

E Numbers

If a food additive has been allowed by the European Community (EC) then it is given an E number. You can tell what kind of additive it is by looking at the E number.

Colours (E100- E180)

Added colours put back the colour lost when the food is being made and they give colour to colourless foods. Colours are not allowed in fresh meat, fish, fruit and vegetables, dried or condensed milk, tea leaves and coffee powder or granules.

Preservatives (E200- E297)

Preservatives prevent the growth of bacteria. They help to make sure that food will still be safe to eat.

Emulsifiers and Stabilisers (E322-E495)

Emulsifiers help to mix air and liquid, as in ice-cream. They also help to mix water and fat, as in salad dressings. Stabilisers help to prevent the mixtures separating again. Many foods such as packet foods contain both.

Flavour Enhancers (E620-640)

Flavour enhancers are used to bring out the natural flavour of the food. Most flavourings are not given E numbers but the label must show that they are present.

Sweeteners (E950-E967)

Sweeteners give food a sweet taste. For example, some fruit yoghurts contain a sweetener instead of sugar.

Many of the foods we eat today would not exist if additives were not allowed. If you look on food labels you will often see an “E” with a number next to it. This means that an additive has been used in that food.

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