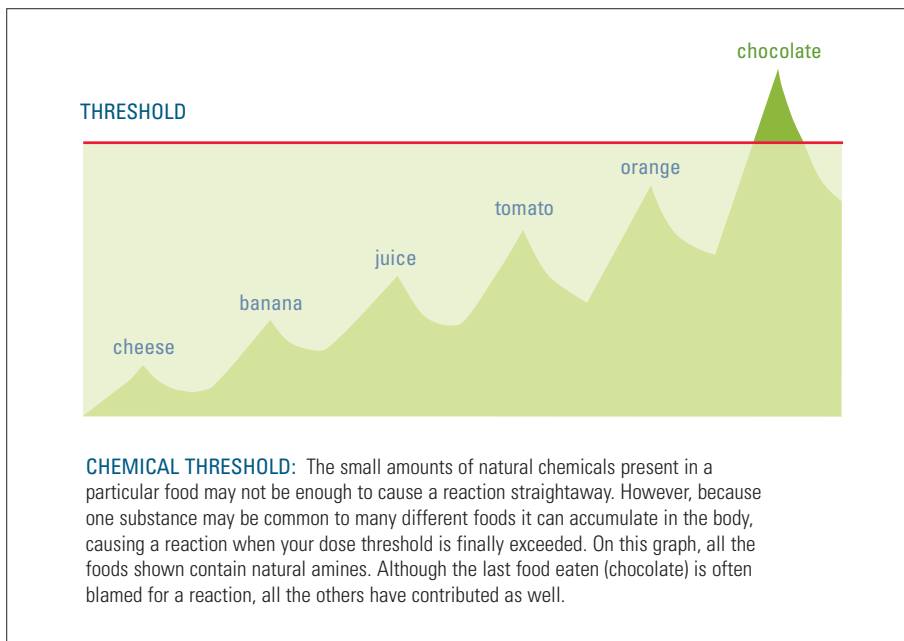


NATURAL FOOD CHEMICALS

Natural chemicals present in many 'healthy' foods can be just as much of a problem for sensitive people as the 'artificial' ones used as food additives.

Foods vary greatly in natural chemical composition. The substances most likely to upset sensitive individuals – salicylates, amines and glutamate – are the ones common to many different foods and are therefore consumed in greatest quantity in the daily diet.



Salicylates

Salicylates are a family of plant chemicals (2-OH-benzoates) found naturally in many fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs and spices, jams, honey, yeast extracts, tea, coffee, juices, beer and wine. They are present in natural flavourings (eg. mint, fruit flavours) used in foods, drinks and liquid medications, and also as scents in perfumes, toiletries, cleaning products, washing powders, and botanical oils (eg. lavender, eucalyptus, tea-tree).

ASPIRIN (acetyl salicylic acid) is a member of this chemical family. Natural salicylates are active ingredients of many herbal medications because of their pain-killing and anti-inflammatory properties.

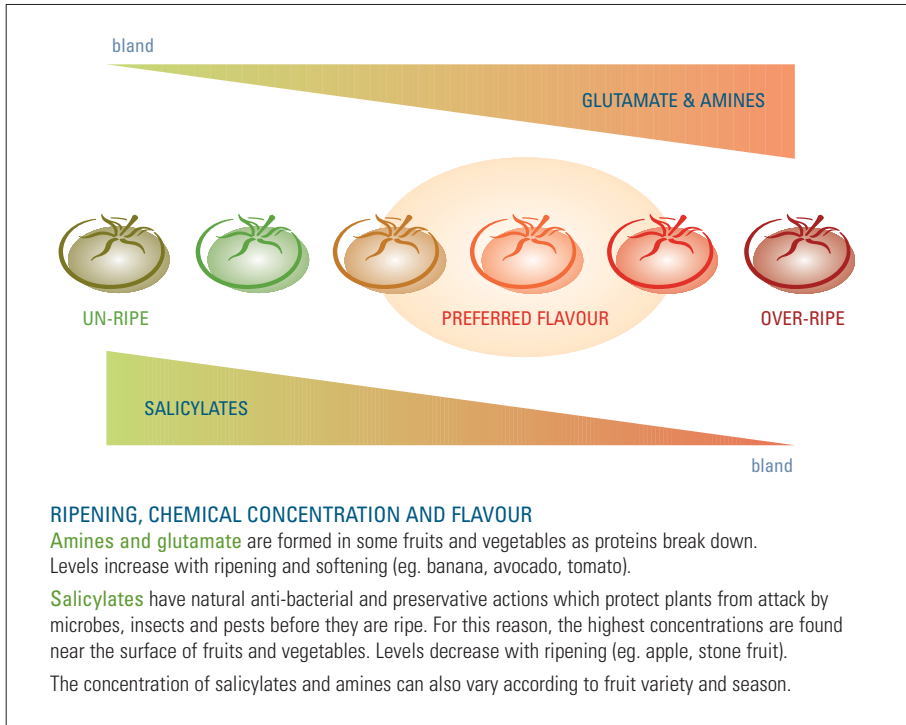
Amines

Dietary amines come from protein breakdown. Levels increase in protein foods (meats, fish, cheese) as they age or “mature”, and in fruits as they ripen (eg. bananas, tomato, avocado, pawpaw, olives). High levels are present in sauces, fruit juices, chocolate, flavoured spreads, nut and seed pastes & jams, and in fermented products (eg. beer, wines, yeast extracts).

Glutamate

Glutamate is an amino acid building block of all proteins and is found naturally in most foods. In its free form (not linked to protein) it enhances the flavour of food. This is why foods rich in natural glutamate (eg. cheese, tomato, mushrooms, stock cubes, soy sauce, meat extracts, yeast extracts) are used to add flavour to meals. For the same reason, MSG (pure monosodium glutamate) is used as an additive in savoury snack foods, soups, sauces and Asian cooking.

Ripening, chemical concentration and flavour



As a general rule, the stronger the flavour of a food, the higher its natural chemical content is likely to be. When fresh tomatoes are made into juice, soup, sauce or paste, the concentration of salicylates, amines and glutamate increases in parallel with the flavour.



Ageing and/or cooking of meat and fish (especially browning, grilling or charring) enhances their flavour due to increased amine formation.