

FOOD ADDITIVES



Food additives are substances that are added to food but are not normally consumed as a food themselves.

The use of additives in food comes within the requirements outlined in the Food Standards Code, which is a national document.

The use of an additive is permitted in food provided that:

- It poses no acceptable risk to health when used in amounts up to the specified permitted limit;
- There is a demonstrable need for the substance and it fulfils a technological function that benefits consumers, and
- It is used in any food only up to the level that achieves the technological function, even if higher levels might pose no threat to health.

The use of additives in food is controlled by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

Specific additives are permitted in specified quantities in some foods to achieve a particular requirement such as:

- Maintaining or improving nutritional quality.
- Maintaining or improving the keeping quality or stability of the food thereby reducing waste.
- Preserving food in order to extend the safe storage life.
- Restoring or improving the taste and/or appearance of the food.

There are many hundreds of different food additives, each of which has been allocated its own prescribed name and code number, which is recognised internationally.

The hundreds of different types of additives fall generally into various 'classes' such as acids, antioxidants, colours, emulsifiers, flavour enhancers, preservatives, sweeteners and thickeners etc.

When an additive is used in food it must be declared in the list of ingredients on the label. Manufactures can use the prescribed name of the food additive, for example "Lactic acid" (270), or "Sulphur dioxide" (220).

Specific information in regard to the various additives and their particular numbers is available from the FSANZ web site www.foodstandards.gov.au.

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Council's Environmental Health Officers can be contacted between the hours of 8.30am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

