LESSON 9:
Strumming

There is a lot of good stuff written about strumming and strum patterns.
There is a lot of twaddle written about strumming and strum patterns.

The important bit is to bear in mind that the ukulele is a rhythm instrument, and the whole mood of a piece is affected by the way you elect to strum it. It becomes part of your interpretation of the song.

Essentially, strumming addresses direction of the strum (a down strum, or an up strum) and the pace at which a piece is strummed.

Try a down strum using your thumb pluck string 1 firmly so your thumb makes contact with string 2 etc. until your thumb is clear of all the strings. Do this briskly and listen to the effect. Now do the reverse with an upward motion striking string 4 first.

Listen carefully the difference is discernable and when you are playing along with somebody else it makes all the difference between a clear played rhythm and a racket.

You can also change the mood of the song by the speed with which you strum. A vigorous strum will give the impression of vitality whereas a slow strum allowing the strings to sound individually will sound languorous and relaxed.

If you are performing solo then the strum pattern you use is part of your interpretation. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise. However, having said that you can find some guidance on strum patterns from: http://ukulelehunt.com/2011/06/29/ukulele-strumming-patterns/

Picking

If you want to try this then more strength to your elbow. It takes an age to develop the competence, but it can be worth effort. Picking is the art of actually playing the tune by plucking the notes of the tune, as you would do if you were playing the piano with one finger. Just as with the piano it is possible to emphasize certain notes by playing them as part of a chord. When it works it works brilliantly well. To develop this skill you practice a tune so many times that your fingers just fall into place. Again, it is a question of muscle memory.

But it takes practice…
Lots of practice.