



THE IMPACT OF FD&C RED 3 DYE REMOVAL ON CAKE AND COOKIE DECORATING



On January 15, 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a final order revoking the authorization to use FD&C Red No. 3 dye (also called erythrosine) in foods and dietary supplements as well as in ingested drugs. Under this order, manufacturers have until January 15, 2027¹ to reformulate food products and dietary supplements that contain FD&C Red No. 3. Separately, the state of California passed AB 418, which prohibits the sale of foods containing FD&C Red No. 3 starting January 1, 2027.²

As a California-based food coloring manufacturer, Chefmaster will be fully compliant with the California deadline and is actively transitioning affected products before that date.

Why does this matter to cake and cookie decorators?

FD&C Red No. 3 has historically been used in a wide range of decorating products, including food colorings, airbrush colors, sprinkles, edible decorations, ready-to-use icings, fondants, coating wafers, and edible food markers.

¹ [https://www.fda.gov/food/hfp-constituent-updates/fda-revoke-authorization-use-red-no-3-food-and-ingested-drugs?](https://www.fda.gov/food/hfp-constituent-updates/fda-revoke-authorization-use-red-no-3-food-and-ingested-drugs)

² [Bill Text - AB-418 The California Food Safety Act.](#)

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As a result of this regulatory change, many products that decorators rely on will need to be reformulated to remove FD&C Red No. 3.

It is important to note that this is a **reformulation requirement, not a product recall**. Products containing FD&C Red No. 3 can continue to be sold and remain in commerce until the applicable compliance deadlines. Since brands are reformulating on different timelines, the most noticeable changes, including shade variation and SKU updates, are expected to occur throughout 2026 before the final transition.

Red 3 versus Red 40

There is often confusion between these two synthetic food dyes. FD&C Red 40, also called Allura Red AC or colorant E129, is not being phased out by the FDA at this time. As such, your favorite food coloring and edible decorations containing FD&C Red No. 40 are not affected by this regulation.

How will this affect your color options?

FD&C Red No. 3 has been primarily used to achieve vivid cherry reds, bright pinks, clean magenta tones, and certain purple and violet hues. It is most commonly found in hot pinks, neon pinks, fuchsia, magenta, and some bright reds, as well as in select purples and violets.

At this time, there are no true one-to-one replacement ingredients. FD&C Red No. 40 dye is not a replacement for FD&C Red No. 3 dye in most formulations, as the two yield very different red hues. Decorators should expect trade-offs in shade, vibrancy, and performance. For example, some icing colors might take longer to deepen, set to slightly different shades, or require more food coloring to reach the same intensity. In some cases, certain purple and violet shades will be discontinued entirely.

What will replace FD&C Red No. 3?

Synthetic replacement options

Many suppliers are rebalancing formulas using blends of other FD&C dyes. Depending on how much FD&C Red No. 3 was used in the original formulation, the new version may be very close in hue or may shift noticeably in undertone, appearing cooler or more muted.

Nature-inspired replacement options

The most common alternatives include:

- **Carmine (cochineal):** Produces vibrant pink-red tones, but is significantly more expensive than FD&C dyes, is not vegan, and may not be accepted under Kosher dietary law.
- **Beet and betanin-based pigments:** Deliver strong pinks but are sensitive to heat, light, and pH changes, which can cause browning.
- **Anthocyanins:** Found in berries and purple vegetables, these pigments produce purplish-red hues but are highly sensitive to heat, light, and pH, and can shift blue.
- **Paprika and lycopene:** Create warmer orange-red tones and perform best in fat-based

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applications, such as scratch buttercreams, rather than ready-to-use icings.

Natural pigments are complex and costly to source and process. Choosing nature-inspired food coloring options often involves balancing vibrancy, stability, shelf life, and cost against label preferences.

Which Chefmaster products are affected?

The majority of Chefmaster's legacy food colorings were already formulated without FD&C Red No. 3. One example is our top-selling Super Red Liqua-Gel, which achieves a rich, warm red without using FD&C Red No. 3.

Over the past several years, our R&D team has been actively reformulating our Liqua-Gels, gels, candy colors, and airbrush colors to ensure full compliance by the January 1, 2027 California deadline.

As part of this transition:

- **Synthetic colors with no change in shade or performance** are being reformulated and transitioned without changes to product names or item numbers. All distribution channels are expected to complete this transition before the end of 2026.
- **Synthetic colors with noticeable shade changes**, but still within the same color family, are being discontinued and replaced with FD&C Red No. 3-free alternatives. For example, our legacy Royal Blue and Navy Blue formulas have been replaced by Royalty Blue and French Navy.
- **Synthetic colors with high levels of FD&C Red No. 3**, such as Neon Brite Pink, Fuchsia, and Neon Brite Purple, will be discontinued by the end of 2026. These shades are being replaced with alternative options, including carmine-based and nature-inspired pigments, and are among the most difficult shades to match.

Our R&D team continues to research and test new ingredients from around the world and is actively monitoring the availability of more stable synthetic alternatives.

How can you tell if a product contains FD&C Red No. 3?

Through the end of 2026, products containing FD&C Red No. 3 and reformulated versions without it will coexist in the marketplace.

The most reliable way to confirm whether a product contains FD&C Red No. 3 is to review the ingredient statement on the packaging or the product specification sheet. FD&C Red No. 3 may appear under several names, including:

- FD&C Red No. 3 or FD&C Red 3
- Red 3
- Colorant E127 (for products manufactured in Europe)
- Erythrosine

Chefmaster flags products on our website with a "No Red 3" logo once inventory has fully transitioned.

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Timing may vary depending on ordering cycles and distribution channels, but reformulated products will continue entering the market on a regular basis throughout the transition period.

Our sales and customer service teams will continue to communicate updates as they occur, and they are always available to assist with questions regarding specific products or orders.

Together, we will continue to make the baking world vibrant and colorful, with or without FD&C Red No. 3.