

Above and Beyond: How the Kaged Muscle Flavoring System Works

written by Mike Roberto | May 12, 2017



The PricePLOW team gets inside the head of Pre-Kaged formulator Brian Rand on exactly how this complex flavoring system works.

At PricePLOW, we love to get “inside the heads” of the formulators and developers of our favorite supplements. Sometimes we’re lucky enough to see how the sausage is made, and other times, well, we’re not so fortunate.

However, we recently sat down with Brian Rand of Kaged Muscle fame for an in-depth discussion on just how they go about flavoring the Kaged Muscle line of supplements. Brian and Kaged Muscle, as you may recall, are committed to using predominantly natural flavoring and coloring to keep in line with Kris Gethin’s holistic lifestyle.

If you’re a fan or user of Kaged Muscle’s pre workout *Pre-Kaged*, or are interested in buying it soon, you’re going to love this post, because we’re going *behind* the label today.

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How Does Kaged Muscle Flavor?

We put that very question to the chief formulator of Kaged Muscle, Brian Rand, and he was more than willing to discuss the methodology of how they go about their wizardry.



Note: Doses and amounts listed below are not the actual doses used in Kaged Muscle products, these are “hypothetical” numbers to explain the process and methodology.

First off, you need to know that it is substantially easier to flavor and color supplements via artificial means – meaning you’ll need A LOT more of the natural flavoring and coloring agents to get something that resembles the artificially enhanced products.

So, with that understanding... here’s some of the math magic Kaged Muscle uses to make their products:

Flavoring

Example / Comparison:

- Synthetic Orange = **480mg per serving**
- Natural Orange = **2g per serving** (roughly)

Kaged Muscle’s flavor system for PRE-KAGED

3-5x the input to flavor something naturally!)

As you can imagine, it also costs more to flavor things naturally, not only due to the volume of the additives, but the mere fact that natural flavoring is more expensive by mass than artificial flavoring is!

Natural flavors cost on average 2-3x more than artificial flavors per kg and you need to use 3-5x the input amount vs synthetic in order to taste great. For this very reason, most brands don't even attempt to naturally flavor a product – it's too cost-prohibitive.

Coloring

Same goes for natural colors...using some rough numbers:

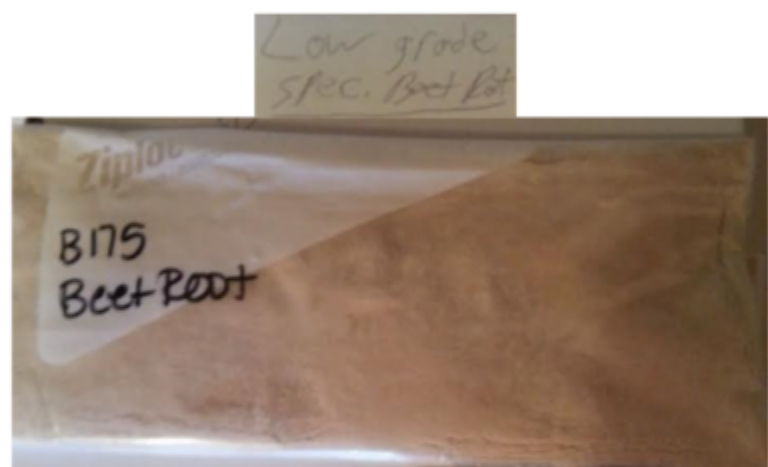
- **Synthetic Color** = 10mg – 20mg per serving
- **Natural Color** = 300mg – 500mg+

Typical natural colors used are beet root (for red/pink colors), turmeric (for yellow/orange colors), and spirulina (for blue/green colors). Kaged Muscle is well-known for their ultra-intense beet root extract, as shown in the image on this page.

costs more per serving vs the total ingredients in many concentrated pre workouts on the market.



Kaged Muscle's Beet Root



The competition's low-cost beet root

A great example why Kaged Muscle supplements cost a bit more... because they're not using the cheap stuff! Image courtesy Brian Rand

Realize what the competition is doing first

Next, you need to see what we're up against. Per Kaged Muscle, "Many companies formulate to 5% – 8% **below label claim to save on costs and still fall within the 10% variance window** that will pass with a 3rd party lab for meeting label claim."



Mandate from Kris: Everything they do – from citrulline to stevia to beet root to testing – has to be the best.

On top of that, many of those ingredients are not full yield. For instance, consider BCAAs. If you look at an L-Leucine spec sheet from a company NOT used by KM, you will see a spec range from 96.5 – 99.5%.

Many companies formulate to 98% and a batch comes in at 96.5% vs 98%. If they don't adjust with the proper overage you will fall short of label claim like the example below:

- If 5g of their leucine is at 99.5% purity = you get 4.975g
- If 5g of their leucine is at 96.5% purity = you get 4.825g

You'll see that **this situation is completely unacceptable to Kris Gethin.**

Also, as an aside, you may notice that at the bottom of the spec sheet, it says "Source: extracted from poultry feathers" – many consumer still believe this to be a myth, but this is a spec from the leading ingredient supplier. This is really happening. Kaged Muscle uses fermented BCAA's that are non-animal, non-GMO, no soy lecithin, and do *not* come from feathers!

Anyway, now you see what's happening – cheaper companies aim for 90% to save money (and it's still technically legal), and raw material suppliers aren't always 100% pure.

Kaged Muscle aims to meet or exceed the numbers on the actual label:

Time for Real Numbers!



Brian jokes that Kris is running a non-profit. Given the amount of testing they perform and what's shown and certified on the label, their costs are certainly higher than most other companies'

Now that you've got an understanding of just how big the difference is between natural and artificial coloring/flavoring, we can get more in-depth into one of Kaged Muscle's best sellers – **Pre-Kaged**.

For Pre-Kaged, the flavor and natural color system alone weighs in at just under **6g** in total; it's quite complex. It's also worth mentioning that in our discussions with Brian Rand, that the KM flavor system alone is more expensive than most brands pre workout total ingredient cost!

One question we've been asked – by founders of *other* supplement companies, no less – is how this label truly adds up. The 6g+ of inactives seems high, and still leaves some room in the heavy scoop. So let's dig in:

Pre-Kaged Breakdown

SUPPLEMENT FACTS

Serving Size: 32g (approximately 1 scoop)
Servings Per Container: 20

	Amount per serving	% Daily Value
Calories	15	
Total Carbohydrate	3 g	1%*
Niacin (as Niacinamide)	30 mg	150%
Vitamin B6 (as Pyridoxine Hydrochloride)	25 mg	1250%
Vitamin B12 (as Methylcobalamin)	500 mcg	8330%
PRO-PUMP™		
L-Citrulline (fermented)	6.5 g	†
Quercetin Dihydrate	200 mg	†
MUSCLE FUEL MATRIX (3.5g)		
L-Leucine (fermented)	1750 mg	†
L-Isoleucine (fermented)	875 mg	†
L-Valine (fermented)	875 mg	†
ANABOLIC-ACTIVATOR		
L-Leucine (fermented)	3 g	†
ENDURA-BURN™ MATRIX		
Carnosyn® (Beta Alanine)	1.6 g	†
Capsimax™ (Capsicum Extract)	100 mg	†
STRENGTH & POWER MATRIX		
BetaPower® (Natural Betaine)	2 g	†
Patented Creatine HCl	1.5 g	†
HYDRATE & DEFEND		
Coconut Water Powder	500 mg	†
SPECTRA™ Total ORAC Blend	100 mg	†
Consisting of green coffee extract, green tea extract, broccoli sprout concentrate, onion extract, apple extract, acerola extract, camu camu concentrate, quercetin, tomato concentrate, broccoli concentrate, acai concentrate, basil concentrate, cinnamon concentrate, garlic concentrate, oregano concentrate, turmeric extract, carrot concentrate, elderberry concentrate, mangosteen concentrate, blackberry concentrate, blackcurrant extract, blueberry extract, chokeberry concentrate, raspberry concentrate, sweet cherry concentrate, spinach concentrate, kale concentrate, bilberry extract, brussel sprout concentrate		
NEURO-FOCUS MATRIX		
Taurine	2 g	†
N-Acetyl-L-Tyrosine	1 g	†
L-Tyrosine	850 mg	†
PurCaf™ Organic Caffeine (from green coffee beans)	274 mg	†

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.
† Daily Value not established

Pre-Kaged packs a hefty 32g dose of ingredients in each scoop. This provides all the pre workout power you will need for 20 grueling gym sessions. It's in our Top 10 Pre Workouts for a reason!

Each scoop of Pre-Kaged weighs approximately 24.179g (ingredient calculation per label) in total ingredients **without flavors**.

The way we get here is that, let's say that an ingredient is 98% Pure + 2-3% manufacturing overage = **5% additional mg** input per ingredient.

Note: Some ingredients are only 50% – 90% pure with botanicals like green tea or PurCaf organic caffeine.

So they add 5% onto the 24g serving = 1.2g. This gets you to the desired *resultant* ingredient weight.

Now make up for *other* ingredient shortfalls (24-month stability!)

So we've got our 5% added to the ingredients that cannot be 100% pure. However, Kaged isn't done yet – they're now also adding 1-2% *more* for each ingredient so

that you can guarantee the label claim for *24 months* after adjusting for **stability testing!**

What most people don't tell you is that older supplement ingredients do indeed break down into component parts, or slowly react with their surrounding atmosphere.

So ultimately, many of the ingredients need to be dosed with a total of + 6%-7% over label claim to *really* ensure that the consumer gets what they say they're getting for the long run!

Then, they add in 6g of their *Total Flavor System* (citric and malic acid + natural colors, stevia, sea salt, sucralose are included in this total).

Long story short? 32g servings with 90% pure ingredients = 28.8g, so you need to add ~3.2g of "bonus" material just to hit 100%.

That gets you to your crazy **total scoop size of 31 – 34g~** depending on the flavor and such.

Other Notes

A few other points came up during our conversation with the Kaged Muscle team about their unique flavoring system that are worth mentioning:



Kris and Brian held nothing back when designing every aspect of Kaged Muscle supplements from ingredients to flavoring and everything in between.

- Each inactive ingredient is VERY unique and has a specific purpose (ingredients that are not readily available – custom made for KM). Example being:
- Pre-Kaged uses a special form of stevia that is unique to KM and why KM products don't have the typical bitter off taste that is associated with stevia.
- NO Fillers – Only the Best Ingredients go into every bottle of KM products!

- KM products 3rd party tested and banned substance free.
- Commitment to quality is the KM promise and something Kris and the team take very serious.

So here's their major claim: **Kaged Muscle's flavor system for PRE-KAGED costs more per serving vs the total ingredients in many concentrated pre workouts on the market** (ie the ones that are 5-6g serving size). We have no proof of that, but we believe it at this point.

There's a reason why Brian Rand joked in our interview about "Kris keeping the brand from making any profits" – the input costs are high but the output costs aren't *that* bad considering the inputs and the testing done after the fact!

Takeaway

Brian Rand is living proof that if you attack something long enough while continuing to learn and tinker with new ideas and technologies, you *will* become a top-tier expert. Stevia supplements are never easy, and right now, Kaged is leading the pack with them because of this experience.

If you can't tell by now, it's no small feat to accomplish what Kaged Muscle has set out to do with their line of high-quality supplements...nor is it cheap! We've said it before, and we'll say it again, you often do get what you pay for in this industry.

Sure, you can get a cheap pre workout for under 20 bucks (this is PricePLOW after all!), but it won't include the quality of ingredients nor the efficacious doses of the higher end products like Kaged Muscle.

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