

FOOD TECHNICAL SERVICES – PROJECT: GEL ISSUE ON FRUIT INFUSED SPIRIT DRINK

The Issue

A new drinks business producing Soft fruit infused spirit drinks from local Strawberries and Neutral spirit had requested support in order to resolve a processing problem. The business had experienced yield and quality losses thought to be caused by gels formation during the process and in the bottle.

After discussions as to the processes used and the occurrence of issues – it seemed apparent that Pectin formation was probably the main issue to address.

- Fruit cell walls consist of cellulose (polysaccharides) bound by other materials such as pectins (also polysaccharides).
- Both Cellulose and Pectins can be degraded by enzymes naturally present in the fruit (eg during ripening) or by microbial enzymes eg from moulds that utilise the simple sugar by-products
- During ripening, many changes take place – but important in his case is softening by enzymes:
 - o Insoluble Pectins are converted to water soluble pectins which results in softer flesh.
 - o The water soluble Pectins then become part of the resultant juice which becomes more viscous or gel like and opaque.
 - o The increased viscosity/pectin gel then makes it harder to extract more juice thus affecting yield, clogging up filters, and spoiling the juice quality.
 - o Quality losses include cloudiness, gel/sediments, loss of eg flavour/sugar/colour.
 - o Fruit cell cellulose walls can also restrict extraction and are also susceptible to enzymes.

It was evident that Enzyme technology was the way to solve this issue and at that point calling in a Biotech-Enzyme specialist was key to getting an optimum result. A phone around our associates in the industry lead us to Enzyme Specialists – Cardiff based Biocatalysts Ltd.



Solution:

After conversations about the process/raw material qualities/ pH / ethanol content / temperatures used, Biocatalysts provided advice and some sample Enzyme blends suitable for the process that could provide the desired functions ie would:

- Break down cell wall celluloses
- Break down the Pectin structures
- Reduce the viscosity of the soluble pectins

A blend of Aspergillus (Fungal) sourced: Endogalacturonase/Polygalacturonase/Pectin lyase and Arabanase would provide the desired function.

Result

Following trials, a simple change to the process by dosing the ambient temp fruit mix for defined period prior to filtering and adding spirit (ethanol denatures enzymes) provided a good result.



** Photos don't relate to actual product/location