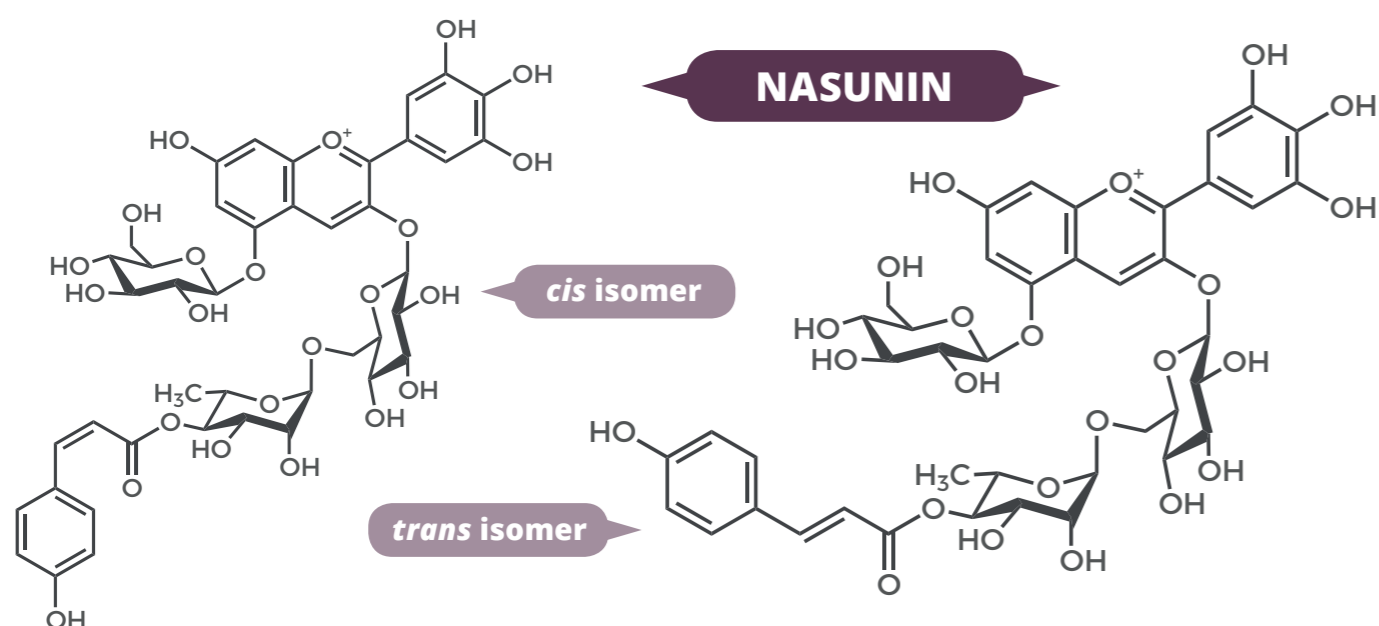


THE CHEMISTRY OF AUBERGINES

THE COLOUR AND TEXTURE OF AUBERGINES

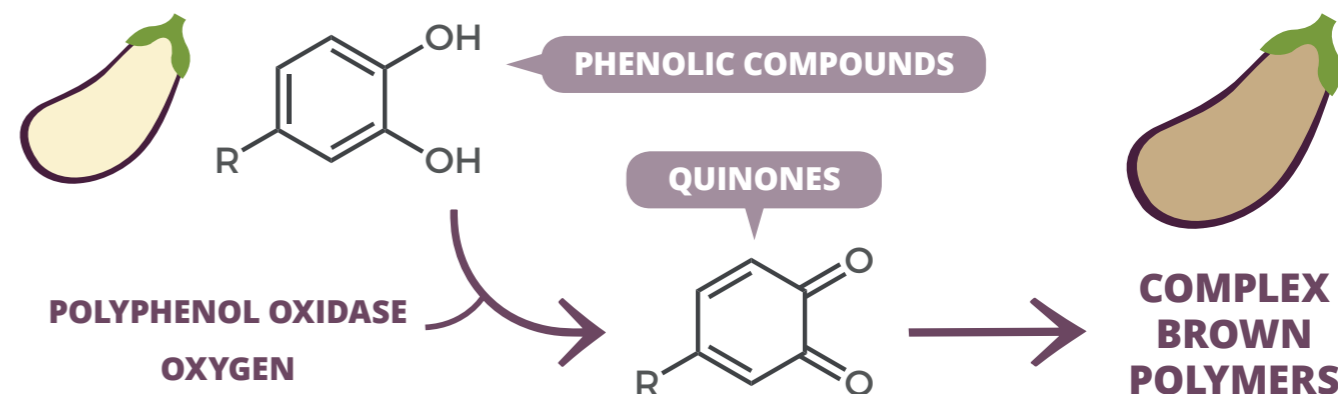
The purple colour of aubergines comes from anthocyanin pigments. The main anthocyanin present is nasunin, named after the Japanese name for aubergine ('nasubi'). It is present as a mix of *cis* and *trans* isomers; the *trans* isomer is the more stable of the two.



Aubergines have a spongy texture, caused by many tiny air pockets between cells. This is why they shrink when cooked, and also soak up cooking oil. The latter can be prevented by pre-cooking or adding salt to draw out water into the air pockets, collapsing the structure.



BITTER FLAVOUR AND BROWNING



Phenolic compounds cause the bitter flavour of aubergines. These compounds also explain their browning when cut. Cutting releases polyphenol oxidase enzyme from cells; it oxidises phenolic compounds, leading to the eventual formation of brown polymers.

