

EUROPE

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**JUNGBUNZLAUER
PRESENTS:**

**Why do food additives
have E-numbers?**



**The
hunt is on**

Finding new ingredients for Europe's changing lifestyle

Why do food additives have E-numbers?

With Dr **Gerhard Gerstner**, Senior Technical Service Manager, Jungbunzlauer.

Jungbunzlauer is one of the world's leading producers of natural biodegradable ingredients, which are manufactured by fermentation of natural carbohydrate sources. These food additives, which include citric acid, xanthan gum and glucono-delta-lactone, are all classified within the European E-numbers system.

With the growing awareness of consumers today, there is often discussion about the pros and cons of food additives. Unfortunately, sometimes unproven or false information is also spread to provoke unnecessary concern about E-numbers. Generally, E-numbers are numerical designations, which have been developed within the European Community for declaration of foodstuff additives.

E-numbers = safe ingredients

The good news is if a food additive has an E-number it shows it has passed safety tests and has been approved for use throughout the

European Union. This approval is monitored, reviewed and amended in the light of new scientific data. Thus, the Jungbunzlauer additives that are labelled with an E-number are approved food additives according to European legislation and its purity criteria, the latter laid down in Directive 96/77/EC for our products.

Additives with E-numbers must serve a purpose

Food additives came into being because large-scale, specialised food production has different requirements to those of the household kitchen. Problems of keeping qualities became acute in foodstuffs produced a long way from their point of consumption. Food additives came into use to satisfy these requirements for processed foods. In some products, additives are so essential that they are retained even in organic foods. Their use and dosage in foodstuff must be justified according to the *quantum satis* principle for generally permitted food additives such as citric acid, xanthan gum, etc.



Dos and don'ts for the food industry

Within the food additives industry, there is an immense and increasing pressure on economics due to aggressive competition from some manufacturers, especially from the Far East. Working in a very competitive environment, some food producers might even accept a certain element of risk in using inferior quality ingredients in order to stay in the game.

A wide range exists in the quality of products available from the Far East. Although the product may be labelled with an E-number or may simply state that it is 'food grade', the certificate of analysis and/or the product quality may not necessarily comply with each of the parameters listed in the EU purity standards. In this case, the E-number would not be valid, and the food additive as well as the foodstuff made thereof would not be marketable.

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It is clear that in the long run, most of the food producers cannot test every specification parameter prior to the release of each incoming batch and must therefore rely on their overall quality system for suppliers (raw material control, audits, delivery and quality documents). However, if there are suspicious facts known to the user, it would be negligent in the eyes of the authorities if the receiving company did not perform a solid and possibly costly risk assessment for those raw materials under scrutiny.

Jungbunzlauer is known as a trusted supplier of high-quality food ingredients and commits itself to the highest purity standards. A recent survey of the company's customers and distributors worldwide revealed that 97 percent gave positive ratings with regard to the reliability of its products – 33 percent as 'excellent', 50 percent as 'very good' and 14 percent as 'good'. We will work even harder to shift those remaining three percent of our customers back to those categories that Jungbunzlauer stands for. ■


Dr **Gerhard Gerstner** is Senior Technical Service Manager for the Swiss-based food ingredients company Jungbunzlauer. He is also the technical service contact for Jungbunzlauer's portfolio of organic, highly bioavailable organic mineral salts of calcium, magnesium and potassium, which are produced in dedicated facilities in Ladenburg, Germany and Pernhofen, Austria. Gerstner is a member of the food additives working group of the German Chemical Society (GDCh).

For further information, please visit www.jungbunzlauer.com. For more general information on this topic, please visit the website of Federation of European Food Additives, Food Enzymes and Food Cultures Industries (ELC) www.elc-eu.org/.

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