

FREE GUIDE • DIET SWAD

Preservative Decoder

The 10 most common preservatives in Indian packaged food - recognise them, understand them, and choose better. Print and stick in your kitchen.

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Ancient Wisdom, Modern Life

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Why does packaged food last so long?

A homemade laddoo stays fresh for a week or two. A factory snack survives 9-12 months. That gap is not magic - it is chemistry: preservatives (to stop spoilage) and antioxidants (to stop oils going stale). None of this is automatically dangerous. But food built to survive a year on a shelf is built for the shelf, not for you. This decoder helps you recognise the names and make your own call.

Jargon buster: 'Preservative'

A substance added to stop bacteria, mould, or staleness. On Indian labels it appears as 'Preservative (INS xxx)'. The INS number identifies exactly which one - and that is what this guide decodes.

The decoder: 10 names to recognise

Code	Name	Usually found in	Worth knowing
INS 211	Sodium benzoate	Soft drinks, sauces, pickles, jams	Studied alongside synthetic colours for possible effects on children's attention; sensitive people may react
INS 220	Sulphur dioxide	Dried fruit, squashes, wine	A known trigger for some asthmatics - India requires it to be declared
INS 202	Potassium sorbate	Cheese, baked goods, syrups	Among the milder options - still marks long-shelf-life food
INS 282	Calcium propionate	Packaged bread, buns	Stops mould in bread; the reason packet bread outlasts bakery bread
INS 250/251	Nitrites / nitrates	Processed meats (salami, sausages)	High regular intake of processed meat is discouraged by global health bodies
INS 223/224	Sodium metabisulphite	Papad, dried veg, some namkeen	Same sulphite family as INS 220 - same caution for sensitive people
INS 200	Sorbic acid	Sweets, chutneys	Mild, common; a shelf-life marker
INS 234	Nisin	Processed cheese, canned items	A bacteria-derived preservative used in dairy
INS 319	TBHQ (antioxidant)	Fried snacks, instant noodles, chips	Keeps frying oil from going rancid; a strong marker of deep-processed snacks
INS 320/321	BHA / BHT (antioxidants)	Chewing gum, cereals, fats	Debated internationally; some countries restrict use in certain foods

The pattern to notice: preservatives cluster in exactly the foods designed to sit for months - breads, drinks, sauces, fried snacks. Fresh-made food simply doesn't need them.

The 'better choice' checklist

- See 'Preservative (INS ...)' on a daily-eaten item (bread, dahi, juice, snack)? Look for a fresher alternative for the DAILY slot; keep the preserved one for occasional use.
- Prefer foods that expire in weeks, not seasons - a short shelf life is often a clean-label signal.
- Frozen is a fair alternative: freezing preserves without chemistry.
- Don't panic about one INS number in an occasional treat. Do care about five of them in something you eat every day.

Fresh by design

Diet Swad products contain zero preservatives - which is exactly why our shelf life is shorter than the big brands. We make in small batches and ship fresh. The pack tells you when to finish it, and honestly - they rarely survive that long anyway.

The no-preservative line-up

Power Bites, Royal Bites, Peanut-Sesame Delights, three Millet Cookies, Roasted Cashews - every single one preservative-free, artificial-anything-free. ₹499 each, FREE shipping across India - dietswad.in.

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