast registers 145° F for medium rare or 160° F for medium doneness. Let stand 5 minutes before carving.
10. Meanwhile combine butter, parsley and garlic salt in medium bowl. Place baguette slices on two 15 x 10 x 1-inch jelly roll pans. Brush tops with butter mixture. While roasts are standing, toast baguette slices in 425° F oven for 8 minutes or until golden brown.
11. Combine dairy sour cream and wasabi paste in medium bowl until well blended. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.
12. Thinly carve roasts into medallions and evenly layer over toasted garlic bread slices. Top with 1 teaspoon Wasabi Sour Cream.

Makes 24 appetizer servings.

Nutrition information per serving, using beef tenderloin: 153 calories; 10 g protein; 10 g carbohydrate; 8 g fat; 146 mg sodium; 36 mg cholesterol; 2.7 mg niacin; 0.2 mg vitamin B₆; 0.5 mcg vitamin B₁₂; 0.8 mg iron; 1.7 mg zinc.

MINI STEAK TACOS WITH SPICY PICO DE GALLO

Total preparation and cooking time: 30 minutes

Marinating time: 30 minutes

- 1-1/2 pounds beef top blade (flat iron) steaks**
- 12 flour tortillas (5-inch diameter)**
- Spicy Pico de Gallo (*recipe follows*)**
- 1 package (8 ounces) shredded Mexican cheese blend**

Marinade:

- 1/2 cup prepared Italian dressing**
- 1/4 cup lime juice**
- 1 tablespoon honey**
- 1-1/2 teaspoons ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon chili powder**

13. Cut beef steaks lengthwise in half, then crosswise into 1/4 inch strips; set aside. Combine marinade ingredients in medium bowl. Place beef and marinade in food-safe plastic bag. Close bag securely and marinate in refrigerator 30 minutes. Remove beef from marinade; discard marinade. Heat pan over medium heat until hot. Add 1/2 of beef; stir-fry 1 to 2 minutes or until outside surface of beef is no longer pink. (*Do not overcook.*) Repeat with remaining beef.
14. Evenly divide beef strips over tortillas. Top with 1 tablespoon Spicy Pico de Gallo and 1 tablespoon cheese.

Makes 12 appetizer servings.

***Nutrition information per serving:** 287 calories; 18 g protein; 21 g carbohydrate; 14 g fat; 450 mg sodium; 42 mg cholesterol; 2.8 mg niacin; 0.2 mg vitamin B₆; 1.5 mcg vitamin B₁₂; 2.3 mg iron; 4.0 mg zinc.*