Canadian Cocoa/Chocolate Standards of Identity

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After many years of collaborative work between Health Canada authorities and the Confectionery Manufacturers Association of Canada (CMAC), the revised Canadian Cocoa and Chocolate Standards of Identity were published in Canada Gazette—Part II, on June 11, 1997.

The revised cocoa and chocolate standards are now officially in place. Because they better reflect the current practices of industry, very few comments were received after its first publication in Canada Gazette—Part II, on March 30, 1996. A definite effort has been made toward harmonization with international Codex standards as well as U.S. standards. Let us review the highlights of this new standard of identity and see how it compares with that of the U.S.

Definitions

At the outset, various definitions are introduced, all of which are used within the different standards of identity. The purpose of these definitions is only for better clarity and understanding of the different standards themselves. Firstly, a distinction is made between cocoa and chocolate products. Cocoa products are derived from cocoa beans and include cocoa nibs, cocoa liquor and cocoa powders. Chocolate products are all types of “chocolate” derived from the above mentioned cocoa products. An extended positive listing of milk ingredients (directly linked with section B.08 of the Canadian Food & Drug Regulations) is also presented; however, this list does not include whey or whey products. Finally, sweetening ingredients are defined as all types of sugar listed in section B.18 of the Canadian Food & Drug Regulations. The listing does not include icing sugar, but allows for the use of lactose, which is considered a sweetening ingredient and not a milk ingredient.

An important difference will be observed in the definition of the term “chocolate.” When used alone in the U.S., the term chocolate means ground cocoa nibs and is synonymous with the term chocolate liquor, whereas in Canada, the term chocolate refers to semi-sweet chocolate. Consequently, the term chocolate is not a cocoa product but rather a chocolate product. This is in line with Codex, and, in fact, such a definition is really what the consumer has in mind when referring to the term chocolate. Terms like “unsweetened chocolate,” “bitter chocolate” and “chocolate liquor” were kept as synonymous with cocoa liquor or cocoa mass because their use is not confusing and they are widely used.

Also, in addition to alkalizing agents, which now include calcium carbonate, provision has been made for the use of neutralizing agents with all the cocoa products.

For chocolate products, the number of categories was increased to four. Semi-sweet and sweet are the two types of dark chocolate; milk and white chocolate are the two other types. The main difference between a “semi-sweet” and a “sweet” chocolate is not the amount of sweetener each contains but the quantity of total cocoa solids and milk solids in their formulations. This approach is in line with Codex. A minimum of 30 percent total cocoa solids is required for sweet chocolate and a minimum 35 percent total cocoa solids for semi-sweet chocolate. The total milk solids in sweet chocolate must be less than 12 percent and in semi-sweet chocolate less than 5 percent. In the U.S., it is important to note that chocolate liquor instead of total cocoa solids is used as a definition basis and that milk solids are required to be less than 15 percent for milk chocolate and less than 3 percent for semi-sweet chocolate.

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