

Flavours and Fragrances

Chemistry, Bioprocessing and Sustainability

R. G. Berger (Ed.)

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**Chemistry, Bioprocessing
and Sustainability**

With 231 Figures and 61 Tables

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Preface

Our ancestors lived in intimacy with nature and knew well that their survival depended on a safe and fertile environment. The introduction of three-field rotation in the eighth century bc, for example, counteracted the depletion of soil and increased crop yields without negative side effects. The first definition of the modern term “sustainability” is usually ascribed to forest chief captain H. C. von Carlowitz, who in 1713 in his *Sylvicultura Oeconomica* formulated principles for a sensible economy of wood. From J. S. Mill (*Of the Stationary State*) to modern academic representatives, such as K. Boulding, D. E. Meadows (*The Limits to Growth*), R. Easterlin and H. E. Daly, the “ecological economists” have remained a concerned but rather ignored minority. The situation started to change after the famous Brundtland report (*Our Common Future*) of the UN defined sustainability as a desirable characteristic of development, which will not only meet current needs of people, but also will not jeopardise the ability of future generations to meet their demands and to choose their style of life. This definition includes a social dimension and was also adopted by Agenda 21 of the UNCED in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro.

A set of rules may aid in assessing the sustainable quality of a process:

- Consumption and regeneration of the raw materials should be balanced.
- Non-regenerative goods should be replaced.
- Generation of waste and its biological elimination should be balanced.
- Technical processes should match biological processes on the time scale.

A merely growth oriented economy must violate these rules. According to the first law of thermodynamics, energy in a closed system like the planet earth is finite (if we neglect the solar photon flux). Today mankind secures its survival by exploiting low-entropy resources, such as fossil fuels, concentrated minerals and higher plants, and by converting them to high-entropy products, such as carbon dioxide, cars and fine chemicals. However, as proven by our office desks, high entropy levels can only be lowered by energy input. Here the first and the second law of thermodynamics collide, and we apparently encounter the inner core of the conflict.

With the world running out of crude oil, species dying out at an alarming rate and political leaders seemingly little concerned about the predicted disasters, scientists should feel challenged to suggest solutions. A sustainable production

of natural flavours, like wood, fats and oils, saccharides, phytomedicines, bio-ethanol, biopolymers and natural colours, mainly depends on the existence of reliable plant sources. But how long will the traditional sources of flavours last? Quality of soil, unfavourable weather conditions, insect infestations and socio-political instabilities may all adversely affect classical agricultural production. Are there new biosources that could replace exhausted ones? Will, as with vanillin production, the exploitation of waste streams of the agricultural and food industries gain importance? “White biotechnology” is propagated as an alternative option, but will bioprocesses possess stability, specificity, up-scalability and profitability? Will the recent advances in biotechnology be successfully transferred to industrial scales? How can the aspired match of economy and ecology be achieved?

In an attempt to compile the current status of sustainability in the flavour industry and the developments in the foreseeable future of flavour production, the present volume discusses consumer trends and preferences, legal and safety aspects; it describes renewable resources of flavours, such as spice plants, fruits, vegetables, fermented and heated plants, and natural building blocks; it presents analytical methods, such as gas chromatography coupled to human or electronic noses or to mass spectrometers; it deals with the isolation, quality control and formulation of flavours for liquid or dry products, with biotechnology to provide novel renewable resources, with enzymes, microbial and fungal cells to bio-transform cheap substrates or to produce flavours *de novo*, and with plant cells as a resource of genes coding for metabolic activities in transgenic producers.

The manufacturers of flavours and fragrances and their scientists are working at the leading edge of research, they look back on a long history of using natural resources, and are profitable on the basis of renewables. A wealth of experience has been gathered on issues such as provenance and quality, safety, authenticity and on problems of isolation, processing and shelf life. On the basis of this fundament of knowledge, we should start to deal with sustainability now, before the looming problems start to deal with us.

Finally, I should like to express my sincere thanks to the contributors for their thoughts and writing efforts, and to the publishers for their continuing support and patience.

Hanover, Summer 2006

Ralf Günter Berger

Contents

1	The Flavour and Fragrance Industry—Past, Present, and Future	1
	MATTHIAS GUENTERT	
	References	14
2	Flavours: the Legal Framework	15
	DIRK A. MÜLLER	
2.1	Definitions	15
2.2	Legal Positions	16
2.2.1	Current Situation in the EU	16
2.2.2	Expected Regulations on Flavourings in the EU in the Future	18
2.2.3	Current Situation in the USA	19
2.2.4	Current Situation in Japan	20
2.2.5	Global Approach	21
2.3	Legal Situation and Natural Flavourings, a Brief Reflection	22
	References	23
3	Olfaction, where Nutrition, Memory and Immunity Intersect	25
	J. BRUCE GERMAN, CHAHAN YERITZIAN, VLADIMIR B. TOLSTOGUZOV	
3.1	Introduction	25
3.2	Memory Consolidation—Short-Term, Long-Term and Permanent Memories	27
3.3	Multidimensional Biomemory	30
3.4	Flavour Sensation as a Part of Personal Dietary Choices	31
3.5	Measuring Flavour Perception Is Influenced by Several Factors	31
3.6	The “Melody” of Coffee	33
3.7	Metabolomics and the Metabolic Response to Foods	36
3.8	Profiling of Postprandial Plasma Lipid Composition	37
3.9	Profiling Signalling Lipids	38
3.10	Conclusion	39
	References	40
4	Chemistry of Essential Oils	43
	K. HÜSNÜ CAN BAŞER, FATİH DEMİRCİ	
4.1	What Is an Essential Oil?	43
4.1.1	Non-terpenoid Hydrocarbons	44

4.1.2	Terpenoids	45
4.1.3	C ₁₃ Norterpenoids	63
4.1.4	Phenylpropanoids	64
4.1.5	Esters	65
4.1.6	Lactones	66
4.1.7	Phthalides	67
4.1.8	Nitrogen-Containing Essential Oil Constituents	68
4.1.9	Sulphur-Containing Essential Oil Constituents	69
4.1.10	Isothiocyanates	70
4.2	Impact of Chirality: Enantiomers	71
4.3	Analysis of Essential Oils	73
4.4	Conclusions	75
	References	83
5	Bioactivity of Essential Oils and Their Components	87
	ADOLFINA R. KOROCH, H. RODOLFO JULIANI, JULIO A. ZYGADLO	
5.1	Introduction	87
5.2	Antimicrobial Activity	87
5.3	Antiviral Activity	90
5.4	Antioxidant Activity	91
5.5	Analgesic Activity	93
5.6	Digestive Activity	94
5.7	Anticarcinogenic Activity	96
5.8	Semiochemical Activity	100
5.9	Other Activities	102
5.10	Conclusions	102
	References	103
6	Citrus Flavour	117
	RUSSELL ROUSEFF, PILAR RUIZ PEREZ-CACHO	
6.1	Introduction	117
6.2	Physical Characteristics of Citrus Fruit	118
6.3	Technological Flavour Products	119
6.3.1	Peel Oil	119
6.3.2	Essences	120
6.3.3	Petitgrain Oil	120
6.3.4	Oil of Neroli	120
6.4	Botanical Sources of Citrus Flavours	121
6.4.1	Sweet Orange (<i>Citrus sinensis</i>)	121
6.4.2	Sour/Bitter Orange (<i>C. aurantium</i>)	122
6.4.3	Lemon (<i>C. lemon</i>)	122
6.4.4	Grapefruit (<i>C. paradisi</i>)	123
6.4.5	Lime (<i>C. aurantifolia</i>)	124
6.4.6	Mandarin (<i>C. reticulata</i>)	124
6.5	Flavour-Impact Compounds	125
	References	132

7	Fruits and Vegetables of Moderate Climate	135
	LARS P. CHRISTENSEN, MERETE EDELENBOS, STINE KREUTZMANN	
7.1	Introduction	135
7.2	Formation of Flavours in Fruits and Vegetables	136
7.2.1	Compounds Formed by Degradation of Fatty Acids	137
7.2.2	Compounds Formed from Amino Acids	140
7.2.3	Compounds Formed from Glucosinolates	142
7.2.4	Compounds of Terpenoid Origin	143
7.2.5	Phenols and Related Compounds	143
7.3	Fruits	145
7.3.1	Pome Fruits	145
7.3.2	Stone Fruits	148
7.3.3	Berry Fruits	157
7.3.4	Soft Fruits	165
7.4	Vegetables	166
7.4.1	Alliaceae	166
7.4.2	Brassicaceae (Formerly Cruciferae)	169
7.4.3	Cucurbitaceae	172
7.4.4	Fabaceae (Formerly Leguminosae) and Solanaceae	173
7.4.5	Apiaceae (Formerly Umbelliferae)	176
7.5	Conclusions	180
	References	181
8	Tropical Fruit Flavour	189
	MÁRIO ROBERTO MARÓSTICA JR, GLÁUCIA MARIA PASTORE	
8.1	Introduction	189
8.2	Guava (Genus <i>Psidium</i>)	189
8.3	Banana (Genus <i>Musa</i>)	190
8.4	Mango (<i>Mangifera indica</i>)	192
8.5	Melon (<i>Cucumis melo</i>)	193
8.6	Papaya (<i>Carica papaya</i>)	194
8.7	Passion Fruit (<i>Passiflora edulis</i>)	195
8.8	Pineapple (<i>Ananas comosus</i>)	196
8.9	Cupuacu (<i>Theobroma grandiflorum</i>)	197
8.10	Bacuri (<i>Platonia insignis</i> M. or <i>Platonia sculenta</i>)	198
8.11	Sustainability of Tropical Cultivation	199
	References	200
9	Vanilla	203
	H. KORTHOU, R. VERPOORTE	
9.1	Introduction	203
9.2	The Plant	204
9.3	Vanillin	205
9.4	Biosynthesis	205
9.5	Enzymes	206
9.6	Curing	209

9.7	Chemistry	210
9.8	Biotechnological Production of Vanillin	211
9.9	Conclusions	213
	References	213
10	Flavour of Spirit Drinks: Raw Materials, Fermentation, Distillation, and Ageing	219
	NORBERT CHRISTOPH, CLAUDIA BAUER-CHRISTOPH	
10.1	Introduction	219
10.2	Flavour Compounds in Distilled Spirits	220
10.2.1	Carbonyl Compounds	220
10.2.2	Aliphatic and Aromatic Alcohols	223
10.2.3	Fatty Acids	223
10.2.4	Esters	224
10.3	Important Flavour Compounds from Raw Materials	224
10.4	Distillation—Separation and Fractionation of Flavour	225
10.5	Flavour Compounds Originating from Ageing	226
10.6	Flavour and Flavour-Related Aspects of Distilled Spirits	227
10.6.1	Wine and Wine-Pomace Brandies	227
10.6.2	Fruit Spirits	228
10.6.3	Grain Spirits	230
10.6.4	Vodka	231
10.6.5	Rum, Cachaça	231
10.6.6	Juniper-, Caraway-, and Aniseed-Flavoured Spirits	232
10.6.7	Tequila, Mezcal	233
10.6.8	<i>Shochu</i> , <i>Soju</i> , <i>Awamori</i>	234
10.6.9	Absinth	234
10.6.10	Liqueurs and Speciality Products	235
10.7	Sustainability in Production of Flavour of Spirits	237
10.8	Conclusions	237
	References	238
11	Wine Aroma	241
	ULRICH FISCHER	
11.1	Introduction	241
11.2	Logic behind Varietal Aroma	242
11.3	Chemical Basis of Varietal Aroma	243
11.3.1	Monoterpenes	243
11.3.2	C ₁₃ Norisoprenoids	246
11.3.3	Methoxypyrazines	247
11.3.4	Sulphur Compounds with a Thiol Function	247
11.4	Impact of Viticulture and Growing Conditions	249
11.4.1	Sun Exposure	249
11.4.2	Stress-Induced Aroma Compounds	251
11.5	Impact of Enology	253
11.5.1	Grape Processing	255

11.5.2	Impact of Yeast	256
11.5.3	Impact of Modern Wine Technology	258
11.6	The Mystery of Wine Ageing	262
11.7	Conclusion	263
	References	264
12	The Maillard Reaction: Source of Flavour in Thermally Processed Foods	269
	DONALD S. MOTTRAM	
12.1	Introduction	269
12.2	The Chemistry of the Maillard Reaction	270
12.2.1	Stages in the Maillard Reaction	270
12.2.2	Strecker Degradation	272
12.3	Classes of Aroma Compounds Formed in the Maillard Reaction	274
12.3.1	Oxygen-Containing Compounds	275
12.3.2	Nitrogen-Containing Compounds	276
12.3.3	Sulphur-Containing Compounds	278
12.4	Conclusion	281
	References	282
13	Chemical Conversions of Natural Precursors	285
	PETER H. VAN DER SCHAFT	
13.1	Introduction	285
13.2	Terpenes as Renewable Resources for Terpene Flavour Molecules	286
13.2.1	Pinenes from Turpentine	286
13.2.2	Citral	288
13.2.3	The Mint Components L-Menthol and L-Carvone	289
13.2.4	Terpene Sulfur Compounds	291
13.2.5	Other Terpene Derivatives	292
13.3	Vanillin	294
13.3.1	Vanillin Synthesis	294
13.3.2	Vanillin Derivatives	294
13.3.3	Heliotropine from Safrole	295
13.4	Sugars as Precursors	297
13.4.1	Sources of Xylose and Rhamnose	297
13.4.2	Examples of Flavour Chemicals Derived from Sugars	297
13.5	L-Cysteine and L-Methionine as Sources of Hydrogen Sulfide and Methanethiol ...	299
13.5.1	Cysteine	299
13.5.2	Methionine	299
13.6	Chemical Conversions of Natural Precursors Obtained by Fermentation or from Residual Streams	299
13.6.1	Aliphatic and Aromatic Esters	299
13.6.2	Heterocyclic Flavour Molecules	300
13.7	Conclusions	301
	References	301

14	Industrial Quality Control	303
	HERBERT J. BUCKENHUESKES	
14.1	Introduction	303
14.2	Quality and Quality Management Systems	303
14.3	Quality Control	305
14.4	Physicochemical Methods	306
14.5	Sensory Evaluation	307
14.6	Specific Safety Aspects	307
14.7	Microbial Aspects and Microbiological Methods	308
14.8	Residues of Plant-Conditioning and Plant-Protective Agents	310
14.9	Biologically Active Substances	311
	References	312
15	Advanced Instrumental Analysis and Electronic Noses	313
	HUBERT KOLLMANNSSBERGER, SIEGFRIED NITZ, IMRE BLANK	
15.1	Introduction	313
15.2	Multidimensional Gas Chromatography	314
15.2.1	Classical Multidimensional Gas Chromatography	314
15.2.2	Comprehensive Two-Dimensional Gas Chromatography	317
15.3	Fast Gas Chromatography	322
15.4	Electronic Noses	326
15.4.1	Catalytic or Metal Oxide Sensor	327
15.4.2	Metal Oxide Semiconductor Field-Effect Transistor	327
15.4.3	Conducting Polymer Sensors	327
15.4.4	Acoustic Wave Sensors	328
15.4.5	Mass Spectrometry Based Systems	328
15.4.6	Other Sensor Technologies	329
15.4.7	Data Processing	330
15.4.8	Applications, Potential and Limitations	331
15.4.9	Conclusions	334
15.5	Time-Resolved Analysis of Volatile Organic Compounds	336
15.5.1	Proton-Transfer-Reaction Mass Spectrometry	337
15.5.2	Resonance-Enhanced Multiphoton Ionisation Time-of-Flight Mass Spectrometry ..	344
	References	349
16	Gas Chromatography–Olfactometry of Aroma Compounds	363
	WERNER GROSCH	
16.1	Introduction	363
16.2	The GC-O Experiment	363
16.2.1	Introduction	363
16.2.2	Isolation of the Volatile Fraction	364
16.2.3	Yield	366
16.3	Screening for Odorants by GC-O	367
16.4	Dilution Analysis	368
16.4.1	Introduction	368

16.4.2	Aroma Extract Dilution Analysis (AEDA)	368
16.4.3	Aroma Extract Concentration Analysis	369
16.4.4	GC-O of Static Headspace Samples	371
16.4.5	Limitations of Extract Dilution Techniques	373
16.5	Enrichment and Identification	373
16.6	Aroma Model	374
16.6.1	Quantitative Analysis	374
16.6.2	Odour Activity Values	375
16.6.3	Aroma Model	375
	References	377
17	Enantioselective and Isotope Analysis—Key Steps to Flavour Authentication	379
	A. MOSANDL	
17.1	Introduction	379
17.1.1	Isotope Discrimination	379
17.1.2	Enantioselectivity	379
17.2	Enantioselective Capillary Gas Chromatography	380
17.2.1	Scope	380
17.2.2	Analytical Conditions	382
17.2.3	Enantioselective Multidimensional Gas Chromatography	383
17.2.4	Detection Systems	383
17.2.5	Limitations	385
17.3	Results and Discussion	388
17.3.1	Chiral γ -Lactones and δ -Lactones	388
17.3.2	2-Alkylbranched Acids (Esters)	390
17.4	Stir-Bar Sorptive Extraction—Enantioselective Multidimensional Gas Chromatography—Mass Spectrometry	390
17.4.1	Tea Tree Oils	392
17.4.2	Isotope Discrimination	394
17.5	Capillary Gas Chromatography—Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry Techniques	394
17.5.1	Fundamentals	394
17.5.2	Validation	395
17.6	Comprehensive Authenticity Assessment	396
17.6.1	(<i>E</i>)- α -Ionone and (<i>E</i>)- β -Ionone	396
17.6.2	Lavender Oil	400
17.7	Concluding Remarks	402
	References	403
18	Flavour-Isolation Techniques	409
	GARY A. REINECCIUS	
18.1	Introduction	409
18.2	Isolation of Flavour Compounds for Analysis	409
18.2.1	Absorption (Polymer Trapping, Solid-Phase Microextraction, Stir Bar, Solid-Phase Extraction)	410
18.2.2	Distillation (Simultaneous Distillation/Extraction, Vacuum Distillation)	412

18.2.3	Solvent Extraction	413
18.2.4	Combinations of Methods	414
18.2.5	Comments on Aroma-Isolation Methods	414
18.3	Isolation of Flavour from Plant Materials for Commercial Use	414
18.3.1	Distillation (Essential Oils)	415
18.3.2	Solvent Extraction (Oleoresins, Extracts, and Infusions)	416
18.3.3	Cold Pressing (Citrus Oils)	416
18.4	Isolation of Flavouring Materials from Waste Streams	417
18.4.1	Spinning Cone Concentrator	418
18.4.2	Absorption/Adsorption	420
18.4.3	Extraction (from Gas or Liquid Streams) Using Cryogenic Traps or Solvents	421
18.4.4	Membranes	423
18.5	Summary	425
	References	425
19	Aroma Recovery by Organophilic Pervaporation	427
	THOMAS SCHÄFER, JOÃO G. CRESPO	
19.1	Membrane Processes in the Food Industry	427
19.2	Recovery of Aromas and Aroma Profiles by Pervaporation	429
19.2.1	Limitations and Technical Challenges	432
19.2.2	Market Opportunities	435
19.3	Concluding Remarks	436
	References	437
20	Encapsulation of Fragrances and Flavours: a Way to Control Odour and Aroma in Consumer Products	439
	JEROEN J.G. VAN SOEST	
20.1	Introduction	439
20.2	Encapsulation	440
20.2.1	Matrix or Coating Materials	441
20.2.2	Hydrophilic Matrices	442
20.2.3	Processing Routes	442
20.2.4	Recent Developments and Trends	447
20.3	Performance of Fragrances in Consumer Products	450
20.4	Market Developments and Products	452
20.5	Conclusions	453
	References	453
21	Creation and Production of Liquid and Dry Flavours	457
	RAINER BARNEKOW, SYLVIA MUCHE, JAKOB LEY, CHRISTOPHER SABATER, JENS-MICHAEL HILMER, GERHARD KRAMMER	
21.1	Modern Flavour Creation	457
21.1.1	The Roots of Flavour Work	457
21.1.2	Raw Materials—the Foundation of Every Creation	458
21.1.3	Process Flavours	463

21.1.4	Taste Modifiers	464
21.1.5	Chemosensates	470
21.1.6	Modern Tools for Flavour Development—Flavour Creation	473
21.1.7	The Specifics of Flavour Application	476
21.2	From Formula to Product	477
21.2.1	Shelf-Life Stability	477
21.2.2	Accelerated Shelf-Life Testing	478
21.2.3	Chemical Interactions	480
21.3	Flavour Production	482
21.3.1	Liquid Flavours	482
21.3.2	Dry Flavours	483
21.4	Conclusion	486
	References	486
22	Enzymes and Flavour Biotechnology	489
	M. MENZEL, P. SCHREIER	
22.1	Introduction	489
22.2	Hydrolytic Enzymes	489
22.2.1	Lipases (EC 3.1.1.X)	489
22.2.2	Glycosidases (EC 3.2.1.X)	493
22.2.3	Flavorzyme®	494
22.3	Oxireductases	495
22.3.1	Horse Liver Alcohol Dehydrogenase (EC 1.1.1.1)	495
22.3.2	Lipoxygenase (EC 1.13.11.12)	496
22.3.3	Peroxidases (EC 1.11.1.X)	497
22.3.4	Laccase (EC 1.10.3.2)/Germacrene A Hydroxylase	499
22.3.5	Microbial Amine Oxidases (EC 1.4.3.X)	499
22.3.6	Vanillyl Alcohol Oxidase (EC 1.1.3.38)	500
22.4	Transferases	501
22.4.1	Cyclodextrin Glucanotransferase (EC 2.4.1.19)	501
22.5	Lyases	502
22.5.1	D-Fructose-1,6-biphosphate Aldolase (EC 4.1.2.13)	502
22.5.2	Sesquiterpene Synthase (EC 4.2.3.9)	502
22.6	Conclusion	502
	References	503
23	Microbial Flavour Production	507
	JENS SCHRADER	
23.1	Introduction and Scope	507
23.2	Characteristics of Microbial Flavour Production	509
23.3	Non-volatile Flavour Compounds	513
23.4	Volatile Flavour Compounds	518
23.4.1	Aliphatic Compounds	518
23.4.2	Aromatic Compounds	530
23.4.3	Terpenes	540

23.4.4	Lactones	555
23.4.5	O-Heterocycles, S- and N-Containing Compounds	561
	References	566
24	Microbial Processes	575
	C. LARROCHE, J.-B. GROS, P. FONTANILLE	
24.1	Introduction: General Concepts on Biotransformation Multiphase Systems	575
24.1.1	Supercritical Fluids	575
24.1.2	Ionic Liquids	577
24.1.3	Organic–Aqueous Reaction Systems	579
24.2	Solvent Selection in Organic–Aqueous Systems	580
24.2.1	Molecular Toxicity of the Solvent	581
24.2.2	Phase-Toxicity Effect	582
24.3	Engineering Aspects	584
24.3.1	Vapour Pressure	585
24.3.2	Phase Equilibrium. Activity Coefficients	586
24.3.3	Contact Between Phases. Mass Transfer	589
24.4	Conclusion	595
	References	595
25	The Production of Flavours by Plant Cell Cultures	599
	A.H. SCRAGG	
25.1	Introduction	599
25.2	Flavours	600
25.3	Plant Cell and Tissue Culture	602
25.3.1	Micropropagation	604
25.3.2	Plant Cell Suspensions	604
25.3.3	Biotransformation	609
25.3.4	Scale-Up	610
25.4	Discussion	610
	References	611
26	Genetic Engineering of Plants and Microbial Cells for Flavour Production	615
	WILFRIED SCHWAB	
26.1	Genetic Engineering	615
26.2	Terpenoids	616
26.3	Hexenals	619
26.4	Esters	621
26.5	Vanillin	622
26.6	Miscellaneous	624
26.7	Conclusion	625
	References	626
	Subject Index	629