

**Advice on additives : helpful information & advice on food & nutrition /
Tesco Stores Ltd.**

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Advice on



FOOD
ADVICE
SERVICE

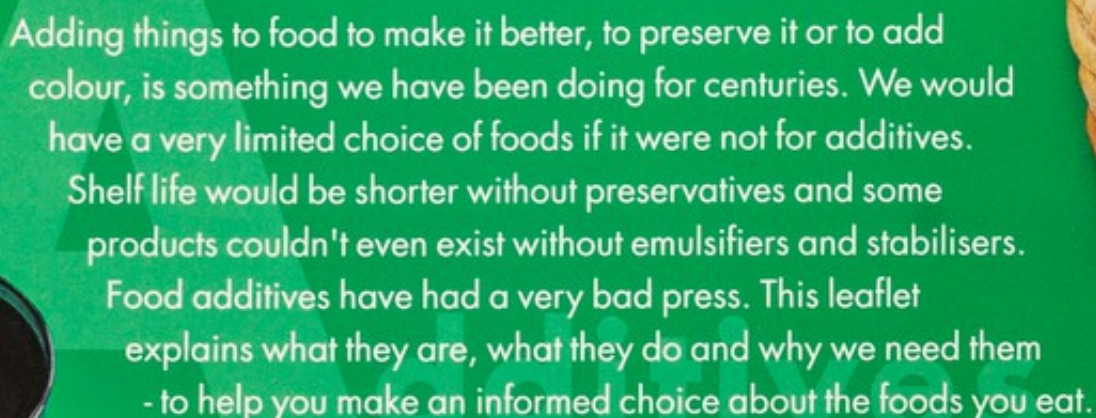
at
TESCO

Additive

Colour Sweetener (E621)A



*Helpful
Information
& Advice
on Food &
Nutrition*



Adding things to food to make it better, to preserve it or to add colour, is something we have been doing for centuries. We would have a very limited choice of foods if it were not for additives. Shelf life would be shorter without preservatives and some products couldn't even exist without emulsifiers and stabilisers. Food additives have had a very bad press. This leaflet explains what they are, what they do and why we need them - to help you make an informed choice about the foods you eat.

ADDITIVES



WHAT DO THEY DO?

PRESERVATIVES

As the name suggests, these preserve food, protecting against microbes which cause food to spoil or food poisoning. Preservatives increase shelf life which means we don't have to shop too often and food is cheaper because it can be mass produced and transported in bulk. They also mean we get a bigger choice of foods as they can be imported from other countries. Examples include:

- E200 - Sorbic Acid - used in soft drinks and fruit yogurts
- E252 - Potassium Nitrate - used in bacon, ham and cured meats.

COLOURS



These are added to a food to make it look better and more appetising, or to replace the colours lost in processing. Some colours are natural - they give fruit and vegetables their bright colours. There are also artificial colours. Some of these are in a group called Azo Dyes which have been linked with some adverse reactions, especially in children. Examples of Azo Dyes or general colours include: E160(a) - Beta-Carotene - is a 'natural' colour which makes carrots orange; and E102 - Tartrazine - an Azo Dye.



FOOD ADDITIVES - WHAT ARE THEY?

Additives are chemicals, which can either be natural or synthetic substances. There are about 300 additives listed for use in the UK. There are 6 main groups:

- preservatives
- colours
- flavour enhancers
- antioxidants
- stabilisers and emulsifiers
- sweeteners.

Other types include:
acids, anti-caking agents, flour improvers and glazing agents.



- THE FACTS & THE

FLAVOUR ENHANCERS

These make flavours taste stronger and are usually only used in savoury foods. The most common is E621, Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), which is used in chinese food. Some people are sensitive to MSG.

ANTIOXIDANTS

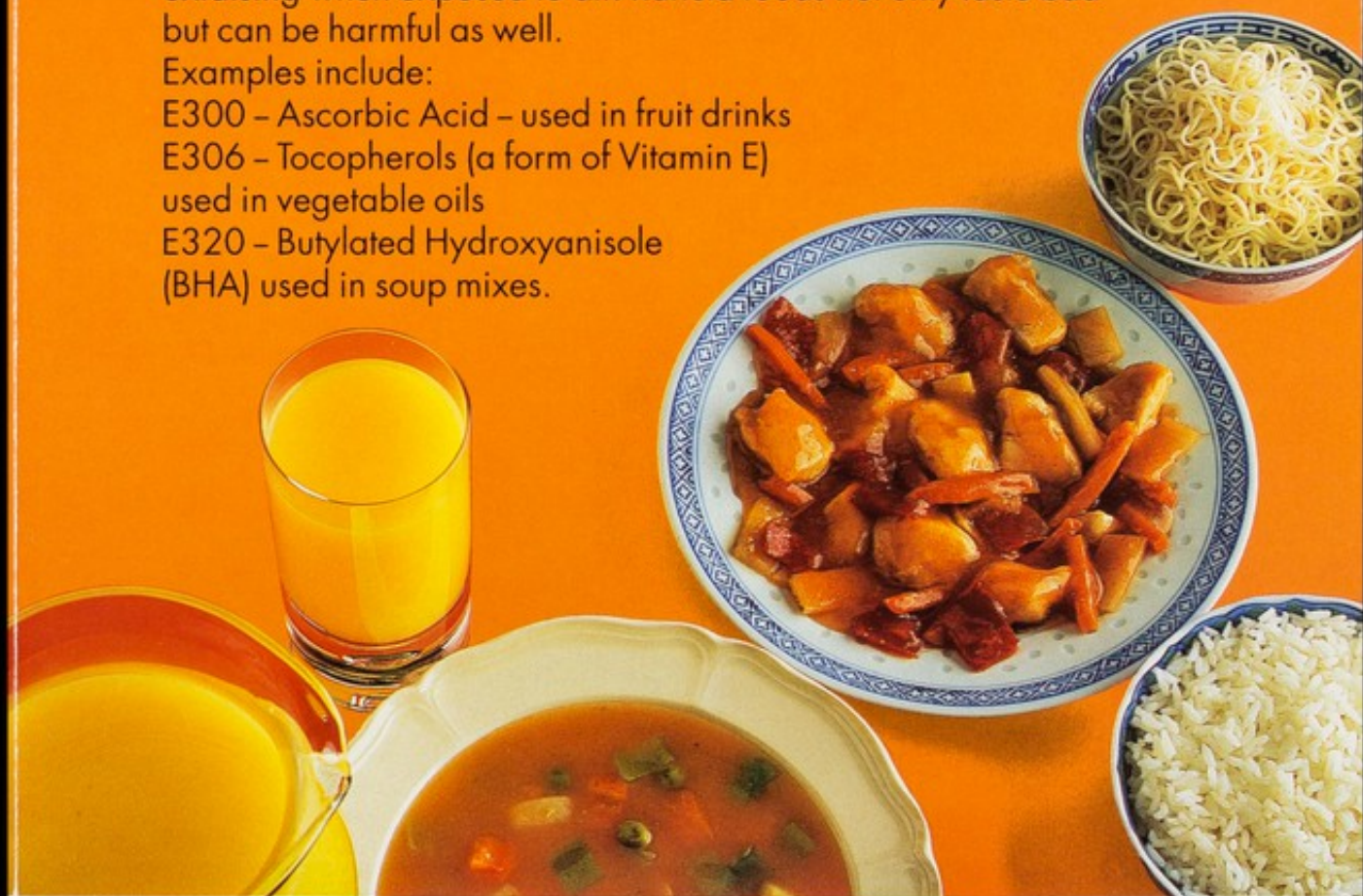
These prevent fatty foods going rancid and other products oxidising when exposed to air. Rancid foods not only taste bad but can be harmful as well.

Examples include:

E300 - Ascorbic Acid - used in fruit drinks

E306 - Tocopherols (a form of Vitamin E)
used in vegetable oils

E320 - Butylated Hydroxyanisole
(BHA) used in soup mixes.





E-NUMBERS

Approved additives usually have numbers which start with an 'E'. These have been approved by the European Community (EC). Manufacturers can't use additives in foods unless they have been approved. The numbers are just used as shorthand for the additives which can have long chemical names.

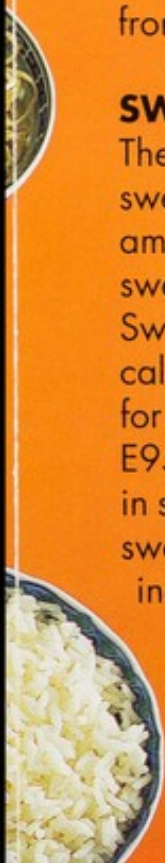
FIGURES

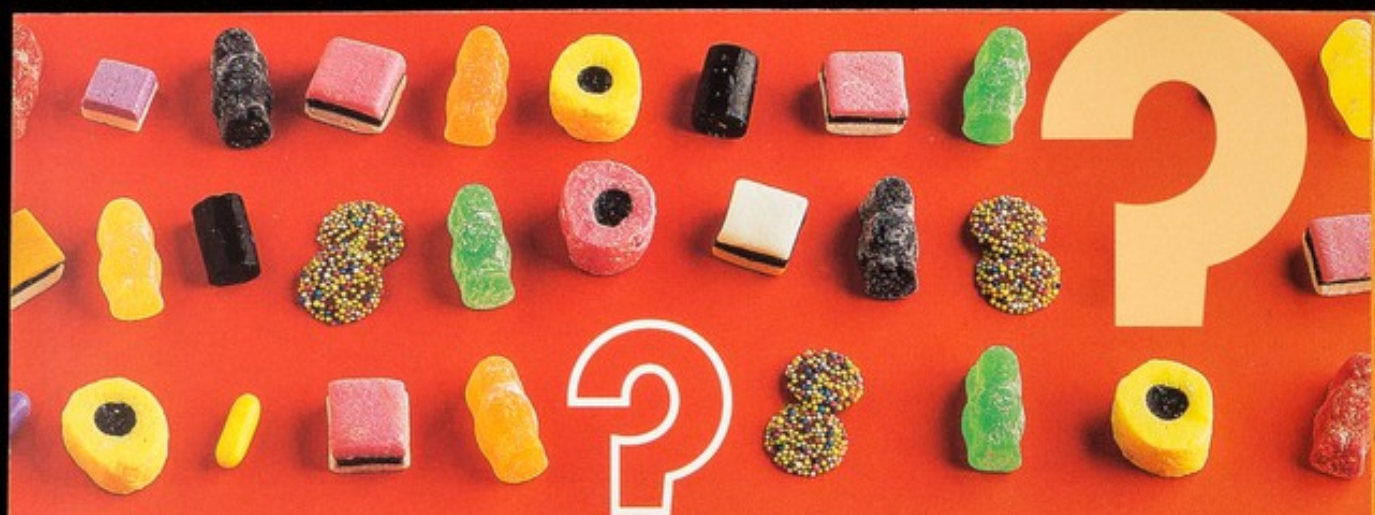
STABILISERS AND EMULSIFIERS

Emulsifiers are used to help water and oil mix together, which they wouldn't normally do. Stabilisers help keep the resulting emulsion together. A lot of stabilisers and emulsifiers are related to natural substances. Examples include:
E322 - Lecithin - This is usually made from soya or eggs and is used in low-fat spreads and chocolate
E471 - Mono-and Di-glycerides of fatty acids - made from oils and used in cake mixes and margarines.

SWEETENERS

These can either be: intense sweeteners - several times sweeter than sucrose (sugar) and used in very small amounts; or bulk sweeteners - approximately the same sweetness as sucrose and used in similar amounts. Sweeteners are used in reduced-sugar and low-calorie products. They are less harmful than sugar for teeth. Examples of intense sweeteners include: E951 Aspartame and E954 Saccharin - used in soft drinks and yogurts as well as tablet sweeteners. Examples of bulk sweeteners include: E420 - Sorbitol - used in sugar-free confectionery.





QUESTIONS

WHY DO WE NEED ADDITIVES?

We have already mentioned some of the reasons for using additives in foods:

- prolonging shelf life
- preventing food poisoning
- preventing rancidity
- producing low-fat products
- producing low-sugar products
- making foods more appetising.

Some of these uses may not necessarily be a "need", for example do we need low-fat spreads or sugar-free drinks? Low-fat products are definitely of benefit in a healthy diet. Low- or reduced-sugar products are also of benefit in preventing dental decay and in helping diabetics have a greater choice of foods. It's all a question of choice and balancing these benefits with the use of additives.



ARE THEY HARMFUL?

Some people can be allergic or intolerant to certain additives but people can also be allergic to things like milk and eggs. Children especially, have been found to react to colours like Azo-dyes. These children become hyperactive and so parents demanded the removal of these colours such as Tartrazine and Sunset Yellow from children's foods. Tesco has responded by replacing them with natural colours, or by taking them out completely, wherever possible. Before any additive can be used, it has to go through a lengthy and detailed process of approval. The manufacturer has to first prove that the additive is needed and then stringent safety tests are performed and checked by the Government.



HOW CAN TESCO HELP?

We have made steady progress to remove unnecessary additives from our own-brand products. Where additives occur in our products, they are listed in the ingredients list using their full names. They are also grouped according to their functional category.

Example:

Wheatflour, Sugar, Egg, Dried Apricots (with Preservative: Sulphur Dioxide), Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil, Water, Emulsifier (Lecithin), Colour (Annatto).

If you are sensitive to certain additives, we can provide lists of additive-free products to make shopping easier.



Advice on Additives
is one in a series of leaflets. For more information please write to:
The Food Advice Service, Tesco House, P.O. Box 18, Cheshunt, Herts EN8 9SL.
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