



The Technology of Vitamins in Food

By P. Berry Ottaway

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The role of vitamins in human nutrition is an important aspect of nutrition and food science, and our knowledge in this area is still advancing. Over the last few years there has been a considerable consumer awareness of nutrition and healthy eating which has been enhanced by numerous articles in the media and by nutritional labelling on products. As a consequence, the food industry has had to become more concerned with the nutritional value of products and the maintenance of guaranteed micronutrient levels. While the food industry has the responsibility of producing foods that provide a realistic supply of nutrients, including vitamins, it is now also required to offer products with a high degree of convenience and long shelf lives. Vitamins are a group of chemical compounds which are relatively unstable. They are affected by a number of factors such as heat, light and other food components and also by the processes needed to preserve the food or to convert it into consumer products (e.g. pasteurisation, sterilisation, extrusion, irradiation, etc.). The result of these interactions may be a partial or total loss of the vitamins. Food technology is concerned with both the maintenance of vitamin levels in foods and the restoration of the vitamin content to foods where losses have occurred. In addition, foods designed for special nutritional purposes such as baby and infant foods and slimming foods need to be enriched or fortified with vitamins and other micronutrients. In addition to being essential nutrients, some vitamins have an important role as technological additives in foods and can be found acting as colours, antioxidants and texture improvers.

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