

Park Slope Food Coop

Food Additives Guidelines

Since our inception, the Park Slope Food Coop (PSFC) has strived to keep our store free of food additives that are harmful to human health¹. **Food additives** are substances added to food to preserve flavor or enhance taste and appearance. Historically PSFC members expressed the desire for a stricter standard than the FDA provides. In response, the PSFC references the food safety guidelines of several independent consumer advocacy organizations² to identify which additives should be avoided.

The PSFC's buying staff tries to avoid ordering food products containing any of the following additives (common/chemical names listed on page 2):

- Artificial colors, flavors, sweeteners and emulsifiers
- Artificial preservatives and fats
- Flour improvers and bleaching agents
- MSG (monosodium glutamate)
- Partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs)³
- Sodium Nitrate & Sodium Nitrite⁴

In addition, scientific evidence showing the harm caused by food-grade carrageenan has increased significantly in recent years. In response, the PSFC will begin a program to phase out carrageenan. Due to the quantity of carrageenan-containing products on our shelves, our goal over time is to replace carrageenan-containing products with suitable substitutes as they become available. We will also be urging current vendors to re-formulate their products.

PSFC staff will review this document and list of additives periodically and amend when necessary. While the staff does review the ingredients of every new product before it is available for sale, with thousands of products on our shelves and product re-formulations a commonplace occurrence, it is difficult for PSFC staff to guarantee all our products are free of these additives. We rely on members to help us adhere to our guidelines. If you see a product on the shelf that contains one of these additives that the Coop is trying to avoid, please bring it to the attention of a Receiving Coordinator or contact product-guidelines@psfc.coop.

¹ Pet food is not covered by this document.

² Sources include: Center for Science in the Public Interest's Chemical Cuisine database, Environmental Working Group's *Dirty Dozen Guide to Food Additives*, and The Cornucopia Institute.

³ PHOs are the primary dietary source of artificial *trans* fat in processed foods. The FDA has determined that PHOs are NOT *Generally Recognized as Safe* and must be phased out by food manufacturers. A three-year compliance period has begun that will allow food manufacturers to phase out the remaining uses of PHOs, or seek food additive approval for continued use in a specific product.

⁴ Consumers should be aware that many nitrate-free products – including those sold in the PSFC – use celery salt as a curing agent, and celery salt is a natural source of sodium nitrates.

Common or chemical names of additives PSFC is trying to avoid:

1. Acesulfame-Potassium - sweetener
2. Artificial Colorings
3. Caramel Coloring⁵
4. Aspartame (NutraSweet) - sweetener
5. Azodicarbonamide (ADC) – flour improver and bleaching agent
6. Brominated Vegetable Oil (BVO) - emulsifier
7. Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA) - preservative
8. Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT) - preservative
9. Carrageenan (phase out in progress)
10. Diacetyl - flavoring
11. Heptyl paraben - preservative
12. MSG (Monosodium Glutamate) – flavor enhancer
13. Olestra (OLEAN) – synthetic fat substitute
14. Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (Trans Fat)
15. Potassium Bromate – flour improver
16. Propyl Gallate - preservative
17. Saccharin - sweetener
18. Sodium Nitrate & Sodium Nitrite - preservative
19. Sucralose - sweetener
20. TBHQ (Tertiary Butylhydroquinone) - preservative

⁵ The CSPI recommends avoiding or drinking less colas and other ammonia-caramel-colored beverages because of risk from 4-methylimidazole (a by-product formed by the creation of Caramel Color III and IV). Soy sauces, baked goods and other foods that contain ammoniated caramel coloring are much less of a problem because the amounts consumed are small. Class I and Class II caramel coloring do not contain 4-MEI.