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MINERAL COMPLEXES OF LACTOBIONIC ACID AND METHOD OF USING FOR MINERAL FORTIFICATION OF FOOD PRODUCTS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention generally relates to mineral complexes,
especially calcium complexes, of lactobionic acid which are especially useful
for mineral fortification of food and beverage products. The calcium complex
of lactobionic acid provided in the present invention delivers a soluble, stable,
clean tasting calcium source suitable for calcium fortification of a wide variety
10 of food and beverage products.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Food products manufactured for public consumption are often modified
by adding nutritional or other types of additives in order to enhance their
nutritional properties. Nutritional fortification of food products may include
15 additives that benefit the overall state of health of the human body. Examples
of nutritional fortification include addition of vitamins, minerals, and
comparable materials. These additives are either absolutely essential for
human metabolism or enhance the provision of substances that may not be
available in sufficient amounts in a normal diet.

20 In recent years, calcium fortification of foods and beverages has
received significant attention. Calcium fortification and increased calcium
intake is reported to be especially useful in the prevention or moderating the
effects of osteoporosis. Increased dietary intake of calcium has been shown
to be effective in minimizing bone loss in adults and the elderly. Moreover,
25 increased consumption of calcium earlier in life may build reserves that
enable a greater tolerance of a negative calcium balance in later years.
Increased consumption of calcium, regardless of age, is expected to mitigate
or delay the effects of osteoporosis. Thus, persons of all ages could benefit
from increased calcium consumption. Unfortunately, many of the people in
30 greatest need of calcium, including children, women, and the elderly, do not
consume the recommended daily levels of calcium. For example, according
to United States Department of Agriculture surveys, as many as nine out of



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ten women in the United States do not consume the recommended levels of calcium. And the elderly often have difficulty in increasing their calcium consumption due to decreasing appetites and metabolism. In addition to bone health, recent research suggests the importance of calcium in improving colon health, weight management, and other health issues.

A large number of calcium compounds or salts have been used to fortify food products. Calcium salts which have been suggested for use or have been used as food supplements include, for example, calcium pyrophosphate, calcium hexametaphosphate, monobasic calcium phosphate, calcium glycerophosphate, tricalcium phosphate, calcium acetate, calcium ascorbate, calcium citrate, calcium citrate malate, calcium carbonate, calcium gluconate, calcium lactate, calcium lactate gluconate, calcium malate, calcium oxide, calcium hydroxide, calcium sulfate, calcium tartrate, dicalcium citrate lactate, calcium fumarate, and calcium chloride.

These calcium supplements have been used in a wide variety of food products. For example, U.S. Patent 4,784,871 (November 15, 1988) provided a calcium fortified yogurt. According to the patent, any calcium compound which is acid soluble could be used. U.S. Patent 5,449,523 (September 12, 1995) and U.S. Patent 5,820,903 (October 13, 1998) also provided calcium-enriched yogurts. U.S. Patent 5,478,587 (December 27, 1995) provided calcium-enriched deserts.

U.S. Patent 5,834,045 (November 10, 1998) provided calcium fortified acid beverages. This patent reported that the use of a calcium source comprising calcium hydroxide and calcium glycerophosphate with any acidulant will result in a beverage product having a marked improvement in storage stability. U.S. Patent 5,855,936 (January 5, 1999) provided a blend of calcium salts balanced with soluble and insoluble salts which are stabilized with a source of glucuronic acid. This composition is capable of fortifying milk beverages and other dairy-based products without coagulation and sedimentation, and with improved palatability. The calcium salts must be stabilized with the glucuronic acid source. Other calcium sources could optionally be included. Other calcium-enriched beverages are disclosed in,

for example, U.S. Patent 4,642,238 (February 10, 1987; dietary and nutritionally balanced drinks); U.S. Patent 4,701,329 (October 20, 1987; milk); U.S. Patent 4,737,375 (April 12, 1988; carbonated and non-carbonated beverages containing solublized calcium and specific amounts of citric acid, malic acid, and phosphoric acid as determined from specific ternary diagrams
5 provided therein); U.S. Patent 4,740,380 (April 26, 1988; soft drinks); U.S. 4,871,554 (October 3, 1989; fruit drink); U.S. Patent 4,851,243 (July 25, 1989; milk); U.S. Patent 4,840,814 (June 20, 1989; milk); U.S. 4,906,482 (March 6, 1990; soy milk); U.S. Patent 5,397,589 (March 14, 1995; milk); U.S.
10 Patent 5,690,975 (November 25, 1997; fermented milk); U.S. Patent 5,597,596 (January 28, 1997; low pH beverage); U.S. Patent 5,780,081 (July 14, 1998; milk); U.S. Patent 5,928,691 (July 27, 1999; milk); and U.S. Patent 5,897,892 (April 27, 1999; milk base products).

U.S. Patent 4,673,583 (June 16, 1987) provided a calcium-enriched
15 soy bean curd. U.S. Patent 5,215,769 (June 1, 1993) provided sauces and salad dressings containing a soluble calcium source comprising specific molar ratios of calcium citrate malate or calcium acetate. U.S. Patent 5,514,387 (May 7, 1996) provided calcium enriched crackers and other baked goods; an emulsifier was used to avoid adverse effect on texture and
20 mouthfeel. U.S. Patent 5,840,354 (November 24, 1998) provided calcium-enriched dried fruit products. U.S. Patent 5,945,144 (August 31, 1999) provided a calcium fortified pasta product.

U.S. Patent 5,075,499 (December 24, 1991) provides dicalcium citrate-lactate for use as a calcium supplement. Tablets of dicalcium citrate-lactate
25 were preferably taken on a daily basis. U.S. Patent 6,007,852 (December 28, 1999) relates to a calcium enriched natural cheese. The preferred calcium source is tricalcium phosphate. The patent indicates that other calcium sources (but does not specifically mention any specific sources) can be used so long as the calcium source forms a suspension rather than a solution in
30 water, skim milk, or cheese milk. U.S. Patent 6,106,874 (August 22, 2000) provides a low pH nutritional beverage which uses pectin-free fruit juice and a

calcium source selected from the group consisting of natural milk mineral concentrate, calcium lactate gluconate, and mixtures thereof.

Calcium sulfate has been found to significantly and adversely affect the organoleptic properties of food products to which it is added. Generally, added calcium sulfate results in bitterness and undesirable strong flavors with added at significant levels. See, e.g., U.S. Patents 5,820,903 and 5,840,354. Tricalcium phosphate, although widely used, often contributes an undesirable "gritty" texture which, of course, limits the levels at which it can be incorporated in food products. See, e.g., U.S. Patent 5,449,523.

Calcium enrichment or fortification can adversely affect the organoleptic properties of the food or beverage product to which it is added. Examples of such unacceptable properties include off-flavors, flavor changes, off-colors, textural changes, and the like. Some calcium compounds have more adverse effects than others, especially at higher levels of calcium addition. Thus, much of the currently available technology related to calcium addition does not provide the high levels of calcium addition desired. Further, the cost of some calcium forms is high and, thus, limits their usefulness. Thus, it is desirable to provide additional calcium compounds and/or other dietary minerals for use in food and beverage products which can provide significant levels of dietary calcium or other dietary minerals without adverse effects on organoleptic properties and at lower cost. Additionally, the form of calcium can influence absorption and use by and in the body. Additionally, the absorption of calcium can be enhanced or inhibited by other compounds. For example, some carbohydrates can improve calcium absorption. Greger, "Nondigestible Carbohydrates and Mineral Bioavailability," *J. Nutr.*, 129, 1434S-1435S (1999); Weaver, "Calcium in Food Fortification Strategies," *Internat. Dairy J.*, 8, 443-449 (1998); Brommage et al., "Intestinal Calcium Absorption in Rats Is Stimulated by Dietary Lactulose and Other Resistant Sugars," *J. Nutr.*, 123, 2186-2194 (1993).

Lactobionic acid (4-O- β -D-galactopyranosyl-D-gluconic acid; CAS Reg. No. 96-82-2) is a water soluble, white crystalline compound. It can be synthesized from lactose by oxidation of the free aldehyde group in lactose as

carried out catalytically, chemically, electrolytically, or enzymatically. Harju, *Bulletin of the IDF* 289, ch. 6., pp. 27-30, 1993; Satory et al., *Biotechnology Letters* 19 (12) 1205-08, 1997. The use of lactobionic acid or its salts as additives in food products previously has been suggested for several specific applications. Calcium or iron chelate forms of lactobionic acid has been described for dietary mineral supplementation. Riviera et al., *Amer. J. Clin. Nutr.*; 36 (6) 1162-69, 1982. U.S. Patent 5,851,578 describes a clear beverage having a non-gel forming fiber, and water soluble salts of calcium, with or without water soluble vitamins, with or without additional mineral salt supplements and buffered with food acids. The food acid buffering agent includes citric, lactic, maleic, adipic, succinic, acetic, acetic gluconic, lactobionic, ascorbic, pyruvic, and phosphoric acids, as well as combinations thereof. Calcium lactobionate, a salt form of lactobionic acid, has been approved for use as a firming agent in dry pudding mixes. 21 C.F.R. §172.720 (1999). Also, the possible use of lactobionic acid as a general food acidulant has been proposed, albeit without exploration or illustration. Timmermans, *Whey: Proceedings of the 2nd Int'l Whey Conf.*, Int'l Dairy Federation, Chicago, October 1997, pp. 233, 249. This article generally describes lactobionic acid as being useful as an antibiotics carrier, an organ transplant preservative, mineral supplement, growth promoter of bifidobacteria, or as a co-builder in detergents in its potassium salt form. More recently, the use of lactobionic acid in cheese and other dairy products has been described in copending U.S. Patent Application Serial Number PCT US02/14337, filed May 7, 2002, (International Publication WO 02/089592) which is owned by the same assignee as the present application and which is hereby incorporated by reference.

JP 07277991 suggests that lactobionic acid generally acts as a substance for promoting mineral absorption within the human bodies, after ingestion, when taken as a tablet or pill, or by blending it in beverages or foods. However, by using the mineral absorption promoter suggested in JP 07277991, the person ingesting the mineral absorption promoter has no way of knowing how much mineral their body is absorbing, if any.

The present invention provides mineral complexes of lactobionic acid which are very effective as mineral fortification agents and which do not significantly affect the organoleptic or textural properties of the food or beverage to which they are added. Such mineral complexes can be produced in a cost effective manner from inexpensive starting materials such as lactose or whey.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention generally relates to mineral complexes, especially calcium complexes, of lactobionic acid which are especially useful for mineral fortification of food and beverage products. For purposes of this invention, the use of the term "lactobionic acid" also includes its lactone as well as mixtures of the acid and its lactone. (See, e.g., Dutta et al., "Study of the Lactone-Acid-Salt Equilibria and Hydrolysis Kinetics for Lactobionic - Lactone," *Indian J. Chem.*, vol 9, 229-232 (March 1971).) The mineral complexes of the present invention include calcium complexes of lactobionic acid, magnesium complexes of lactobionic acid, potassium complexes of lactobionic acid, sodium complexes of lactobionic acid, iron complexes of lactobionic acid, zinc complexes of lactobionic acid, copper complexes of lactobionic acid, chromium complexes of lactobionic acid, selenium complexes of lactobionic acid, manganese complexes of lactobionic acid, and the like. Mixtures of these mineral complexes may also be used. The mineral complexes of lactobionic acid provided in the present invention delivers a soluble, stable, clean tasting mineral source suitable for mineral fortification of a wide variety of food and beverage products. The high solubility of the mineral complexes of the present invention in water allows for the preparation of mineral-fortification of foods and beverages which are clean tasting and non-gritty. The preferred mineral complex of the present invention is the calcium complex of lactobionic acid.

The mineral complexes of lactobionic acid of the present invention are prepared by mixing lactobionic acid with a mineral source such as mineral hydroxide, mineral carbonate, mineral oxide, or mixtures thereof with an edible acid such as citric acid, lactic acid, acetic acid, malic acid, gluconic acid, tartaric acid, fumaric acid, adipic acid, succinic acid, ascorbic acid, phosphoric acid, or mixtures thereof. Thus, the preferred calcium complex of lactobionic acid of the present invention is prepared by mixing lactobionic acid with a calcium source such as calcium hydroxide, calcium carbonate, calcium oxide, or mixtures thereof with an edible acid such as citric acid, lactic acid, acetic acid, malic acid, gluconic acid, tartaric acid, fumaric acid, adipic acid,

succinic acid, ascorbic acid, phosphoric acid, or mixtures thereof. Generally, an aqueous solution containing about 1 to about 95 percent lactobionic acid is mixed with about 1 to about 50 percent of the mineral source (e.g.; calcium source) and about 1 to about 50 percent of the edible acid to form the desired mineral complex; generally the pH of the final aqueous solution is about 2 to about 8. More preferably, an aqueous solution containing about 50 to about 90 percent lactobionic acid is mixed with about 5 to about 25 percent of the mineral source (e.g., calcium source) and about 2 to about 20 percent of the edible acid to form the desired mineral complex. An especially preferred calcium complex of lactobionic acid is prepared by mixing lactobionic acid with calcium hydroxide and citric acid.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a method of preparing a mineral complex of lactobionic acid comprising lactobionic acid, a mineral source, and an edible acid, wherein the mineral complex is prepared by mixing 5 to 95 percent by weight lactobionic acid, 1 to 50 percent by weight of the mineral source and 1 to 50 percent by weight of the edible acid in an aqueous solution and wherein the mineral source is a mineral hydroxide, a mineral carbonate, a mineral oxide or mixtures thereof and wherein the mineral complex can be incorporated in a food or beverage product to provide 5 to 200 percent of the current recommended United States Daily Value of the mineral per single serving size of the food or beverage product.

The present invention is also directed to mineral-fortified food and beverage products containing a mineral complex of lactobionic acid prepared by mixing lactobionic acid with a mineral source such as a mineral hydroxide, mineral carbonate, mineral oxide, or mixtures thereof with an edible acid such as citric acid, lactic acid, acetic acid, malic acid, gluconic acid, tartaric acid, fumaric acid, adipic acid, succinic acid, ascorbic acid, phosphoric acid, or mixtures thereof. Generally, the mineral-fortified food and beverage products of this invention will contain about 0.2 to about 20 percent of the calcium complex of lactobionic acid. Preferably, a single serving of the mineral-fortified food or beverage products of the present invention contain sufficient quantities of the mineral in the form of the corresponding mineral complex of lactobionic to provide about 5 to about 200 percent of the recommended

United States Daily Value of calcium, more preferably about 10 to about 35 percent of the recommended United States Daily Value of that mineral. Calcium fortification of food and beverage products using the calcium complex of lactobionic acid of the present invention is especially preferred.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

Figure 1 shows the Differential Scanning Calorimetry results (top portion of each panel) and the Thermal Gravimetric Analysis results (bottom portion of each panel) for crystalline calcium salt of lactobionic acid (Panel A),

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crystalline citric acid (Panel B), a mixture of crystalline calcium salt of lactobionic acid and crystalline citric acid (Panel C), and an inventive calcium lactobionic acid complex (Panel D).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5 The mineral complexes of the present invention are prepared by mixing lactobionic acid, a mineral source, and an edible acid in an aqueous solution. The mineral complexes of the present invention include calcium complexes, magnesium complexes, potassium complexes, sodium complexes, iron complexes, zinc complexes of lactobionic acid and the like.
10 Mixtures of these mineral complexes may also be used. The calcium complex of lactobionic acid is especially preferred. Suitable mineral sources include mineral hydroxides, mineral carbonates, mineral oxides, or mixtures thereof. Generally, the preferred mineral source is the corresponding mineral hydroxide. Suitable edible acids include citric acid, lactic acid, acetic acid,
15 malic acid, gluconic acid, tartaric acid, fumaric acid, adipic acid, succinic acid, ascorbic acid, phosphoric acid, or mixtures thereof. Generally, the preferred edible acid is citric acid.

 The mineral complexes of the present invention are sufficiently soluble in food or beverage products to provide at least about 5 percent, and in some
20 cases, depending on the actual product, much higher, of the current United States recommended Daily Value of the mineral per single serving size of the food or beverage product. For purposes of this invention, a single serving size for a food product is about 28 g and for a beverage product is about 240 ml or 8 ounces. For purposes of this invention, the current United States
25 recommended Daily Value of the mineral is considered to be the value published by the United States Food and Drug Administration as of the filing date of the current application. The current United States recommended Daily Value for calcium is 1000 mg per day.

 The preferred calcium complex of lactobionic acid of the present
30 invention is prepared by mixing lactobionic acid with a calcium source such as calcium hydroxide, calcium carbonate, calcium oxide, or mixtures thereof with

an edible acid such as citric acid, lactic acid, acetic acid, malic acid, gluconic acid, tartaric acid, fumaric acid, adipic acid, succinic acid, ascorbic acid, phosphoric acid, or mixtures thereof. Generally, an aqueous solution

containing about 5 to about 95 percent lactobionic acid is mixed with about 1

5 to about 50 percent of the mineral source (e.g., calcium source such as calcium hydroxide in the preferred embodiment) and about 1 to about 50 percent of the edible acid (e.g., citric acid in the preferred embodiment) to form the desired mineral complex; generally the pH of the final aqueous

solution is about 2 to about 8. More preferably, an aqueous solution

10 containing about 50 to about 90 percent lactobionic acid is mixed with about 5 to about 25 percent of the mineral source and about 2 to about 20 percent of the edible acid to form the desired mineral complex. Generally, mixing of the

components are carried out at or near room temperature. An especially preferred calcium complex of lactobionic acid is prepared by mixing

15 lactobionic acid with calcium hydroxide and citric acid. Mixed complexes can also be prepared if desired by mixing two or more mineral sources with lactobionic acid and the edible acid. Physical mixtures of two or more separately prepared mineral complexes can also be used.

The mineral complexes of this invention can be prepared by combining

20 the lactobionic acid, mineral source, and edible acid in an aqueous solution. The mineral complex may be maintained as formed in the aqueous solution

or may be collected as a solid complex by removing the water medium using any conventional drying technique. Generally it is preferred that the mineral complexes are collected in a solid form; the solid complexes will generally be

25 easier to store and use. Conventional methods can be used to collect the solid mineral complex. Generally, however, gentle methods such as freeze drying, spray drying, drum drying, and the like are preferred to remove the water and obtain the solid mineral complex.

Lactobionic acid is generally a white crystalline powder. Lactobionic

30 acid may be obtained commercially (e.g., Lonza Inc., Fairlawn, N.J.; Sigma, St. Louis, MO) or prepared through chemical or enzymatic oxidation of lactose or a lactose-containing substrate. The lactobionic acid can be

prepared by saccharide chemical oxidation or bioconversion processes (e.g., catalytic action of a carbohydrate oxidase enzyme) using lactose or a lactose-containing substrate (e.g., whey or whey permeate) as the starting material. Suitable carbohydrate oxidase enzymes include, for example, lactose
5 oxidase, glucose oxidase, hexose oxidase, and the like, as well as mixtures thereof. Generally, lactose oxidase is preferred. A particularly suitable enzyme for lactose oxidation has been developed by Novozymes A/S and is described in Patent WO 9931990, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Cellobiose dehydrogenase is also a useful enzyme for converting
10 lactose to lactobionic acid. Canevascini et al., *Zeitschrift fur Lebensmittel Untersuchung und Forschung*, 175: 125-129 (1982). This enzyme is, however, complex and requires the use of a relatively expensive co-factor (e.g., quinones, cytochrome C, Fe(III), and the like); it also requires immobilization. Also, a second enzyme, laccase, is required to regenerate
15 the co-factor used with cellobiose dehydrogenase. The use of glucose-fructose oxidoreductase to oxidize lactose results in two products, sorbitol and lactobionic acid, and a further separation procedure is necessary to recover the lactobionic acid product. Nidetzky et al., *Biotechnology and Bioengineering*, Vol. 53 (1997). Nonetheless, glucose-fructose
20 oxidoreductase also is a suitable enzyme for the practice of this embodiment of the invention. Of course, other methods can be used to prepare the lactobionic acid for use in the present invention.

The mineral complexes of the present invention can be incorporated into various food and beverage products to provide mineral-fortification food
25 and beverage products. Generally, the mineral-fortified food and beverage products of this invention will contain about 0.2 to about 20 percent of the mineral complex of lactobionic acid. Preferably, a single serving of the mineral-fortified food or beverage products of the present invention contain sufficient quantities of the mineral in the form of the corresponding mineral
30 complex of lactobionic to provide about 5 to about 200 percent of the recommended United States Daily Value of calcium (i.e., about 50 to about 2000 mg calcium), more preferably about 10 to about 35 percent of the

recommended United States Daily Value of calcium (i.e., about 100 to about 350 mg calcium). Calcium fortification of food and beverage products using the calcium complex of lactobionic acid of the present invention is especially preferred.

5 Having generally described the embodiments of the process illustrated in the figures as well as other embodiments, the invention will now be described using specific examples which further illustrate various features of the present invention but are not intended to limit the scope of the invention, which is defined in the appended claims. All percentages used herein are by
10 weight, unless otherwise indicated. All patents and other publications referenced herein are hereby incorporated by reference.

EXAMPLE 1. Lactobionic acid crystals (58 g; Lonza Inc., Fairlawn, NJ) were completely dissolved in 500 g deionized water. Citric acid (6 g; Sigma, St. Louis, MO) was then completely dissolved in the solution; calcium
15 hydroxide (10 g; Sigma, St. Louis, MO) was then completely dissolved in the solution. The final pH of the calcium complex solution was about 4.6. The aqueous solution was mixed for about 10-30 minutes at room temperature and then freeze dried. About 65 g (about 87 percent yield) of the desired white solid calcium complex containing about 8 percent calcium was
20 obtained. The calcium complex was dissolved in water at room temperature to provide a clear solution with about 2000 mg calcium per single beverage serving size (i.e., about 240 ml or 8 ounces). The calcium complex was more soluble than calcium citrate; it contained more calcium and had better flavor than pure calcium lactobionate available commercially. Thus, the calcium
25 complex better suited in food and beverage applications than other calcium salts or commercially available calcium lactobionate.

EXAMPLE 2. A fortified liquid beverage was prepared using the calcium complex of Example 1. The following formulations were prepared by simply mixing the components together at room temperature:

	Inventive (%)	Control (%)
Calcium Complex	2.1	0
Water	96.8	98.9
Flavor	0.3	0.3
Citric Acid/Malic Acid	0.5	0.5
Colorant	0.0001	0.0001
Preservative (EDTA, sorbate, benzoate, or potassium citrate)	0.17	0.17
Artificial Sweetener (sucralose or acesulfame K)	0.05	0.05
Clouding Agent (Givaudan Flavors Corp.)	0.06	0.06

The inventive sample provided about 300 mg calcium per serving (about 240 ml). The control sample was prepared in the same manner as the inventive sample except that it did not contain any of the calcium complex. Samples of the inventive and control samples (20 ml at room temperature) were provided to a trained panel of 17 members in a discrimination sensory test. No significant differences were detected between the inventive and the control samples. Thus, the inventive calcium fortified sample provided a sensory impression essentially identical with the control sample and had no off-flavors, objectionable sensory notes, or textural defects.

Example 3. Combinations of calcium lactobionic acid (Sigma, St. Louis, MO) with either monocalcium citrate or tricalcium citrate were compared with the calcium complex of Example 1 in similar beverages as described in Example 2 above. The various salts and the calcium complex were added at levels to provide about 1000 mg calcium per single serving. Beverages were prepared containing the following amounts of calcium salts or inventive calcium complex:

Sample	Calcium Lactobionic Acid (5.3% Ca)	Monocalcium Citrate (9% Ca)	Tricalcium Citrate (21% Ca)	Inventive Calcium Complex (8% Ca)
Comparative #1	15.8 g	1.8 g	-	-
Comparative #2	15.8 g	-	0.76 g	-
Inventive	-	-	-	12.5 g

Similar water samples containing the above amounts of calcium salts or calcium complex were also prepared. The calcium complex dissolved easily in either the beverage formulation or water to provide a clean tasting, non-gritty beverage. Comparative samples #1 and #2, however, were not completely soluble in either the beverage formulation or water.

EXAMPLE 4. The calcium content of the inventive beverage of Example 2 was increased to provide about 1000 mg calcium (i.e., about 100 percent of the DV of calcium) per 240 ml single serving size. The calcium complex completely dissolved in the beverage. The resulting beverage had acceptable flavor and appearance.

EXAMPLE 5. Beverages as prepared in Examples 2 and 3 containing the inventive calcium complex of Example 1 as well as aqueous solutions containing similar amounts of the calcium complex of Example 1 were stored under refrigerated conditions. Similar levels of conventional calcium sources (e.g., monocalcium citrate, tricalcium citrate, and calcium fumarate) were prepared in aqueous solutions or similar beverages formed noticeable sediments within about 1 week under such storage conditions. No sediments or precipitates were observed in the samples containing the calcium complex of this invention after 7 months of refrigerated storage.

EXAMPLE 6. This examples illustrates several methods of preparing the calcium complex other than the one described in Example 1.

(1) Lactobionic acid (29 g) was dissolved in 250 ml water to which was added calcium hydroxide (5 g) with stirring. Stirring was continued for about 10 minutes, after which citric acid (3 g) was added. Within a few minutes, all

solids were completely dissolved. The final pH of the resulting calcium complex solution was about 6.0.

(2) Lactobionic acid (29 g) and citric acid (3 g) were dissolved in water (250 ml). Calcium hydroxide (5 g) was then completely dissolved in the water solution to provide the calcium complex. The final pH of the resulting calcium complex solution was 7.0.

(3) A calcium complex was prepared as in subpart (1) above except that the amount of lactobionic acid was increased to 35.5 g. The final pH of the resulting calcium complex solution was 4.2.

The calcium complexes prepared in subparts (1) - (3) were evaluated in the same manner as in Examples 2, 3, and 4 above. Performance was essentially the same as the calcium complex as prepared in Example 1.

EXAMPLE 7. A zinc complex was prepared by mixing water (250 g), lactobionic acid (55 g), zinc carbonate (10 g), and citric acid (10 g). The final pH of the solution was about 3.4. A portion of the zinc complex was freeze dried. The freeze dried zinc complex was sufficiently soluble in water such that a clean tasting beverage could be prepared containing 200 percent of the United States Daily Value of zinc.

EXAMPLE 8. A calcium complex of lactobionic acid was prepared as in Example 1 except that lactic acid was used according to the following formulation.

<u>Ingredient</u>	<u>Weight (g)</u>
Water	400
Lactobionic Acid	60
Calcium Hydroxide	10
Lactic Acid (85%)	9

The resulting calcium complex solution had a final pH of about 4.7. A portion of the calcium complex was freeze dried. It exhibited good solubility in water.

Example 9. Differential Scanning Calorimeter and Thermal Gravimetric Analyst of (A) crystalline calcium salt of lactobionic acid, (B) crystalline citric acid, (C) a mixture of crystalline calcium salt of lactobionic

acid and crystalline citric acid, and (D) an inventive calcium lactobionic acid complex as prepared in Example 1 above. The results are shown in Figure 1 wherein for each Panel the Differential Scanning Calorimetry is on the top and the Thermal Gravimetric Analysis is on the bottom. The results obtained shown that the inventive calcium lactobionic acid complex (Panel D) is very different from the calcium salt of lactobionic acid (Panel A), citric acid (Panel B), or mixtures thereof (Panel C).

While the invention has been particularly described with specific reference to particular process and product embodiments, it will be appreciated that various alterations and modifications may be based on the present disclosure, and are intended to be within the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the following claims.

CLAIMS

1. A method of preparing a mineral complex of lactobionic acid comprising lactobionic acid, a mineral source, and an edible acid, wherein the mineral complex is prepared by mixing 5 to 95 percent by weight lactobionic acid, 1 to 50 percent by weight of the mineral source and 1 to 50 percent by weight of the edible acid in an aqueous solution and wherein the mineral source is a mineral hydroxide, a mineral carbonate, a mineral oxide or mixtures thereof and wherein the mineral complex can be incorporated in a food or beverage product to provide 5 to 200 percent of the current recommended United States Daily Value of the mineral per single serving size of the food or beverage product.
2. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the mineral source is a mineral hydroxide, mineral carbonate, a mineral oxide, or mixtures thereof and the edible acid is citric acid, lactic acid, acetic acid, malic acid, gluconic acid, tartaric acid, fumaric acid, adipic acid, succinic acid, ascorbic acid, phosphoric acid, or mixtures thereof.
3. The method as defined in claim 1 or 2, wherein the mineral complex is prepared by mixing 50 to 90 percent lactobionic acid, 5 to 25 percent of the mineral source, and 2 to 20 percent of the edible acid in the aqueous solution.
4. The method as defined in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the mineral is calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium, iron, zinc, copper, chromium, selenium, manganese, or mixtures thereof.
5. The method as defined in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the mineral is calcium.
6. The method as defined in any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein a food or beverage product is prepared comprising 0.2 to 20 percent of the mineral complex.