

Food science

Functions of ingredients

Ingredients provide a variety of functions in recipes.

Carbohydrate, protein and fat

Carbohydrate, protein and fat all have a range of properties that make them useful in a variety of food products.

Carbohydrates perform different functions in food.

They can:

- help to cause the colour change of bread, toast and bakery products (dextrinisation);
- contribute to the chewiness, colour and sweet flavour of caramel;
- thicken products such as sauces and custards (gelatinisation).

Maillard reaction

Foods which are baked, grilled or roasted undergo colour, odour and flavour changes. This is primarily due to a group of reactions involving amino acids (from protein) and reducing sugars.

Dextrinisation

When foods containing starch are heated they can also produce brown compounds due to dextrinisation. Dextrinisation occurs when the heat breaks the large starch polysaccharides into smaller molecules known as dextrans which produce a brown colour.

Caramelisation

When sucrose (table sugar) is heated above its melting point it undergoes physical and chemical changes to produce caramel.

Gelatinisation

When starch is mixed with water and heated, the starch granules swell and eventually rupture, absorbing liquid, which thickens the mixture. On cooling, if enough starch is used, a gel forms.

Proteins perform different functions in food products.

They:

- aerate foods, e.g. whisking egg whites;
- thicken sauces, e.g. egg custard;
- bind ingredients together, e.g. fishcakes;
- form structures, e.g. gluten formation in bread;
- gel, e.g. lime jelly.

Gluten formation

Two proteins, gliadin and glutenin, found in wheat flour, form gluten when mixed with water. Gluten is strong, elastic and forms a 3D network in dough. In the production of bread, kneading helps untangle the gluten strands and align them. Gluten helps give structure to the bread and keeps in the gases that expand during cooking.

Gelation

Gelatine is a protein which is extracted from collagen, present in animal connective tissue. When it is mixed with warm water, the gelatine protein molecules start to unwind. On cooling, a stable, solid network is formed, trapping the liquid.

Denaturation

Denaturation is the change in structure of protein molecules. The process results in the unfolding of the protein's structure. Factors which contribute to denaturation are heat, salts, pH and mechanical action.

Coagulation

Coagulation follows denaturation. For example, when egg white is cooked it changes colour and becomes firmer (sets). The heat causes egg proteins to unfold from their coiled state and form a solid, stable network.

Aeration

Products such as creamed cakes need air incorporated into the mixture in order to give a well-risen texture. This is achieved by creaming a fat, such as butter or baking spread, with sugar. Small bubbles of air are incorporated and form a stable foam.

Fats performs different functions in food.

They help to:

- add 'shortness' or 'flakiness' to foods, e.g. shortbread, pastry;
- provide a range of textures and cooking mediums;
- glaze foods, e.g. butter on carrots;
- aerate mixtures, e.g. a creamed cake mix;
- add a range of flavours.

Plasticity

Fats do not melt at fixed temperatures, but over a range. This property is called plasticity.

Colloidal systems

Colloidal systems give structure, texture and mouthfeel to many different products.

System	Disperse phase	Continuous phase	Food
Sol	Solid	Liquid	Unset jelly
Gel	Liquid	Solid	Jelly
Emulsion	Liquid	Liquid	Mayonnaise
Solid emulsion	Liquid	Solid	Butter
Foam	Gas	Liquid	Whipped cream
Solid foam	Gas	Solid	Meringue

Raising agents

Raising agents include anything that causes rising within foods, and are usually used in baked goods. Raising agents can be:

- biological, e.g. yeast;
- chemical, e.g. baking powder;
- mechanical, e.g. adding air through beating or folding.

Functional ingredients

These are ingredients that are specifically included in food for additional health benefits. They include:

- probiotics – 'good' bacteria that may have a positive impact on human health;
- prebiotics – food ingredients that promote the growth of beneficial microorganisms in the gut;
- sterols/stanols – compounds that can lower cholesterol;
- healthy fats (e.g. omega-3);
- added vitamins and minerals (more than in the original food).

Why is food prepared and cooked?

Food is prepared and cooked to:

- make the food more palatable – improves flavour, texture and appearance;
- reduce the bulk of the food;
- provide variety and interest to meals.

Methods of cooking food

The methods of cooking are divided up into groups. These are based on the cooking medium used.

They are:

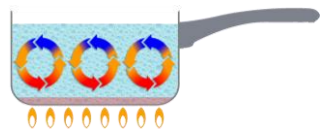
- moist/liquid methods, e.g. boiling;
- dry methods, e.g. grilling;
- fat-based, e.g. frying.

Selecting the most appropriate way of preparing and cooking certain foods is important to maintain or enhance their nutritional value.

- Vitamins can be lost due to oxidation during preparation or leaching into the cooking liquid.
- Fat-based methods of cooking increase the energy (calories) of the food.
- The use of different cooking methods affects the sensory qualities of the food.

There are three ways that heat is transferred to food.

- Conduction – the exchange of heat by direct contact with foods on a surface.
- Radiation – energy in the form of rays.
- Convection – currents of hot air or hot liquid transfer the heat energy to the food.



Tasks

1. Choose a recipe that you enjoy or have made recently and explain in detail the functions of the ingredients.
2. Explain the function of raising agents, giving examples of recipes.

Key terms

Conduction: The exchange of heat by direct contact with foods on a surface.

Convection: Currents of hot air or hot liquid transfer the heat energy to the food.

Functional ingredients: Included in food for additional health benefits.

Heat transfer: Transference of heat energy between objects.

Radiation: Energy in the form of rays.

Tenderisation

- Mechanical tenderisation – a meat cleaver or meat hammer may be used to beat the meat. Cutting into small cubes or mincing can also help.
- Chemical tenderisation (marinating) – the addition of any liquid to flavour or soften meat before cooking.

To find out more go to: <https://bit.ly/2SPqWEG>

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