CLAIMS

[Claim 1]

A method for producing a whey protein hydrolysate, the method comprising:

determining the mass percent of protein, lipid, ash, and lactose in a whey protein- containing starting material, wherein, when the lipid and lactose are present in the whey protein-containing starting material, the lipid content and the lactose content are each based on the total amount of protein, lipid, ash, and lactose in the whey-protein-containing starting material taken as 100 percent mass, or wherein, when the lipid is present while the lactose is not present in the whey protein- containing starting material, the lipid content is based on the total amount of protein, lipid, and ash in the whey protein-containing starting material taken as 100 percent mass;

subjecting the whey protein-containing starting material containing a lipid and either having (i) a lipid content of 0.2 mass percent or less, or having (ii) a lipid content of 0.2 mass percent or less and the lactose content of less than 1 mass percent; and

subjecting the selected whey protein-containing starting material to hydrolysis treatment.

[Claim 2]

The production method according to claim 1, wherein the lactose content of the selected whey protein-containing starting material is 0.5 mass percent or less .

[Claim 3]

The production method according to claim 1, wherein the hydrolysis treatment is an enzymatic treatment.

[Claim 4]

The production method according to claim 3, wherein the

enzymatic treatment is a treatment that uses a protease.

[Claim 5]

The production method according to claim 1, wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate that has bitterness which is reduced relative to bitterness of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using a whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent, and wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate having an odor which is reduced relative to an odor of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using the whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent .

[Claim 6]

The production method according to claim 1, wherein the selected whey protein-containing starting material has a lactose content of less than 1 mass percent, and wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate in which time-dependent discoloration is suppressed more than in whey protein hydrolysates obtained by hydrolyzing a whey protein-containing starting material having a lactose content of more than 4 mass percent.

[Claim 7]

A method for producing a whey protein hydrolysate which has bitterness reduced relative to bitterness of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using a whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent, and which has an odor reduced relative to an odor of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using the whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent, the method comprising:

determining the mass percent of protein, lipid, ash, and lactose in a whey protein-containing starting material, wherein the lipid content is based on the total amount of protein, lipid, ash, and lactose in the whey protein containing whey protein-containing

starting material taken as 100 percent mass;

selecting the whey protein-containing starting material containing a lipid and having a lipid content of 0.2 mass percent or less; and

subjecting the selected whey protein-containing starting material to hydrolysis treatment to prepare the whey protein hydrolysate.

[Claim 8]

The method according to claim 7, wherein the selected whey protein-containing starting material has a lactose content of less than 1 mass percent.

[Claim 9]

The method according to claim 7, wherein the hydrolysis treatment is an enzymatic treatment.

[Claim 10]

The method according to claim 9, wherein the enzymatic treatment is a treatment that uses a protease,

[Claim 11]

A method for suppressing time-dependent discoloration of a whey protein hydrolysate, more than in whey protein hydrolysates obtained by hydrolyzing a whey protein-containing starting material having a lactose content of more than 4 mass percent, the method comprising:

determining the mass percent of protein, lipid, ash, and lactose in a whey protein-containing starting material, wherein, when the lipid and lactose are present in the whey protein-containing starting material, the lipid content and the lactose content are each based on the total amount of protein, lipid, ash, and lactose in the whey protein-containing starting material taken as 100 percent mass; and wherein, when the lipid is present while the lactose is not present in the whey protein-containing starting

material, the lipid content is based on the total amount of protein, lipid, and ash in the whey protein-containing starting material taken as 100 percent mass;

selecting the whey protein-containing starting material containing a lipid and having a lactose content of less than 1 mass percent and a lipid content of 0.2 mass percent or less; and

subjecting the selected whey protein-containing starting material to hydrolysis treatment to prepare the whey protein hydrolysate.

[Claim 12]

The discoloration suppressing method according to claim 11, wherein the lactose content of the selected whey protein-containing starting material is 0.5 mass percent or less.

[Claim 13]

The discoloration suppressing method according to claim 11, wherein the hydrolysis treatment is an enzymatic treatment.

[Claim 14]

The discoloration suppressing method according to claim 13, wherein the enzymatic treatment is a treatment that uses a protease.

[Claim 15]

The production method according to claim 2, wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate that has bitterness which is reduced relative to bitterness of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using a whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent, and

wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate having an odor which is reduced relative to an odor of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using the whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent.

[Claim 16]

The production method according to claim 2, wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate in which time-dependent discoloration is suppressed more than in whey protein hydrolysates obtained by hydrolyzing a whey protein-containing starting material having a lactose content of more than 4 mass percent.

[Claim 17]

The production method according to claim 3, wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate that has bitterness which is reduced relative to bitterness of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using a whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent, and

wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate having an odor which is reduced relative to an odor of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using the whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent.

[Claim 18]

The production method according to claim 3,

wherein the whey protein-containing starting material has a lactose content of less than 1 mass percent, and

wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate in which time-dependent discoloration is suppressed more than in whey protein hydrolysates obtained by hydrolyzing a whey protein-containing starting material having a lactose content of more than 4 mass percent.

[Claim 19]

The production method according to claim 4, wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate that has bitterness which is reduced relative to bitterness of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using a whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent, and

wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate having an odor which is reduced relative to an odor of whey protein hydrolysates prepared using the whey protein-containing starting material having a lipid content of more than 4 mass percent.

[Claim 20]

The production method according to claim 4,

wherein the whey protein-containing starting material has a lactose content of less than 1 mass percent, and

wherein the method produces a whey protein hydrolysate in which time-dependent discoloration is suppressed more than in whey protein hydrolysates obtained by hydrolyzing a whey protein-containing starting material having a lactose content of more than 4 mass percent.

[Claim 21]

The production method according to claim 4, wherein the protease is a protease from the genus *Aspergillus*.

[Claim 22]

The production method according to claim 4, wherein the protease is an acidic protease from the genus *Aspergillus*.

[Claim 23]

The method according to claim 10, wherein the protease is a protease from the genus *Aspergillus*.

[Claim 24]

The method according to claim 10, wherein the protease is an acidic protease from the genus *Aspergillus*.

[Claim 25]

The discoloration suppressing method according to claim 14, wherein the protease is a protease from the genus *Aspergillus*.

[Claim 26]

The discoloration suppressing method according to claim 14, wherein the protease is an acidic protease from the genus *Aspergillus*.