

Tartaric acid



is an acidulant derived from grapes, and is very soluble in water. It has a slightly tarter taste profile than citric acid, and is often used in grape and lime flavoured beverages. Tartaric acid is available in a medium granular form and complies with the FCC standards.

In food, especially in wines, Tartaric acid may be most immediately recognizable to wine drinkers as the source of "wine diamonds", the small potassium bitartrate crystals that sometimes form spontaneously on the cork or bottom of the bottle. These "tartrates" are harmless, despite sometimes being mistaken for broken glass, and are prevented in many wines through cold stabilization, although not always preferred since it can change the wine's profile. The tartrates remaining on the inside of aging barrels were at one time a major industrial source of potassium bitartrate.

Tartaric acid plays an important role chemically, lowering the pH of fermenting "must" to a level where many undesirable spoilage bacteria cannot live, and acting as a preservative after fermentation. In the mouth, tartaric acid provides some of the tartness in the wine, although citric and malic acids also play a role.