

DESCRIPTION

METHOD FOR PRODUCING GALACTOOLIGOSACCHARIDE

Technical Field

[0001]

The present invention relates to a method for producing a galactooligosaccharide using β -galactosidase, more particularly relates to a method for improving the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate by allowing β -galactosidase to act on a substrate in the coexistence of specific metal ions at a predetermined concentration.

Background Art

[0002]

β -Galactosidase is known to catalyze a transgalactosylation reaction as well as a hydrolysis reaction of a β -D-galactoside bond in lactose or the like, and is used in the production of a galactooligosaccharide that selectively allows Bifidobacteria to grow in the intestine.

[0003]

A method for improving a transgalactosylation ratio in such a reaction using β -galactosidase has been studied. For example, a method for increasing the transgalactosylation ratio by increasing the concentration of lactose serving as a substrate and allowing β -galactosidase to act thereon has been proposed (PTL 1).

[0004]

A product obtained by a transgalactosylation reaction using β -galactosidase can include, other than tri- or higher galactooligosaccharides such as β -D-galactopyranosyl-(1-4) β -D-galactopyranosyl-D glucose (4'-GL), for example, transgalactosylated disaccharides such as β -D-galactopyranosyl (1-6)-D-glucose, however, from the viewpoint of improvement of an effect of promoting the growth of Bifidobacteria or the like, a technique for further increasing the production amount of a tri-

or higher galactooligosaccharide has been demanded. Further, from the viewpoint of reduction of the production cost and improvement of the production efficiency, it is important to reduce a reaction time until the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide reaches the maximum, and a method for improving the reaction rate has been awaited.

Citation List

Patent Literature

[0005]

PTL 1: JP-B-5-22517

Summary of Invention

Technical Problem

[0006]

An object of the present invention is to provide a method for improving the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate in a method for producing a galactooligosaccharide using β -galactosidase.

Solution to Problem

[0007]

The present inventors conducted intensive studies for achieving the above object, and as a result, they found that by allowing β -galactosidase to react with a substrate in the presence of sodium ions and magnesium ions within a specific concentration range, the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide can be increased, and also the reaction time until the production amount reaches the maximum can be reduced, and thus completed the present invention.

[0008]

That is, the present invention is directed to a method for producing a galactooligosaccharide, characterized by allowing β -galactosidase to react with a substrate in the presence of 5 to 60 mM sodium ions and 0.5 to 8 mM magnesium ions.

Advantageous Effects of Invention

[0009]

According to the production method of the present invention, the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide can be increased, and also the reaction rate is improved, so that the reaction time until the maximum production amount is reached can be reduced. Therefore, a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide can be efficiently produced at low cost.

Description of Embodiments

[0010]

The method for producing a galactooligosaccharide of the present invention is characterized by allowing β -galactosidase to react with a substrate in the presence of 5 to 60 mM sodium ions and 0.5 to 8 mM magnesium ions. In the galactooligosaccharide, a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide represented by the general formula: Gal-(Gal) $_n$ -Glc (wherein Gal represents a galactose residue, Glc represents glucose, and n represents an integer of 1 to 6) is included.

[0011]

β -Galactosidase is an enzyme that catalyzes a hydrolysis reaction of a β -galactoside bond in lactose, o-nitrophenyl- β -D-galactopyranoside, or the like, or a transgalactosylation reaction. The β -galactosidase to be used in the present invention is not particularly limited, but from the viewpoint of improvement of the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate, one derived from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Kluyveromyces*, the genus *Streptococcus*, the genus *Lactobacillus*, the genus *Bifidobacterium*, the genus *Bacillus*, or the like is preferred, further, one derived from *Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Kluyveromyces fragilis*, *Streptococcus thermophilus*, *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, or *Bifidobacterium breve* is preferred, particularly, β -galactosidase derived from a microorganism belonging to the genus

Kluyveromyces is preferred, and further, β -galactosidase derived from Kluyveromyces lactis is preferred.

[0012]

As a commercially available product of the above-mentioned β -galactosidase, for example, GODO-YNL (manufactured by GODO SHUSEI Co., Ltd.) and Maxilact LG 5000 (manufactured by DSM) derived from Kluyveromyces lactis, Lactozym 3000 L (manufactured by Novozymes A/S) derived from Kluyveromyces fragilis, Lactase Y-ST (manufactured by Yakult Pharmaceutical Industry Co., Ltd.) derived from Streptococcus thermophilus, and the like can be exemplified.

[0013]

The form of a microorganism having β -galactosidase activity or β -galactosidase derived from the microorganism is not particularly limited, and for example, a culture solution, a cell concentrate or pellet obtained by concentration of a culture solution through centrifugation, a membrane treatment, or the like, dry cells, a cell homogenate, a crude enzyme solution, a purified enzyme solution, an enzyme powder, and the like are exemplified, and these are prepared according to a known method.

[0014]

For example, when a microorganism having β -galactosidase activity is used, the microorganism is cultured according to a known method for culturing the microorganism, and the obtained culture solution is used as it is, or the culture solution is subjected to a known treatment such as centrifugation, a membrane treatment, drying, or homogenization as needed, and is used as a cell concentrate or pellet, dry cells, a cell homogenate solution, or the like. The cells may be used as living cells as such, or may be subjected to an organic solvent treatment, a lyophilization treatment, or the like and used as dead cells.

[0015]

Further, when β -galactosidase derived from a microorganism having β -galactosidase activity is used, there is no particular restriction on the purification conditions or the purification degree, and a general purification method can be used. After the

microorganism is cultured according to a known method, cells are separated by a separation means such as centrifugation or a membrane treatment, and when β -galactosidase is contained in the culture supernatant, the culture supernatant is recovered and can be used as a crude enzyme solution. Further, when β -galactosidase is contained in the cells, the cells are physically homogenized using a homogenizer or by a supersonic treatment, or enzymatically treated using a cell-wall digesting enzyme or the like to obtain an intracellular extract, which can be used as a crude enzyme solution. Such a crude enzyme solution may be formed into a purified enzyme solution with a high purification degree by appropriately combining an ammonium sulfate precipitation treatment, dialysis, gel filtration chromatography, ion-exchange chromatography, adsorption chromatography, affinity chromatography, and the like.

[0016]

As the substrate on which the above-mentioned β -galactosidase is allowed to act, a case where it is a single substrate that acts as both an acceptor and a donor of a galactosyl group, and a case where an acceptor and a donor of a galactosyl group separately coexist are included. Examples of the substrate to serve as a donor of a galactosyl group include lactose and o-nitrophenyl- β -D-galactopyranoside. Further, examples of the substrate to serve as an acceptor of a galactosyl group include lactose, a galactooligosaccharide, glucose, and glycerol.

[0017]

The concentration of the substrate is appropriately set according to the type thereof or the like, however, for example, when lactose is used, from the viewpoint of an effect of improving the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate, the concentration thereof is preferably from 5 to 65 mass%, more preferably from 15 to 60 mass%. Further the addition amount of β -galactosidase can be appropriately adjusted according to a desired reaction time, but is preferably from 10 to 1000 U, more preferably from 30 to 800 U per gram of lactose.

The reaction temperature or the like can be appropriately set according to the optimum temperature of β -galactosidase to be used, or the like. For example, when β -galactosidase derived from *Kluyveromyces lactis* is used, the reaction temperature is preferably from 30 to 50°C, more preferably from 40 to 50°C. Note that the measurement of the enzyme activity (U) is as follows.

[Measurement Method for Enzyme Activity (U) of β -Galactosidase]

0.5 mL of a diluted enzyme sample is placed in a test tube, and 0.5 mL of 100 mM KH_2PO_4 -NaOH buffer (pH 6.5, hereinafter referred to as "buffer") to which manganese chloride is added so that the concentration becomes 0.1 mM is added thereto and mixed therewith, and then incubation is performed at 37°C for 3 minutes. 1.0 mL of a 0.1% o-nitrophenyl- β -D-galactopyranoside (hereinafter referred to as "ONPG") solution pre-incubated at 37°C is added thereto and immediately mixed therewith, and then incubation is performed accurately at 37°C for 1 minute. 2.0 mL of a 0.2 M sodium carbonate solution is added thereto and immediately mixed therewith, and the reaction is stopped (a test system). Separately, 0.5 mL of a diluted enzyme sample is placed in a test tube, and 0.5 mL of the buffer is added thereto and mixed therewith, and thereafter, 2.0 mL of a 0.2 M sodium carbonate solution is added thereto, and then incubation is performed at 37°C for 3 minutes. 0.1 mL of the ONPG solution pre-incubated at 37°C is added thereto and mixed therewith, and then incubation is performed accurately at 37°C for 1 minute (a blind test system). Distilled water is used as a control, and the absorbance at 420 nm of the test system and the blind test system is measured, and the enzyme activity (U) is calculated according to the following formula.

[Numerical Formula 1]

$$\text{Enzyme activity}^* = (A_1 - A_2) \times 10 \times B$$

A_1 : absorbance of test system

A_2 : absorbance of blind test system

B: dilution factor

*: U/mL

[0018]

In the present invention, the above-mentioned β -galactosidase is allowed to react with a substrate in the presence of sodium ions and magnesium ions. The concentration of sodium ions in the reaction system is from 5 to 60 mM. On the other hand, the concentration of magnesium ions is from 0.5 to 8 mM, more preferably from 1.5 to 8 mM. In a case where the concentration of sodium ions is more than 60 mM or a case where the concentration of magnesium ions is more than 8 mM, a load when the obtained galactooligosaccharide is purified by desalting becomes larger, and therefore, such a case is not preferred. By allowing sodium ions and magnesium ions to coexist within such a range, the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate can be improved. Sodium ions and magnesium ions can be added to the reaction system in the form of a solid or a buffer of a salt such as a chloride, a carbonate, an acetate, or a phosphate, and sodium chloride and magnesium chloride are preferred from the viewpoint of a small change in pH after addition thereof.

[0019]

In general, the transgalactosylation reaction by β -galactosidase competes with the hydrolysis reaction of a substrate, and therefore, when β -galactosidase is allowed to act on the substrate, a desired galactooligosaccharide is produced, and also a monosaccharide such as glucose or galactose is generated by the competing hydrolysis reaction, and further, the once produced galactooligosaccharide is also subjected to hydrolysis. In such a manner, the transgalactosylation reaction and the hydrolysis reaction compete with each other, and further, accompanying that, various combinations of an acceptor and a donor of a galactosyl group may occur, and therefore, it is difficult to control the reactions so that the transgalactosylation reaction between a specific acceptor and a specific donor is preferentially made to proceed so as to produce a desired galactooligosaccharide. On the other hand, in the present invention, by allowing β -galactosidase to act on the substrate in the presence of sodium

ions and magnesium ions within a specific concentration range, the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide among the galactooligosaccharides can be increased, and moreover, the reaction rate thereof can be increased so that the time until the production amount reaches the maximum can be reduced, and thus, a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide can be efficiently produced at low cost.

[0020]

Further, the method of the present invention can also be applied to a second-order reaction in the production of a galactooligosaccharide by a consecutive reaction in which two types of β -galactosidase are allowed to act on. That is, as a first-order reaction, a microorganism having β -galactosidase activity or β -galactosidase derived from the microorganism is allowed to react with the substrate, and thereafter, as a second-order reaction, β -galactosidase different from that used in the first-order reaction is allowed to act on the first-order reaction solution in the presence of 5 to 60 mM sodium ions and 0.5 to 8 mM magnesium ions, whereby the unreacted substrate is reduced, and also the production amount of the galactooligosaccharide can be increased.

[0021]

As the microorganism having β -galactosidase activity to be used in the first-order reaction, for example, a microorganism belonging to the genus *Sporobolomyces*, the genus *Aspergillus*, or the genus *Bacillus* is preferred, particularly, a microorganism belonging to the genus *Sporobolomyces* is preferred, and further, *Sporobolomyces singularis* is preferred from the viewpoint of improvement of the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate.

[0022]

The form of the microorganism having β -galactosidase activity or β -galactosidase derived from the microorganism to be used in the first-order reaction is not particularly limited, and for example, a culture solution, a cell concentrate or pellet obtained by concentration of a culture solution through

centrifugation, a membrane treatment, or the like, dry cells, a cell homogenate, a crude enzyme solution, a purified enzyme solution, an enzyme powder, and the like are exemplified, and these are prepared according to a known method.

[0023]

For example, when a microorganism having β -galactosidase activity is used, the microorganism is cultured according to a known method for culturing the microorganism, and the obtained culture solution is used as it is, or the culture solution is subjected to a known treatment such as centrifugation, a membrane treatment, drying, or homogenization as needed, and is used as a cell concentrate or pellet, dry cells, a cell homogenate solution, or the like. The cells may be used as living cells as such, or may be subjected to an organic solvent treatment, a lyophilization treatment, or the like and used as dead cells.

[0024]

Further, when β -galactosidase derived from a microorganism having β -galactosidase activity is used, there is no particular restriction on the purification conditions or the purification degree, and a general purification method can be used. After the microorganism is cultured according to a known method, cells are separated by a separation means such as centrifugation or a membrane treatment, and when β -galactosidase is contained in the culture supernatant, the culture supernatant is recovered and can be used as a crude enzyme solution. Further, when β -galactosidase is contained in the cells, the cells are physically homogenized using a homogenizer or by a supersonic treatment, or enzymatically treated using a cell-wall digesting enzyme or the like to obtain an intracellular extract, which can be used as a crude enzyme solution. Such a crude enzyme solution may be formed into a purified enzyme solution with a high purification degree by appropriately combining an ammonium sulfate precipitation treatment, dialysis, gel filtration chromatography, ion-exchange chromatography, adsorption chromatography, affinity chromatography, and the like.

[0025]

In the first-order reaction, the microorganism having β -galactosidase activity or β -galactosidase derived from the microorganism is allowed to react with the substrate such as lactose. The reaction conditions can be appropriately set according to the properties of the microorganism having β -galactosidase activity or β -galactosidase derived from the microorganism to be used. For example, when *Sporobolomyces singularis* is used as the microorganism having β -galactosidase activity and lactose is used as the substrate, from the viewpoint of the effect of improving the production amount of the galactooligosaccharide and the production rate, the concentration of lactose is preferably from 10 to 60 mass%, more preferably from 40 to 50 mass%. Further, the addition amount of *Sporobolomyces singularis* is preferably from 0.03 to 0.3 U, more preferably from 0.2 to 0.3 U per gram of lactose. Further, the reaction temperature is about 30 to 70°C, and the reaction may be performed for about 24 to 96 hours.

[0026]

In the second-order reaction, β -galactosidase different from that used in the first-order reaction is allowed to act on the first-order reaction solution obtained by the first-order reaction in the presence of sodium ions and magnesium ions within a specific concentration range.

[0027]

β -Galactosidase to be used in the second-order reaction is not particularly limited, however, from the viewpoint of improvement of the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate, one derived from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Kluyveromyces*, the genus *Streptococcus*, the genus *Lactobacillus*, the genus *Bifidobacterium*, the genus *Bacillus*, or the like is preferred, further, one derived from *Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Kluyveromyces fragilis*, *Streptococcus thermophilus*, *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, or *Bifidobacterium breve* is preferred, particularly, β -galactosidase derived from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Kluyveromyces* is preferred,

and further, β -galactosidase derived from *Kluyveromyces lactis* is preferred.

[0028]

By allowing the above-mentioned β -galactosidase to act on the first-order reaction solution in the presence of sodium ions and magnesium ions within a specific concentration range, the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide is increased. Further, the reaction rate thereof is also improved, and the reaction time until the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide reaches the maximum is reduced. The concentration of sodium ions in the second-order reaction solution is from 5 to 60 mM. On the other hand, the concentration of magnesium ions is from 0.5 to 8 mM, more preferably from 1.5 to 8 mM. In a case where the concentration of sodium ions is more than 60 mM or a case where the concentration of magnesium ions is more than 8 mM, a load when the galactooligosaccharide is desalted to be purified becomes larger, and therefore, such a case is not preferred. By allowing sodium ions and magnesium ions to exist within such a concentration range, the production amount of the galactooligosaccharide and the production efficiency can be improved. Sodium ions and magnesium ions can be added to the reaction system in the form of a solid or a buffer of a salt such as a chloride, a carbonate, an acetate, or a phosphate, and sodium chloride and magnesium chloride are preferred from the viewpoint of a small change in pH after addition thereof.

[0029]

The concentration of residual lactose in the first-order reaction solution is preferably from 5 to 65 mass%, more preferably from 15 to 60 mass% from the viewpoint of an effect of improving the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the reaction rate. Further, the addition amount of β -galactosidase is preferably from 10 to 1000 U, more preferably from 30 to 800 U per gram of residual lactose. The reaction temperature or the like can be appropriately set according to the optimum temperature of β -galactosidase to be used, or the like.

For example, when β -galactosidase derived from *Kluyveromyces lactis* is used, the reaction temperature is preferably from 30 to 50°C, more preferably from 40 to 50°C from the viewpoint of an effect of improving the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide and the production rate.

[0030]

The reaction solution in which the galactooligosaccharide is produced as described above can be used as it is or as a sugar syrup by appropriately performing decolorization with active carbon, filtration with diatomite, desalting with an ion exchange resin, or concentration with a concentrator, or as a food material by being formed into a powder using a spray dryer or the like. For example, it is used as table sugar as it is, or can also be added to a food or drink such as fermented milk, lactic acid bacteria drink, bread, jam, or confectionery. The addition concentration at that time is not particularly limited and may be appropriately determined in view of flavor, physical properties, or the like. It can also be used in a cosmetic, a pharmaceutical, or the like other than such a food.

[0031]

Hereinafter, the present invention will be described in more detail with reference to Examples, however, the present invention is by no means limited thereto.

Examples

[0032]

Example 1

15 g of lactose of Japanese Pharmacopoeia grade was weighed in a 100 mL Erlenmeyer flask, and 85 g of a Bis-Tris buffer (pH 6.8) that was prepared with deionized water (containing no sodium ions or magnesium ions) was added thereto (lactose concentration: 15%). After lactose was completely dissolved in a boiling water bath, the solution was cooled in a thermostat water tank at 45°C. 2.6 M sodium chloride was added thereto so that the concentration of sodium ions becomes 15 mM, and further 0.75 M magnesium chloride

was added thereto so that the concentration of magnesium ions becomes a concentration shown in the following Table 1, and then, GODO-YNL (β -galactosidase derived from *Kluyveromyces lactis*, manufactured by GODO SHUSEI Co., Ltd.) was added at 600 U per gram of lactose, and a reaction was carried out at 40°C. These reaction solutions were subjected to sampling over time until the elapse of 7 hours, and then, the enzyme was inactivated by increasing the temperature to 90°C in the boiling water bath, and thereafter, the ratio of the residual disaccharide and the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide was measured by an HPLC analysis under the following conditions. The measurement results when the production amount of the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide at each magnesium ion concentration reached the maximum are shown in Table 1. Note that in the residual disaccharide, unreacted lactose and a transgalactosylated disaccharide are included.

[0033]

<HPLC Conditions>

Column: Shodex SUGAR KS-802

Mobile phase: purified water

Flow rate: 0.5 mL/min

Detection: differential refractive index detector

[0034]

[Table 1]

Reaction conditions	Na (mM)	15	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
	Mg (mM)	0.0	0.1	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	4.0	8.0
When tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide content reached maximum	Reaction time (hr)	7	7	3	3	2	2	2	2
	Residual disaccharide (%)	60.4	33.1	29.4	27.8	33.1	32.2	33.1	30.1
	Tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide (%)	9.8	13.2	13.2	13.2	13.3	13.4	13.6	13.9

[0035]

Example 2

The procedure was performed in the same manner as in Example 1 except that 2.6 M sodium chloride was added so that the

concentration of sodium ions becomes 30 mM, and the ratio of the residual disaccharide and the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide was measured. The results are shown in Table 2.

[0036]

[Table 2]

Reaction conditions	Na (mM)	30	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
	Mg (mM)	0.0	0.1	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	4.0	8.0
When tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide content reached maximum	Reaction time (hr)	7	5	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Residual disaccharide (%)	43.9	28.4	33.8	32.1	31.7	31.1	31.1	32.3
	Tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide (%)	13.6	14.2	14.1	14.2	14.2	14.2	14.5	14.7

[0037]

Example 3

The procedure was performed in the same manner as in Example 1 except that the concentration of lactose in the reaction solution was set to 45%, 2.6 M sodium chloride was added so that the concentration of sodium ions becomes 5 mM, GODO-YNL was added at 250 U per gram of lactose, and a reaction was carried out at 45°C, and the ratio of the residual disaccharide and the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide was measured. The results are shown in Table 3.

[0038]

[Table 3]

Reaction conditions	Na(mM)	5	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
	Mg(mM)	0.0	0.1	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	4.0	8.0
When tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide content reached maximum	Reaction time (hr)	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Residual disaccharide (%)	30.1	35.2	32.1	31.6	31.4	31.3	31.0	31.3
	Tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide (%)	18.8	18.6	18.6	18.7	19.0	19.2	19.2	19.6

[0039]

Example 4

The procedure was performed in the same manner as in Example 1 except that the concentration of lactose in the reaction solution was set to 45%, 2.6 M sodium chloride was added so that the concentration of sodium ions becomes 60 mM, GODO-YNL was added at 250 U per gram of lactose, and a reaction was carried out at 45°C, and the ratio of the residual disaccharide and the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide was measured. The results are shown in Table 4.

[0040]

[Table 4]

Reaction conditions	Na (mM)	60	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
	Mg (mM)	0.0	0.1	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	4.0	8.0
When tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide content reached maximum	Reaction time (hr)	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Residual disaccharide (%)	31.1	35.9	33.5	32.7	32.8	32.9	32.7	32.1
	Tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide (%)	24.3	23.9	24.0	24.0	24.5	24.5	24.8	25.2

[0041]

From Table 1 and Table 2, it was revealed that by adding magnesium ions so that the concentration becomes 0.5 mM or more when the concentration of sodium ions is 15 mM or 30 mM, the reaction time until the production amount of the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide reaches the maximum is reduced to half or less as compared with a case where the concentration of magnesium ions is 0 mM or 0.1 mM. Further, it was demonstrated that with the increase in the concentration of magnesium ions, the production amount of the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide increases. In addition, it was revealed that when the concentration of sodium ions is 15 mM, by adding magnesium ions so that the concentration becomes 1.5 mM or more, the reaction time until the production amount of the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide reaches the maximum is further reduced. Further, from Table 3 and Table 4, it was revealed that when the concentration of sodium ions is 5

mM or 60 mM, by adding magnesium ions so that the concentration becomes 0.5 mM or more, the reaction time until the production amount of the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide reaches the maximum is reduced as compared with a case where the concentration of magnesium ions is 0 mM or 0.1 mM, and it was demonstrated that with the increase in the concentration of magnesium ions, the production amount of the tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide increases particularly when the concentration of magnesium ions is 1.5 mM or more.

Industrial Applicability

[0042]

According to the present invention, the production amount of a tri- or higher galactooligosaccharide can be increased in a short reaction time, and therefore, it is useful as an industrial production method for a galactooligosaccharide.

CLAIMS

1. A method for producing a galactooligosaccharide, characterized by allowing β -galactosidase to react with a substrate in the presence of 5 to 60 mM sodium ions and 0.5 to 8 mM magnesium ions.

2. The production method according to claim 1, wherein the concentration of magnesium ions is from 1.5 to 8 mM.

3. The production method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein β -galactosidase is derived from a microorganism belonging to the genus *Kluyveromyces*.