

COOKING METHOD FOR SIMULTANEOUSLY COOKING FOODS

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates a method of preparing a food dish by simultaneously cooking more than one food item where at least one of the food items is seasoned or flavoured in a cook-in bag. The invention is ideally suited for seasoning and cooking a food item in a cook-in bag where the food item is cooked at the same time with rice in the same cooking appliance.

BACKGROUND

In Asia nearly every household has a rice cooker appliance. The main function of a rice cooker is for cooking rice. Generally, other foods needed for preparing a food dish for serving as a meal must be cooked in different ways and often in different cooking appliances. However, as the pace of modern life accelerates, there is a need to prepare food more conveniently and efficiently using only one cooking appliance by simultaneously cooking two or three food items, one of which is usually rice. The ability to simultaneously cook two or more different foods at the same time would have wide market appeal due to convenience, time saving, and reduced energy consumption.

Rice dishes are typically prepared by placing uncooked rice, main ingredients (e.g. pieces of meat, vegetables, etc.) and seasonings in a rice cooker appliance, and are then cooked together in water for the appropriate time. However, this method has drawbacks. The rice and main ingredients will have the same taste from the seasoning. The seasoning tends to settle during cooking and form a layer on the bottom of the appliance, which is likely to burn and form a crust in the appliance, and also deliver an unpleasant flavour.

The rice and the main ingredients plus seasoning can be prepared separately in two different compartments (e.g. a rice cooker appliance and a cooking pot on a stove top). However, this is a high energy consumption method. In addition, the cooking time for each is usually different, which causes inconvenience.

Some other cooking methods utilise a plastic or stainless steel basket in the upper portion of a rice cooker appliance to steam dishes in the headspace of the appliance. One can steam a single dish at a time, or foods can be steamed at the same time as rice is cooked. The drawback of steaming foods while cooking rice in this way is that flavours from the dish are released into the headspace and into the rice itself. Additionally, cooking juices drop onto the rice affecting the undisturbed taste and plainness of the rice. This plain or neutral flavour of rice is highly desirable to many consumers.

Therefore, there is a need to improve the conventional methods for simultaneously cooking two or more foods, especially cooking with rice.

An object of the present invention is therefore to provide a cooking method and kit that at least goes part way to overcoming one or more of the above disadvantages of existing methods or at least to provide a useful alternative.

5 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In a first aspect, the invention provides a method of preparing a food dish by simultaneously cooking a food item with rice, wherein the food item is seasoned or flavoured by placing food and seasoning or flavouring ingredients inside a cook-in bag, sealing the cook-in bag, placing the sealed cook-in bag in a cooking appliance, and wherein the rice is
10 placed in the cooking appliance either before or after the cook-in bag is placed in the cooking appliance, and the food item and the rice are cooked together.

The food item and the rice are preferably cooked for 10-90 minutes. Water may be added to the cooking appliance to aid cooking of the rice.

Preferably, the seasoning or flavouring ingredients are selected from fermented
15 ingredients, spices, taste enhancers, and Chinese functional ingredients, and may further include thickeners, binders, or food colouring agents. The seasoning or flavouring ingredients may be in the form of a cube, a powder, granules, a liquid, or a paste.

The cooking appliance may be any appliance suitable for cooking food, but is preferably a conventional oven, a microwave oven, an electric rice cooker, a stove-top rice
20 cooker, a pressure cooker or a steamer.

In a second aspect, the invention provides a cooking kit for use in the method of the invention, comprising a cook-in bag provided together with a sachet containing seasoning or flavouring ingredients, or a combination of seasoning and flavouring agents.

The cook-in bag and the sachet are preferably packaged together. The cook-in bag
25 may be provided tightly folded, and may be provided with a sealing device.

The bag is preferably made of a monolayer film formed from 99 wt % or more of polyester. The monolayer film preferably has an oxygen transmission of 110-168 $\text{cm}^3/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{d}\cdot\text{atm}$ at 23 °C, and a water vapour transmission rate of 25-40 $\text{g}/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{d}$ at 38 °C.

30 DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The invention relates to a method of preparing a food dish by simultaneously cooking a food item with rice, wherein the food item is seasoned or flavoured by placing food and seasoning or flavouring ingredients inside a cook-in bag, sealing the cook-in bag, placing the sealed cook-in bag in a cooking appliance, and wherein the rice is placed in the cooking
35 appliance either before or after the cook-in bag is placed in the cooking appliance, and the food item and the rice are cooked together. The invention also relates to a cooking kit

comprising a cook-in bag provided together with a sachet containing seasoning or flavouring ingredients, or a combination of seasoning and flavouring agents

The term "cook-in bag" means any bag suitable for the cooking of foods, commonly known as an oven bag, and made from a see-through temperature resistant flexible plastics material.

The term "cooking appliance" refers to any appliance suitable for cooking foods, including conventional oven, microwave oven, rice cooker, pressure cooker, steamer, whether powered electrically or by gas or any other suitable means.

The cooking kit may contain more than one cook-in bag, and may contain more than one ingredient sachets.

The seasoning or flavouring ingredients preferably comprise a complete seasoning mix for preparing dishes. These ingredients may include fermented ingredients, spices, taste enhancers or Chinese functional ingredients, as well as thickeners, binders, food colouring agents, and other suitable ingredients.

The term "Chinese functional ingredients" refers to dietary ingredients that have been consumed over centuries and considered by the public to have certain positive functions on human health. Examples include black fungus and red dates.

The seasoning or flavouring ingredients may be in various forms, such as cubes (for example, pressed cubes), powder, granules, liquid, or paste with or without particulates (for example, pastes including pasta). In addition, these ingredients may be in frozen form or presented under chilled or refrigeration conditions, or at normal ambient temperatures.

The cook-in bag is normally presented tightly folded to save space. In addition, the cook-in bag may be provided with a sealing device, such as a twistable tie or zip-lock seal.

The cook-in bag is preferably made of a monolayer film formed from 99 wt % or more of polyester. The film can be produced by conventional bi-axially orientated extrusion. In order to further improve anti-adhesive characteristics of the cook-in bag, silica can be included in the film.

The film preferably has a non-polarized structure, has an oxygen transmission of 110-168 $\text{cm}^3/\text{m}^2 \cdot \text{d} \cdot \text{atm}$ at 23 °C, and has a water vapour transmission rate of 25-40 $\text{g}/\text{m}^2 \cdot \text{d}$ at 38 °C. The low oxygen transmission and water vapour transmission rate provide excellent water proofing and grease proofing of the bag. In addition, the bag has anti-adhesive characteristics and does not decompose, deform or melt over the temperature range of 30-121 °C. Therefore, the cook-in bag of the invention is particularly suitable for a variety of cooking appliances, especially rice cookers.

More than one sealed cook-in bag can fit in a typical cooking appliance, and thus two or more dishes can be simultaneously prepared in the appliance. The waterproof and greaseproof characteristics of the bag mean there is no taint of odour or flavour between the

food materials from the different bags. Preparing more than one dish in the appliance at the same time is also energy efficient.

During cooking the rice keeps its original neutral taste because it does not come into contact with the foods contained within the cook-in bag.

5 In addition, the cook-in bag of the invention typically has anti-adhesive characteristics, which means that neither the bag, nor any food materials or seasoning ingredients, stick to the bottom of the cooking appliance. The appliance is therefore easy to clean after cooking.

EXAMPLES

10 The invention is further described with reference to the following examples. It will be appreciated that the invention as claimed is not intended to be limited in any way by these examples.

Example 1

15 Black pepper sauce in a liquid form (about 50 g) was placed inside a cook-in bag with fish fillet (300 g) and bell pepper (45 g). After thorough mixing, the cook-in bag was sealed. The sealed bag and uncooked rice (300 g) were placed in a rice cooker and water (500 ml) added to the rice cooker. After cooking for 30-45 min, the bag was taken out and the cooked black pepper fish fillet removed ready for eating. The cook-in bag was made using a
20 monolayer film formed from 100 wt % polyester. The bag remained intact during cooking, and did not melt, deform, or stick to the rice cooker. Thus, the rice cooker was easy to clean after cooking. There was no unpleasant flavour in the rice cooker. In addition, the rice maintained its original neutral taste and there was no contamination of odours between the rice and the cooked black pepper fish fillet.

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Example 2

Cha Shao powder (about 30 g) was placed in a cook-in bag with pork fillet (200 g). After thorough mixing, the cook-in bag was sealed. The sealed bag and uncooked rice (300 g) were placed in a rice cooker and water (500 ml) was added to the rice cooker. After
30 cooking for 45 min, the bag was taken out and the cooked Cha Shao pork removed ready for eating. The cook-in bag used was made from monolayer polyester film containing 0.02 wt % or less of silica. The bag remained intact during cooking, and did not melt, deform, or stick to the rice cooker. Thus, the rice cooker was easy to clean after cooking. There was no unpleasant flavour in the rice cooker, in the cooked food or in the rice. In addition, the rice
35 maintained its original neutral taste and there was no contamination of odours between the rice and the cooked Cha Shao pork.

Example 3

A curry cube (about 50 g) was placed in a cook-in bag with beef pieces (300 g) and vegetables, including potatoes and carrots, (100 g). After thorough mixing, the cook-in bag was sealed. The sealed bag was placed in a rice cooker together with the sealed cook-in bag of Example 2. Uncooked rice (300 g) and water (400-500 ml) was added to the rice cooker. After cooking for 45-55 min, the two bags were taken out and the cooked curry beef and Cha Shao pork removed ready for eating. The cook-in bag used was the same as that of Example 1. The two bags remained intact during cooking, and did not melt or deform. There was no adhesion between the two bags, and neither bag stuck to the rice cooker. Thus, the rice cooker appliance was easy to clean after cooking, and there was no unpleasant flavour in the rice cooker, or the cooked food or rice. Furthermore, there was no contamination of odours between the curry beef and the Cha Shao pork. In addition, the rice kept its original neutral taste, and there was no contamination of odours between the rice and the curry beef or the Cha Shao pork.

Example 4

Spicy chicken mix in the form of powder (about 30-50 g) was placed in a cook-in bag with chicken pieces (300-500 g) and some vegetables, such as bell peppers. After mixing together, the bag was sealed and placed in an electric pressure cooker. Rice was added to the cooker with the required amount of water. After 20-30 min cooking, the dish was ready for serving. The cook-in bag used was prepared by conventional methods. The polyester monolayer film used contains 0.02 wt % or less of silica. The bag remained intact during cooking with no physical or chemical damage. The bag did not melt, deform or stick to the pressure cooker.

Example 5

Thai curry mix in the form of powder (about 30 g) was placed in a cook-in bag with chicken pieces (300 g) and some vegetables, such as diced potato. After mixing together, the bag was sealed and placed on rice with added water in a traditional pressure cooker and heated on a gas stove top. After cooking for 20 min, the cooked chicken was removed and served. The cook-in bag used was the same as for Example 6. The bag remained intact during cooking with no physical or chemical damage. The bag did not melt, deform or stick to the pressure cooker.

As used in this specification, the words “comprises”, “comprising”, and similar words, are not to be interpreted in an exclusive or exhaustive sense. In other words, they are intended to mean “including, but not limited to”.

5 Further, any reference in this specification to prior art documents is not intended to be an admission that they are widely known or form part of the common general knowledge in the field.

10 It is to be appreciated that although the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments, variations and modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the claims. Furthermore, where known equivalents exist to specific features, such equivalents are incorporated as if specifically referred to in this specification.

CLAIMS

1. A method of preparing a food dish by simultaneously cooking a food item with rice, wherein the food item is seasoned or flavoured by placing food and seasoning or flavouring ingredients inside a cook-in bag, sealing the cook-in bag, placing the sealed cook-in bag in a cooking appliance, and wherein the rice is placed in the cooking appliance either before or after the cook-in bag is placed in the cooking appliance, and the food item and the rice are cooked together.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food item and the rice are cooked for 10-90 minutes.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein water is added to the cooking appliance to aid cooking of the rice.

4. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the seasoning or flavouring ingredients are selected from fermented ingredients, spices, taste enhancers, and Chinese functional ingredients.

5. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the seasoning or flavouring ingredients further include thickeners, binders, or food colouring agents.

6. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the cooking appliance is a conventional oven, a microwave oven, an electric rice cooker, a stove-top rice cooker, a pressure cooker or a steamer.

7. A cooking kit for use in the method of any one of claims 1 to 7, comprising a cook-in bag provided together with a sachet containing seasoning or flavouring ingredients, or a combination of seasoning and flavouring agents.

8. A cooking kit as claimed in claim 7, wherein the cook-in bag and the sachet are packaged together.

9. A cooking kit as claimed in claim 7 or claim 8, wherein the cook-in bag is provided tightly folded.

10. A cooking kit as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein the seasoning or flavouring ingredients are selected from fermented ingredients, spices, taste enhancers, and Chinese functional ingredients.

11. A cooking kit as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 10, wherein the seasoning or flavouring ingredients further include thickeners, binders, or food colouring agents.

5 12. A cooking kit as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 11, wherein the seasoning or flavouring ingredients are in the form of a cube, a powder, granules, a liquid, or a paste.

10 13. A cooking kit as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 12, wherein the cook-in bag is made of a monolayer film formed from 99 wt % or more of polyester.

14. A cooking kit as claimed in claim 14, wherein the monolayer film has an oxygen transmission of $110\text{-}168\text{ cm}^3/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{d}\cdot\text{atm}$ at $23\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, and a water vapour transmission rate of $25\text{-}40\text{ g}/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{d}$ at $38\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$.

15 15. A cooking kit as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 15, wherein the cook-in bag is provided with a sealing device.