We claim:

1. A process which comprises reacting a fatty alkyl ester with an amino acid salt in the presence of at least 10 mole %, based on the amount of fatty alkyl ester, of an alkoxide catalyst at a pressure of at least 5 psig to produce a composition comprising an N-acyl amino acid salt.

2. The process of claim **1** wherein the catalyst comprises a C_1-C_4 alkoxide.

3. The process of claim **1** wherein the catalyst is sodium methoxide/methanol.

4. The process of claim **1** wherein the catalyst is used in an amount within the range of 12 to 50 mole %.

5. The process of claim **1** wherein the reaction is performed at a pressure within the range of 5 psig to 50 psig.

6. The process of claim **1** wherein the fatty alkyl ester is a C_6-C_{22} methyl ester.

7. The process of claim **1** wherein the amino acid salt is an alkali metal salt of an amino acid selected from the group consisting of glycine, alanine, glutamine, glutamic acid, and aspartic acid.

8. The process of claim **1** wherein the amino acid salt is an alkali metal salt of glycine.

9. The process of claim **1** wherein the reaction is performed in the presence of a polyol selected from the group consisting of glycerin and propylene glycol.

10. The process of claim **1** wherein the reaction is performed at a temperature within the range of 65°C to 200°C.

11. The process of claim **1** wherein the reaction is performed in the presence of 1 to 200 wt.%, based on the amount of fatty alkyl ester, of an added alcohol solvent.

12. The process of claim **11** wherein the reaction is performed in the presence of 40 to 80 wt.% of the alcohol solvent.

13. The process of claim **1** wherein conversion of the amino acid salt to the N-acyl amino acid salt is at least 85 mole %.

14. The process of claim **1** wherein a 20 wt.% aqueous solution comprising the N-acyl amino acid salt has an APHA color according to ASTM D1209 less than 100.

18. The process of claim **1** wherein the amino acid salt is a mixture comprising a glycinate salt and a non-glycinate amino acid salt, wherein the salt mixture comprises at least 20 mole % of the glycinate salt.

19. The process of claim **1** wherein the amino acid salt is a mixture comprising a glycinate salt and a non-glycinate amino acid salt, wherein the salt mixture comprises at least 30 mole % of the glycinate salt.

20. The process of claim **1** wherein at least a 30 mole % excess of the fatty alkyl ester is used based on the combined amounts of fatty alkyl ester and amino acid salt.

21. The process of claim **1** wherein at least a 30 mole % excess of the amino acid salt is used based on the combined amounts of fatty alkyl ester and amino acid salt.

22. A process which comprises reacting a C_6-C_{22} methyl ester with a glycinate salt in the presence of at least 10 mole %, based on the amount of C_6-C_{22} methyl ester, of an alkoxide catalyst at a pressure within the range of 5 psig to 30 psig and a temperature within the range of 65°C to 100°C to produce an N-acyl glycinate salt composition.

23. The process of claim **22** wherein the N-acyl glycinate salt composition ~~has an APHA color less than 20 and~~ comprises 5 mole % or less of fatty acid soap and 1 mole % or less of di-acylated by-products.