Tips on reading ingredient labels

Q. I rend ingredients labels but can't always understand them. Can you tell me what the letters mean and why these preservatives are added to the food?

added to the food?

A. Preservatives used in our food today perform one or both of two major functions: As antimicrobial agents, they keep food from spolling; and as antioxidants, they keep food from pecome rancid or developing off-eclors or flavors.

Antimicrobial agents inhibit or prevent mold, yeast and bacteria growth that spoils foods.

Antioxidants, are found in many foods — particularly those containing fats and oils — to prevent rancidity and slow the development of off-flavors, colors and odors which is caused by the food being expect to oxygen, moisture, heat and certain enzymes present in many natural fats.

Until the 1970s, the FDA listed

Until the 1970s, the FDA listed Until the 1970s, the FDA listed more than two dozen antimerobial and antioxidants on its GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe) list. Since then a review of these agents has been started to reaffirm their safety. Here is a brief description of some commonly used additives and their use in foods:

ASCORPATES AND ERVITIORATES. AND ERVITIORATES. (ascorbic acid, ascorby) pal-

BATES: (ascorbic acid, ascorbyl pal-mitate, calcium ascorbate, crythor-bic acid, sodium ascorbate, sodium crythorbate).

Use: In small amounts to inhibit

enzymatic browning and/or as a preservatives in foods and bever-

preservatives in foods and bever-nges.
Foods: meat products, concentrated milk, baked goods, candy fats and olls, breakfast cereals, processed fruits and vegetables.
Ascorbic acid (vitamin C) is used mostly as an antioxidant but can act as antimicrobial agent in some foods.

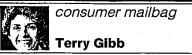
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BENZOIC ACID and Sodium Ben-

BENZOIC ACID and Sodjum Benzoate:
Use: As an antimicrobial agent which is especially effective against yeast and bacteria.
Foods: condiments, relishes, sugar substitutes, alcobolic and non-alcobolic boverages, candy, chewing gum, back goods, frozen dairy products.
Benzoic acid also occurs naturally in some foods: raspberries, cranberries, cloves, tea and aniso to name a few,

BHA (BUTYLATED hydroxyanisole) a BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene):
Use: As antioxidants to retard raneldity in many foods containing fats and oils and in certain processed meat products

meat products.
Foods: breakfast cereals, chewing gum, potato chips, candy, enriched rice, potato flakes, convenience foods.

PARABENS: (methyl paraben and

PARABENS: (methyl paraben and propyl paraben)
Use: To inhibit mold and yeast. Foods: processed vegetables, baked goods, fats and oil, sugar substitutes, seasonings, procuested fruits, jams and pilles, grain products, gelatins and puddings, candy, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. PROPIONIC Acid and its salts: (calcium propionate, dilauryl thiodipropionate acid).
Use: Usually in combination with

"We Discount Luxury"

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Foods: fats and olls, meat products, snack foods, baked goods, nuts, grain products, frostings, chewing gum, frozen dairy products, gelatins and puddings, beverages.

SORBIC ACTD and its salts: (calci-

SURSIC ACID and its salts; (eatching potassium and sodium sorbate). Use: As an antimicrobial agent. Foods: baked goods, fals and oils, milk products, cheese, frozen dairy products.

Sorbic acid and potassium sorbate are the only sorbates used as a preservative.

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emulsifying agents to prevent fungi and bacteria that cause rope in baked goods. This rope produces off-flavor, discoloration and softening.

Foods: primarily in baked goods. Propionic acid is found naturally

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