

**DRIED AND/OR MICROENCAPSULATED SACCHAROMYCES
CEREVISIAE CELLS WITH A HIGH CONTENT OF (S)-(+)-S-
ADENOSYL-L-METHIONINE, PROCESS FOR THEIR
PREPARATION, AND COMPOSITIONS CONTAINING SAID CELLS**

This invention relates to dried and/or microencapsulated *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells with a high content of (S)-(+)-S-adenosyl-L-methionine, a process for their preparation, and compositions containing said cells.

In particular, the invention relates to *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells
5 wherein the diastereoisomer, free base, (R)-(+)-S-adenosyl-L-methionine (hereinafter called (R)-(+)-SAME) is in a quantity lower than or equal to 10% of the diastereoisomer, free base, (S)-(+)-S-adenosyl-L-methionine (hereinafter called (S)-(+)-SAME).

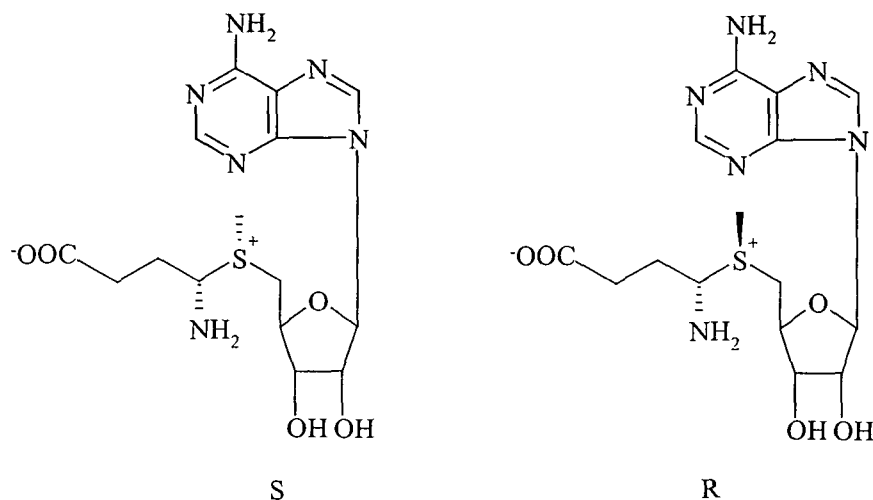
BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

10 It is known that the (S)-(+)-SAME ion is highly unstable and consequently rapidly degradable if extracted from the producing cells. In fact, many years passed between the discovery of SAME (Cantoni et al. "Phosphorous metabolism", Baltimore 1952 2, 129; Cantoni et al. J. Biol. Chem, 1953, 204, 403) and its marketing. The stability problem was initially
15 solved by salification, in particular in the form of sulphates. However, the sulphate salts of SAME sometimes cause side effects, especially in the gastric mucosa, due to their inherent acidity.

It is known that (R, S) SAME is a physiological donor of methyl groups involved in enzymatic reactions of transmethylation, which is present in all
20 living organisms and has therapeutic effects on chronic liver disorders, adiposis, lipaemia and atherosclerosis.

It is also known (J.W. Cornforth, J.A.C.S., 1977, 99, 7292-7300; Stolowitz et al., J.A.C.S., 1981, 103, 6015-6019) that products containing

(R, S) SAME consist of a mixture of two diastereoisomers: (R)-(+)-SAME and (S)-(+)-SAME, which have the following molecular structure:



It has also been demonstrated (De La Haba et al., J.A.C.S. 1959, 81, 3975-3980) that only one of the two diastereoisomers, ie. (S)-(+)-SAME, is enzymatically active by spontaneous transmethylation and racemisation, and consequently generates the formation of the inactive diastereoisomer (R)-(+)-SAME amounting to approx. 20% (Wu et al., Biochemistry 1983, 22, 2828-2832).

It has been observed that in all the products available on the market containing SAME, the inactive diastereoisomer (R)-(+)-SAME is present in the amount of at least 20%; it has further been observed that said percentages increase over time to 40% and more due to spontaneous racemisation.

The cells have a natural content of (S)-(+)-SAME equal to approx. 100%, but the industrial extraction and purification methodology produces a partly degraded product, and consequently a mixture of $\geq 20\%$ (R)-(+)-SAME and $\leq 80\%$ (S)-(+)-SAME

These factors clearly confirm that the mixture of diastereoisomers is unstable over time, and this was already known in relation to the product in solution (G.L. Creason et al., Phytochemistry, vol. 24, N. 6, 1151-1155, 1985; H.C. Uzar, Liebigs Ann. Chem. 1989, 607-610).

It has also been observed that (R, S) SAME, and its salified forms

approved for pharmaceutical use, present problems of instability, in addition to the complexity of the preparation and purification processes.

Known purification processes involve the use of strong acid resins (JP 13680/1971), chelating resins (JP 20998/1978) or expensive special
5 reagents, such as picric or picolinic acid (US 3707536 and US 3954726); however, they lead to partial racemisation of the SAME sulphur and consequently to the production of end products containing the inactive diastereoisomer in an amount exceeding 20%.

However, purification processes involving the use of weak acid resins
10 (JP 14299/1981, FR-A-2531714, EP-A-0141914) only allow partial separation of the active diastereoisomer to be obtained, and consequently a degree of purity insufficient for pharmaceutical purposes.

Although the performance of some of the said processes allows greater purity to be obtained, partial racemisation implies, in any event, that at least
15 20% of inactive diastereoisomer is present; moreover, in some cases (FR 2531714), potassium bicarbonate is used to extract the product from the cells, with consequent precipitation of potassium perchlorate, which causes difficulty with the separation and subsequent elimination of the product. In EP-A-0141914, the lysis of yeast cells containing SAME is performed in the
20 presence of an organic solvent (such as ethyl acetate, acetone, etc.), also using chromatographic columns which require the use of resins with a particle size of 100-200 mesh, involving heavy investments and maintenance costs for regeneration and washing.

The use of solvents to extract the SAME necessarily involves the use of
25 flameproof plant, solvent recovery and distillation systems, as well as the separation and necessary drying of the depleted biomass, to prevent it from being eliminated together with the residual solvent. All these factors clearly involve an increase in expenditure and the cost of the operations.

Morana et al., *Biochimica Biophysica Acta*, 1573 (2002), 105-108, disclose that SAME may be stabilized by trehalose in lyophilized yeast extracts and, to a lesser extent, in lyophilized yeast cells. Lyophilization is however disadvantageous since the cells are subjected to stressful conditions (frozen at -20°C and then thawed at 37°C) and trehalose is anyhow presumed essential to stabilize intracellular SAME. The addition of trehalose would moreover involve economical and regulatory problems.

There is consequently a need for derivatives or dosage forms of SAME wherein the percentage of active (S)-(+)-SAME diastereoisomer is clearly higher than the inactive (R)-(+)-SAME isomer, and wherein the said percentage is stable over time. A further important goal would be a stable administration dosage form of (S)-(+)-SAME as a free base, without recurring to the formation of salts and/or to stabilizing agents and without subjecting yeast cells to stressful conditions..

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

It has now been discovered that SAME free base is stable inside the producing cell even without the addition of stabilizing agents. The protection afforded by the intact cell wall of the yeast also promotes greater stability over time at ambient temperature.

This invention therefore relates to dried and/or microencapsulated *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells with a high content of (S)-(+)-S-adenosyl-L-methionine, in the form of a free base obtainable from yeast cells which are simply dried at temperatures ranging from 20 to 40°C, optionally under reduced pressure, in particular from *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* strains characterised by high-productivity of (S)-(+)-SAME.

The cells according to the invention can be administered as such in suitable pharmaceutical forms, especially capsules, tablets, gastro-resistant tablets and the like.

Suitable strains of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* can be selected by screening colonies originating from plating on YM agar a sample of culture broth taken from industrial fermentation at the pre-stationary stage, and subsequently checking its ability to produce (S)-(+)-SAMe.

5 The SAMe productivity of a strain thus selected, called GNL24/497, is 2.0%-6.0% w/dry weight, more specifically 3%-4% w/dry w, at the end of fermentation, and 7%-20% w/dry w, and more specifically 10%-16% w/dry w, at the end of the enrichment stage.

10 The yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* GNL24/497 has been classified as such by the Perugia University "Industrial Yeast Collection DBVPG" on the basis of its morphophysiological characteristics and by the DNA-DNA reassociation technique. The strain *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* GNL 24/497, which has been deposited in the DBVPG collection for patent purposes according to the Treaty of Budapest dated 27 April 2005, under access number
15 DBVPG 8 P, constitutes a further subject of the invention.

20 The yeast is grown at industrial level according to known techniques and conditions, and used to prepare bread-making biomasses wherein DL methionine in the quantity of 0.5%-4.0% w/v, more specifically 1.0%-3.0% w/v, is added to ordinary culture medium based on molasses (F. Schlenk and R.E. De Palma, J. Biol. Chem. 1957 229, 1051; F. Schlenk, J.L. Dainko and S.M. Stanford, Archives of Biochemistry and Biophysics 1959, 83, 28-34).

25 The biomass is collected by centrifugation, washed, resuspended and subjected to a process of activation in a medium (hereinafter called "the activation medium") containing potassium phosphate; ammonium sulphate; sodium citrate; magnesium, manganese, zinc and calcium salts; glucose and L-methionine or DL-methionine (F. Schlenk and R.E. De Palma, J. Biol. Chem, 1957, 229, 1051-F. Schlenk et al., Enzymologia 29, 283, 1965).

 The activation process can be repeated 2-5 times, more specifically 2-3

times, under sterile or non-sterile conditions; at atmospheric pressure or under slight pressure; at a controlled pH or free pH; with aeration of 0.1-1.5 v/v/m, or more specifically 0.2-1.0 v/v/m; at a temperature of 25°C-35°C, or more specifically 28°C-32°C; for 6-24 h, or more specifically 8-18 h.

5 The biomass concentration in the activation medium can range from 2.5% to 18% dry weight/volume, and more specifically from 5%-15% dry weight/volume. After enrichment, the biomass is collected by centrifugation or microfiltration, washed several times with sterile water or phosphate buffer pH 5.2 (± 0.2), and then dried or microgranulated according to conventional
10 techniques.

According to a preferred aspect, the microgranulation can be performed by a process which comprises:

- a) centrifugation or microfiltration of yeast cells from the culture broth;
- b) washing with water of the yeast cells and resuspension in sterile water;
- 15 c) possibly, the addition to the suspension obtained in b) of bentonite, kaolin, silica, microcellulose, lecithinated sodium, and/or natural or hydrogenated vegetable or animal oils;
- d) drying at low pressure of the mixture obtained in c) at a temperature of between 20°C and 40°C to an H₂O content of between 0.5 and 5%;
- 20 e) addition of excipients to the dried substance and direct compression of the mixture;
- f) granulation of the tablets obtained in e);
- g) coating of the granules obtained in f) with molten wax.

This process is disclosed in European patent application no. 05425084.0
25 of 18.2.2005, filed by the Applicant.

The biomass of dried, microgranulated yeast is used to prepare tablets with a weight of between 1.0 and 2.5 g, and more specifically 1.3-1.8 g, having a content of the active constituent (S)-(+)-SAME of between 100 and 400 mg,

and more specifically between 150 and 300 mg. The tablets can be prepared according to known techniques using dried yeast with a high (S)-(+)-SAME content or by adding excipients such as microcrystalline cellulose, silica, glycerol behenate, magnesium stearate (or the like). The tablets thus obtained
5 can also be coated with excipients like BIOGAPRESS® VEGETAL, Labrafac® CC, EUDRAGIT L30D-55, titanium dioxide, talc, colloidal silicon dioxide, triethyl citrate, FD & C yellow 5, or the like, to standardise gastric resistance.

The invention is illustrated in greater detail in the examples below.

Example 1

10 The yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* GNL-24/497 (DBVPG 8 P) is grown in an industrial medium based on molasses used for bread-making yeast, to which 30 g/l of DL-methionine has been added, for 24 h at 28°C. The biomass is collected by centrifugation and washed twice with tap water: creams with 20%±2 g/dry weight/vol. and a total SAME content of 3% (±0.5%) w/dry w are
15 obtained. In a 10-litre fermenter a medium is prepared containing:

glucose 82 g/l, DL-methionine 12 g/l, Na₂NO₃ 10 g/l, KH₂PO₄ 3.5 g/l, KOH 0.385 g/l, (NH₄)₂SO₄ 7.0 g/l, MgSO₄ 0.5 g/l, antifoam 0.03 g/l. The medium is heated to 28°C, and the creams are added until a concentration of 100 g/l dry weight is obtained. Activation conditions: agitation 200 rpm, air
20 0.25 v/v/min. At the end of glucose consumption, after approx. 12 h, the cells are collected by centrifugation, recovering 100-102 g/l dry weight of biomass containing 11.5% of total SAME, of which 4.5% is (R)-(+)-SAME isomer and 95.5% is (S)-(+)-SAME isomer.

The biomass was dried at 28°C to an H₂O content ≤0.5% w/w.

25 Analysis confirmed that the (R)-(+)-SAME isomer content was lower than 5%, and that the (S)-(+)-SAME isomer exceeded 95%.

Example 2

As per example 1, but the biomass is activated twice. 14.2% w/dry w of

total SAME is obtained, of which 4.3% w/w is (R)-(+)-SAME isomer and 95.7% is (S)-(+)-SAME isomer.

Example 3

As per examples 1 and 2, but the biomass undergoes a third enrichment
5 process, producing 15.1% w/dry w of total SAME, of which 4.4% (R)-(+)-
SAME isomer and 95.6% w/dry weight of (S)-(+)-SAME.

Example 4

As per examples 1-3, wherein the dried biomass is microencapsulated
by adding bentonite and drying at 32°C ($\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$) under vacuum at 5 mbars,
10 ground to a fine powder and added to the granulate for microencapsulation as
indicated below:

g%

- *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* powder 10
- Mannitol 50
- 15 • Microcrystalline cellulose 10
- Colloidal silicon dioxide 2
- Mg stearate 3
- Glycerol behenate 888 5
- Hydrogenated vegetable fat (Biogapress Vegetal 8M297, GATTEFOSSÈ) 20

20 The powder is suitably mixed with all the components except for the
hydrogenated vegetable fat. This mixture is used to make tablets with a
20-25 mm diameter which are then granulated in an oscillating granulator to
produce 300-1500 micron granules. The granule is coated with melted vegetable
fat using a recirculating screw mixer and left to cool at ambient temperature,
25 producing 500-1600 micron microcapsules containing $3.0 (\pm 5\%) \times 10^9$ CFU/g.

Example 5

The yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* GNL-24/497-(DBVPG 8P) was
prepared and dried as described in example 1.

The dried biomass was subjected to a stability program at ambient temperature ($T = 25 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ and $\text{RH} = 60 \pm 5\%$).

For analysis purposes, the cells were mechanically lysed at $+4^\circ\text{C}$.

The table below shows the results obtained:

5

SAMPLE Time in days	KF %	(S)-(+)-SAmE % CONTENT	(R)-(+)-SAmE % CONTENT
0	0.40 (± 0.05)	94.50 (± 0.1)	5.50 (± 0.1)
15	0.40 (± 0.05)	94.10 (± 0.1)	5.90 (± 0.1)
45	0.40 (± 0.05)	94.10 (± 0.1)	5.90 (± 0.1)
75	0.40 (± 0.05)	94.00 (± 0.1)	6.00 (± 0.1)
100	0.40 (± 0.05)	94.10 (± 0.1)	5.90 (± 0.1)
120	0.42 (± 0.05)	93.80 (± 0.1)	6.20 (± 0.1)
150	0.42 (± 0.05)	94.00 (± 0.1)	6.00 (± 0.1)
180	0.46 (± 0.05)	93.90 (± 0.1)	6.10 (± 0.1)

Example 6

Tablets having the following composition were prepared with the dried biomass, as indicated in examples 1, 2, 3, 4, according to known techniques:

CONSTITUENTS	FUNCTION	QUANTITY
Dried cells	Active constituent ≥ 200 mg	1350 mg
Microcrystalline cellulose	<u>Excipients: core</u> Binder	86.00 mg
Colloidal silicon dioxide	Absorbent	7.00 mg
Glycerol behenate	Lubricant	20.00 mg
Magnesium stearate	Anti-adherent agent	7.00 mg
Total weight		1470 mg

Example 7

Tablets having the following composition were prepared with the dried biomass, as indicated in examples 1, 2, 3, 4, according to known techniques:

COMPOSITION PER TABLET

5

CONSTITUENTS	FUNCTION	QUANTITY
Dried cells	Active constituent ≥200 mg	1350 mg
Microcrystalline cellulose	<u>Excipients: core</u> Binder	86.00 mg
Colloidal silicon dioxide	Absorbent	7.00 mg
Glycerol behenate	Lubricant	20.00 mg
Magnesium stearate	Anti-adherent agent	7.00 mg
Biogapress ® vegetal (Glyceryl glycerol palmitost.)	<u>Excipients (spinning)</u> Protector	11.20 mg
Labrafac ® CC *	Protector	11.20 mg
Eudragit L30D-55 **	Filming agent	43.20 mg
Titanium dioxide	Opacifier	7.20 mg
Talc	Anti-adherent agent	14.25 mg
Colloidal silicon dioxide (Aerosol 200)	Desiccant	1.00 mg
Triethyl citrate	Plasticiser	11.55 mg
Tartrazine yellow	Colouring	0.08 mg
Total weight		1569.68 mg

- * LABRAFAC (chain triglycerides)
- ** EUDRAGIT (copolymer of methacrylic acid)
- *** FD (tartrazine)

Example 8

10

The tablets referred to in example 7 were subjected to the

gastroresistance test according to the European Pharmacopoeia, using the PHARMATEST PTL-5 disintegrator apparatus. After 1 hour the tablets were totally intact.

CLAIMS

1. Dried and/or microencapsulated *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells with a high content of (S)-(+)-S-adenosyl-L-methionine, in the form of free base
5 obtainable from yeast cells which are dried at temperatures ranging from 20 to 40°C, optionally under reduced pressure, in the absence of stabilizing agents.
2. Cells as claimed in claim 1, in dried form.
3. Cells as claimed in claim 1 or 2, in microencapsulated form.
4. Cells as claimed in any of the preceding claims, obtainable by screening
10 colonies originating from plating on YM agar a sample of culture broth taken from industrial fermentation at the pre-stationary stage, and subsequently checking its ability to produce (S)-(+)-SAME.
5. *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells as claimed in any of the preceding claims, deposited in the DBVPG collection under number DBVPG 8 P.
- 15 6. Cells as claimed in any of the preceding claims, having a SAME productivity of 2.0%-6.0% w/dry w at the end of fermentation and 7%-20% w/dry w at the end of the enrichment stage.
7. Pharmaceutical compositions containing the cells claimed in claims 1-6 as active constituent, mixed with suitable excipients.
- 20 8. Compositions as claimed in claim 7, in the form of tablets, gastro-resistant tablets and capsules.
9. Compositions as claimed in claim 7 or 8, with a content of active constituent (S)-(+)-SAME of between 100 and 400 mg.
10. Process for the preparation of the cells claimed in claims 1-6, which
25 comprises:
 - the addition of DL Methionine in the amount of 0.5%-4.0% w/v to the medium based on bread-making molasses;
 - centrifugation of the biomass, which is washed, resuspended and

subjected to a process of activation in a medium containing potassium phosphate; ammonium sulphate; sodium citrate; magnesium, manganese, zinc and calcium salts; glucose and L-methionine or DL-methionine;

- 5 - possible repetition of the activation process 2-5 times, with aeration 0.1-1.5 v/v/m and a temperature of 25°C-35°C for 6-24 h;
- biomass concentration in the activation medium of 2.5% to 18% dry weight/volume;
- centrifugation or microfiltration of the biomass, which is washed
10 several times with sterile water or phosphate buffer pH 5.2 (± 0.2) and then dried or microgranulated according to conventional techniques.

11. Strain of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* deposited in the DBVPG collection under number DBVPG 8 P.