

# MANUFACTURING FRESH, ASIAN-STYLE NOODLES

Food manufacturers are required by law to ensure that they sell safe food products that comply with all provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).

## Fresh noodles are potentially hazardous

Fresh noodles have a high water activity level and a near neutral pH. This allows pathogenic organisms to grow, and they can rapidly reach dangerous levels. Such organisms may cause serious illness if not controlled. Contaminated or spoiled products may not look deteriorated, so they must be refrigerated at all times to minimise the risks to consumers.

Bacteria grow fastest between 5°C and 60°C, so it is important to keep the product under 5°C (refrigerated) at all times. This includes at the manufacturing facility, during transport, and at the retail outlet.

## Hardening of noodles

Typically, fresh noodles harden when refrigerated. This may lead consumers to think that the noodles are not fresh. Placing cooking instructions on the packaging, as well as a correct 'use-by' date and storage

instructions, will reassure retailers and consumers that the noodles will soften after reheating. The production date is another piece of information that could be included on the packaging to help customers gauge freshness.

## Shelf life

Manufacturers are responsible for determining shelf life, and must be able to verify that shelf life to the enforcement authority if required. In setting the shelf life, the manufacturer must take into account all the various factors that can impact it, e.g. water activity and the type of packaging used. If any changes are made to a product, shelf life must be revalidated.

Pasteurisation, or refrigeration, can extend the shelf life, but this must be verified by the manufacturer. Special storage requirements to meet the 'use-by' date must be shown on the packaging, e.g. 'Keep refrigerated'.

## Preservatives

Preservatives are food additives which can extend the shelf life of a product by inhibiting microbiological activity which leads to spoilage. Preservatives which are permitted in fresh noodles are listed in Standard 1.3.1 of the Food Standards Code (see table).

Manufacturers must choose preservatives carefully. Different preservatives inhibit different organisms and are only effective under certain conditions, such as within a specific pH range. The concentration used must be within the limits defined in the Code, and although more than one preservative may be added, each can only be added to a net total that is within the defined limits in the Code.

The amount of preservative added to each batch must be consistent to ensure compliance to the Code and to achieve the correct shelf life. The preservatives added must be measured every time and thoroughly mixed through the entire batch.

Altering preservatives in any product may alter its shelf life and other properties. Therefore, all changes must incorporate a



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product review to ensure that all changes are noted. Whenever a product is changed, it must be relabelled and the shelf life validated.

#### Permitted preservatives in fresh noodles (Food Standards Code, Standard 1.3.1, section 6.4)

| E number                             | Food additive   | Limit (mg/kg) |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------|
| 200 201<br>202 203                   | Sorbic acid and sodium, potassium and calcium sorbates          | 1000          |
| 220 221<br>222 223<br>224 225<br>228 | Sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulphites              | 300           |
| 243                                  | Ethyl lauroyl arginate*   | 200           |
| 280 281<br>282 283                   | Propionic acid and sodium and potassium and calcium propionates | 2000          |

#### More information

- See publications: *Date marking, storage conditions and directions for use; Shelf life testing; Potentially hazardous foods*
- Food Standards Code, Standard 1.3.1, section 6.4
- visit the Food Authority website [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry)
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).



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