

# INGREDIENT GUIDE

*for* **Better**  
**School Food**  
**Purchasing**

**QUICK REFERENCE**

*Last updated July 2021*



# INGREDIENT GUIDE INTRODUCTION

This guide is a resource for school food leaders and manufacturers alike who are committed to improving the overall quality, nutritional value, and safety of food provided to all students in every school. It highlights unwanted ingredients to eliminate, and those to watch out for as new food products are developed and others are modified.

This document is a science-based tool created primarily by school nutrition professionals, in partnership with Center for Science in the Public Interest.

The full version with descriptions and citations can be downloaded here:



## THIS GUIDE IS ENDORSED BY:

Center for Ecoliteracy

Chef Ann Foundation

Eat REAL

FoodCorps

Healthy Schools Campaign

Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food,  
Education & Policy, Teachers  
College, Columbia University

Life Time Foundation

LunchAssist

National Farm to School  
Network

Urban School Food Alliance

Wellness in the Schools

Whole Kids Foundation

# UNWANTED LIST



Ingredients that are not acceptable at any level in newly developed products, and should be eliminated over time from existing products.

## ① ARTIFICIAL COLORS

Synthetic Food Dyes (Blue 1, Blue 2, Green 3, Red 3, Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6)

Caramel Color CL 3-4

## ② ARTIFICIAL & UNSPECIFIED NATURAL FLAVORS, AND FLAVOR ENHANCERS

Artificial Flavors & Unspecified Natural Flavors

Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)

## ③ ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES

Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA)

Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT)

Propyl Gallate

Tert-Butylhydroquinone (TBHQ)

## ④ ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS & OTHER SUGAR-FREE (Non-Nutritive, Low Calorie, and Reduced-Calorie) SWEETENERS

## ⑤ EMULSIFIERS

Brominated Vegetable Oil (BVO)

Carboxymethylcellulose (CMC) and Polysorbates

## ⑥ FLOUR TREATMENT AGENTS

Bromated Flour/Potassium Bromate

Azodicarbonamide (ADA)

Potassium Iodate

## ⑦ MYCOPROTEIN

# WATCH LIST



Ingredients common in foods of lower nutritional quality, and/or tend to indicate a highly processed food. Watch, limit, demand transparency and accountability in their use.

- ① **ADDED SODIUM**
- ② **ADDED SUGARS (INCLUDING SUGARY SYRUPS)**
- ③ **ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES**  
Benzoates and Benzoic Acid  
Sulfites
- ④ **CAFFEINE (Especially Added Caffeine)**
- ⑤ **COLORINGS (Naturally Derived)**  
Annatto  
Cochineal extract/carmine
- ⑥ **HYDROLYZED VEGETABLE PROTEIN (HVP)**
- ⑦ **NATURAL FLAVORS (Specified)**
- ⑧ **PHOSPHORIC ACID & PHOSPHATES**
- ⑨ **PROCESSED MEAT**
- ⑩ **REFINED OR WHITE (including Bleached) FLOUR**
- ⑪ **SUGARS METABOLIZED DIFFERENTLY THAN TRADITIONAL SUGARS:**  
Allulose & Tagatose
- ⑫ **THICKENING AGENTS**  
Carrageenan