

Defining Natural Flavor, Thank You Uncle Sam

The FDA lays out a clear definition of what constitutes a natural flavor within the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) within Subpart B §101.22(a)(3):

The term natural flavor or natural flavoring means the essential oil, oleoresin, essence or extractive, protein hydrolysate, distillate, or any product of roasting, heating or enzymolysis, which contains the flavoring constituents derived from a spice, fruit or fruit juice, vegetable or vegetable juice, edible yeast, herb, bark, bud, root, leaf or similar plant material, meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, dairy products, or fermentation products thereof, whose significant function in food is flavoring rather than nutritional.

In order for a flavor to be natural, it must come from one of the natural materials listed in this definition. Any flavor that does not come from one of those natural sources is considered an artificial flavor.



Derived from

Plants, Animals, and Natural Cultures

There are three major components of which a natural flavor needs to come from:

- **Plants:** spice, fruit or fruit juice, vegetable or vegetable juice, herb, bark, bud, root, leaf or similar plant material
- **Animals:** meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, dairy products
- **Natural Cultures:** edible yeast, fermentation products



The Most Effective Tool in the Tool Kit

Have you ever wondered how your ice cream can be made to taste like a birthday cake, vegan cheese puffs still taste like they are covered with cheddar, or your vegetarian burger still tastes like grilled ground beef? Natural Flavors are the most effective way to make this happen.

By using natural flavors inside of the seasonings, we can open a broader world of possibilities and capabilities. Flavors allow us to re-create unique and whimsical flavor characteristics that taste great, invoke a positive eating experience, and lead to repeat purchase.



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The Processes of Squeezing, Evaporating, Cooking, or Rotting (Fermentation)

Natural Flavors are not synthetically processed. Instead, they undergo natural processing steps in order to concentrate the key flavor components of the material. These are natural processes that we see or conduct in our home every day.

- **Squeezing:** essential oil, oleoresin, essence, extractive
- **Evaporating:** distillate
- **Cooking:** roasting, heating
- **Rotting (Fermentation):** protein hydrolysate, enzymolysis



The Secret Sauce Recipe Stays in the Family

It is often that we are asked to breakdown the components of a natural flavor, but accomplishing this task is not simple. TFS sources flavors from various flavor companies. Asking for the components of a natural flavor is like asking a flavor company for the recipe of the flavor. The recipe and processes to make the flavors that we purchase are owned and considered to be intellectual property of the flavor vendor. For this reason, it is not always easy for us to share details of the natural flavor ingredient.



Embracing That Nature is Made of Compounds

Everything we see is made of elements, compounds, and states of matter. That includes the plants and proteins that we eat on a daily basis. Even water is a well-known chemical compound (H₂O). If you pick an apple from a tree, it contains thousands of natural flavor compounds. Bite into that apple, and these compounds interact with your nose and tongue to provide flavor. That mix of compounds lets you know that you may be eating a McIntosh apple instead of a Gala apple.

Through observation, we have learned what we really enjoy in the foods we eat, and what flavor compounds invoke memorable eating experiences. Natural flavors give us an opportunity to take what we enjoy the most, and to apply them back into food in unique, fun, and creative ways.



Who do I contact for questions?

If you do not know who your representative is, we have listed below our general contact information. Please feel free to call or email, and someone from The Food Source International will respond to your question.

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