CLAIMS:

1. A method of preparing an edible oleogel comprising:

    a) homogenising a crude dispersion of natural food fibre a plurality of times to develop viscosity; wherein said homogenising is performed in a 2-stage homogeniser to form an aqueous fibre dispersion having a viscosity;
    b) shear-mixing the aqueous fibre dispersion with liquid edible oil at room temperature, to form an emulsion; and
    c) subjecting the emulsion to freeze-drying to remove the water.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the viscosity of the aqueous fibre dispersion is increased by increasing a homogenising pressure and/or by repeating the homogenisation in step a).

3. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein step a) further comprises:
pre-combining a powder of natural food fibre with water and shear-mixing the combination to form the crude dispersion, prior to homogenising the crude dispersion.

4. The method of any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the homogenising to form the aqueous fibre dispersion is performed at a pressure in the range between 25 bar and 160 bar.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the total homogenising pressure in step a) is in the range between 25 bar and 160 bar and the pressure applied in the second stage is in the range of 5% to 20% of the total pressure.

6. The method of any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the shear-mixing is performed at 6000 rpm or higher for 5 minutes or more.

7. The method of any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein step c) comprises subjecting the emulsion to rapid freezing, such as via liquid nitrogen freezing, and then freeze drying it.

8. The method of any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the food fibre is an insoluble food fibre or a mixture of insoluble and soluble food fibre.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the food fibre is a fruit fibre, vegetable fibre, or a bacterial cellulose fibre.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the food fibre is a citrus food fibre, or nata de coco fibre and a soluble fibre, such as corn fibre.

11. The method of any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the total fibre concentration in the aqueous fibre dispersion is the range of 1% to 5% (w/w), preferably 1% to 3% (w/w), more preferably 1.5% to about 2.0% (w/w).

12. The method of any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein for 2.0% and 1.5% fibre dispersions, the preferred dispersion-to-oil ratio is set at 2.0: 1 and 2.7: 1 (w/w), respectively.

13. The method of any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein an oleogel with the rheology of a breakfast spread can be obtained using a citrus fibre (at a powder particle size below 12 μm) at 2.0% (w/w), and by homogenising at a total pressure of 50 ± 5 bar with 3 passes during the preparation of the aqueous fibre dispersion.

14. The method of any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein an oleogel with temperature tolerance as high as 70 ºC can be obtained using a citrus fibre (at a powder particle size below 74 μm) at 1.5% (w/w), and by homogenising at a total pressure of 50 ± 5 bar with 3 passes during the preparation of aqueous fibre dispersion.

15. The method of any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein the liquid edible oil is selected from a group comprising canola oil, corn oil, flaxseed oil, palm oil, olive oil, soybean oil, safflower oil, peanut oil, grape seed oil, sesame oil, argan oil, rice bran oil, avocado oil, mustard oil, algal oil, echium oil, squid oil, salmon oil, halibut oil, fractions and mixtures thereof.

16. An edible oleogel obtained by the method of any one of claims 1 to 15 wherein the homogenised aqueous fibre dispersion is shear-mixed with liquid edible oil at room temperature, preferably at a minimum of 6000 rpm for at least 5 minutes to form an emulsion, and wherein the oleogel does not contain any emulsifier or surfactant or food polymer in addition to the food fibre and the liquid edible oil is selected from

canola oil, corn oil, flaxseed oil, palm oil, olive oil, soybean oil, safflower oil, peanut oil, grape seed oil, sesame oil, argan oil, rice brain oil, algal oil, echium oil, squid oil, salmon oil, halibut oil, fractions and mixtures thereof, wherein the oleogel comprises an insoluble fibre component, a soluble fibre component and vegetable oil, and wherein the oleogel contains up to 96% (w/w) oil content.

17. The edible oleogel of claim 16, wherein the insoluble fibre to oil content is up to 1:61 (w/w) after excluding residual bound water.

18. The edible oleogel of any one of claims 16 to 17, wherein the insoluble fibre component content in the aqueous fibre dispersion during preparation is in the range of 0.62 % to 0.83 % (w/w), and the soluble fibre component content in the aqueous fibre dispersion during preparation is in the range of 0.52 % to 1.18 % (w/w).

19. Use of the oleogel of any one of claims 16 to 18 to prepare a food product.

20. The use according to claim 16, wherein the oleogel replaces at least part of a solid or semi-solid fat in the food product.

21. The use according to claim 19 or 20, wherein the food product is selected from the group comprising baked goods such as cookies and cakes; spreads such as margarine or bakery margarine, breakfast spreads, and chocolate spreads; shortening-replacer and fillings.