

There are 27 Ingredients in a Dunkin' Donuts Powdered Doughnut

Terrence McCoy | Mar. 11, 2015



Doughnut holes at a Dunkin Donuts in New York on Tuesday.
(Victor J. Blue/Bloomberg)

The doughnut is not, nor has it ever been, a complicated thing. This hunk of sugary bread doesn't require any gourmet secret. All you need, more or less, is a bit of flour, egg, sugar, milk and butter. According to Shugary Sweets, an authority on all matters sweet, one requires nothing more than 18 minutes and 10 ingredients.

Then there's Dunkin' Donuts, which also apparently requires something called titanium dioxide nanoparticles.

But don't fret, Dunkin' Donuts lovers! In a statement reported on Tuesday, the doughnut maker has learned the error of its ways. It will now change its powdered doughnut recipe and exclude a chemical that, in addition to making every doughy bite sing, is also used in sunscreen. (Warning: Don't eat sunscreen.)

In 2013, an Oakland, Calif.-based organization called took some Dunkin' white-powdered doughnuts and commissioned independent laboratory tests. The tests turned up titanium dioxide nanomaterials. "Insufficient safety information exists regarding these manufactured particles, especially for use in foods," the organization said in a statement. "Preliminary studies show that nanomaterials can cause DNA and chromosomal damage, organ damage, inflammation, brain damage, and genital malformations, among other harms."

Dunkin' Donuts, alerted to the fact it was injecting something that sounds straight out of the Manhattan Project, got to work. In a letter addressed to **As You Sow** in late February, it immediately introduced a word rarely associated with doughnuts: "nanotechnology." Let it be known that "nanotechnology is an issue" Dunkin' Donuts "takes seriously." By late March, the letter said, the doughnut empire will "finalize the timeline for transitioning from the current product ... to remove titanium dioxide."

In the meantime, eat up, doughnut lovers! There's still titanium dioxide in those powdered doughnuts. And that's not all. There are also 26 additional ingredients.

No one can say the doughnut kingmaker hasn't been transparent. It listed its full ingredient registry for every sugary treat in its arsenal. This was a bold undertaking, for there are just so many things happening in these doughnuts — especially the titanium dioxide-laced "powdered cake donut." Dunkin' Donuts even listed titanium dioxide in its recipe.

Several ingredients with many component parts were only counted as one. For instance, "enriched unbleached wheat flour," which includes things like "thiamin mononitrate" and "folic acid," was marked as a single ingredient, according to Dunkin'. But with that caveat aside, here are the 27 ingredients:

- Enriched unbleached wheat flour
- Palm oil
- Skim milk
- Sugar
- Water

- Soybean oil
- Egg yolks
- Leavening
- Salt
- Defatted soy flour
- Soy flour
- Soy Lecithin
- Wheat starch
- Konjac flour
- Wheat germ
- Carrageenan
- Natural and artificial flavor
- Enzyme modified egg yolks
- Gelatinized wheat starch
- Coloring
- Defatted wheat germ
- Powdered sugar
- Dextrose
- Corn starch
- Vegetable oil
- Titanium dioxide
- Artificial flavor

Now, this impressive list of elements raises many questions. For one, what's carrageenan? (It's a thickening agent that comes from seaweed.) And must one gelatinize wheat? But none of the ingredients, despite their number, raised the hackles of health groups like titanium dioxide.

As You Sow trumpeted the decision by Dunkin' Donuts to excise it from its powdery doughnut. "This is a groundbreaking decision. ... The pressure is on Dunkin's competitors to follow suit," Austin Wilson, an **As You Sow** official, said in a statement. "Peer-reviewed research on titanium dioxide nanoparticles has found that they may damage human cells and DNA."