CLAIMS:

1. A pod for storing and dispensing a beverage preparation ingredient during a dispensing operation, the pod comprising:

a body defining a cavity for storing the beverage preparation ingredient, said body comprising a dispensing side and a closed side, and at least one side wall extending from the closed side to the dispensing side; and

an actuation member contained within said cavity;

wherein:

the actuation member is configured to cause an opening to be formed between said cavity and a region outside the pod when actuated;

characterized in that,

said opening is formed around a perimeter of a dispensing surface of the pod at a junction formed between the at least one side wall and the dispensing surface, the dispensing surface being provided at the dispensing side of the body.

2. A pod according to claim 1, wherein the width of the opening is at least as large as the width of the cavity adjacent to the opening, the width of the cavity being defined by the least one side wall.

3. A pod according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the pod is generally rotationally symmetrical about an axis of rotation (A-A'), the at least one side wall comprising a curved surface disposed around the axis of rotation (A-A'); and optionally

wherein:

a path is defined along an internal surface of the at least one side wall from the closed side to the dispensing side, and

the at least one side wall is configured such that the shortest distance between the path and the axis of rotation (A-A') gradually increases from the closed side to the dispensing side.

4. A pod according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the opening is formed around the entire perimeter of the side wall; and/or

wherein the pod is configured to be rotated during said dispensing operation so as to cause the beverage preparation ingredient stored within the cavity to be released from the cavity via said opening.

5. A pod according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the opening is formed in a base of the pod; and optionally

wherein the base comprises a generally planar surface disposed at the bottom of the pod during a dispensing operation.

6. A pod according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the cavity remains sealed during a dispensing operation except for the opening or openings formed by the actuation member; and/or

wherein said opening provides a direct path from within the cavity to a region outside the pod.

7. A pod according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the pod further comprises a closing member for closing said dispensing side, thereby sealing said cavity; and optionally

wherein the body comprises a sealing rim extending around a perimeter of the dispensing side, the closing member being sealed to the sealing rim.

8. A pod according to claim 7, wherein the actuation member is configured to engage with said closing member to form said opening when actuated; and/or

wherein the body further comprises a sealing region disposed towards the centre of the dispensing side, the closing member being sealed to the sealing region.

9. A pod according to any preceding claim, wherein:

(i) the body is configured to flex during said dispensing operation so as to cause the actuation member to form the opening; and/or

(ii) the actuation member comprises a separator; and optionally

wherein the separator comprises a hub and a pusher region disposed around and extending away from the hub.

10. A pod according to any preceding claim, wherein the pod comprises an actuator engagement region for engagement with a corresponding actuator of a dispensing system; and optionally

wherein the actuator engagement region is provided in the closed side of the pod.

11. A pod according to any preceding claim, wherein the pod comprises a mounting region for engagement with a corresponding pod support region of a dispensing apparatus.

12. A method for dispensing a beverage preparation ingredient from a pod according to any one of claims 1 to 11, the method comprising:

providing a pod at a pod support location;

applying an actuation force to an actuator engagement region of the pod to cause the opening to be formed in the pod; and

rotating the pod.

13. A method according to claim 12, further comprising providing a liquid to be mixed with said released beverage preparation ingredient.

14. A dispensing apparatus for dispensing a beverage preparation ingredient from a pod according to any one of claims 1 to 11, the apparatus comprising:

a pod support region configured to support the pod; and

an actuator configured to engage with a corresponding actuator engagement region of the pod;

wherein the apparatus is configured to cause the actuation member to cause an opening to be formed in the pod supported by the pod support region during a dispensing operation, so as to cause the beverage preparation ingredient to be released from the pod via said opening.

15. A dispensing apparatus according to claim 14 further comprising:

(i) a rotation mechanism for rotating the pod, wherein the apparatus is further configured to cause the rotation mechanism to cause the pod to rotate about an

axis of rotation (A-A') during said dispensing operation, so as to cause the beverage preparation ingredient to be released from the pod via said opening; and/or

(ii) a mixing chamber, the mixing chamber comprising an inlet for receiving at least one beverage preparation ingredient from said pod; and optionally

further comprising a mixing device provided within the mixing chamber for mixing the at least one beverage preparation ingredient.