

In A Bite with Charlotte Mei

Q&A - MSG

Full Transcript

CHARLOTTE: Hey you, you're listening to the Q&A episode to our first topic on MSG! First off, I couldn't be more thankful for the valuable feedback I've received from those of you that have listened! So thank you for being here!

And before I begin, I just wanna let you know that I've got a newsletter out and if you'd like to subscribe to it, head over to thecharlottemei.com. I've added the link down below on the show notes if that's easier for you. This is a weekly newsletter where I share 3 things from my week - from updates in the world of nutrition, to what went down in my kitchen. Ooh, that rhymes! I also share 3 additional things that may or may not be related to food...either just for laughs, or a thought to ponder on. It's a cosy space for us to connect!

Now as promised, I will be running a short Q&A for each episode to make sure I've answered any questions you may have about what was shared. I don't know if this would be relevant for all episodes going forward, but let's give it a try and see how we go! And if you've got any feedback, feel free to write to me at hello@thecharlottemei.com or just send me a DM (direct message) on Instagram.

So, onto the questions.

Firstly, I've received ones on Instagram asking if MSG would contribute to hair loss, this was asked a few times, or cause cancer. To date, there isn't any scientific evidence to prove any of the two.

Another question was received on YouTube, and I thought it was a pretty good one. This listener asked: "When is it best to add MSG or salt - while cooking or after cooking when you are about to eat your food?"

Now the short answer is: both! It really doesn't matter. Just remember to taste your food before adding any seasoning, as with cooking in general, right? But say we're focusing on MSG in particular. There are certain ways to use it in a more effective way, so to speak.

According to FOOD IQ - my favourite book that I'm currently geeking out on - MSG works well in the beginning of cooking, like using it in your marinades or adding it as a condiment into your stews. But, you can also use it as a finishing seasoning for roasted meats, as you do with salt and pepper. And for dry and fried foods like french fries, popcorn... you know, the snacky stuff, you may wanna try adding MSG at the end so your taste buds get it on first contact.

Now remember, you don't need as much MSG as you do salt. As mentioned in the previous episode, you want to use a 1:10 ratio of MSG to salt. For easy access, you can create a blend of this and store it in a jar alongside the rest of your condiment. Just please label it! And remember, not to use it when baking sweet things!

I really like this analogy by food writer Helen Rosner, who compares MSG to the contrast slider in photo editing tools. She says if you boost it a little bit, it makes everything look sharper and bolder. And if you boost it too much, it'll just look like garbage. So the same thing with MSG, a little goes a long way.

On my recent trip to the supermarket, I decided to spend some time looking at how MSG is listed on ingredients lists. And I went through several aisles - not just the instant noodle section! You can check out the image of me holding a bunch of these products that contain MSG on my IG (Instagram) post dated 3 March; and you'd be surprised to know how many products actually contain the ingredient. Or rather, how often you may be consuming MSG without knowing it! And hopefully this would allay some of your concerns around consuming MSG, because frankly speaking you could be eating it more often than you imagined and you've haven't had any side effects, right? Or at least I hope not.

I mentioned this in the previous episode, but I thought it was worth highlighting again that manufacturers use different terms for MSG on their ingredients lists. Some are very straightforward with it stating monosodium glutamate. Some use the term 'flavour enhancers' followed by the number E621. Some others stop at 'flavour enhancers', without any specification.... almost as though they are keeping hush hush about using MSG...

Now for more content on the topic, here's a shameless plug for my TikTok account. I posted a video explaining how MSG allows soy sauce manufacturers to give you a more heart-healthy soy sauce product that is just as tasty but with half the sodium content. So head on over to my TikTok account @thecharlottemei to check it out.

Thanks for listening to this Q&A episode of In A Bite! If you found this useful, share the link to this episode via text to a friend, or on your social media page! For more content, follow me on Instagram and TikTok @thecharlottemei. And also, don't forget to subscribe to the channel and rate it on whichever platform you're listening on, so more people get to know of it too!