

GROCERIES

Meet the woman behind Umamicart, bringing Asian ingredients to your doorstep

Andrea Xu always had trouble finding her favorite ingredients in one place – so she created an online Asian grocery service.



— "I'm really passionate for it," said Umamicart founder Andrea Xu. "I don't think you can build something you're not passionate about." TODAY Illustration / Umamicart

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By Erica Chayes Wida

Andrea Xu always found it difficult to find all the Chinese ingredients she wanted to cook with in grocery stores and markets. So, earlier this month, the 28-year-old launched a streamlined online grocery service called Umamicart with hundreds of Asian products all in one place.

Growing up in Spain with Chinese immigrant parents who owned and operated a Chinese restaurant, Xu was used to enjoying her family's cuisine at home. But out at Madrid's markets, it was nearly impossible to find the products she craved.

"My parents served Chinese food, but they had to conform to what is it considered Chinese food in Spain, they had to have certain things on the menu," Xu told TODAY Food. "For

Umamicart, I wanted to create something that's not determined by something else. Getting rid of that undo definition is part of this."



— Andrea Xu as a girl with her mom at their restaurant in Madrid. Mischelle Moy / Umamicart

Xu said it often felt like a disconnect between the way she experienced her ancestral cuisine at home and the way it was presented outside her home.

"I never realized how huge a part of me I wasn't able to share until I moved to the U.S.," Xu, who attended New York University and now lives in Brooklyn, said. "Ten years ago, I moved here for college and never felt so in touch with my Asian identity. Friends understood how it feels to be bicultural growing up."

Still, aside from the mom-and-pop markets Xu loves to frequent in Chinatown, it was hard for her to find all the ingredients she needed to cook what she wanted. Having worked in finance for five years, Xu never expected to work in the food space, but her passion for creating accessible Asian food options inspired her to create Umamicart.



— Umamicart is a one-stop shop for Asian products, from sauces and meats to veggies and snacks.

Mischelle Moy

"I'm picky about what online experiences I like and was always settling in terms of consumer choice and ingredients for what I wanted," Xu said. "I want a level of offering that you're happy to shop for, and happy with the service. I'm really passionate for it. I don't think you can build something you're not passionate about."

Umamicart is designed so customers can buy items a la carte, whether shopping for one dinner recipe or two weeks worth of groceries for the household. Sections include savory snacks that are typically just released in Asian markets like Lay's cucumber-flavored chips and Yakult, a popular probiotic dairy drink. There is also fresh sashimi Xu orders from a local purveyor (one of her favorite items), a range of meats like Wagyu beef and roasting hens, plenty of sauces and seasonings – from Sichuan chili crisp to furikake rice seasoning – as well as fresh produce. She also offers fun kits biweekly so people can make their own sushi, dumplings or other dishes that inspire her.



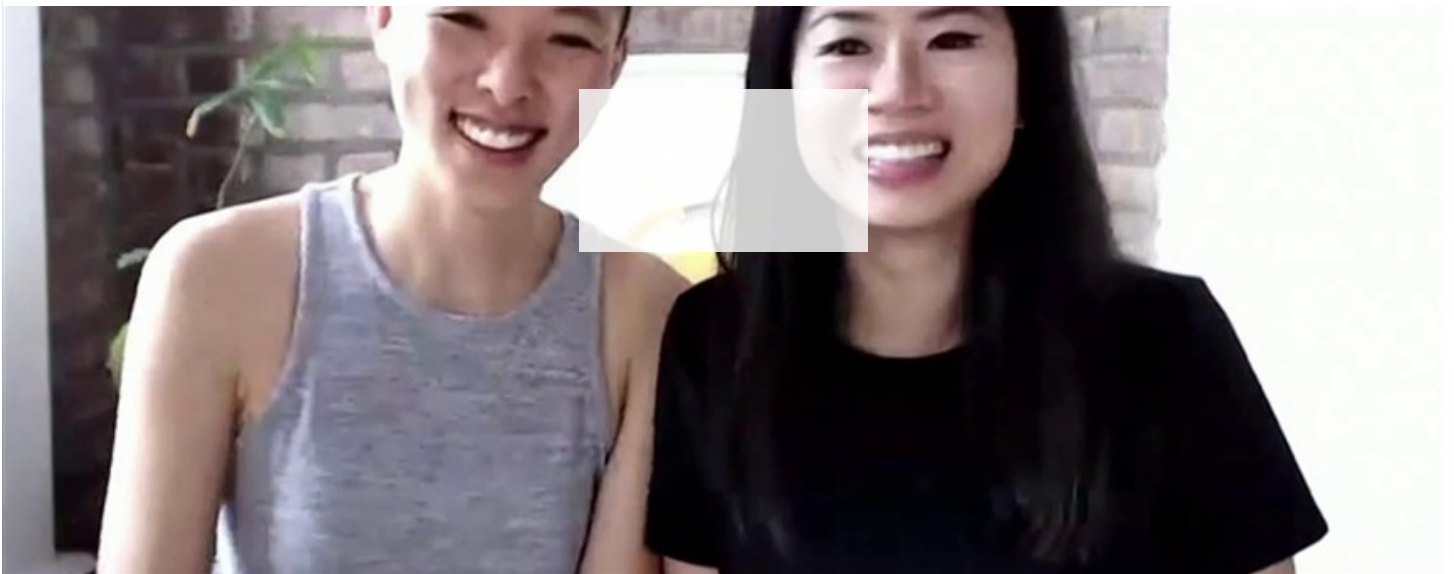
— A variety of products available on Umamicart. Mischele Moy

Since the site launched on March 1, it has had 500+ products available at any given time, more than 90% of which are produced by Asian- and Asian American-led businesses. Roughly 50 or

so products are sourced from Asian American woman-owned companies. Currently doing next-day delivery to the mid-Atlantic region (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Virginia), Xu plans to ship to other states by the end of the year. She looks to expand from mainly East Asian products to more Southeast Asian products in the near future and encourages customers to email hello@umamicart.com if they want to see something they love on the site.

"I did research finding local suppliers that are farmed directly or work with farms, immigrant-led or Asian/Asian American-led," Xu told TODAY. "I did a lot of cold reaching out to them to learn about their story, share what I was looking to do, how they wanted to get their brands out there."

Meet 2 women providing hot meals to elderly Asian Americans in their community



During this process, connected with other Asian women who were helming their own businesses, many of whom, like Xu, hadn't initially planned to work in food. She forged relationships with Erica Liu Williams of [Gr8nola](#), Lauryn Chun of [Mother-in-Law's Kimchi](#), Jing Gao of [Fly by Jing](#), Carol Pak of [Makku](#) and Nona Lim of [Nona Lim Foods](#). And since Umamicart's launch coincided with Women's History Month, Xu used the opportunity to highlight all the wonderful Asian American women working in the food space.

"We chatted a long time and we all talk a lot. It's easy to relate to them all because there are very few women in this space, especially Asian American women," said Xu. "The idea came from Lauren from Mother-in-Law's Kimchi to come together to launch Umamicart with Women's History Month."



umamicart
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HOW WE ARE CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

(hint: it's with these #girlbosses)

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March is [#womenshistorymonth](#) and we teamed up with some amazing female food founders to bring you special gifts and content the whole month of March



Stay tuned, watch this space, and let's celebrate women-led businesses together!

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All through March, Xu will host an IGTV series on [@umamicart Instagram](#) with candid conversations with the female founders behind the products on her grocery site. People can tune in and view the full schedule of talks on the Instagram post above.

"I want to continue to make the digital product and mobile experience great – fixing the fact that it's not just convenient, but makes it easy to shop and makes an impact," said Xu.



Erica Chayes Wida

Erica Chayes Wida is an award-winning journalist, food writer and recipe editor who helmed a local newspaper before joining TODAY's freelance team. A mother of two, she loves singing, collecting old vinyl and, of course, cooking. Erica is forever on a worldwide quest to find the best ham and cheese croissant and brainstorms best over a sauce pot of bubbling pasta sauce. Her work has been featured on BBC Travel, Saveur, Martha Stewart Living and PopSugar. Follow along on [Instagram](#).

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