

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

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DATE

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The present invention relates to dates having improved characteristics, particularly from the marketing standpoint, and to methods of preparing the same.

5 Dates, as ordinarily marketed, have certain pleasing characteristics of taste and texture which are highly desirable, but which are accompanied ordinarily by a disagreeable surface stickiness or by crystalline deposits
10 of date sugars on the surface of the dates which are highly undesirable. However, in the marketing of dates, these undesirable characteristics have necessarily been present, since the thin layer of date sugars or solu-
15 tion of date sugars which imparts the undesirable characteristics, is probably an important factor in retaining the natural moisture of the dates.

Dates treated in accordance with our
20 process have a soft glossy non-adhesive surface, which is attractive in appearance and makes it possible to handle them without making the fingers undesirably sticky. They retain these characteristics as well as their
25 freedom from superficial crystalline sugar deposits, over such periods of time as ordinarily are necessary for the marketing of the packed product. In addition, their non-
30 sticky nature makes possible the use of mechanical methods of handling not otherwise possible.

In carrying out the present invention, the dates, as received, are separated and superficially washed to remove the saccharine material on their surfaces. Occasionally, cer-
35 tain varieties of dates, such as Sayer dates, are received with substantially no saccharine deposits on their skins, and in such cases the washing step may be omitted. Of course,
40 care is taken in washing to prevent undue softening of the dates or breaking of the skins, with the resulting exposure of the pulp containing large quantities of saccharine material. Ordinarily a short washing of 30 to
45 60 seconds in a stream or spray of water is sufficient. The wash water may be preserved and evaporated to concentrate its sugar content, if desired.

The dates are then dried to remove adher-
50 ent wash water. They may be dried by any

suitable means, in batch or continuous dryers, the latter being, of course, preferred when large quantities are to be handled. The drying may suitably be accomplished by cur-
55 rents of air at atmospheric or warmed temperatures, and adherent wash water remaining on the dates is thus removed. The drying is controlled to effect a reasonably rapid removal of the wash water.

In the preferred embodiment of the next
60 step of the invention, a coating of glycerol is applied to the surfaces of the dates. This may be effected by spraying the dates with glycerol or an aqueous solution of glycerol, or by immersing the dates in glycerol, or an
65 aqueous solution containing glycerol. For example, the dates, in suitable perforated containers or wire baskets, may be immersed in glycerol or an aqueous solution of glycerol containing 25 to 100% glycerol. A 40% so-
70 lution is suitable. A prolonged immersion is not required, as only a superficial wetting of the surfaces of the dates is desired. Thus, when the dates are coated by immersion, it is
75 ordinarily sufficient to immerse them in the liquid and immediately remove them. In the event that a solution of glycerol has been used for their treatment, the dates may be
80 dried in any suitable manner, as by air drying at various temperatures, to remove excess water and leave a thin coating of glycerol. If desired, the dates may be sprayed
85 with glycerol, for example, with about 2% of their weight of 95% glycerol, to produce a uniform glycerol coating thereupon. A solu-
90 tion of glycerol in quantity to leave approximately the same proportion of glycerol on the dates may also be employed in which case subsequent drying may be advisable.

The desirable freedom from stickiness
90 hereinbefore referred to is obtained notwithstanding the hygroscopic nature of the film produced on the dates. It has likewise been found that other hygroscopic materials of a
95 similar physical nature may be employed, such as ethylene glycol, other glycols, and the hygroscopic derivatives of glycols and glycerols. In carrying the invention into effect, the use of glycerol as hereinbefore described
100 is preferred, since such use is legally per-

missible and wholly unobjectionable in foods. However, other hygroscopic liquid coating materials having similar characteristics may be employed where their use is unobjectionable and permissible.

The dates prepared in accordance with the present invention, may be packaged and merchandised in the usual manner common in the trade. They have their normal pleasing characteristics of taste and texture. In addition, their skins are firm and glossy and they are soft and free from crystalline sugar deposits. They are also free from the disagreeable stickiness, characteristic of dates ordinarily marketed.

We claim:

1. The method of preparing dates which comprises applying superficially thereto a film containing a hygroscopic polyhydric alcohol free from excess water.
2. The method of preparing dates which comprises applying superficially thereto a film containing glycerol free from excess water.
3. The process of preparing dates which comprises removing the superficial deposits from the skins thereof and coating the dates with a film containing a hygroscopic polyhydric alcohol free from excess water.
4. The process of preparing dates which comprises removing the superficial deposits from the skins thereof and coating the dates with a film containing glycerol free from excess water.
5. The method of preparing dates which comprises washing the dates, thereby removing superficial saccharine deposits therefrom, and applying to the surfaces of the dates a film of glycerol.
6. The method of preparing whole dates which comprises applying thereto an aqueous solution of glycerol and drying the dates, thereby leaving thereupon a superficial coating of glycerol substantially free from excess water.
7. The method of preparing whole dates which comprises washing the dates, thereby removing superficial saccharine deposits therefrom, applying to the surfaces of the dates a solution containing glycerol, and drying the dates, thereby leaving thereupon a superficial coating of glycerol free from excess water.

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