can be insufficient for binding the oil content, resulting in an undesirable consistency. Additionally, as a greater understanding of the negative health impacts of saturated fatty acids has developed, it has become increasingly desirable to reduce their prevalence in food products.

There remains a need for improved methods of achieving desirable texture and consistency in meat-analogue food products and avoiding moisture and fat losses on cooking. Preferably, such methods also reduce or eliminate the use of saturated and trans fatty acids, and increase stability and shelf-life.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It has now been found that oil and moisture losses associated with the cooking of meat-analogue compositions can be reduced, by incorporating a structured oil-in-water emulsion into the meat-analogue composition. Furthermore, it has been surprisingly found that the presence of such an emulsion in a meat-analogue composition results in a desirable texture and consistency in cooked food products obtainable therefrom.

Aspects of the invention are defined in the independent claims. Some optional features of the invention are defined in the dependent claims.

An exemplary meat-analogue composition is provided, comprising an oil-in-water structured emulsion and plant protein; wherein said structured emulsion is characterised by an ordered lamellar gel network. In some embodiments, this structured emulsion further comprises a polyhydroxy compound.

An exemplary process for preparing a meat-analogue composition is provided, said process comprising the step of: forming the meat-analogue composition by blending a plant protein with an oil-in-water structured emulsion characterised by having an ordered lamellar gel network. In some embodiments, the process further comprises the step of: preparing the plant protein by providing a dry phase comprising plant protein and blending the dry phase with an amount of water. In some embodiments, the oil-in-water structured emulsion comprises a polyhydroxy compound.

There is also provided an exemplary meat-analogue composition preparable, or prepared, by the process described herein.

There is further provided the exemplary use of a structured emulsion as defined herein as a component of a meat-analogue composition, for instance for reducing oil and/or water loss from the meat-analogue composition during cooking.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Meat-analogue composition

The meat-analogue composition of the present invention has been found to exhibit improved properties over known compositions, particularly in terms of “juiciness”, which has historically been hampered by oil and/or moisture losses during cooking. The meat-analogue composition of the present invention avoids weight loss as well as unwanted shrinkage during frying/cooking. In addition, the composition exhibits a juicy texture and desirable consistency once cooked, and may also be prepared with desirable springiness, cohesiveness, hardness, gumminess, chewiness, resilience and adhesiveness. Moreover, the meat-analogue composition of the present invention may be prepared with low levels of saturated fatty acids and also with a low content of contaminants, such as mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons and mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons typically associated with the use of coconut oil, which is often used in known meat-analogue compositions.

The meat-analogue composition of the present invention comprises a plant protein. The plant protein may suitably be present in an amount of from 2 to 50 wt.% of the composition. In preferred embodiments, the plant protein is present in an amount from 5 to 30 wt.%, more preferably from 15 to 25 wt.% of the composition.

Plant protein is a source of protein which is obtained or derived from plants. The plant protein may be any suitable plant protein and may comprise a mixture of plant proteins and/or may include protein isolates or concentrates. Examples of suitable plant proteins include algae protein, black bean protein, canola wheat protein, chickpea protein, fava

protein, lentil protein, lupin bean protein, mung bean protein, oat protein, pea protein, potato protein, rice protein, soy protein, sunflower seed protein, wheat protein, white bean protein, and protein isolates or concentrates thereof. Preferably, the plant protein