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Methyl 3,4-dihydroxybenzyl ketones. Merck & Co., Inc. (by David F. Hinkley and John Budavari). Fr. 1,450,200 (Cl. C 07c, A 61k), Aug. 19, 1966; U.S. Appl. Oct. 21, 1964; 6 pp. The title compds. are prepd. and can be used as chem. intermediates. Thus, a soln. of 60 g. 3,4-(MeO)<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>CHO in 500 ml. C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub> is cooled to 0°, a mixt. of 30 g. NaO-Me and 44.1 mt. MeCHClCO2Me added in 30 min. at 2-5°, and the mixt. agitated  $\sim 1$  hr. at  $\sim 20^{\circ}$  to give Me  $\alpha$ -methyl- $\alpha,\beta$ -epoxy- $\beta$ -(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)propionate (I). A concd. soln. of I in C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub> is treated with 400 ml. MeOH, the mixt. heated to 75°, 240 ml. 10% NaOH added in 30 min., and the mixt. heated to 82° and treated with 50 ml. water to give Na α-methyl-α,βepoxy- $\beta$ -(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)propionate (II). An aq. soln. of II is heated to 100° for 30 min., 70 ml. concd. HCl added, and the mixt. heated 30 min. at 100° to give Me 3,4-dimethoxybenzyl ketone, which can be used in the prepn. of 3,4-(HO)2C6H3CH2-CMe(NH<sub>2</sub>)CO<sub>2</sub>H. Similarly prepd. are 3,4-(HO)<sub>2</sub>C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>CH<sub>2</sub>-COMe (b<sub>0.05</sub> 165-8°), 4,3-HO(MeO)C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>CH<sub>2</sub>COMe, and methyl piperonyl ketone.

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