CLAIMS

1. A container for containing a precursor material for use with a machine for preparing a beverage and/or foodstuff or a precursor thereof, the container including a machine-readable code storing preparation information for use with a preparation process performed by said machine, the code comprising:

   a reference portion (R) to locate the code; a data portion (D) to store the preparation information;

   the container is characterized in that the code comprises a code identifying portion (I),

   wherein the code identifying portion (I) is separate from the reference portion (R), and

   wherein the code identifying portion encodes information related to a geometric arrangement of the data portion relative the reference portion.

2. The container of claim 1, wherein the data portion at least partially encodes a value of a parameter of the preparation information as a geometric distance (d) of a data unit of the code along a virtual encoding line (E) from a start position arranged on the encoding line, with an end position arranged on the encoding line defining a maximum allowable distance (d),

   and said geometric arrangement of the data portion related to the information encoded by code identifying portion includes one or more of:

   a location of the start position on the encoding line;

   a location of the end position on the encoding line, and;

   an incremented distance and/or a number of increments between the start and end position that the data unit may be arranged within.

3. The container of claim 2, wherein the data portion is arranged as a plurality of individual data portions, each arranged on the encoding line,

   and said geometric arrangement related to the information encoded by code identifying portion comprises a number of individual data portions on the encoding line.

4. The container of claim 3, wherein there are a plurality of encoding lines and the data portion is arranged as one or more individual data portions on each of the plurality of encoding lines,

and said geometric arrangement related to the information encoded by code identifying portion includes comprises a number of data portions for each encoding line.

5. The container of any of claims 2 to 4, wherein the reference portion is arranged to define a linear virtual reference line (L), and the encoding line is circular and is arranged to intersect the reference line (L),

wherein the location of the start position and/or end position relative the intersection point is related to the information encoded by the code identifying portion.

6. The container of any of claims 2 to 5, wherein the code identifying portion is arranged as one or more discrete positions arranged at a predefined location relative the reference portion,

the discrete positions either comprising or are absent a unit to encode said information as binary information related to said geometric arrangement of the data portion.

7. The container of claim 6, wherein the code identifying portion is arranged distal the or each encoding line, with said the or each encoding line arranged between the code identifying portion and the reference portion.

8. The container of any of claims 2 to 7, wherein the code identifying portion encodes information related to a representation of a data unit, wherein said representation comprises whether an encoding distance is defined by one or more data units and/or the code identifying portion encodes information related to an encoding of the data unit being continuous or at discrete positions on the encoding line.

9. The container of any preceding claim, wherein the code identifying portion encodes information related to a type of data encoded by the data portion and/or the code identifying portion encodes information related to a rule for decoding the encoded preparation information.

10. The container of any preceding claim wherein the information encoded by the code identifying portion comprises an identifier, which is for use by said machine to look-up said geometric arrangement of the data portion.

11. A substrate for attachment to: a container for containing a precursor material for use with a machine for preparing a beverage and/or foodstuff or a precursor thereof, or; a machine for preparing a beverage and/or foodstuff,

the substrate comprising a code comprising:

a reference portion (R) to locate the code; a data portion (D) to store the preparation information;

the substrate is characterized it comprises a code identifying portion (I),

wherein the code identifying portion (I) is separate from the reference portion (R), and

wherein code identifying portion encodes information related to the geometric arrangement of the data portion relative the reference portion.

12 A machine for preparing a beverage and/or foodstuff or a precursor thereof, the machine including:

a code reading system to read a code of a container;

a processing unit for processing precursor material of the container, and;

electrical circuitry to control the processing unit based on preparation information read from the code,

the electrical circuit configured to execute steps of: locating a reference portion (R) of the code; reading a code identifying portion (I) of the code which is separate from the reference portion (R) and arranged relative the located reference portion to determine a geometric arrangement of a data portion (D); reading the data portion of the code based on the determined geometric arrangement to determine the preparation information from the data portion.

13. A system comprising the container of any of claims 1 to 10 and the machine of claim 12.

14. Use of the container of any of claims 1 to 10 for the machine for preparing a beverage and/or foodstuff or a precursor thereof according to claim 12.

15. A method of reading preparation information from a code for use in a preparation process, in which a machine is controlled based on the preparation information to prepare a beverage and/or foodstuff or precursor thereof, the method comprising:

locating a reference portion (R) of the code;

decoding a code identifying portion (I) of the code which is separate from the reference portion (R) of the code and arranged relative the located reference portion to determine a geometric arrangement of a data portion (D);

reading the data portion based on the determined geometric arrangement to determine the preparation information from the data portion.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein reading the code identifying portion of the code to determine a geometric arrangement of the data portion comprises:

obtaining information from the code identifying portion, and;

and determining said geometric arrangement of the data portion based on a stored relationship between the information and the geometric arrangement.

17. The method of either of claims 15 or 16, the method comprising reading a code identifying portion (I) to determined one or more of:

a representation of a data unit, wherein said representation comprises whether an encoding distance is defined by one or more data units;

an encoding of the data unit being continuous or at discrete positions on an encoding line;

a type of data encoded by the data portion, and;

a rule for decoding the encoded preparation information.

18. A code for a container for containing a precursor material for use with a machine for preparing a beverage and/or foodstuff or a precursor thereof, the container including a machine-readable code storing preparation information for use with a preparation process performed by said machine, the code comprising:

a reference portion (R) to locate the code; a data portion (D) to store the preparation information;

the code is characterized in that it comprises a code identifying portion (I),

wherein the code identifying portion (I) is separate from the reference portion, and

wherein the code identifying portion encodes information related to a geometric arrangement of the data portion relative the reference portion.