

FOOD PRODUCT

This invention relates to food products and more especially to processed food products containing a stabilising or thickening agent. Various processed food products such as ice cream, whipping cream, cheese spreads, cheese slices, milk drinks, meringues and the like when produced on a commercial scale normally incorporate a stabilising and/or thickening agent to improve their processability, texture, organoleptic properties and storage capability.

Various materials have been used as stabilising and thickening agents including carob gum and/or cellulose ethers such as the hydroxyethyl and carboxymethyl ethers.

Carob gum is now in short supply and is relatively expensive but for many applications is among the best stabilising and thickening agents hitherto available.

This invention is based on the observation that glucomannans, especially those derived from the *Amorphophallus* species and especially from *A. rivieri* and its varieties, often referred to as *A. konjac*, *A. oncophyllus*, *A. variabilis*, *A. bulbifera* and *A. blumeii* can be used satisfactorily to replace carob gum or carob gum in admixture with other gums and thickeners as a stabilising and/or thickening agent in processed food products such as those indicated above.

Such glucomannans, especially that derived from *A. konjac* are in many cases cheaper than carob gum and frequently can be used in smaller quantities than carob gum to achieve the same effect or a better effect.

The invention provides an ungelled processed food product preferably having a pH less than 8 such as, for example, a dairy product such as ice cream, whipping cream, cheese spread, cheese slices, a flavoured milk drink or a meringue, a salad cream or mayonnaise, a gravy or sauce or a jam or pie filling etc., which has been stabilised and/or thickened by

incorporation therein of at least one glucomannan, preferably a glucomannan derived from the *Amorphophallus* sp. and especially a glucomannan derived from *A. konjac*, *A. oncophyllus*, *A. variabilis*, *A. blumei* or *A. bulbifera*.

5 The amount of glucomannan required to be incorporated in the food product depends, of course, on the effect to be achieved but normally amounts within the range of from 0.01 to 5% are found to be satisfactory.

The following examples illustrate the invention.

10 In the Examples two different forms of Konjac glucomannan were used: the material referred to as Japanese Konjac is a purified glucomannan extract of approximately 90% by weight glucomannan content and is a commercially available product; the material referred to as Chinese Taro is a crude material obtained by slicing, drying and
15 grinding whole tubers of *A. Konjac* from a Chinese source to a particle size of 0.5 mm or less. The Chinese Taro material in addition to the glucomannan contains large amounts of starch and in the examples is used in an amount which is 56% more than is used with Japanese Konjac to ensure that the glucomannan content of the produced food products
20 is the same. The word "Genulacta" is a Registered Trade Mark.

Example 1 - Ice Cream

Some commercial Ice Creams use Carob gum for its stabilising and thickening powers. It imparts smooth melt-down and heat-shock resistance and is not affected by lactic acid or calcium
25 salts.

The Ice Cream was made to the recipe shown in Table 1.

Table 1

	%
Butter	10
Sugar	14
Skimmed Milk Powder	11
5 Genulacta L100	0.015
Carob Gum	0.16
Glycerol Monostearate (GMS)	0.12
Vanilla	0.24
Water	64.465

10 Genulacta type L100 is a Casein reactive Carrageenan from Hercules Ltd.

Four samples were prepared as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Recipes for Test Samples (grams)

	Sample 1 (Control)	Sample 2 (Carob gum)	Sample 3 (Konjak)	Sample 4 (Taro)
15 Butter	1020	1020	1020	1020
Milk Powder	1100	1100	1100	1100
Sugar	1440	1440	1440	1440
GMS	12	12	12	12
20 Vanilla	24 mls	24 mls	24 mls	24 mls
Japanese Konjac	-	-	16	-
Chinese Taro	-	-	-	25
Carob gum	-	16	-	-
Genulacta L100	-	1.5	1.5	1.5
25 Water	6600	6600	6600	6600

Procedure

Each mix was blended in a Taylor Rustless Steam Jacketed bowl with a Silverson Lab-bench model L2R. The water (6,600 cc) was raised to 50°C, milk powder added, then sugar, then butter hand-sliced into 5 cm pieces, then GMS. Temperature was raised to 72°C and held for 10 mins.

The blend was transferred to stainless steel buckets and passed through a homogeniser to reduce fat globules to 1µ. An APV Gaulin Minor Homogeniser with 2 stage valve at 2000 psi used.

The homogenised mix was transferred to the Taylor machine and beaten until cool. Vanilla was added and beating/cooling continued to auto-cutout at -5°C. Beating was then continued with manual override and samples taken to estimate foaming.

Beating was continued until the air content of each mix was approximately 50%.

The ice cream was poured into plastic dishes and frozen in a blast freezer at -25°C.

Results

Some physical properties of the ice cream at various stages of its preparation are shown in table 3.

Table 3 - Measurements of Emulsions

Recipe	Beating Time To 50% Air Content	pH	Viscosity (Brookfield) Spindle 1, 30 rpm	
			Before Homogn	After Homogn
1	4 mins	6.6	4.5	not measured
2	4 mins	6.5	66.5	75
3	4 mins	6.6	42	64.5
4	4 mins	6.3	78	>100

Subjective examination showed that sample 1 was thinner than samples 2 to 4; that samples 2 and 3 were similar; and that sample 4 was thicker, being thixotropic and containing swollen particles which were not in solution before homogenisation.

5 After cold storage for 3 days, melt-down was assessed by the standard method of standing equal volumes of ice cream on a mesh and allowing it to melt at ambient temperatures:-

The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 - Melt-Down Test

Time	Recipe 1	Recipe 2	Recipe 3	Recipe 4
10 mins	Just dripping watery	No drip	No drip	Dripping more than 1, but drips are viscous
20 mins	Dripping, watery, little spreading	Just dripping spreading	Just dripping viscous, spreading	Doming
40 mins	10 ml melt-down	3 ml melt-down	12 ml melt-down	12 ml melt-down
1 hour	26 ml melt-down; domed	33 ml melt-down; spreadout	45 ml melt-down; spreadout	45 ml melt-down; spreadout

10 Subjectively, all the ice creams were acceptable. A taste panel unanimously agreed that recipe sample 1 was watery, with a less full-textured mouth feel. The panel also found that samples 2 to 4 were all better than sample 1 with samples 3 and 4 exhibiting smoother melt-down in the mouth and appearing less crystalline than sample 2.

Example 2 - Whipping Cream

Carob gum has also been used commercially to stabilise natural whipped cream.

Co-operative Wholesale Society Whipping Cream (48% Butter-fat) was used. The thickener was added to the cream and the mix was handwhipped with a kitchen tool to "peaks". $\frac{1}{2}$ pint (276 g) samples were used at room temperature (20°C). The results are listed in Table 5.

Table 5 - Whipped Cream Samples

Sample No.	Whipping Time To Peaks	Additive	Comment
1	1 minute	Nil	
2	1½ minutes	0.25% Carob	Lighter and more aerated than 1.
3	1½ minutes	0.25% Japanese Konjac	Richer than 1 or 2, stiffer than 2.
4	1½ minutes	0.39% Chinese Taro	Very stiff Richer than 1 or 2, Lighter than 1

The whipped creams were stored overnight in the refrigerator and tasted at 24 hours age. All tasted similar but sample 2 had a slight alteration in taste due to the carob gum.

The texture was compared by stirring and piping using domestic cake decorating pipes with the results shown in table 6.

Table 6 - Texture of Whipped Creams

Sample No.	Bulk Cream Texture	Piped Cream Texture
1	Just pourable	Forms stable rosettes
2	Softer and creamier more foamy, More pourable	Softer foamier
3	Similar to 1	Rosettes do not maintain form
4	Similar to 1	Forms stable rosettes

Example 3 - Meringues

Thickeners are used commercially as stabilisers in meringues to improve whipping times and reduce 'bleeding' on cooking.

5 The following recipe and method was used:-

Recipe

2 egg whites (separated from hen eggs: approx. 58g)

4 oz caster sugar (113 g)

Pinch of salt (NaCl)

10 Method

The egg whites were hand-whipped until peaked. Two teaspoons of caster sugar were beaten in and the remainder of the sugar was folded in. The mix was piped onto grease-proof paper. Cooking time was 1½ hours in a forced-air oven at 129°C.

15 After cooking, the meringue shells were left to stabilise and samples were evaluated after 24 hours.

Table 7 - Meringue Samples

Sample No.	Recipe	Whipping Texture	Eating Texture
1	Standard	Good foam	Sweet and crisp
2	Plus 0.25% carob	)	Sweet and crisp
3	Plus 0.25% Japanese Konjac	) Better foam than 1, less let-down with sugar addition	Sweet and crisp
4	Plus 0.39% Chinese Taro	)	Sweet and crisp

Example 4 - Cheese Spreads

Traditionally cheeses are blended into a spreadable form by cooking whilst beating with the addition of emulsifying salts that

5 complex the Calcium, Casein, and fats at a buffered pH. The salts are called Joha Emulsifying agents. They consist of Sodium, Potassium and Calcium polyphosphates, diphosphates, monophosphates and citrates.

Red Leicester cheese was formed into a cheese spread using the recipe and method shown in table 8.

10 Table 8 - Cheese Spread Recipe and Method

	Basic Recipe %	Sample No.			
		1 (g)	2 (g)	3 (g)	4 (g)
Red Leicester Cheese	60	300	300	300	300
Water	34.5	173	173	173	173
Joha S9	3	15	15	15	15
Carob gum	(0.5)	-	2½	-	-
Japanese Konjac	(0.5)	-	-	2½	-
Chinese Taro	(0.6)	-	-	-	3

The mix was blended 5 minutes at 85°C in a steam jacketed Hobart bowl and scraped into polyfoil dishes.

After 24 hours the samples were tested for texture and taste and the results are listed in Table 9.

5 Table 9 - Cheese Spreads

Sample No.	Texture	Taste
1	Soft	Pleasant cheesy taste
2	Slightly stiffer	Pleasant cheesy taste but fruity carob aftertaste
3	Stiffer than 2, slightly waxy	Pleasant cheesy taste No aftertaste
4	Stiffer than 3, more crumbly	Pleasant cheesy taste No aftertaste

Example 5 - Cheese Slices

Similar techniques to those of Example 4 are used to produce a stiffer cheese for slicing. The addition of thickeners reduces melt-down effects when such processed cheese slices are subsequently used in cooking, for example, Welsh Rarebit.

The cheeses from Example 4 were reheated with beating to lower the moisture content, and left to stiffen overnight in the refrigerator.

Next day, slices were cut with an electric knife and equal weights placed on toast. All four samples were toasted simultaneously under a domestic gas-oven grill. Sample 1 (no gum)

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melted quicker and ran over the sides of the bread. Samples 2, 3 and 4 all showed less tendency to overflow when molten.

All four samples tasted equally pleasant.

Example 6 - Milk Drinks

5 Japanese Konjac and Chinese Taro were added to a commercially available milk drink and left overnight in the refrigerator. The mix was then homogenised with the Silverson mixer (highest shear). Viscosities were measured with the Brookfield Viscometer (Model LVT).

10 The results are listed in Table 10.

Table 10 - Thickened Milk Drinks

Sample No.	Addition	Viscosity (Scale Reading) Spindle 2/30 rpm	Subjective Assessment
1	0.33% Japanese Konjac	10	Foamy, thick texture, very pleasant
2	0.66% Chinese Taro	40	Foamy, slightly thicker texture, very pleasant
3	Nil	3	Thin, milky texture

CLAIMS:

1. An ungelled processed food product which has been stabilised and/or thickened by incorporation therein of at least one glucomannan.
2. A food product according to claim 1, which is a dairy product.
3. A food product according to claim 2 in the form of ice cream, whipping cream, a cheese spread, cheese slices, a flavoured milk drink or a meringue.
4. A food product according to claim 1, in the form of a salad cream or mayonnaise, a gravy or sauce or a jam or pie filling.
5. A food product according to any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the glucomannan is a glucomannan derived from the *Amorphophallus* species.
6. A food product according to claim 5, wherein the glucomannan is a glucomannan derived from *A. Konjac*, *A. oncophyllus*, *A. variabilis*, *A. bulbifera* or *A. blumeii*.
7. A food product according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the glucomannan is incorporated in the food product in an amount within the range of from 0.01 to 5% based on the weight of the food product.
8. A food product according to any one of claims 1 to 7 having a pH not higher than 8.



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9. A food product according to claim 1 substantially as described in any one of the Examples.
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