

PROCESS AND PRODUCT

This description relates to the provision of a coffee replacement.

- 5 Coffee is one of the world's most popular beverages, and large quantities are consumed daily in all parts of the world. In addition, it is also incorporated into many other comestible products, such as dairy products, confectionery, baked goods, cereals and ice cream. Coffee is sourced from coffee beans, roasted seeds of several species of bushes native to warm and tropical areas of the world. These are also areas where both extremes of weather conditions, exacerbated by climate change, and various conflicts are to be found. This often results in shortages of coffee beans, which is reflected in higher prices, not only for connoisseur coffee but also for the more popular instant coffee. Instant coffee is prepared from coffee beans by roasting, finely grinding, dissolving in water and then freeze-drying or spray-drying. It is not only drunk, but is also used in numerous other comestible products.
- 15 It has been proposed to counter the effect of higher prices by providing a replacement for some or even most of the instant coffee powder used to make the drink, while retaining its desirable qualities. It has now been found that this can be achieved by providing a coffee replacement granule, that not only tastes like instant coffee, but also looks like it. There is therefore provided a method of making a coffee flavour soluble granule, comprising the combining of spray-dried coffee flavour with Maillard process flavour and caramel sugar to form a fine powder, suspending this powder in a fluidised bed and spraying it with an aqueous saccharide binder solution.
- 25 Other spray-dried flavours may be added in addition to the Maillard flavour. A particular example is the one described in PCT publication WO 01/35764. This comprises a spray-dried composition comprising at least one flavourant encapsulated in a carbohydrate matrix which matrix is characterized by from 40 to 80 wt. % high molecular weight film-forming carbohydrate; from 10 to 30 wt. % mono-, di- and trisaccharides; and from 10 to 30 wt. % maltodextrin, based on the total weight of the carbohydrate matrix. Such flavours may be used up to a maximum extent of 50% by weight of the total granule.
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Coffee flavour is widely available both in solution and powder form and is used in comestible products to give a coffee flavour. It may be a NI (nature-identical) coffee, or it

may be a blend of coffee plus ingredients that together simulate coffee flavour but containing a reduced proportion of instant coffee. Such products are well known to and widely used by the art, and include, for example, mixtures of several liquid components applied to a carrier such as maltodextrin. The ingredients may include coffee, hazelnut, caramel, vanilla and mixtures thereof.

Maillard process flavours, sometimes referred to as thermal process flavours, are high value building blocks for flavour compositions. They are made by the Maillard reaction of a reducing sugar with a food-grade nitrogen source, typically amino acids, peptides, food proteins, hydrolysed vegetable proteins and yeasts. These flavour compositions are used in culinary and savoury products such as soups, snacks and ready meals where they provide and enhance specific taste donation like roast pork, sautéed chicken or boiled beef. There are many such flavours available. This results in a product that is characteristically dark in appearance.

The binder solution is an aqueous solution of a saccharide that is at least a disaccharide. For example, it may be sucrose or maltodextrin. However, it is particularly a polysaccharide, particularly one of the polysaccharide gums widely used in the food industry. Examples of these include pectin, gum Arabic and xanthan gum.

The concentration of the saccharide should be such that the solution is sprayable (that is, not too viscous), but will agglomerate the mix. A suitable concentration may easily be determined by routine experimentation in every case. However, a rough guide for xanthan is from 0.2-5.0% by weight, particularly from 0.5-1.5%.

In the process, the powdered ingredients (coffee flavour, process flavour and caramel sugar, plus other spray-dried flavours, if desired) are added separately to a fluidised bed and suspended therein, being mixed to give a homogeneous blend. They are then sprayed with the binder solution. This causes agglomeration to form particles. The resulting particles are sieved until a desired particle size is attained (this is usually in the range of 125-4000 micrometres, particularly 125-2000 micrometres).

The spraying of the binder may be carried out using standard equipment in the normal manner known to the art. It is a feature of this process that we are able to produce an agglomerate with the same visual outlook and performance as the 100% instant coffee. The resulting particulate flavours are solid, non-adhesive particles, which can be used in consumable compositions.

The compositions may be used as partial coffee replacements in both beverages and other coffee flavours. For example, it may be used in soluble coffee powders in loose or in sachets (for example, single serve and three-in-one (coffee-sugar-creamers)). In such uses, the compositions can replace instant coffee to the extent of up to 50%, and in some specific uses even 100% by weight without affecting the flavour in any way. This provides a substantial savings. It has been observed that, at replacement levels of the order of 30-40% by weight, consumers are not able to detect any difference between coffee and composition on the one hand, and 100% coffee on the other.

The compositions can also be used in any comestible product requiring coffee flavour, non-limiting examples of which include baked goods such as cakes, biscuits and cereal bars; breakfast cereals; chewing gums; confectionery; ice creams; and dairy products. There is therefore also provided a comestible product, comprising a comestible product base and a coffee flavour as hereinabove described. By "comestible product base" is meant the combination of all ingredients of the comestible product, other than the coffee flavour. These ingredients will naturally change, depending on the nature of the comestible product, but they are completely standard and used in art-recognised proportions, so that the skilled person will have no difficulty formulating with the coffee flavour hereinabove described.

The process is now further described with reference to the following non-limiting example.

EXAMPLE

Experiments as described below were carried out in a fluidised bed utilising the mentioned parameters.

Fluid bed equipment GPCG03 of Glatt AG (Binzen, Germany)

The operating parameters were maintained between the following ranges:

	Temperature Inlet °C	Temperature Product °C	Air volume M3/h
5	90 - 95	57 - 60	82 - 87

A particulate flavouring composition was prepared from the ingredients shown in the following table:

Powder Mixture

10	Caramel sugar	600g.
	Spray dried flavour*	40g.
	Process flavour**	150g.
	MaltoDextrine 10***	240g.

15 * Robusta Coffee US151 Flv ex Givaudan

** Grilled type SSF999/K ex Givaudan

*** Maltodextrin with a dextrose equivalent of 10

Binder Solution

20	Water	296g.
	Xanthane	4g.
	Flavour liquid	2g.
	Bitterness agent	12g.

25 The resulting composition was a coffee-coloured powder of size 50 – 500 micron.

The composition was tested in a coffee beverage in the popular three-in-one sachet form (50% sugar, 40% creamer, 10% instant coffee, all by weight). The test samples were as follows:

30 Sample 1 – 15% of the coffee flavour was the composition of the example, the rest instant coffee

Sample 2 – 30% was replaced

Sample 3 – 45% was replaced

Coffee was made from all four samples and submitted to an expert taste panel, who tested them against a reference composition with 100% instant coffee. The panel's findings were

Sample 1 – indistinguishable from the reference

- 5 Sample 2 – the experts noticed a difference (but to an extent undetectable by ordinary consumers)

Sample 3 – significant difference, certainly detectable by ordinary consumers.

Claims:

1. A method of making a coffee flavour soluble granule, comprising the combining of spray-dried coffee flavour with Maillard process flavour and caramel sugar to form a fine powder, suspending this powder in a fluidised bed and spraying it with an aqueous saccharide binder solution.
2. A method according to claim 1, in which the binder is at least a disaccharide.
3. A method according to claim 1, in which the binder is a polysaccharide, preferably gum Arabic or xanthan gum.
4. A method according to claim 1, in which the saccharide concentration is such that it is sprayable but it will not agglomerate the mix.
5. A method according to claim 3, in which xanthan gum is used, and the solution contains from 0.2-5.0% by weight, particularly from 0.5-1.5%, of xanthan gum.
6. A method according to claim 1, in which there is additionally added a spray-dried composition comprising at least one flavourant encapsulated in a carbohydrate matrix which matrix is characterized by from 40 to 80 wt. % high molecular weight film-forming carbohydrate; from 10 to 30 wt. % mono-, di- and trisaccharides; and from 10 to 30 wt. % maltodextrin, based on the total weight of the carbohydrate matrix.
7. A method according to claim 4, in which the spray-dried composition comprises up to 50% by weight of the granule.
8. A coffee flavour preparable by a method according to claim 1.
9. A soluble single-serve coffee powder comprising instant coffee and up to 50% by weight of a coffee flavour according to claim 8.

10. A three-in-one coffee powder comprising a coffee flavour comprising instant coffee and up to 50% by weight of a coffee flavour according to claim 8.
11. A comestible product comprising a consumable composition base and a coffee
5 flavour according to claim 8.