

FoodData Central

Experimental Foods

Documentation and User Guide

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Preface

The food supply, and the scientific understanding of relationships between dietary intakes and health, have evolved over the years. USDA's food composition data resources also have evolved to meet the needs of diverse users, including researchers, policymakers, academicians and educators, nutrition professionals, product developers, and others. In recent years, the rapidly escalating pace of change in the food supply and the growing variety of uses for food data have greatly enhanced the need for transparent and easily accessible information about the nutrients and other components of foods and food products. This need required a new approach to analyzing, compiling, and presenting food profile information in a clear and transparent manner. FoodData Central is USDA's response to this need.

This integrated data system contains—in one place—five distinct types of food and nutrient composition data, each with a unique purpose. Three of these data types are well-established and familiar to many users: The **National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference (Legacy)**, the **Food and Nutrient Database for Dietary Studies**, and the **USDA Global Branded Food Products Database**. The other two data types—**Foundation Foods** and **Experimental Foods**—provide data that have never previously been available.

- **Foundation Foods** includes values for nutrients and other food components on a diverse range of foods and ingredients as well as extensive underlying metadata. These metadata include the number of samples, sampling location, date of collection, analytical approaches used, and if appropriate, agricultural information such as genotype and production practices. The enhanced depth and transparency of Foundation Foods data can provide valuable insights into the many factors that influence variability in nutrient and food component profiles. The goal of Foundation Foods will be to, over time, expand the number of basic foods and ingredients and their underlying data. Foundation Foods will be a primary focus of efforts as FoodData central expands and develops in coming years.
- **Experimental Foods** contains data that do not appear in any other dataset searchable from FoodData Central. The overall goal of this data type is to allow users to focus on the research aspects and deeper understanding of factors that impact food composition. Generally, data presented are those that: 1) exist within the context of an experimental design; 2) are derived from new analytical methodology; and/or 3) are based on innovative sampling procedures. In some cases, data presented may expand information about a specific food that appears in other data types. Data for Experimental Foods are for research purposes and may not be appropriate as a reference for the consumer, diet planning, or dietary guidance. Experimental Foods data will be displayed in FoodData Central and some may also be available through links to relevant agricultural research data sources, such as the AgCROS. Often, data in Experimental Foods will include (or link to) variables such as genetics, environmental inputs and outputs, supply chains, economic considerations, and nutrition research.

Foods in Experimental Foods include, but are not limited to, those produced, acquired, or studied under unique conditions, such as alternative management systems, experimental genotypes, or research/analytical protocols. The foods in Experimental Foods may or may not be commercially available to the public. Experimental Foods presently focuses on data published in peer-reviewed journals and generated through support by USDA or in collaboration with USDA.

1. About Experimental Foods Found in FoodData Central

Experimental foods are a food data type in FoodData Central that allow users to focus on the research aspects and gain a deeper understanding of factors related to food composition. Generally, data presented are those that 1) exist within the context of an experimental design; 2) are derived from new analytical methodology and/or 3) are based on innovative sampling procedures. In some cases, data presented may expand information about a specific food that appears in other data types. Experimental Foods data will be displayed in FoodData Central and some may also be available through links to relevant agricultural research data sources, such as the AgCROS, or in scientific publications. Often, data in Experimental Foods will include (or link to) variables such as genetics, environmental inputs and outputs, supply chains, economic considerations, and nutrition research.

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2. Details on Information in Foundation Foods

Many data in Experimental Foods are the result of scientific research projects. Where appropriate, the data for Experimental Foods are organized and displayed in four sections: About, Study Design, Results, and Supplemental Information. These sections reflect the information contained in the Experimental Foods data currently available in FoodData Central, but may evolve as more Experimental Foods data are released.

2.1 About

The About section includes general information about the featured experiment and the investigators involved. This section contains links, if available, to websites and/or publications.

2.2 Study Design

The Study Design section contains information on the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data for the experiment.

2.3 Results

The Results section represents the unique data resulting from the experiment.

2.4 Supplemental Information

Any additional information that is available on an experiment is included in the supplemental information section. Examples include reference materials, original raw data, and additional tables, images, or files not included in the Results section.