

CLAIMS

1.- A process for cooking pasta (2) with a humidity content of at least 20% by weight with respect to the weight of the pasta; the process comprises:

5 a water feeding step, during which a given quantity of liquid water is fed to a container (4); and

 a vapour feeding step, during which a given quantity of water vapour is fed to the container (4) containing a given quantity of pasta for an amount of time ranging from 7 to 40
10 seconds.

2.- A process according to claim 1, wherein the given quantity of water is smaller, by weight, than the given quantity of pasta (2) and has a temperature of at least approximately 50°C.

15 3.- A process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the container (4) comprises at least one opening (20), through which, during the vapour feeding step, part of the water vapour flows out of the container (4).

 4.- A process according to any one of the preceding
20 claims, wherein, during at least part of the vapour feeding step, the pressure inside the container (4) is greater than atmospheric pressure, in particular greater than approximately 1 bar.

 5.- A process according to any one of the preceding
25 claims, wherein the water vapour has a vapour quality smaller

than approximately 0.9, in particular smaller than approximately 0.8.

6.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the ratio between the weight of the given
5 quantity of water and the given quantity of pasta (2) ranges from approximately 0.30 to approximately 0.95, in particular from approximately 0.35 to approximately 0.90.

7.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the container (4) has a base wall (19) and
10 an opening (20) opposite the base wall (19); during the vapour feeding step, a lid (21) at least partially covers said opening (20) so as to reduce the outlet of water vapour from the container (4).

8.- A process according to claim 7, wherein the lid
15 (21) completely covers said opening (20) and has an outlet passage (22), which establishes a communication between the inside of the container (4) and the outside and has an area ranging from approximately 0.09 cm² to approximately 0.95 cm².

20 9.- A process according to claim 7 or 8, wherein the lid (21) completely covers said opening (20) and is provided with control means, which are configured to let out gas from the inside of the container (4) when the pressure inside the container (4) exceeds a reference value.

25 10.- A method according to any one of the preceding

claims, wherein, during the water feeding step, a first nozzle (7) feeds the given quantity of liquid water into the container (4); during the vapour feeding step, a second nozzle (16) feeds the given quantity of water vapour into the container (4).

11.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the vapour feeding step is at least partially subsequent to the water feeding step, during which the given quantity of liquid water is fed to the container (4) containing the given quantity of pasta (2).

12.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims and comprising an addition step, which is subsequent to the vapour feeding step and during which a sauce is added to the pasta (2), which has already been subjected to the water feeding step and to the vapour feeding step.

13.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the pasta has a humidity of at least approximately 24% by weight relative to the weight of the pasta.

14.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the pasta has a water activity (A_w) ranging from approximately 0.85 to approximately 0.98.

15.- A process according to any one of the claims from 1 to 12, wherein the pasta (2) has a water activity (A_w) up to approximately 0.91.

16.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the given quantity of pasta inside the container (4) has a weight ranging from approximately 70 to approximately 150 grams; the given quantity of liquid water
5 has a weight ranging from approximately 30 to approximately 130 grams; the given quantity of vapour has a weight ranging from approximately 4 to approximately 20 grams.

17.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein, during the water feeding step, the given
10 quantity of liquid water is fed to the container (4) containing the given quantity of pasta (2); the container (4) having a code or the conditions of the liquid water and/or water vapour feeding steps; the process further comprises a detection step, during which the code is
15 detected, and a condition selection step, during which, based on the detected code, the parameters used during the liquid water feeding step and the water vapour feeding steps are selected; in particular, during the condition selection step, at least one of the following items is selected: the
20 given quantity of liquid water, the given quantity of water vapour, and the time during which the water vapour is fed to the container (4).

18.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the vapour feeding step is at least partially
25 simultaneous with or subsequent to the water feeding step.

19.- A process according to any one of the preceding claims, said pasta (2) has a humidity content of at least approximately 22%, in particular up to approximately 30%, by weight with respect to the weight of the pasta (2).