We claim:

1. A method of purifying a protein of interest from a mixture which comprises the protein of interest and one or more contaminants, comprising:

a) subjecting the mixture to a first chromatography matrix, wherein the protein of interest binds to the first chromatography matrix, and wherein the first chromatography is an affinity chromatography selected from a protein A affinity chromatography and a protein G affinity chromatography;

b) contacting the first chromatography matrix with a first wash solution which has a pH of at least 9.5, and does not comprise arginine or an arginine derivative;

c) eluting the protein of interest from the first chromatography matrix into an elution solution; and

d) contacting the first chromatography matrix with a second wash solution which has a pH of at least 9.0, and does not comprise arginine or an arginine derivative.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the contaminants are selected from host cell proteins, host cell metabolites, host cell constitutive proteins, nucleic acids, endotoxins, viruses, product related contaminants, lipids, media additives and media derivatives.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the affinity chromatography is a protein A affinity chromatography.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the protein of interest is selected from an antibody, an antibody fragment, and an Fc fusion protein.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the antibody is a monoclonal antibody.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the monoclonal antibody is selected from the group consisting of a human, humanized and chimeric antibody.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the pH of the first wash solution is between about 9.5 and about 10.5.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the pH of the first wash solution is about 9.6.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the pH of the first wash solution is about 10.4.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising contacting the first chromatography matrix with a third wash solution which has a pH between about 6 and about 7, and does not comprise arginine or an arginine derivative.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the first wash solution comprises sodium carbonate at a concentration in a range of about 0.01-1.0 M and sodium chloride at a concentration in a range of about 0.5-2 M.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the second wash solution comprises sodium carbonate at a concentration in a range of about 0.01-1.0 M.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the mixture is subjected to one or more additional chromatography matrixes.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the one or more additional chromatography matrices are selected from an ion exchange chromatography, a hydrophobic interaction chromatography, and a mix-mode chromatography.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the mixture is selected from a harvested cell culture fluid, a cell culture supernatant, and a conditioned cell culture supernatant, a cell lysate, and a clarified bulk.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the cell culture is a mammalian cell culture.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein the ion exchange chromatography is an anion exchange chromatography or a cation exchange chromatography.