

Food additives (sorbic/benzoic acid) in kueh products under the Singapore Food Regulations

Food additives are substances added to food to provide specific technological functions (e.g., to preserve, add colour or texture to foods). They may only be used when they do not present any health risks to consumers, when there is a technological justification, and when their use does not mislead consumers.

Benzoic acid and sorbic acid are food additives allowed for addition into fillings (e.g., red bean paste, lotus paste) as there had been an established technological justification for use in these products. Food industry tend to purchase these fillings in larger bulk packages to be used as an ingredient in kueh products over a period of time. Hence, the use of benzoic acid/sorbic acid helps to extend the shelf-life of the fillings, before they are further processed into other food products. Permitted levels of benzoic acid and sorbic acid in fillings vary, depending on the type of fillings. Singapore adopts the permitted levels set by Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)[#]. For types of fillings where Codex has not set a level, SFA adopts the principles recommended by Codex on the use of additives in food to set a level.

Kueh products are typically made freshly for sale with a short shelf-life, displayed and sold at room temperature, for consumption within the same day (or the next if refrigerated). Hence, the further addition of benzoic acid and sorbic acid into kueh products are not considered to be technologically justified. This means that kueh products that do not contain fillings such as the steamed colourful layered soft rice flour pudding (e.g., 9-layer kueh) as well as the kueh dough should not be detected with benzoic acid or sorbic acid. For kueh products with fillings, the final product should not exceed the permitted level for the fillings.

- The CAC is the international food standards setting body established by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization.

**Issued by SFA
02 August 2022**