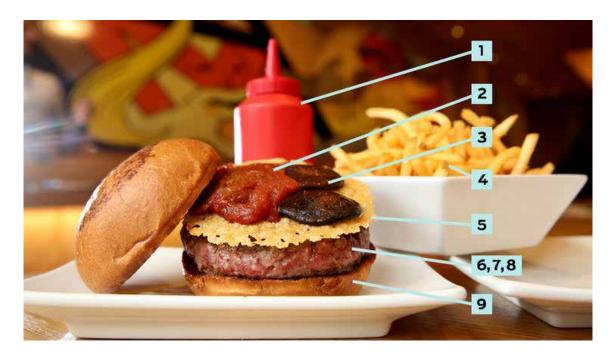
## DECONSTRUCTING THE DISH: UMAMI BURGER



## Chicago Tribune

Forget all the connotations of a chain restaurant. Umami Burger serves a legit serious burger, made with the care that a restaurant with 800-thread-count linens might employ. Plus, it's a burger style likely unfamiliar to most Chicago palates. As the name suggests, Umami serves a burger loaded with umami-rich ingredients, umami being the taste sensation associated with savoriness. It's that rich, full-bodied, vaguely beefy taste you get from hard cheeses and soy sauce. In the construct of the flagship Original Burger, executive chef Ted Hopson said the idea was to pile on so much umami that the burger becomes habit-forming for diners, even if they have no idea what hit them. He's right. This addictive \$12 burger isn't just in the top tier of chain options, it's one of my new go-to burgers in town. Umami Burger, 1480 N. Milwaukee Ave., 773-423-2005, umamiburger.com

- 1. Ketchup: Perhaps my favorite part is their house-made umami ketchup. It verges on barbecue sauce, but souped up with honey and Red Boat fish sauce. Don't let the fish sauce scare you, because you can't taste it. Yes, ketchup gets a bad rap in Chicago, but this version will render that argument obsolete.
- 2. Roasted tomatoes: Glazed with aforementioned umami ketchup and roasted until soft.
- 3. Mushroom: Meaty shiitake mushrooms braised in butter.
- 4. Fries: These remind me of McDonald's french fries, except in shoestring form. You're tasting mostly the fried crispiness.
- 5. Cheese: A crispy-chewy textural contrast to the soft and pillowy beef patties. It's made from wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano and baked on a silicone cooking sheet until it turns into a chip.
- 6, 7, 8: Beef: Butchered and ground in-house, the plancha-seared beef (request medium-rare) has a creamy, tartare quality that leaks juice upon biting in.

Glaze: A brush of sweet soy glaze finishes the grilled beef, and here's where much of that intense umaminess originates. It's a long list of savory ingredients — soy sauce, Worcestershire, hoisin, oyster sauce, miso, dried seaweed, bonito flakes and Marmite. On top of this is even more umami, a dusting of dried mushroom, seaweed and garlic powder.

Caramelized onions (under cheese): Slowly caramelized with star anise and butter for nearly five hours until dark and intensely sweet.

9: Bun: Like a brioche bun but less buttery, like a Hawaiian roll but less sweet. Super-soft interior. Toasted on the flattop.