



Umami Café

BY AJINOMOTO CO.



The Tea Experience

For centuries, green tea has been treasured throughout Asia for its healthful, restorative qualities. In Japan, Zen priests drank green tea to keep them awake through long hours of meditation. In the 16th century, a man named Sen no Rikyū, influenced by the study of Zen, envisioned a path to enlightenment through the simple act of sharing a bowl of tea among friends in the spirit of peace and harmony—a practice he called wabi-cha. For Rikyū, making tea while mindfully engaging all the senses was to have a complete Zen experience. We are pleased to have you share a moment of quiet joy with us and experience the spirit of Japanese culture through a simple bowl of tea.



Tea Sets

We've paired traditional teas with Japanese sweets. A great place to start.



Matcha with Hanabira Mochi GF V \$14

A bowl of hand-whisked, jade green matcha is paired with a traditional Japanese tea ceremony sweet. Tender sheets of mochi rice dough are folded over candied burdock root and filled with sweetened white bean paste infused with a hint of miso.



Sencha with Fried Rice

The light, sweetness of our Sencha balances nicely with the strong umami flavors of either our Yakitori Chicken Style Fried Rice (\$14) or our Takikomi Gohan Style Vegetable Fried Rice V (\$12). *Additional tea steepings available upon request.*



Sencha with Castella Cake \$12

The light, mild sweetness of the Sencha is enhanced by this popular Japanese sponge cake. This light and honeyed cake is a specialty of the Nagasaki region. *Additional tea steepings available upon request.*



Matcha with Mochi Ice Cream GF \$12

A bowl of our hand-whisked matcha is paired with a premium chocolate ice cream ball wrapped in sweet rice dough. A delightful combination of flavors.



Genmaicha with Manju \$11

Genmaicha, with its roasted rice and earthy flavor, is a perfect partner to our handmade manju. The sweetness from the manju's bean paste enhances the nuttiness and complexity of the tea. *Additional tea steepings available upon request.*



Hojicha with Shortbread Cookies \$9

These bitter chocolate and vanilla cookies highlight the aromatic sweetness of our Hojicha. A great choice for those in search of a lightly caffeinated tea with a roasted, malty flavor. *Additional tea steepings available upon request.*

Sweets



Matcha Brownie \$8

A contemporary take on a western classic, this brownie is made with matcha, walnuts, and vanilla.



Chikara Cake \$9

This popular cake is packed with a variety of nuts and dried fruit and gets its name from the Japanese word for strength.



Yuzu Curd Tart \$8

Organic and decadent, this tart features a yuzu citrus filling with a rich European-style butter crust.



Chocolate Macaron \$6

Beauty and simplicity meet in these organic macarons. Delicate sandwich cookies with a chocolate filling will melt in your mouth.



Mochi Ice Cream \$4

Your choice of mango sherbet or chocolate ice cream wrapped in sweet rice dough.



Yuki no Yado Senbei Crackers \$3

A Japanese rice cracker, most commonly enjoyed with a cup of tea. Mildly sweet and salty with a light and crisp texture.

Umami: The Fifth Taste

Western chefs have historically focused on four basic taste profiles – sweet, sour, salty and bitter. Yet in many parts of East Asia, an additional flavor has entered the culinary lexicon: umami. This fifth taste is savory, complex, and wholly distinct. Umami is imparted by glutamate, a type of amino acid which occurs naturally in many foods. Obvious sources include meat, fish, and vegetables, but you also find umami in less expected foods like dairy products or even tea. As the taste of itself is subtle, many people don't recognize umami when they encounter it. However, this fifth taste creates harmony among the other four and plays an important role in making food taste delicious.



Yakitori Style Fried Rice \$10

If you've ever traveled through Japan, you've likely encountered either a specialty shop or street vendor selling Yakitori chicken. This savory yakitori is combined with fresh carrots, edamame, peas, and red peppers. This sweet and savory dish evokes the authentic flavors of the traditional street food and bursts with flavors of umami.



Takikomi Gohan Style Fried Rice \$8

The Takikomi Gohan style, also known simply as 'Japanese Mixed Rice', provides a comforting and delicious meal through the combination of traditional flavors mixed into a colorful dish of rice and vegetables. Our Takikomi Gohan style of fried rice features edamame, carrots, and hijiki seaweed seasoned with soy sauce, one of the most popular seasonings with natural umami.



Misoshiru \$6

Miso is combined with locally sourced tofu, scallions, and black sesame seeds to become a flavorful soup.



Togarashi Edamame \$5

A classic Japanese side dish, soybeans are dusted with a Togarashi spice blend of chili powder, Meyer lemon, and sea salt.

Hot Beverages

Mecha GF V \$5
A well-balanced and mild green tea. Mecha is made from new tea leaf buds and a touch of matcha powder.

Mugicha GF V \$4
Made from roasted barley, this naturally caffeine-free herbal tea is refreshingly aromatic and delicious. It is gentle on the stomach and relaxing.

Cold Beverages

Iced Mecha GF V \$5
Refreshing Mecha tea served over ice. Perfect on a warm day.

Mango Nectar GF V \$4

Sweets locally sourced from:
Gena Renaud
Yume Confections
Portland, OR
yumeconfections.com

Tomoe Horibuchi
Behind the Museum Café
Portland, OR
behindthemuseumcafe.com

Hiro Horie
OYATSUPAN™ Bakers
Beaverton, OR
oyatsupan.com

Mio Asaka
Mio's Delectables
Portland, OR
miosdelectables.com

Cameron Frank
Innkeeper Fine Foods
Portland, OR
Innkeeperfoods.com

Our Teas



Matcha Powdered Green Tea
Matcha has been the highlight of Japanese tea ceremonies for centuries. Shade grown leaves are harvested, dried, and ground into a fine powder, giving its jade color and savory, grassy flavor.



Organic Sencha Classic Green Tea
Sencha has a light, mildly sweet flavor and a fragrance of young spring leaves. It is by far the most popular tea in Japan.



Organic Genmaicha Green Tea & Roasted Brown Rice
Our Genmaicha is made with Sencha, roasted rice, and a hint of Matcha, giving it a nutty, earthy flavor and aroma. This is a great choice for those new to tea drinking.



Organic Hojicha Roasted Green Tea
Roasting at high temperatures provides Hojicha with an aromatic sweetness. It is lower in caffeine and tannins than other green teas, making it gentle on the stomach.

From the Garden Gift Shop

Want to take your Umami Café experience home? Several of the teas served at the Umami Café are available for purchase at the Portland Japanese Garden Gift Shop. Ask your server for details.



Tea and food photos by Aaron Lee.

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Although the flavor of umami has naturally existed for thousands of years, it was first discovered by Dr. Kikunae Ikeda of the Imperial University of Tokyo in 1908. Through experimentation, Dr. Ikeda found that the umami flavor is imparted by glutamate, a type of amino acid which occurs naturally in many foods and provides the distinctive fifth taste. Dr. Ikeda's discovery allowed him to launch the world's first umami seasoning, AJI-NO-MOTO® with businessman Mr. Saburosuke Suzuki II in 1909. In the nearly 110 years since, Ajinomoto has grown into one of Japan's largest and most successful food companies.

The Umami Café was made possible because of an extremely generous donation from Ajinomoto Co., Inc., and Ajinomoto Windsor.



Tea by Jugetsudo

The Portland Japanese Garden is honored to serve tea from Japanese tea shop Jugetsudo. Over 160 years after its founding, the company's pursuit of the spirit of "Cha-Zen" is as passionate as ever. Through their uncompromising commitment to the highest quality ingredients, Jugetsudo conveys the authentic values and delicate flavors particular to the spirit of Japanese tea.

Jugetsudo teas originate in Kakegawa, Japan. Located in the highlands of Shizuoka near Mount Fuji, several factors make this area excellent for tea production. The temperature variation between day and night, the mountain climate, and the amount of morning dew combine to create the prime conditions for producing Jugetsudo's delicious teas with their unique tastes, aromas, and colors.

Jugetsudo has two tea houses in Japan and one in Paris. The Umami Café at the Portland Japanese Garden is the first to sell Jugetsudo tea in the United States.



Design of the Umami Café

“The design for the café is inspired by its specific place at the crest of the hill. As with the pilgrimages to such renowned mountainside temples as Kiyomizu-dera in Kyoto, this structure hovers above and greets those on the approaching path. For those arriving, it is a shelter to catch one's breath and anticipate the gardens ahead. For those finishing their journey, it is an opportunity to reflect with all senses.”

– Kengo Kuma, Architect



Café photo by Jeremy Bitterman

