

NEW AJINOMOTO CAMPAIGN CHALLENGES ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE (MSG)

The company joins forces with Pepper Teigen, designer Zipeng Zhu, and Asian food brand Omsom to replace outdated “No MSG” signs with new “KNOW MSG” symbol



Itasca, Ill. (December 2, 2020) – Ajinomoto Co., Inc., a leading producer of MSG committed to championing science and setting the record straight on the ingredient, today announced a new campaign to address the heart of MSG’s perception problem in the US: xenophobia-born misinformation. With the reveal of a new “Know MSG” symbol designed by acclaimed Chinese-born graphic artist Zipeng Zhu, the campaign calls into question the problematic and pervasive “No MSG” signs that have reinforced baseless anti-MSG stigma for decades.

In response to recent research that shows most MSG avoiders lack real knowledge of the ingredient¹, and in a moment when Americans are demanding facts over fear and questioning myriad misinformed historical symbols, the new emblem and campaign urge people get to *know* MSG and reconsider it. Additional aspects of the movement include:

- **An MSG-boasting product collaboration between** long-time MSG advocate, cooking enthusiast and mother to Chrissy Teigen, Pepper Teigen, popularly known as “Pepper Thai”, and innovative Asian food brand Omsom, available spring 2021.
- **The launch of [KnowMSG.com](https://www.knowmsg.com)**, an educational hub for accurate information on MSG where visitors can download “Know MSG” graphics, request “Know MSG” stickers, and sign up to be alerted when the Pepper Teigen x Omsom product drops.

“Many people don’t know that MSG is plant-derived, made through fermentation, and inherently present in lots of vegetables, meats and cheeses,” said Tia M. Rains, PhD, Vice President of Customer Engagement & Strategic Development at Ajinomoto Health & Nutrition, North America. “In fact, recent research shows that MSG may be used to improve the flavor of food while lowering sodium.^{2,3} We can’t appreciate MSG for its many benefits until we get past the stigma.”

Despite MSG’s 110-year history of safety validated by health organizations across the globe, lingering skepticism fueled by personal anecdotes and poorly conducted research in the 1970s has unfairly stigmatized the ingredient. For decades, the “No MSG” symbol that pervades restaurant windows, grocery shelves and food products has perpetuated the false perception of MSG as dangerous, and driven Americans away from enjoying an ingredient that adds savory umami taste to food.

“The ‘No MSG’ symbol is rooted in xenophobia, so it’s time for a change,” said Zhu. “No one had a problem with MSG until it was associated with the unsubstantiated idea of ‘Chinese Restaurant Syndrome’ in the 1960s. Tell me – why would a person get a headache from eating MSG in Chinese food, but not from eating American chips or soups or pasta Alfredo? We eat lots of delicious foods every day that have MSG.”

¹ Behavioralize 2020

² Halim J, Bouzari A, Felder D, and Guinard JX. The Salt Flip: Sensory mitigation of salt (and sodium) reduction with monosodium glutamate (MSG) in “Better-for-You” foods. *J Food Sci.* 2020 Sep;85(9):2902-2914. doi.org/10.1111/1750-3841.15354

³ Wallace TC, Cowan AE, Bailey RL. Current Sodium Intakes in the United States and the Modeled Effects of Glutamate Incorporation into Select Savory Products. *Nutrients.* 2019 Nov; 11(11): 2691. doi: 10.3390/nu11112691

Across the globe, MSG is a common pantry staple, widely enjoyed as an umami seasoning. Pepper Teigen's family has been cooking with MSG for decades.

"Dinner guests will tell me, 'oh, I don't do MSG', and then they take home leftovers of my MSG-seasoned meal," said Pepper Teigen. "It just makes everything taste better. People should know the truth."

"We grew up on MSG and are so stoked to help change the xenophobic narrative surrounding the ingredient," says Kim Pham, co-founder of Omsom. "This dish starter will celebrate MSG and hopefully become a must-have in pantries across the nation, sitting right between the tomato sauce and olive oil. We're excited for it to proudly wear the new 'Know MSG' symbol on the packaging!"

Visit KnowMSG.com for information about MSG safety, science, and benefits, and for more about the campaign.

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About Ajinomoto's Past Campaigns

In 2019, Ajinomoto established that deep-rooted xenophobia is at the center of MSG's complicated history in the U.S. by successfully lobbying Merriam Webster's Dictionary to revise the outdated and racist definition of "Chinese Restaurant Syndrome." Then, when COVID-19 swept the country, the U.S. was faced with an even greater need for unity and understanding, as Asian Americans and restaurants were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and misinformation perpetuated by talk of a "Chinese virus." As a company that champions better livelihoods for all, Ajinomoto stepped in to encourage the public to "Take Out Hate" by ordering from their local Asian restaurants, which were closing at double the rate of others.

About Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

The Ajinomoto Group, by unlocking the power of amino acids, aims to resolve food and health issues associated with dietary habits and aging, and contribute to greater wellness for people worldwide. Based on the corporate message "Eat Well, Live Well.", we have been scientifically pursuing the possibilities of amino acids to aim for future growth by creating new value through sustainable and innovative solutions for communities and society. The Ajinomoto Group has offices in 35 countries and regions, and sells products in more than 130 countries and regions. In fiscal 2019, sales were 1.1000 trillion yen (10.1 billion U.S. dollars). To learn more, visit www.ajinomoto.com.

About Ajinomoto Health & Nutrition North America, Inc.

Ajinomoto Health & Nutrition North America, Inc. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Ajinomoto Co., Inc., a global leader in the research, development, manufacture and sale of amino acid-based products for the pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, sports nutrition, health and beauty industries, as well as food ingredients. The company opened its first American office in New York in 1917 and has since grown and expanded its presence, establishing offices and production facilities in North Carolina, Iowa and Illinois. Ajinomoto Health & Nutrition North America, Inc. leverages an international manufacturing, supply and distribution chain to bring the highest-grade products to customers. For additional information on Ajinomoto Health & Nutrition North America, Inc., please visit <http://www.ajihealthandnutrition.com>.

Know MSG Campaign Assets:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/b0g7s5t7vq7q3gh/AABXUAJzLiH7ZCfB4zU3QwR9a?dl=0>

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