

Food: The Chemistry of its Components, 2nd Edition. By T. P. Coultate, Royal Society of Chemistry Paperbacks, London. First Published in 1984, 2nd Edition 1989. 336 pp. ISBN 0 85186 433 3. Price: £9.95.

All foodstuffs contain a large number of components which are responsible for flavour, texture, odour and general appearance, and, therefore, their acceptability to the consumer. Clearly carbohydrate polymers play an important part in many foodstuffs. Their interactions with other components are extensive. An understanding of the nature and role of individual components is of great importance to the food industry. Processing of foods may destroy certain nutrients and cause deterioration in flavour, texture, etc. These effects obviously have to be minimised and where possible reversed. For example, texture can be improved by the addition of polysaccharides. But today's consumer is no longer interested in buying just any convenient food. With an increasing awareness of nutritional value and food safety, the consumer also wants 'natural' foods. However, it is difficult to define what is meant by the term 'natural' since many of the compounds which are added during processing are naturally produced.

Although these and many more issues are discussed scientifically in *Food: The Chemistry of its Components*, it is not difficult to read. The author obviously wrote this book primarily for those involved with food chemistry and having a basic knowledge of chemistry. However, anyone with an interest in the issues of nutrition, food safety, additives and what constitutes healthy eating will find this book a valuable source of information.

This second edition of '*Food: The Chemistry of its Components*' has been extensively revised and three valuable chapters concerning 'Undesirables', 'Minerals' and 'Water' have been added. All chapters contain up-to-date suggestions for further reading since nobody could claim to be able to write a totally comprehensive book on such a diverse topic as food.

This text is a must for all students of food chemistry and will also provide valuable aid to those teaching the subject. It will also provide a wealth of information and a good read to anyone interested in today's debate about food.

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