

Types of Food Ingredients

The following summary lists the types of common food ingredients, why they are used, and some examples of the names that can be found on product labels. Some additives are used for more than one purpose.

| Types of Ingredients | What They Do | Examples of Uses | Names Found on Product Labels |
|------------------------|--|--|---|
| Preservatives | Prevent food spoilage from bacteria, molds, fungi, or yeast (antimicrobials); slow or prevent changes in color, flavor, or texture and delay rancidity (antioxidants); maintain freshness | Fruit sauces and jellies, beverages, baked goods, cured meats, oils and margarines, cereals, dressings, snack foods, fruits and vegetables | Ascorbic acid, citric acid, sodium benzoate, calcium propionate, sodium erythorbate, sodium nitrite, calcium sorbate, potassium sorbate, BHA, BHT, EDTA, tocopherols (Vitamin E) |
| Sweeteners | Add sweetness with or without the extra calories | Beverages, baked goods, confections, table-top sugar, substitutes, many processed foods | Sucrose (sugar), glucose, fructose, sorbitol, mannitol, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, saccharin, aspartame, sucralose, acesulfame potassium (acesulfame-K), neotame |
| Color Additives | Offset color loss due to exposure to light, air, temperature extremes, moisture and storage conditions; correct natural variations in color; enhance colors that occur naturally; provide color to colorless and "fun" foods | Many processed foods, (candies, snack foods margarine, cheese, soft drinks, jams/jellies, gelatins, pudding and pie fillings) | FD&C Blue Nos. 1 and 2, FD&C Green No. 3, FD&C Red Nos. 3 and 40, FD&C Yellow Nos. 5 and 6, Orange B, Citrus Red No. 2, annatto extract, beta-carotene, grape skin extract, cochineal extract or carmine, paprika oleoresin, caramel color, fruit and vegetable juices, saffron (Note: Exempt color additives are not required to be declared by name on labels but may be declared simply as colorings or color added) |
| Flavors and | Add specific flavors (natural | Pudding and pie fillings, gelatin dessert | Natural flavoring, artificial flavor, and |

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| Spices | (natural and synthetic) | mixes, cake mixes, salad dressings, candies, soft drinks, ice cream, BBQ sauce | spices |
| Flavor Enhancers | Enhance flavors already present in foods (without providing their own separate flavor) | Many processed foods | Monosodium glutamate (MSG), hydrolyzed soy protein, autolyzed yeast extract, disodium guanylate or inosinate |
| Fat Replacers (and components of formulations used to replace fats) | Provide expected texture and a creamy "mouth-feel" in reduced-fat foods | Baked goods, dressings, frozen desserts, confections, cake and dessert mixes, dairy products | Olestra, cellulose gel, carrageenan, polydextrose, modified food starch, microparticulated egg white protein, guar gum, xanthan gum, whey protein concentrate |
| Nutrients | Replace vitamins and minerals lost in processing (enrichment), add nutrients that may be lacking in the diet (fortification) | Flour, breads, cereals, rice, macaroni, margarine, salt, milk, fruit beverages, energy bars, instant breakfast drinks | Thiamine hydrochloride, riboflavin (Vitamin B ₂), niacin, niacinamide, folate or folic acid, beta carotene, potassium iodide, iron or ferrous sulfate, alpha tocopherols, ascorbic acid, Vitamin D, amino acids (L-tryptophan, L-lysine, L-leucine, L-methionine) |
| Emulsifiers | Allow smooth mixing of ingredients, prevent separation Keep emulsified products stable, reduce stickiness, control crystallization, keep ingredients dispersed, and to help products dissolve more easily | Salad dressings, peanut butter, chocolate, margarine, frozen desserts | Soy lecithin, mono- and diglycerides, egg yolks, polysorbates, sorbitan monostearate |
| Stabilizers and Thickeners, Binders, Texturizers | Produce uniform texture, improve "mouth-feel" | Frozen desserts, dairy products, cakes, pudding and gelatin mixes, dressings, jams | Gelatin, pectin, guar gum, carrageenan, xanthan gum, whey |

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| | | and jellies, sauces | |
| pH Control Agents and acidulants | Control acidity and alkalinity, prevent spoilage | Beverages, frozen desserts, chocolate, low acid canned foods, baking powder | Lactic acid, citric acid, ammonium hydroxide, sodium carbonate |
| Leavening Agents | Promote rising of baked goods | Breads and other baked goods | Baking soda, monocalcium phosphate, calcium carbonate |
| Anti-caking agents | Keep powdered foods free-flowing, prevent moisture absorption | Salt, baking powder, confectioner's sugar | Calcium silicate, iron ammonium citrate, silicon dioxide |
| Humectants | Retain moisture | Shredded coconut, marshmallows, soft candies, confections | Glycerin, sorbitol |
| Yeast Nutrients | Promote growth of yeast | Breads and other baked goods | Calcium sulfate, ammonium phosphate |
| Dough Strengtheners and Conditioners | Produce more stable dough | Breads and other baked goods | Ammonium sulfate, azodicarbonamide, L-cysteine |
| Firming Agents | Maintain crispness and firmness | Processed fruits and vegetables | Calcium chloride, calcium lactate |
| Enzyme Preparations | Modify proteins, polysaccharides and fats | Cheese, dairy products, meat | Enzymes, lactase, papain, rennet, chymosin |
| Gases | Serve as propellant, aerate, or create carbonation | Oil cooking spray, whipped cream, carbonated beverages | Carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide |