



# Natural Flavors: What's Really in Your Food?

- **Definition:** Natural flavors are derived from plant or animal sources, but they can be highly processed.
- **Common Sources:** Fruits, vegetables, meat, seafood, dairy, herbs, spices, and even fermentation.
- **Processing:** Though labeled as “natural,” these flavors undergo chemical processes to extract and concentrate them.



# What Do Natural Flavors Contain?

- **Primary Ingredient:** The base ingredient (e.g., a fruit or spice).
- **Additional Ingredients:** Flavor compounds extracted with chemicals like solvents or carriers, often including preservatives, emulsifiers, or stabilizers.
- **Hidden Chemicals:** Up to 100 chemical compounds can be combined to create a single “natural flavor.”



# Where Do You Find Natural Flavors?

- **Processed Foods:** Breakfast cereals, sodas, flavored snacks, candy, and frozen meals.
- **Beverages:** Flavored waters, sodas, and fruit juices.
- **Packaged Snacks:** Chips, cookies, crackers, and energy bars.



# How Are Natural Flavors Regulated in the U.S.?

- **FDA Definition:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) defines natural flavors as substances derived from plant or animal matter.
- **No Ingredient Transparency:** Manufacturers are not required to disclose the exact chemicals used to create natural flavors, only the source (e.g., plant-based or animal-based).
  - **Common Additives:** Some natural flavors contain solvents, carriers, and preservatives like propylene glycol or glycerin, which can still be considered “natural.”



# Are Natural Flavors Different in Europe?

- **Stricter Regulations:** The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) requires more transparency and stricter safety evaluations for flavoring compounds.
  - **Fewer Additives:** In Europe, natural flavors must come predominantly from the original plant or animal source, with less chemical processing allowed.
  - **No Synthetic Solvents:** European standards are more likely to ban solvents and other synthetic chemicals often found in U.S. “natural flavors.”
- Key Point:** Europe tends to restrict the use of chemically processed compounds in flavors, making their definition of “natural” stricter.



# Are Natural Flavors Safe?"

- **Cumulative Exposure:** Consuming small amounts of chemicals in natural flavors daily can add up over time.
- **Allergenic Reactions:** Since manufacturers aren't required to list all ingredients, people with allergies might unknowingly consume allergens.
- **Misleading Label:** The term "natural" often leads consumers to believe the product is healthier, even when it contains artificial or highly processed components.





# Real Foods That Use Natural Flavors

- **Cereal Bars:** Often contain “natural flavors” derived from fruit, but with added chemical compounds.
- **Flavored Drinks:** “Fruit-flavored” waters and juices that list natural flavors usually contain processed flavor extracts.
- **Chips & Snacks:** “Natural” seasonings often contain a blend of processed flavor compounds.

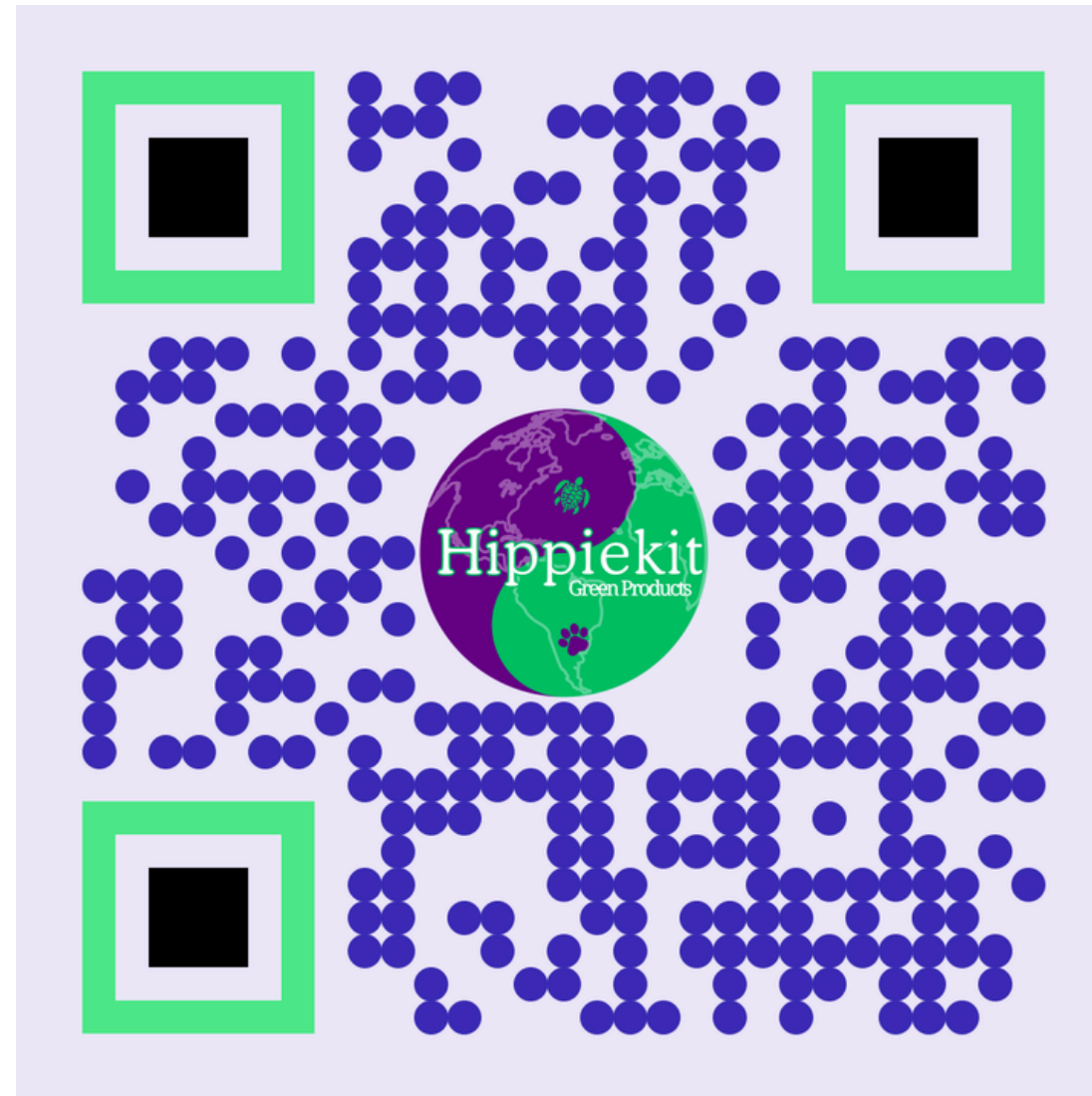


# How to Avoid Natural Flavors

- **Look for Whole Ingredients:** Choose products flavored with real fruit, herbs, or spices, rather than generic “natural flavors.”
- **Organic Products:** Organic certification in the U.S. and Europe generally requires more transparency and fewer artificial processing agents.
- **Homemade Food:** Preparing food from scratch using real ingredients is the best way to avoid hidden chemicals.



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