

15 Food Companies That Serve You 'Wood'

I remember hearing back in the day that the secret ingredient in McDonald's milk shakes was...wood. What?! Many people chalked it off to urban myth, but as the ingredient listed as cellulose began popping up with increased frequency, myth seemed less likely.

As it turns out, wood cellulose is used in everything from milk shakes to salad dressing, from muffins to pancake syrup. Food manufacturers use it to thicken and stabilize foods, replace fat and boost fiber content—as well as to reduce reliance on more expensive ingredients like oil or flour.

Powdered cellulose is made by cooking virgin wood pulp in chemicals to separate the cellulose, and then purified. Modified versions go through extra processing, such as exposing them to acid to further break down the fiber. Then it's mixed into popular foods, and unwittingly devoured by the consumer.

Even organic-food products aren't safe from the taint of cellulose. According to a story in *The Wall Street Journal*, Organic Valley uses powdered cellulose made from wood pulp in its shredded-cheese products. The company would prefer not to use a synthetic ingredient, but cellulose is bland, white and repels moisture, making it the favored choice over products such as potato starch, says Tripp Hughes, director of product marketing for Organic Valley. Only powdered cellulose in its least manipulated form can be used in foods labeled "organic" or "made with organic" ingredients by the USDA.

Cellulose comes in different forms, each used for a specific purpose. Beyond powdered cellulose, two other modified forms are commonly used in food. **Microcrystalline cellulose is either listed as such on labels, or as MCC, or in some cases as cellulose gel. Carboxymethyl cellulose or cellulose gum**, another modified version, is listed as such on labels.

The website *TheStreet* rounded up a list of popular food companies that use cellulose in a number of their products. But so many companies are using it now, if you want to avoid it, you need to check the label.

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/15-companies-that-use-wood-in-food.html#ixzz1RzqmuJPm>

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/15-companies-that-use-wood-in-food.html#ixzz1RzqZPXIX>

The recent [class-action lawsuit brought against Taco Bell](#) raised questions about the quality of food many Americans eat each day.

Chief among those concerns is the use of cellulose (read: wood pulp), an extender whose use in a roster of food products, from crackers and ice creams to puddings and baked goods, is now being exposed. What you're actually paying for -- and consuming -- may be surprising

Cellulose is virgin wood pulp that has been processed and manufactured to different lengths for functionality, though use of it and its variant forms (**cellulose gum, powdered cellulose, microcrystalline cellulose**, etc.) is deemed safe for human consumption, according to the FDA, which regulates most food **industry** products. The government agency sets no limit on the amount of cellulose that can be used in food products meant for human consumption. The USDA, which regulates meats, has set a limit of 3.5% on the use of cellulose, since fiber in meat products cannot be recognized nutritionally.

"As [commodity prices continue to rally](#) and the cost of imported materials impacts **earnings**, we expect to see increasing use of surrogate products within food items. Cellulose is certainly in higher demand and we expect this to continue," Michael A. Yoshikami, chief investment strategist at YCMNet Advisors, told *TheStreet*.

Manufacturers use cellulose in food as an extender, providing structure and reducing breakage, said Dan Inman, director of research and development at **J. Rettenmaier USA**, a **company** that supplies "organic" cellulose fibers for use in a variety of processed foods and meats meant for human and pet consumption, as well as for plastics, cleaning detergents, welding electrodes, pet litter, automotive brake pads, glue and reinforcing compounds, construction materials, roof coating, asphalt and even emulsion paints, among many other products.

Cellulose adds fiber to the food, which is good for people who do not get the recommended daily intake of fiber in their diets, Inman said. It also extends the shelf life of processed foods. Plus, cellulose's water-absorbing properties can mimic fat, he said, allowing consumers to reduce their fat intake.

Perhaps most important to food processors is that cellulose is cheaper, he added, because "the fiber and water combination is less expensive than most other ingredients in the [food] product."

Indeed, food producers save as much as 30% in ingredient costs by opting for cellulose as a filler or binder in processed foods, according to a source close to the processed food industry who spoke with *TheStreet* on the condition of anonymity.

Inman said that in his 30 years in the food **science** business, he's seen "an amazing leap in terms of the applications of cellulose fiber and what you can do with it." He said powdered cellulose has a bad reputation but that more of his customers are converting from things like oat or sugar cane fibers to cellulose because it is "snow white in color, bland and easy to work with."

Most surprising, said Inman, is that he's been able to remove as much as 50% of the fat from some cookies, biscuits, cakes and brownies by replacing it with powdered cellulose -- but still end up with a very similar product in terms of taste and appearance.

"We're only limited by our own imagination," Inman told *TheStreet*. "I would never have dreamed I could successfully put 18% fiber in a loaf of bread two years ago."

He said cellulose is common in processed foods, often labeled as reduced-fat or high-fiber -- products like breads, pancakes, crackers, pizza crusts, muffins, scrambled eggs, mashed potato mixes, and even cheesecake. Inman himself keeps a box of Wheat Thins Fiber Selects crackers, manufactured by **Kraft Foods**([KFT](#))' Nabisco brand, at his desk, and snacks on them daily, clearly unmoved by the use of wood pulp in its ingredients.

"Most consumers would be shocked to find these types of filler products are used as substitutes for items that they believe are more pure," Yoshikami said. "We would expect increased disclosure to follow increased use of cellulose and other filler products as the practice increases in frequency."

(Please note the following lists are not exhaustive. Some companies list all ingredients on their Web sites. Other items were found in a local grocery store near TheStreet's headquarters on Wall Street in New York City.)

Pepsi([PEP](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Aunt Jemima Frozen Blueberry Pancakes
- Aunt Jemima Original Syrup
- Aunt Jemima Original Syrup

Kellogg([K](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- MorningStar Farms Chik'n Nuggets
- MorningStar Farms Chik Patties Original
- MorningStar Farms Buffalo Wings Veggie Wings
- Eggo Nutri-Grain Blueberry waffles
- Eggo Strawberry Waffles
- Eggo Blueberry Waffles
- Cinnabon Pancakes Original
- Cinnabon Pancakes Caramel
- Cinnabon Snack Bars Original

- Cinnabon Snack Bars Baked Cinnamon [Apple](#)

Weight Watchers International ([WTW](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Vanilla Ice Cream Sandwich
- English Toffee Crunch Ice Cream Bar
- Giant Cookies & Cream Ice Cream Bar

General Mills([GIS](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Fiber One Ready-To-Eat Muffins (Wild Blueberry & Oats; Mixed Fruit, Nuts & Honey; [Apple](#) Cinnamon Bun, Banana Chocolate Chip)
- Fiber One Original cereal
- Fiber One Chewy Bars (90 Calorie Chocolate, 90 Calorie Chocolate Peanut Butter)
- Fiber One baking products (Apple Cinnamon Muffin Mix, Banana Nut Muffin Mix, Blueberry Muffin Mix)
- Pillsbury Moist Supreme Classic Yellow Cake Mix
- Pillsbury Mozzarella and Pepperoni Pastry Puffs
- Pillsbury Cheese and Spinach Crescent Pastry Puffs
- Pillsbury Artichoke and Spinach Bread Bowl Bites
- Pillsbury Buffalo Chicken Crescent Pastry Puffs
- Pillsbury Cream Cheese and Jalapeno Bread Bowl Bites
- Betty Crocker whipped frostings (Strawberry Mist, Chocolate, Cream Cheese)
- Betty Crocker Vanilla Amazing Glazes
- Duncan Hines Cake Mixes (Devil's Food Cake Mix, Dark Chocolate Fudge, Strawberry Supreme, Fudge Marble, Classic Yellow, French Vanilla)

McDonald's ([MCD](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Fish Filet Patty
- McRib
- Premium Caesar Salad
- Chipotle BBQ Snack Wrap
- Premium [Southwest](#) Salad with Grilled Chicken
- Southern Style Chicken Biscuit
- Strawberry Sundae
- Natural Swiss Cheese (used in McRib, Quarter Pounder with Cheese, Angus Mushroom & Swiss, Premium Grilled Chicken Club Sandwich, Premium Crispy Chicken Club Sandwich, Angus Mushroom & Swiss Snack Wrap)
- Shredded Cheddar/Jack Cheese (used in Ranch Snack Wrap (Crispy and Grilled), Honey Mustard Snack Wrap (Crispy and Grilled), Chipotle BBQ Snack Wrap (Crispy and Grilled), Premium Southwest Salad with Grilled Chicken, Premium Southwest Salad with/without Crispy/Grilled Chicken, Premium Bacon Ranch Salad with/without Crispy/Grilled Chicken, McSkillet Burrito with Sausage)
- Barbeque Sauce
- Sweet 'N Sour Sauce

- Shredded Parmesan Cheese (used in Premium Caesar Salad with/without Crispy/Grilled Chicken)
- Biscuit (Large and Regular) (used to make Bacon, Egg & Cheese Biscuit, Sausage Biscuit with Egg, Sausage Biscuit, Southern Style Chicken Biscuit, Big [Breakfast](#) with/without Hotcakes)
- Vanilla Reduced Fat Ice Cream (used in Strawberry Sundae, Hot Caramel Sundae, Hot Fudge Sundae, McFlurry with M&M'S Candies, McFlurry with OREO Cookies, Chocolate Triple Thick Shake, Strawberry Triple Thick Shake, Vanilla Triple Thick Shake)
- Sugar Free Vanilla Syrup (used in Premium Roast Coffee, Espresso)

Sara Lee([SLE](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Jimmy Dean Frozen Breakfast Bowl (Sausage & Gravy)
- Jimmy Dean D-lights Turkey Sausage Breakfast Bowl
- Jimmy Dean D-lights Turkey Sausage Croissant
- Jimmy Dean Breakfast Entrée (Scrambled Eggs with Bacon/Sausage and Cheese Diced Apples & Seasoned Hash)

Yum's Brands'([YUM](#)) Taco Bell uses cellulose in the following products:

- Southwest Chicken
- Caramel Apple Empanada
- Corn Tortilla
- Enchilada Rice
- Nacho Chips
- Red Strips
- Strawberry Topping
- Zesty Dressing

Jack in the Box([JACK](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Cheese, Cheddar, Shredded (used in Grilled Chicken Salad, Chicken Club Salad with Crispy Chicken, Meaty [Breakfast](#) Burrito, Hearty Breakfast Bowl)
- Cheese, Pepper Jack, Shredded (used in Chicken Fajita Pita, [Southwest](#) Chicken Salad with Grilled Chicken, Meaty Breakfast Burrito)
- Honey Mustard Dipping Sauce
- Ice Cream Shake Mix
- Log Cabin Syrup
- Mini Funnel Cake
- Mozzarella Cheese Sticks (also part of Sampler Trio)
- Smoothie Base (Mango, Strawberry, Strawberry Banana)
- Tortilla, Flour (used for Chorizo Sausage Burrito, Steak & Egg Burrito, Meaty Breakfast Burrito)
- White Cheese Sauce (used in Breakfast Bowl (Hearty and Denver))

Kraft Foods([KFT](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Wheat Thins Fiber Selects
- Frozen Bagel-Fuls
- Macaroni & Cheese Thick 'n Creamy
- Kraft Macaroni & Cheese Three Cheese W/mini-shell Pasta

Yum's Brands'([YUM](#)) Pizza Hut uses cellulose in the following products:

- Parmesan Romano Cheese
- Taco Bean Sauce
- Shredded Cheddar (for Taco Pizza)
- Breadstick Seasoning (used to make Cheese Breadsticks)
- WingStreet Bone-In (in the batter)
- Meatballs (for pasta products, sandwiches)
- White Pasta Sauce (used for PastaBakes Marinara, PastaBakes Meatball Marinara, PastaBakes Primavera, PastaBakes Chicken Primavera)
- Alfredo Sauce (used for PastaBakes Marinara, PastaBakes Meatball Marinara, PastaBakes Primavera, PastaBakes Chicken Primavera)
- Fat Free Ranch Dressing

Wendy's Arby's([WEN](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Asiago Cheese (used in Spicy Chicken Caesar Salad, Asiago Ranch Chicken Club, Caesar Side Salad)
- Fat Free French Dressing (for Apple Pecan Chicken Salad, Baja Salad, Spicy Chicken Caesar Salad, BLT Cobb Salad)
- Blue Cheese Crumbles (used in Apple Pecan Chicken Salad, BLT Cobb Salad)
- Cheddar Pepper Jack Cheese Blend, Shredded
- Chocolate Sauce
- Coffee Toffee Twisted Frosty (Chocolate, Vanilla)
- Frosty (Chocolate and Vanilla)
- Frosty Shake (Frosty-cino, Chocolate Fudge, Strawberry, Vanilla Bean)
- Milk, 1% Low Fat Chocolate Milk

Sonic([SONC](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Ice Cream
- Sonic Blast
- Banana Split
- Ice Cream Cone

Dole Food([DOLE](#)) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Peaches & Crème Parfait
- Apples & Crème Parfait

Yum's Brands'[\(YUM\)](#) KFC uses cellulose in the following products:

- KFC Cornbread Muffin
- [Apple](#) Turnover
- Honey Mustard BBQ Sauce
- Lil' Bucket Strawberry Short Cake Parfait
- Lil' Bucket Lemon Crème Parfait
- Lil' Bucket Chocolate Crème Parfait
- Oreo Cookies and Crème Pie Slice
- Reese's Peanut Butter Pie Slice
- Popcorn Chicken
- Strawberry Cream Cheese Pie Slice

Nestle[\(NSRGY\)](#) uses cellulose in the following products:

- Hot Cocoa Mixes (Mini Marshmallows, Rich Milk Chocolate, Chocolate Mint, Chocolate Caramel)