



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INGREDIENTS AND PROCESSING AIDS

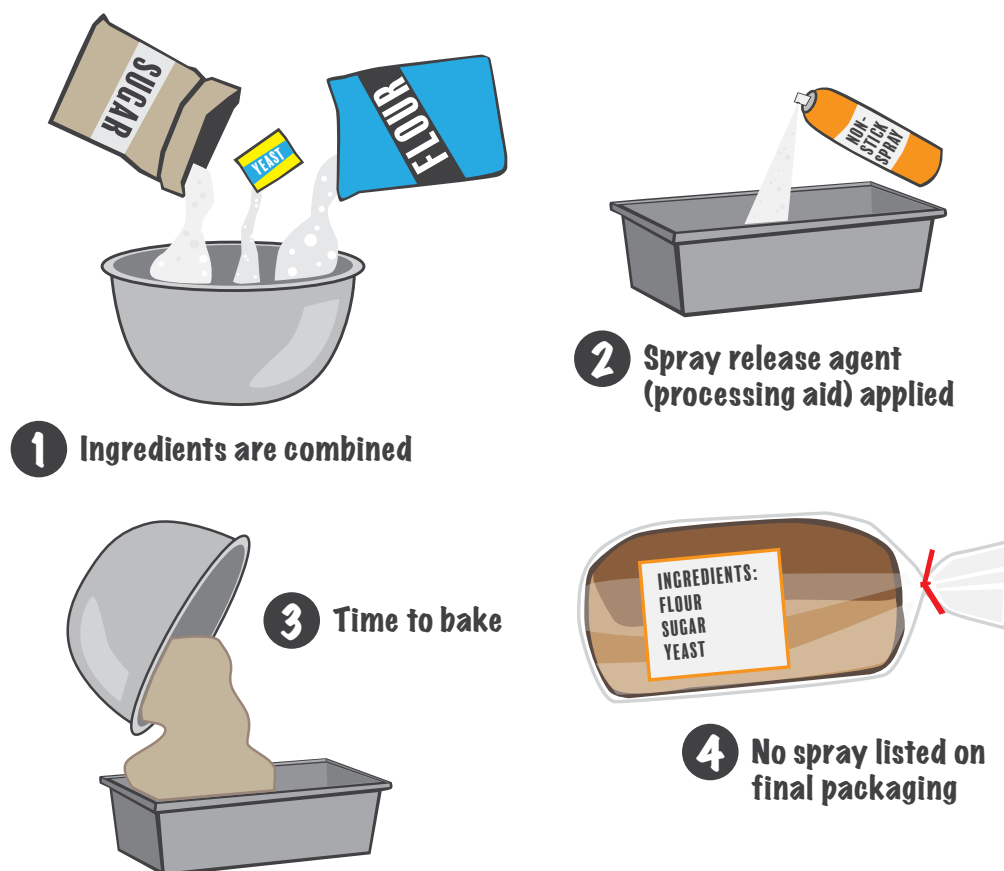
In organic certification, understanding the difference between ingredients and processing aids is essential. This infographic illustrates the distinction between the two, showing how ingredients appear on the final product label while processing aids typically do not.

Since certification operates on precise language, let's look closely at the phrase "ingredients and processing aids."

- **Ingredients** are "any substance used in the preparation of an agricultural product that is still present in the final commercial product as consumed." These are the substances printed on the product's final retail label. Wheat, for example, is an ingredient of bread.
- **Processing aids** are substances added to a food during processing that meet one of the following conditions:
 - They are removed in some manner before the food is packaged in its final form;
 - They are converted to constituents normally present in the food and do not significantly increase the amount of those constituents beyond what is present naturally; or
 - They are added for a technical or functional effect during processing but are present in the finished food only at insignificant levels, with no technical or functional effect on the finished food itself.

Processing aids normally do not appear on the product's retail label. The nonstick oil sprayed on a baking pan is a typical example.

The same substance can be either an ingredient or a processing aid, depending on *how* it is used. When carbon dioxide is used as a packaging flush it is a processing aid, because it is not incorporated into the final retail product. When it is used to add carbonation, it is an ingredient, because it stays in the final product and has a functional effect.



SOURCES CITED

USDA National Organic Program, [7 CFR §205.2](#).



United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program

