

Food additives

Definition:

Food additives are the substances added to food and drinks during manufacturing, processing and packaging. They may be added to ensure safety or contribute in key factors such as taste or appearance. Not all food manufacturing requires additives but it depends upon the shelf life, quality of food, and process of packaging.

Why are food additives used?

Food additives are used for a wide variety of functions such as acidity regulators, anticaking agents and antioxidants to keep food in good conditions, preserving the nutritional value of food and thus reducing the waste. Colours, emulsifiers, sweeteners and stabilizers contribute to the product quality and eating experience.

What are E numbers?

E numbers are found on food labels show that additives have been evaluated and approved by

Date: _____

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Functions of different Food additives

- **Acidity regulators:** They change or maintain acidity or alkalinity. e.g. Sodium citrate.
- **Antioxidants:** They stop oxidation thereby extending the shelf life of food. e.g. ascorbic acid.
- **Colours:** They are used for imparting colours enhancing or restoring colours to food. They can also be used for compensating the color changes during food processing.
- **Emulsifiers:** They prevent ingredients from separating and giving ice-cream, mayonnaise or margarine their smooth textures.
- **Sweeteners:** Intense sweetness, e.g. aspartame and saccharin are many times sweeter than sugar and in fewer quantities contribute lesser calories.
- **Others:** Gelling agents, foaming, anti-foaming agents, glazing agents, packaging gases, propellents etc.

Many additives are found 'naturally' in foods such as beetroot extract for adding colours in confectionary.