

Bread dough conditioners ^[1]

Dear Alice,

What can you tell me about dough conditioners used in bread? I know so-called health food breads usually don't use dough conditioners. I also know dough conditioners are supposed to prolong the fresh "feel" of many commercial breads. Are dough conditioners bad for you? Do they have any nutritional value? -- John Dough

Answer

Dear John Dough,

And you thought conditioner was just for hair? Commercial bread bakers often use additives, such as dough conditioners, to improve the texture, appearance, and shelf-life of their bread. Dough conditioners strengthen the gluten (protein portion of wheat) and starch (complex carbohydrate) in the dough. This prevents overmixing of the bread dough, which can easily happen when large quantities of dough are made at one time. Overmixed dough rises irregularly, and thus produces funny shaped, dense loaves. The addition of dough conditioners helps to ensure rounded, well shaped, light loaves.

The most common dough conditioners are sodium stearoyl 2 lactylate, calcium stearoyl lactate, barley malt, ethoxylated and succinylated monoglycerides, and polysorbate 60. The [Center for Science in the Public Interest](#) ^[2] (which is often conservative when it comes to "questionable food items") rated these dough conditioners as "additives that appear to be safe." Dough conditioners are used in very small amounts, so even if the dough conditioner contains a nutrient, such as calcium, they do not provide any substantial nutritive value.

If you wish to avoid additives in your bread, buying it from small, local bakeries or health food stores may be your best bet. You might consider asking for a list of all ingredients in their loaves or you could even try making your own bread.

Hope this response has risen to the occasion!

Alice!

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[1] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/bread-dough-conditioners>

[2] <http://www.cspinet.org/reports/chemcuisine.htm>

[3] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/nutrition-physical-activity>

[4] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/food-choices-health>

[5] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/benefits-eating-fiber>

[6] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/quick-and-healthy-bag-lunches>

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