



Pure, Natural Quality

INFORMATION RELEASE

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Organic Ingredients: The New Frontier

Most people who've heard the term would associate shellac with paint products. But did you know that shellac is or can be used in or on just about every consumer product we come in contact with in our daily lives?

Armalac Industries Inc., a Toronto Canada operation, wants you to know all about the healthy properties of shellac as an organic alternative currently used ingredients. The company claims to have reengineered a 50 year-old refining process to produce the purest form of shellac available today. With almost zero bioburden and salt content, their top offering presents itself as the foremost natural alternative to ingestible plastic, synthetic or oil-based product coatings.

And the uses are telling: a protective coating for fruit, candy and pills; an ingredient in pharmaceutical gel caps and cosmetics such as lipstick and nail polish; and an additive to non-toxic paints and colourings for children's toys.

So, what is shellac, and what makes it important to ensure that the best processing methods are employed?

Well, shellac is derived from a naturally produced substance called Lac. This substance is produced by the Lac Beetle (*Kerria lacca*) on farms in countries like India, Indonesia, and in the wild in Thailand and surrounding areas. There are up to two crops per year. The harvesting of the original material, sticklac, undergoes initial processing, the result of which are small granules called seedlac. Seedlac is then put through a refining process that produces the various grades of shellac currently on the market. Up 'till now, this process consisted essentially of boiling the seedlac in water, skimming off the effluent, screening the remainder through a filter and drying the result to create shellac flakes. The flakes are stored, or mixed with alcohol for a liquid form of the product.

In its specialized processing, Armalac says it does all this and more. Its new process goes on to extract and dramatically lower the content of the many toxins and bioburden that may be present or introduced as the material goes through the traditional and sometimes widely varying methods of initial processing and subsequent refining. As a consequence, harmful items such as salt are extracted, the colour number is lowered and the thermal properties are enhanced, producing a superior grade of shellac to what is currently available.



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What has Health Canada and the US Federal Drug Administration regulation have to say about all this? They both say that shellac must meet the United States Pharmacopeia (USP) requirement for output. But that is only half the story. The FDA has also included an open clause which says that shellac must be refined in a facility that meets health standards for the ingredient's intended use. This means pharmaceutical standards for refining shellac for pharmaceutical use; food standards for candy use, and so on. And this is not on one's say so. There must be validated testing to prove it. With a little research, you may be surprised at the type of facility that is refining ingredients of this type at the moment.

But, what does this all mean? Well, one would think that if there is a natural, organic alternative to synthetic, oil-based ingredients that may cause medical problems in certain individuals, especially children, moving to products containing a natural organic ingredient would be an easy call for savvy consumers. And, if that natural, organic ingredient has had its salt content significantly lowered, the decision to move should be made even easier. Additionally, if the natural, organic ingredient played a role in safe-guarding the most vulnerable amongst us, our children, by allowing manufacturers to avoid lead based paints, that should make us ecstatic.

As a bonus for manufacturers, ARMALAC says that the liquid form of its shellac is almost colourless, reducing its impact on the use of bright colour schemes of the products in and on which it can be used. Finally, the thermal properties of the new processed ingredient are said to be more predictable, making it great for use in pharmaceutical time release technology and even confectionery products. What a win/win for producers and consumers.

Shellac as an organic alternative to ingestible plastic, synthetic or oil-based product coatings is good. Shellac free of salt and other bioburden is even better. For more information, go to ARMALAC's website at www.armalac.com

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