



\*\* This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/fda-bans-red-dye>

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### **Substitutes for recently banned cherry dye are limited, says food scientist**

K-State's Blakeslee says food bans are based on best available science

*By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news*

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recent ban on the use of a popular food dye will create a new challenge for home bakers aiming for a signature cherry red color in candy, cakes, icings and other food products.

Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee said there are foods that can substitute for FD&C Red No. 3 – such as beets, cranberries, raspberries and more – “but these may also add flavors to food that may not be wanted.”

She added that food manufacturers and researchers will look at how these new colors react with other ingredients or temperature changes.

The FDA announced on Jan. 15 that it is banning the use of FD&C Red No. 3 in any food product or drugs that are ingested. The government agency cited two studies indicating cancer in laboratory male rats that were exposed to high levels of the dye, due to a rat-specific hormonal mechanism.

To date, there are no scientific studies that have shown a connection between consuming FD&C Red No. 3 and cancer in humans, but a provision within the U.S. Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (called the Delaney Clause) prohibits the use of food or color additives if they are proven to cause cancer in humans or animals.

The FDA will require manufacturers using FD&C Red No. 3 to reformulate their products by Jan. 15, 2027 or Jan. 18, 2028, depending on the size of the business. Imported foods may not contain this ingredient.

If shopping for food colors, consumers can avoid products containing FD&C Red No. 3 by reading the ingredient statement on the packaging, according to Blakeslee.

“Look for FD&C Red No. 3, Red 3, or if the product is imported, it may be called erythrosine,” she said. “FD&C Red No. 3 is a certified color additive and it must be specified in the ingredient statement if it is included in the product.”

Other examples of color substitutes for FD&C Red No. 3 include red beet extract or paprika extract. Blakeslee said future decisions on food additives by the FDA will be based on the best science available. The agency shares information regarding recalls, outbreaks and more [on its website](#).

More food safety tips are available online from K-State’s [Rapid Response Center for Food Science](#). Blakeslee publishes a monthly newsletter, called [You Asked It!](#), with timely tips for safe food in and out of the home.

More information is also available at [local extension offices in Kansas](#).

-30-

**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story

Food and Drug Administration (food), <https://www.fda.gov/food>

Rapid Response Center for Food Science (Kansas State University), <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu>

You Asked It! food safety newsletter, <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter/index.html>

K-State Research and Extension statewide locations, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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