



## Frequently Asked Questions About Flavors

Flavors play an important role in making nutritious foods more appealing and can safely and effectively encourage nutritious eating choices. Yet, there are common misconceptions about flavors added to our foods and beverages. Learn more about flavors so that you can confidently answer questions from your patients, clients and audiences.

### What are flavors?

Flavors are what create the enjoyable sensations of taste and smell that we experience when we eat a food or drink a beverage. In nature, individual components work together to create what we recognize as a food's flavor. For example, peaches consist of more than 100 individual components that make a peach taste like peach.

### What are natural flavors?

Natural flavors are made by taking these individual components from whole foods using simple processes, such as heating or fermentation. Natural flavors meet very specific U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requirements, such as what natural source they come from, and how they are produced.<sup>1</sup>

### Are flavors safe?

Every flavoring is rigorously assessed to ensure safety by an esteemed international panel of scientific experts from prestigious academic and research institutions across the world. This process is recognized by over 100 countries globally. Flavorings are thoroughly re-evaluated on a regular basis, using the most current, state-of-the-art scientific methods and safety data.

### Where can I find flavoring safety evaluations?

Every flavoring evaluation and supporting data is reported to the FDA and is publicly available online in the FDA's databases, in independent peer reviewed scientific journals, and in the Flavor & Extract Manufacturers Association of the United States (FEMA) Flavor Ingredient Library, available on [femaflavor.org](http://femaflavor.org).

### Why are flavors used in foods and beverages?

Flavors are used for many reasons. One important benefit is making nutritious foods more enjoyable to eat without adding extra calories, added sugar or sodium. By making nutritious foods more appealing, flavors play an important role in encouraging better food choices.<sup>2</sup> In fact, evidence suggests that eating pleasure can help foster healthy dietary choices.<sup>3</sup> Flavors are also part of culture, preserve traditions, and celebrate the way we eat and connect.

## What is the difference between natural and artificial flavors?

The use of “artificial” and “natural” are defined in FDA’s regulations and describe where the flavor ingredients used to make that flavor are derived from and the processes used to create the flavor. If a flavor is deemed “natural,” it originates from a natural food source, such as strawberries, and is produced using simple process in accordance with FDA.<sup>1</sup> A flavor referred to as “artificial” may contain flavorings that occur in nature but may be processed in a way that doesn’t meet FDA’s definitions, or it could be made from flavoring ingredients produced by people rather than nature. Food and beverage companies have used artificial flavor for decades as they provide several important benefits. For instance, they allow people to enjoy a variety of food flavors even when the foods from which those flavors are derived are unavailable or out of season. They also enable individuals with food allergies to safely enjoy flavors they cannot consume from natural sources. Both “natural” and “artificial” flavors have a role in the U.S. food supply and are rigorous assessed to ensure safety.



## References

1. Food and Drug Administration. CFR – Code of Regulations Title 21. Accessed May 28, 2025.
2. McCrickerd K, Forde CG. Sensory influences on food intake control: moving beyond palatability. *Obes Rev.* 2016 Jan;17(1):18-29.
3. Bédard A, Lamarche PO, Grégoire LM, Trudel-Guy C, Provencher V, Desroches S, Lemieux S. Can eating pleasure be a lever for healthy eating? A systematic scoping review of eating pleasure and its links with dietary behaviors and health. *PLoS One.* 2020 Dec 21;15(12):e0244292

