

Specification

Acidic Milk Drink

Detailed Description of the Invention

Technical Field

[0001] The present invention relates to an acidic milk drink with excellent quality stability and great flavor even when the acidic milk drink is at a low solids not fat (SNF). More specifically, the invention relates to an acidic milk drink with great flavor, where the deterioration of the quality thereof such as the aggregation and precipitation of milk protein therein can be modified and reduced without any use of stabilizers even when the total caloric value of the acidic milk drink is reduced, and a method for producing the same, as well as a method for preventing the deterioration of the quality of the acidic milk drink.

Related Art

[0002] Acidic milk drinks such as fermented milk and drinks prepared with lactic acid bacteria have great taste and possibly have various physiological functions. In recent years, therefore, such acidic milk drinks are widely ingested as merchandises satisfying consumers' needs.

[0003] These acidic milk drinks are produced from a raw material milk type acidified by microbial fermentation and the addition of sour agents as the base, so the resulting drinks are hardly ingestible because the drinks have poor flavor such as sour taste when they are ingested as they are. So as to satisfy the consumers' taste, therefore, appropriate amounts of carbohydrate are added. Additionally, the carbohydrate is added owing to the effects thereof on the prevention of the aggregation and precipitation of milk protein-suspended particles.

[0004] In recent years, alternatively, the attention toward health has been increasing in dietary life. The market of diet foods with reduced calories, namely so-called low-calorie foods has been enlarging. Following the trend, products with reduced calories from various foods have been developed. Such needs have emerged in the field of the acidic milk drinks.

[0005] So as to meet such needs, the use of carbohydrate as one of main elements causing caloric increase should essentially be limited in producing acidic milk drinks with reduced calories.

[0006] However, it has been known that carbohydrate has the effect on the suppression of the aggregation and precipitation of milk protein-suspended particles. When the use thereof is limited so as to adjust the calorie, the dispersion stability of milk protein gets highly unstable, so that it is difficult to obtain acidic milk drinks with excellent storage stability

involving the suppression of the aggregation and precipitation of milk protein therein. When the SNF is low in an acidic milk drink, in particular, it is difficult to obtain such an acidic milk drink as described above.

[0007] For reducing the calorie of acidic milk drinks with low SNF, therefore, artificial highly sweet sweeteners are used, such as sucralose and aspartame giving sweetness at a small amount to hardly give caloric elements. Additionally, various stabilizers are also used, such as pectin, carboxymethyl cellulose, propylene glycol alginate, carrageenan, locust bean gum and soybean polysaccharides for allowing them to make contributions to the dispersion stability of milk protein.

[0008] For milk-containing acidic drinks with reduced calories, in particular, a method using pectin and soybean polysaccharides as stabilizers singly or in combination has been reported (patent references 1 and 2).

[0009] When the SNF in an acidic milk drink is low, however, the viscosity of the resulting product is increased via the use of stabilizers such as pectin, although the dispersion stability of the milk protein is improved in that case. Therefore, in that case, the resulting product may sometimes be adversely affected concerning easy drinkability and food texture. Such product has problems such as the deterioration of light texture including refreshing food texture and non-sticky texture demanded toward calorie-reduced drink

types.

[0010] In case that the calorie of such acidic milk drinks with low SNF are to be reduced, additionally, the amount of carbohydrate to be used is limited. For the purpose of improving flavor and quality stability, thus, plural materials should essentially be used. Accordingly, problems in terms of cost and production emerge in that case.

[0011] [Patent reference 1] Japanese Patent No. 3400777

[Patent reference 2] Japanese Patent No. 3313104

Disclosure of the Invention

Problems that the Invention is to Solve

[0012] It is an object of the invention to provide an acidic milk drink with high quality stability and great flavor with light texture demanded toward for calorie-reduced acidic milk drink types even when the SNF in the acidic milk drink is low, as well as a method for producing an acidic milk drink with no problems in terms of cost and production even when the amount of carbohydrate used is limited so as to reduce the calorie of the acidic milk drink.

Means for solving the Problems

[0013] The present inventors made investigations so as to solve the problems. Consequently, the inventors found that the problems can be overcome by blending polydextrose and sugar

in combination in an acidic milk drink at a SNF of 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass. Thus, the invention has been achieved.

[0014] Specifically, the invention is to provide an acidic milk drink at a SNF of 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass, which contains polydextrose and sugar.

[0015] Additionally, the invention is to provide a method for producing an acidic milk drink at a SNF of 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass, including blending polydextrose and sugar in the acidic milk drink.

[0016] Still additionally, the invention is to provide a method for preventing the deterioration of the quality of an acidic milk drink at a SNF of 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass, including blending polydextrose and sugar in the acidic milk drink.

Advantages of the Invention

[0017] The acidic milk drink in accordance with the invention can have improved dispersion stability of milk protein due to the combined use of polydextrose and sugar without any use of stabilizers and the like, even when the acidic milk drink is at a low SNF, so that the aggregation and precipitation of milk protein can be suppressed to prevent the deterioration of the quality. Thus, the acidic milk drink consequently has excellent storage stability. Furthermore, the flavor thereof is excellent with light texture.

Best Mode for Carrying out the Invention

[0018] The acidic milk drink of the invention is prepared by allowing an acidic milk drink at a SNF of 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass to contain polydextrose and sugar.

[0019] The acidic milk drink of the invention is prepared by diluting any of the following acidic raw material milk types with water and the like to adjust the SNF to 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass, preferably 3.0 to 4.0 % by mass and adjust the pH to 3.0 to 4.0.

(1) An acidic raw material milk type of fresh bacterium type, as prepared by allowing microorganisms such as lactic acid bacteria and bifidus bacteria to interact with liquid milk types derived from animals and vegetables, such as cow milk, goat milk, sheep milk and soybean milk, defatted powdered milk, whole powdered milk or powdered milk, and milk types and the like as prepared by reducing condensed milk.

(2) An acidic raw material milk type of killed bacteria types, as prepared by sterilizing the acid raw material milk (1).

(3) An acidic raw material milk type prepared by simply adding various sour agents to the milk described above and the like.

[0020] In case of producing the milk types (1) and (2) among the acidic raw material milk types, microorganisms such as lactic acid bacteria and bifidus bacteria interacting with milk and

the like include for example bacteria of genus *Lactobacillus* such as *Lactobacillus casei*, *Lactobacillus mali*, *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subspecies. *bulgaricus*, and *Lactobacillus herveticus*; bacteria of genus *Streptococcus*, such as *Streptococcus thermophilus*; bacteria of genus *Lactococcus*, such as *Lactococcus lactis* subspecies. *lactis* and *Lactococcus lactis* subspecies. *cremoris*; bacteria of genus *Enterococcus*, such as *Enterococcus faecalis*; or bacteria of genus *Bifidobacterium*, such as *Bifidobacterium breve*, *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, and *Bifidobacterium longum*; bacteria of genera *Bacillus*, *Acetobacter* and *Gluconobacter*; and yeast species of genera *Saccharomyces* and *Candida*. Any of them may be used preferably. These microorganisms may be used singly or in combination of two or more thereof. Among the microorganisms, in particular, one or more species selected from *Lactobacillus casei*, *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* subspecies. *bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus* are preferably used because the resulting flavor is greater in that case.

[0021] Any general method for producing drinks and foods from fermented milk is used with no specific limitation as the fermentation method for allowing the microorganisms to interact with milk and the like. A method suitable for the fermentation of microorganisms for use in fermentation is appropriately selected from stationary fermentation, agitation fermentation,

shaking fermentation and aeration fermentation. Among them, stationery fermentation is preferably used.

[0022] Any conditions for use in producing drinks and foods with fermented milk may be used with no specific limitation, as the conditions for the fermentation to allow the microorganisms to interact with milk and the like. For example, the fermentation may satisfactorily be done at a temperature of 30 to 40 °C to pH 3.0 to 4.0.

[0023] In case that the acidic raw material milk (3) is to be used as an acidic raw material milk for the acidic milk drink, various sour agents may satisfactorily be added to milk and the like for use in general foods, so as to make the pH of the final acidic milk drink to pH 3.0 to 4.0. Specific sour agents include for example various fruit juices of apple, blue berry and citrus fruits, extracts or mixtures thereof, organic acids such as lactic acid, citric acid, malic acid, tartaric acid, gluconic acid, and succinic acid; and inorganic acids such as phosphoric acid.

[0024] The acidic raw material milk is homogenized if necessary. The homogenization is preferably done at a pressure of about 15 MPa. Via the homogenization process, the resulting texture (food texture) gets better, while the milk protein in blend with polydextrose and sugar can get greater dispersion stability.

[0025] Polydextrose to be blended in the acidic milk drink

of the invention is a polysaccharide prepared by the polymerization of glucose, sorbitol and citric acid at high temperature and high pressure. In the polydextrose, from monosaccharide to polysaccharides with molecular weights of several tens thousands exist in mixture. Specific product names include "Litesse" (manufactured by DANISCO CULTOR; average molecular weight of 1,200). Polydextrose is added at an amount of 1.1 to 7.0 % by mass, preferably 1.1 to 4.6 % by mass per product.

[0026] Additionally, the sugar to be blended in the acidic milk drink in accordance with the invention is the generic name of a processed product containing sucrose composed of glucose and fructose as the main components and specifically includes for example soft sugar, granulated sugar, crystal sugar, processed sugar and liquid sugar. In accordance with the invention, the sugar can be used without any specific limitation. Preferably, granulated sugar and liquid sugar are used. Specific product names include Granulated Sugar (manufactured by Itochu-sugar Company; manufactured by Nisshin-sugar Company); and Fine Liquor (manufactured by Fuji Nihon Seito). The amount of the sugar to be added is at 3.8 to 9.5 % by mass, preferably 3.8 to 6.2 % by mass per product.

[0027] The timing and method for blending polydextrose and sugar in the acidic milk drink are not specifically limited. Polydextrose and sugar may satisfactorily be added at any stage

of preparing the acidic milk drink. Preferably, syrup containing polydextrose and sugar as prepared by the general method is blended in a preliminarily prepared acidic milk drink.

[0028] The syrup is prepared for example by dissolving sugar and polydextrose in water heated to 70 °C or more and then sterilizing the resulting solution at 112 °C for 10 seconds on plate.

[0029] The acidic milk drink thus obtained in accordance with the invention can get improvement in the quality deterioration such as aggregation and precipitation of milk protein which emerge at low SNF, without any use of stabilizers having been used in the related art, such as pectin, carboxymethyl cellulose, propylene glycol alginate, carrageenan, locust bean gum and soybean polysaccharides. Additionally, the flavor is great with light texture.

[0030] Additionally, preferably, the acidic milk drink of the invention is adjusted to a caloric value per 100-ml drink of 40 to 58 kcal, preferably 48 to 58 kcal, using polydextrose and sugar.

[0031] So as to adjust the caloric value using polydextrose and sugar, specifically, the ratio in weight ratio of the contents of polydextrose and sugar in the acidic milk drink is 10:90 to 65:35, preferably 10:90 to 42:58.

[0032] Other food materials may additionally be blended in the acidic milk drink of the invention within a range that does

not impair the effect of the invention. Examples of such food materials include sugars such as glucose, isomerized sugar, fructose, palatinose, trehalose, lactose and xylose; sugar alcohols such as sorbitol, xylitol, erythritol, lactitol, palatinit, reduced starch syrup and starch syrup of reduced maltose; and highly sweet sweeteners such as aspartame, sucralose, stevia and alitame. In accordance with the invention, highly sweet sweeteners such as aspartame hardly influencing the calorie of the acidic milk drink are preferably blended among them. Additionally, emulsifying agents such as sucrose fatty acid ester, glycerin fatty acid ester and lecithin, vitamins such as vitamin A, vitamin B group, vitamin C, vitamin D and vitamin E, and minerals such as iron, manganese and zinc may also be blended other than those described above. These food materials may be added at any stage of producing the acidic milk drink of the invention.

Examples

[0033] The invention is further described in detail in the following Examples and Test Examples, which should not be construed as limiting the present invention.

[0034] Test Example 1

Production of acidic milk drink (1)

An aqueous solution prepared by dissolving 14.9 % by mass

of powdered skim milk and 3.5 % by mass of glucose was sterilized at 121 °C for 3 seconds on plate, which was then inoculated with a starter of *Lactobacillus casei* for culturing to pH 3.6. The culture was cooled to get a fermented product. Subsequently, the fermented product was homogenized with a homogenizer at 15 MPa. 49.6 parts by weight of the resulting homogenate was mixed with 50.4 parts by weight of each of the syrup types of the following compositions as separately prepared and 115 parts by weight of water, to obtain comparative products 1 through 3 (SNF of 3.2 %). The syrup types were obtained by dissolving the following ingredients in water, sterilizing the resulting solutions at 112 °C for 10 seconds on plate and cooling the solutions. Further, the syrup 1 was used in the comparative product 1; the syrup 2, in the comparative product 2; and the syrup 3, in the comparative product 3.

[0035] Syrup compositions

Syrup 1: polydextrose at 46.8 % by mass and aspartame at 0.27 % by mass

Syrup 2: polydextrose at 46.8 % by mass, aspartame at 0.27 % by mass and 1.3 % by mass of pectin

Syrup 3: polydextrose at 46.8 % by mass, aspartame at 0.27 % by mass, and carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC) at 2.1 % by mass

[0036] Table 1 shows the compositions of the syrup types contained in the comparative products 1 through 3 and the

calories thereof per 100-ml product. Immediately after production and after subsequent storage at 10 °C for 14 days, the appearance, precipitation, whey-off and flavor of the comparative products were evaluated according to the following standards. Furthermore, the light texture of the products after the storage for 14 days was evaluated according to the following standards. The results are shown in Table 2.

[0037] <Standards for determining appearance>

○: No aggregation or like observed.

△: More or less aggregated.

×: Aggregated.

[0038] <Standards for determining precipitation/whey-off>

-: Not observed

±: Slightly observed, with almost no problem.

+: Observed.

[0039] <Standards for determining flavor>

○: Great

△: Normal

×: Poor.

[0040] <Standards for determining light texture>

○: Light texture

△: Neither the presence nor absence of light texture can be determined.

×: No light texture.

[0041] Table 1

	Polydextrose	Sugar	Aspartame	Pectin	CMC	Calories (kcal)
Comparative product 1	10.9	-	0.06	-	-	28.4
Comparative product 2	10.9	-	0.06	0.3	-	28.4
Comparative product 3	10.9	-	0.06	-	0.5	28.4

Numerical figures except those expressing calorie are expressed in % by mass.

[0042] Table 2

	Immediately after production			After storage at 10 °C for 14 days			
	PH	appearance	flavor	precipitation /whey-off	appearance	flavor	light texture
Comparative product 1	3.64	×	×	+	×	×	×
Comparative product 2	3.63	○	△ to ×	- to ±	○	△ to ×	×
Comparative product 3	3.64	○	△ to ×	- to ±	○	△ to ×	×

[0043] As a consequence of the test, products prepared using aspartame to adjust the calories had poor flavor and poor quality. In case of using aspartame, and pectin and carboxymethyl cellulose as stabilizers, the resulting products had poor drinkability and deteriorated light texture including refreshing texture and non-sticky texture demanded toward low-calorie types, although the stability of physico-chemical properties such as precipitation is improved.

[0044] Example 1

Production of acidic milk drink (2)

An aqueous solution prepared by dissolving 14.9 % by mass

of powdered skim milk and 3.5 % by mass of glucose was sterilized at 121 °C for 3 seconds on plate, which was then inoculated with a starter of *Lactobacillus casei* for culturing to pH 3.6. The culture was cooled to get a fermented product. Subsequently, the fermented product was homogenized with a homogenizer at 15 MPa. 49.6 parts by weight of the resulting homogenate was mixed with 50.4 parts by weight of each of the syrup types of the following compositions as separately prepared and 115 parts by weight of water, to obtain example products 1 through 3 and comparative product 4 (SNF of 3.2 %). The syrup types were obtained by dissolving raw materials of the following compositions in water, sterilizing the resulting solutions at 112 °C for 10 seconds on plate and cooling the solutions to about 30 °C. Further, the syrup 4 was used in the example product 1; the syrup 5, in the example product 2; the syrup 6, in the example product 3 and the syrup 7, in the comparative product 4.

[0045] Syrup compositions

Syrup 4: polydextrose at 30.0 % by mass, sugar at 16.0 % by mass and aspartame at 0.2 % by mass

Syrup 5: polydextrose at 19.4 % by mass, sugar at 26.2 % by mass and aspartame at 0.16 % by mass

Syrup 6: polydextrose at 4.6 % by mass, sugar at 40.8 % by mass and aspartame at 0.10 % by mass

Syrup 7: polydextrose at 19.4 % by mass, sugar at 26.2 %

by mass, aspartame at 0.16 % by mass, and pectin at 1.3 % by mass

[0046] Table 3 shows the compositions of the syrup types contained in the resulting products and the calories thereof per 100-ml product. Immediately after production and after subsequent storage at 10 °C for 14 days, the same evaluation was done according to the standards in Test Example 1. The results are shown in Table 4. Table 4 additionally shows the results of the comparative product 1.

[0047] Table 3

	Polydextrose	Sugar	Aspartame	Pectin	Calories (kcal)
Comparative product 1	10.9	-	0.06	-	28.4
Comparative product 4	4.6	6.2	0.04	0.3	48.0
Example product 1	7.0	3.8	0.05	-	40.0
Example product 2	4.6	6.2	0.04	-	48.0
Example product 3	1.1	9.5	0.04	-	58.0

Numerical figures except those expressing calorie are expressed in % by mass.

[0048] Table 4

	Immediately after production			After storage at 10 °C for 14 days			
	PH	appearance	flavor	precipitation /whey-off	appearance	flavor	light texture
Comparative product 1	3.64	×	×	+	×	×	×
Comparative product 4	3.65	○	△ to ×	- to ±	○	△ to ×	×
Example product 1	3.66	○	○	±	○	○	○
Example product 2	3.67	○	○	- to ±	○	○	○
Example product 3	3.67	○	○	- to ±	○	○	○

[0049] As a consequence of the test, it is indicated that in case of preparation using polydextrose and sugar, specifically polydextrose and sugar at a blend ratio within a range of 10: 90 to 65: 35 to adjust the calories of the resulting products to a range of 40 to 58 kcal, the resulting fermented milk products had great flavor and high stability of the quality. In case of using pectin, alternatively, the resulting product had a higher viscosity although the product had greater quality stability than the products using polydextrose and sugar. Therefore, the product had poor drinkability and deteriorated light texture including refreshing texture and non-sticky texture.

[0050] Example 2

Production of acidic milk drink (3):

Using a syrup type of the following composition containing a combination of polydextrose and sugar, or a combination of indigestible dextrin and sugar or a combination of polydextrose, fructose and glucose to adjust the calorie of the resulting acidic milk drink to 48 kcal, products 1 through 4 were obtained by the same method as in Example 1. Table 5 shows the compositions of the syrup types contained in the resulting products and the calories thereof per 100-ml product. Immediately after production and after subsequent storage at

10 °C for 14 days, the same evaluation was done according to the standards in Test Example 1. The results are shown in Table 6. Herein, the syrup 8 was used in the product 1; the syrup 9, in the product 2; the syrup 10, in the product 3 and the syrup 11, in the product 4.

[0051] Syrup compositions

Syrup 8: polydextrose at 19.4 % by mass, sugar at 26.2 % by mass and aspartame at 0.16 % by mass

Syrup 9: indigestible dextrin at 19.4 % by mass, sugar at 26.2 % by mass and aspartame at 0.16 % by mass

Syrup 10: polydextrose at 19.4 % by mass, fructose at 13.1 % by mass, glucose at 13.1 % by mass and aspartame at 0.16 % by mass

Syrup 11: polydextrose at 19.4 % by mass and sugar at 26.2 %

[0052] Table 5

	Polydextrose	Indigestible dextrin	Sugar	Aspartame	Fructose	Glucose	Calories (kcal)
Product 1	4.6	-	6.2	0.04	-	-	48.0
Product 2	-	4.6	6.2	0.04	-	-	48.0
Product 3	4.6	-	-	0.04	3.1	3.1	48.0
Product 4	4.6	-	6.2	-	-	-	48.0

Numerical figures except those expressing calorie are expressed in % by mass.

[0053] Table 6

	Immediately after production	After storage at 10 °C for 14 days
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	pH	appearance	flavor	precipitation /whey-off	appearance	flavor	light texture
Product 1	3.66	○	○	- to ±	○	○	○
Product 2	3.67	○	△	± to +	○	△	△ to ○
Product 3	3.66	○	△ to ○	- to ±	○	△ to ○	○
Product 4	3.66	○	×	- to ±	○	×	○

[0054] As a consequence of Table 6, it was found that in case of using a combination of polydextrose and sugar and a combination of polydextrose, fructose and glucose in the syrup types, fermented milk drinks with great flavor and good stability of the quality could be obtained and that the combination of polydextrose and sugar achieved better flavor and higher stability. In case of using a combination of indigestible dextrin and sugar in the syrup, it was found that no great flavor was observed and that the resulting physico-chemical properties after storage were unstable. Further, it was found that the effect on product stability was sufficiently obtained from the simple combination of polydextrose and sugar.

Industrial Applicability

[0055] The acidic milk drink of the invention can get improved dispersion stability of milk protein even at a low SNF without any use of other stabilizers and the like, because the acidic milk drink contains polydextrose and sugar, so that the aggregation and precipitation of milk protein are suppressed to prevent the deterioration of the quality. Thus, the acidic

milk drink of the invention has excellent storage stability.

[0056] Additionally, the acidic milk drink of the invention has such great flavor as light texture including refreshing food texture and non-sticky texture, even when the calorie of the whole acidic milk drink is reduced, compared with such acidic milk drink using stabilizers and the like.

Claims

1. An acidic milk drink at a solids not fat (SNF) of 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass, containing polydextrose and sugar at a ratio in weight ratio of the contents of 10:90 to 65:35.

2. An acidic milk drink according to claim 1, having 40 to 58 kcal as the calorie per 100-ml.

3. An acidic milk drink according to claim 1 or claim 2, substantially never containing other stabilizers.

4. A method for producing an acidic milk drink including blending polydextrose and sugar at a ratio in weight ratio of the contents of 10:90 to 65:35 in an acidic milk drink at a solids not fat (SNF) of 1.0 to 4.0 % by mass.

5. A method for preventing the deterioration of the quality of an acidic milk drink at a solids not fat (SNF) of 1.0 to 4.0 by mass, including blending polydextrose and sugar at a ratio in weight ratio of the contents of 10:90 to 65:35 in the acidic milk drink.