

Food additives

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Food additives have become a necessity for all types of food products and food industry. Right from the aroma of the beverage, the texture of the food and its visual appeal have to be enriched to make it acceptable.

Once upon a time everybody worked the land and there wasn't any need for food additives – people just ate what they could grow. But it wasn't a very varied diet. Once people started living in cities, food had to be grown for them, With the Industrial Revolution the cities burgeoned out, and farmers had to provide food for increasing numbers of urban workers. Today we get an extraordinary range of exotic foods from farmers all over the world, partly or fully prepared to save us time. But concerns about food additives, production and distribution, not mentioning its environmental impact, may be the price we pay for our 21st century lifestyle.

In the past 50 years food additives have been extensively studied by additive manufacturers, universities and independent research organizations.

I had put myself a question before I chose my topic: Are the additives in foods giving us more than just a longer shelf life and distinctive flavor? First of all I tried to find: what are “additives” in food and I found that they are any of various chemical substances added to produce desirable effects. Additives include such substances as artificial or natural colorings and flavorings; some additives are harmless, others reduce nutritional value or are made from raw materials of poor quality [1].

Many additives have several different functions depending on the foods they are added to. In addition to their flavoring and nutritive properties, some herbs, spices, vegetables, and vitamins added to foods have other functional properties as processing aids.

The only practical way to classify additives is by the purpose for which they are added to foods. In this case there are many types of additives; I will explain the most important of them. The main is Colors. There are three categories of colors: natural, synthetic, and inorganic. The enzymes are second. They are biological catalysts that can break down specific materials into simpler components or cause changes in the substrate's structure. Carbohydrates break down complex sugars into mono sugars. There are two types of sweeteners: caloric sweeteners that provide minimal calories based on their sweetening power and no caloric sweeteners, which provide non calories. Preservatives are a wide variety of additives that are used for preventing or delaying spoilage and are closely restricted in respect to the foods they can be used with and the levels at which they can be used. Firming agents prevent or inhibit the softening of processed fruits and vegetables, especially during the process of canning in which they receive a severe heat treatment.

Yeast foods as their name suggests, they are used in fermentations with yeast and serve as a food for the yeast in the preparation of the inoculums [2].

I have prepared a specified table about the worst additives for our body [3].

Food additives that are recommended to avoid	E220, E221, E222
Allergizing food additives	E102, E105, E110, E120, E123, E124
Carcinogenic food additives	E123, E 142, E210, E211, E212, E213
Food additives that increase cholesterol	E320, E321
Toxic food additives	E151, E200, E220, E221, E222, E223, E224

After I have studied this topic I found some advantages and disadvantages that are the answer to my question:

Advantages of Food Additives

- Food additives Improve the look, the color and the texture of food
- Food additives increase the shelf life of food
- Food additives help to prevent food poisoning
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Disadvantages of food additives

- Food additives sometimes destroy vitamins in food
- Food additives may be used to make bad quality food look good
- Many people are allergic to particular food additives

In the end I have to say that this topic made really worried about the food we eat daily. In my opinion we should all be much more attentive at the composition of food products that we buy, and should always opt for healthy and natural ingredients.

Bibliography:

1. *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, March 5, 2010.
2. *Food Additives: A Shopper's Guide to What's Safe & What's Not*, (2004 Revised Edition) by Christine Hoza Farlow
3. *Excitotoxins: The Taste That Kills*, by Russell L. Blaylock and George R. Schwartz, January 1997.