Whatâ€™s in Engine Oil Anyway?

by Natasha Sajan

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Whatâ€™s in Engine Oil Anyway?

Engine oil is an amazingly complex chemical soup. You may think itâ€™s just a cleaned up version of the oil that gets pumped out of the ground, but youâ€™d be very wrong. For example, did you know that a typical engine oil has as many as 200 chemical ingredients in it? The most complicated food recipe I know has only 20 ingredients and itâ€™s not easy to make.

Engine oil has two basic parts, the base oil (sometimes called the â€œgoopâ€•) and the additive package. There are many types and grades of base oils. They can be pure mineral oil, meaning a product refined from the actual oil pump from the ground. In this case, there is a huge variety in oil grades depending on the region of the world it came from, how it was stored, how it was refined, etc. Base oils can also be synthetic, meaning that itâ€™s manufactured or created in a lab/facility rather than based on pumped crude oil.

So base engine oil to start with is complicated, but itâ€™s only the beginning. On top of the base oil comes the additive package, which is all kinds of chemical voodoo. Additives are ingredients that clean your engine (detergents), extend the viscosity range of the oil, prevent the oil from foaming, make the oil cling to surfaces in the engine while at the same time ensuring the oil drains quickly back to the drain pan, and perform dozens of other functions.

Itâ€™s this complex chemical formula that ends up being poured into your carâ€™s engine at the factory. The car manufacturers spend a lot of time and effort to make sure that the oil they specify for your engine will ensure optimal gas mileage, emissions, reduced wear, power and of course the durability to last as long as possible.

You really should avoid adding aftermarket oil additives to your oil. Oil additives you see on TV or at the store contain dozens of ingredients in themselves, and thereâ€™s no assurance that a bottle of it wonâ€™t negatively interact with your engine oil. Name brand modern engine oil is so good, you donâ€™t need any of these additives anyway.

You should always stick to the oil recommended by your carâ€™s manufacturer. I have an Infiniti G35 for example, and I only have the original specification oil put into the car. Actually, as an Infiniti owner, I take advantage of a tremendous perk offered by my Infiniti dealer, itâ€™s call Express Service. I donâ€™t need an appointment, they always service my car right then. Thereâ€™s a very comfortable air conditioned/heated customer lounge with free wi-fi, hot coffee, chairs and a couch and a big TV. While Iâ€™m waiting, genuine factory certified Infiniti technicians change my oil and oil filter, with genuine Infiniti parts and the correct, factory spec oil. They also conduct a free multipoint inspection on my whole car, checking brakes, tire wear, exterior lights, and even the condition of my battery. If anything is wrong or needs replacement, they come to me and show me the problem and offer to replace with genuine factory parts. They even give my car a free car wash when theyâ€™re done. And all of this takes less than an hour. I checked around town and discovered that the price I pay is very competitive with the cheap â€œquickieâ€• oil change shopsâ€”who donâ€™t offer real trained factory certi technicians and donâ€™t use genuine parts and fluids.

Wherever you get your oil and filter changed, remember how complex the fluids and parts are that your carâ€™s manufacturer put into it at the factory and donâ€™t settle for anything less.

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Natasha Sajan - About Author:
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