

ODA Food Safety Division

Sodium Erythorbate - is it an earthworm?



Sodium Erythorbate, a food additive found in several food products, has been rumored to be from earthworms. Where the rumor came from, we are not sure. We suspect the word erythorbate looks and sounds somewhat like the word earthworms.

Actually, it is a chemical food additive whose chemical structure resembles Vitamin C or Ascorbic Acid. It is used in the food processing industry to preserve the color of cured meats and related products. It actually is a chemical salt of Erythorbic Acid.

The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) regulates all allowable food additives which are contained in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR's), Title 21. Safe levels for various foods are promulgated in those regulations or are allowed under good manufacturing practice guidelines, also known as GRAS (generally recognized as safe) compounds.

As you can see, strict federal regulations related to allowable food ingredients do not include earthworms. We hope this information will be useful in discounting an unfounded rumor.

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