composition where coagulation begins relatively late. As a result, the texture of the resulting cooked food tends to be watery, too soft, or otherwise undesirable.

Then, the approach adopted in the present invention is to implement a gelling prevention measure to prevent the alginic acid present in the specific composition from gelling during the time period after completion of the pretreatment to before performing heating, thereby to control the gelling of the alginic acid so that it may occur substantially at the time of performing heating.

[0031]

The gelling prevention measure includes all of measures A, B, and C:

• Measure A: Controlling the temperature of the food precursor immediately before applying the specific composition thereto in the pretreatment at or below 30°C, preferably 20°C or lower, more preferably 10°C or lower

• Measure B: Controlling the time in which the temperature of the pretreated food precursor is 40°C or higher, preferably 30°C or higher, more preferably 20°C or higher, so as not to be 2 hours or more, this time being hereinafter also referred to as the “food precursor high-temperature-hold time”

• Measure C: Controlling the time in which the temperature of the pretreated food precursor is in the range of from 10°C to 20°C, preferably from 0° to 10°C, more preferably from 0° to 4°C, so as not to be 12 hours or more, this time being hereinafter also referred to as the “food precursor medium-to-low-temperature-hold time”

As used herein, the term “the temperature of the food precursor” refers to the surface temperature of the food precursor. When a food precursor has different dimensions (e.g., lengths, diameters, etc.) in different directions, the term refers to the surface temperature of the central portion in the maximum length of the food precursor. For example, in the case of a spherical food precursor, the temperature at any surface point of the food precursor is the temperature of the food precursor. In the case of a food precursor with an oblong rectangular plan view shape, the surface temperature of the middle third of the food precursor equally divided into three in its maximum length (i.e., in the length direction of the rectangle) is the temperature of the food precursor.

[0032]

With regard to measure B, if the food precursor high-temperature-hold time ~~exceeds~~ is 2 hours or more, gelling will proceed substantially during the time between

after completion of the pretreatment and before heating, tending to result in a failure to obtain the desired effect of the present invention. The food precursor high-temperature-hold time is ~~preferably 2 hours or less, more~~ preferably 90 minutes or less, ~~even~~ more preferably 1 hour or less. The shorter, the better.

From the same viewpoint, in the measure C, the food precursor medium-to-low-temperature-hold time is ~~preferably 12 hours or less, more~~ preferably 10 hours or less, ~~even~~ more preferably 8 hours or less. The shorter, the better.

When there is a plurality of food precursor high-temperature-hold times or a plurality of food precursor medium-to-low-temperature-hold times after the pretreatment and before heating, it is required that the total of the food precursor high-temperature-hold times or the food precursor medium-to-low-temperature-hold times be within the above-recited range.

[0033]

Since gelling of alginic acid proceeds rapidly when the temperature of the pretreated food precursor is 40°C or higher, the food precursor high-temperature-hold time is preferably as short as possible as discussed. On the other hand, the progress of gelling of alginic acid at the food precursor temperature lower than 40°C is slower than at the food precursor temperature of 40°C or higher. Therefore, the gelling prevention measure that should be taken in the food precursor temperature range lower than 40°C can be different from the one that should be performed in the food precursor temperature range of 40°C and higher. In other words, in the food precursor temperature range lower than 40°C, the higher the food precursor temperature and the longer the time between after completion of the pretreatment and before heating (this time is hereinafter also referred to as the food precursor temperature-hold time), the more gelling of alginic acid proceeds. Therefore, in order to more reliably prevent gelling of alginic acid in the above temperature range, it is preferred that, when the food precursor temperature having been pretreated is lower than 40°C, the gelling prevention measure further includes controlling the product of the food precursor temperature and the food precursor temperature-hold time (the time from after completion of the pretreatment to before heating is performed), i.e., (the food precursor temperature (°C) below 40°C) × (the food precursor temperature-hold time (h)), to a relatively low value. The product of the food precursor temperature (below 40°C) and the food precursor temperature-hold time is preferably smaller than 220, more preferably smaller than 160, even more preferably