

## **USDA Natural Definition**

(taken from Food Standards and Labeling Policy Book)

The USDA definition of “Natural” is as follows:

### **NATURAL CLAIMS:**

The term “natural” may be used on labeling for meat products and poultry products, provided the applicant for such labeling demonstrates that:

(1) the product does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring, coloring ingredient, or chemical preservative (as defined in 21 CFR 101.22), or any other artificial or synthetic ingredient; and (2) the product and its ingredients are not more than minimally processed. Minimal processing may include: (a) those traditional processes used to make food edible or to preserve it or to make it safe for human consumption, e.g., smoking, roasting, freezing, drying, and fermenting, or (b) those physical processes which do not fundamentally alter the raw product and/or which only separate a whole, intact food into component parts, e.g., grinding meat, separating eggs into albumen and yolk, and pressing fruits to produce juices.

Relatively severe processes, e.g., solvent extraction, acid hydrolysis, and chemical bleaching would clearly be considered more than minimal processing. Thus, the use of a natural flavor or flavoring in compliance with 21 CFR 101.22 which has undergone more than minimal processing would place a product in which it is used outside the scope of these guidelines. However, the presence of an ingredient which has been more than minimally processed would not necessarily preclude the product from being promoted as natural. Exceptions of this type may be granted on a case-by-case basis if it can be demonstrated that the use of such an ingredient would not significantly change the character of the product to the point that it could no longer be considered a natural product. In such cases, the natural claim must be qualified to clearly and conspicuously identify the ingredient, e.g., all natural or all natural ingredients except dextrose, modified food starch, etc.”

All products claiming to be natural or a natural food should be accompanied by a brief statement which explains what is meant by the term natural, i.e., that the product is a natural food because it contains no artificial ingredients and is only minimally processed. This statement should appear directly beneath or beside all natural claims or, if elsewhere on the principal display panel; an asterisk should be used to tie the explanation to the claim.

The decision to approve or deny the use of a natural claim may be affected by the specific context in which the claim is made. For example, claims indicating that a product is natural food, e.g., “Natural chili” or “chili a natural product” would be unacceptable for a product containing beet powder which artificially colors the finished product. However, “all natural ingredients” might be an acceptable claim for such a product.