

(12) PATENT
(19) AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE

(11) Application No. AU 199719040 B2
(10) Patent No. 716929

(54) Title
Food product

(51)⁶ International Patent Classification(s)
A23G 003/20

(21) Application No: **199719040** (22) Application Date: **1997 .04 .23**

(30) Priority Data

(31) Number	(32) Date	(33) Country
1194/96	1996 .05 .10	CH

(43) Publication Date : **1997 .11 .13**

(43) Publication Journal Date : **1997 .11 .13**

(44) Accepted Journal Date : **2000 .03 .09**

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(56) Related Art
EP 86319
DE 3942856
US 4430351

ABSTRACT

The product comprises a body (2) having a layered structure typical of filled products together with a praline (3) such as a praline containing a liquid and/or creamy filling. The praline (3) is housed in a cavity created by the removal of part of one or more layers forming the body (2).

(Figure 1)



DESCRIPTION

The present invention relates to a food product and has been developed with particular concern for its possible application in the production of confectionery products.

The present invention specifically faces the problem of making a food product which can be produced on an industrial scale but, at the same time, has organoleptic characteristics of palatability and an appearance typical of a hand-made product such as, for example, a confectionery product.

This problem has already been faced in the art, as evidenced, for example, by US-A-4 362 751 which relates to a naturally raised product impregnated with sweetened and/or alcoholic liquor and coated with chocolate, optionally after filling with cream, or US-A-4 209 536 which describes a food product comprising a spherical shell of a dough which is not raised but baked on a plate with recesses and has a filling substantially free from moisture. Yet again, US-A-4 430 351 describes a filled confectionery product in which two wafer shells enclose a filling enclosed in a water-impermeable capsule. This capsule may be a praline. EP-A-0 086 319 on the other hand describes a product which comprises a creamy filling, with a low moisture content, enclosed by two wafer half-shells sealed together by drops of molten

chocolate and with a chocolate coating containing nut granules.

Products substantially corresponding to some of the patents mentioned above have had considerable success in terms of acceptance by the public.

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There is however a need to further address the organoleptic characteristics of the products without losing, or at least opposing, the essential requirements of manufacture on an industrial scale.

10 According to the present invention there is provided a food product comprising:

a body with a layered structure, at least one of the layers of the body fashioned during manufacture to define a cavity, and a praline, comprising a confectionary shell of chocolate or like material containing a liquid or creamy filling, housed in said cavity.

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In summary, the product of the invention combines, in itself, organoleptic characteristics typical of filled baked products (comprising one or more layers of sponge-cake, possibly moistened with syrup or liqueur and possibly including a filling) with the characteristics of pralines, particularly pralines of chocolate (or like

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material). This is true particularly with regard to the possibility, offered by pralines, of enclosing a liquid or substantially liquid filling intended to wet the filled product only at the moment of consumption.

The invention will now be described, purely by way of non-limitative example, with reference to the appended drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a general perspective view of an embodiment of a product according to the invention,

Figure 2 is a section taken on the line II-II of Figure 1, and

Figure 3 is a further section taken on the line III-III of the same Figure 1.

In the drawings, the product of the invention is generally indicated 1.

Usually, but not necessarily, it is in the form of a confectionery product having the dimensions of a "pastry" and hence of average-large bite-size.

Essentially, the product 1 may be seen as constituted by two elements, that is to say:

- a body 2 having a generally layered structure of typical of filled food products, and
- a so-called praline 3.

In the embodiment illustrated, the praline 3 comprises a casing (shell) 4 of a material which offers a certain resistance to biting (typically chocolate or like material) as well as a liquid or creamy filling 5 such as, for example, a sweet syrup and/or liqueur (alcoholic or non-alcoholic).

To advantage, the praline 3 may be in the shape of a case substantially like that of the confectionery products sold under the marks "MON CHERI" and "POCKET COFFEE" by the Ferrero company. This is also true with regard to the choice of the filling 5 and the possible presence of a layer of protective material, such as a sugary material or the like, on the inner surface of the shell 4 which is not clearly visible in the drawings for obvious reasons of representation.

The structure of the praline 3 and the way in which it is made are in any case well known in the art and do not need to be described in detail herein, especially since they are not relevant for the purposes of an understanding of the invention.

The body 2 is usually arranged on a sort of tray or serviette 6 of sheet material. This preferably includes two side wings 7 which can be folded against the two opposite sides of the body 2 during packaging and when the product is eaten.

In the embodiment illustrated, the body 2 in question, has a layered structure including three layers, that is, from the bottom towards the top:

- a first layer 8 of a baked product (usually a so-called sponge) possibly moistened with a liquid such as a sweet syrup and/or liqueur,
- an intermediate layer 9 constituted by a creamy/pasty filling, such as, a cream with the flavour of milk, zabaione etc, and
- an upper layer 10 which, in the embodiment illustrated, is substantially the same as or identical to the bottom layer 8.

The body 2 has a generally prismatic shape, preferably parallelepipedal with a rectangular or square plan.

This type of shape (parallelepipedal) is not in itself essential. It is usually preferred for reasons of production efficiency, both for greater ease of manufacture and for the possibility of minimising and, in fact, eliminating waste.

Usually, the baked layers 8 and 10 (sponge) are arranged so that their outer faces display their internal cellular structure which results from the raising which occurs during their production. Even though this is not essential, this choice has the advantage of facilitating the application of a coating or enrobing 11 on one or

more side faces of the body 2 (in the embodiment illustrated, on the two shorter sides), the coating being constituted, for example, by a cream such as a chocolate-flavoured cream, optionally with a subsequent application (in the embodiment illustrated, only on the two shorter sides) of a granular material such as, for example, nut granules, coconut flakes, etc, possibly covered again with a further cream layer, for example with chocolate.

In the embodiment illustrated, the coating 11 is applied to the shorter sides of the body 2 while the longer sides against which the sides 7 of the tray 6 bear, are left uncovered.



Preferably the layer of granular material is applied solely to the shorter sides of the body 2 while the cream coating also extends over the upper face of the body 2, thus over the layer 10, as shown schematically at 12. The whole is such that it is possible to apply further decorative elements such as, for example, piped decorations 13 of creamy material and/or garnishing to the upper face of the product.

Further decorative elements such as lines of cream or the like may also be applied to the upper part of the praline 3 as shown schematically at 14 in the drawings.

Particularly in the preferred embodiment illustrated by

way of example in the appended drawings, the product according to the invention solves the problem of combining a praline with a filled body extremely well.

This combination could be achieved very simply by the superposition of the praline 3 on the body 2.

Such a solution would, however, have two basic disadvantages.



In the first place, the arrangement of the praline 3 on the body 2 could be insecure, there being a high risk of its accidental movement, removal or falling off during handling (such as packaging) after the production of the product, during storage and transfer to the place of sale, during transport to the home of the consumer and even in the period immediately before consumption.

In the second place, experiments carried out by the Applicant have shown that the simple superposition of the praline 3 on the body 2 is not the optimum as regards consumption for various reasons. More particularly, if the praline shell 3 were outside the body 2, when it was broken or pierced this would allow the filling 5 to be released from the body 2 whereas it is, on the contrary, desirable for this filling to be distributed uniformly over the body 2 and in the body 2 itself.

To achieve this result in the optimum manner, the invention instead provides for the praline 3 not simply to be superposed on the body 2 but to be housed at least partly within it.

For this purpose, the invention provides for at least one of the layers of the body 2 (in the embodiment illustrated, currently preferred, the upper layer 10) to be absent so as to form a cavity in which the praline 3 is placed during manufacture of the product 1.

The partial removal of the layer or layers concerned (in the embodiment illustrated the layer 10) may be achieved by known means, for example by mechanical removal.

As will readily be understood, the layer or layers of the body 2 removed to form the cavity for receiving the praline 3 may be outer layers (for example the upper layer 10) or inner layers, in which case the praline 3 is incorporated in the product and not visible from the outside.

The removal of a layer on the surface, as indeed the layer 10, has at least two advantages;

- the praline 3 is visible from the exterior (as is seen in the drawings, the whole or a substantial part of the praline 3 may be housed in the body 2, in which latter case the praline 3 projects at least marginally,

as in the embodiment illustrated, from the imaginary surface enveloping the body 2) whereby its presence is immediately perceptible, and

- it is possible, as illustrated at 15 in Figures 2 and 3, to achieve continuity between the coating material (specifically the areas 12 covered by chocolate cream) and the shell 4 of the praline 3, particularly when the components are identical or compatible. This is achieved, for example, with reference to a configuration such as that illustrated in the appended drawings, when both the material forming the coating 12 and the material constituting the shell 4 of the praline 3 are, for example, chocolate or chocolate-flavoured cream.



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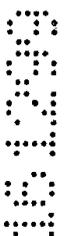
Throughout the description and claims of this specification, the word "comprise" and variations of the word, such as "comprising" and "comprises", is not intended to exclude other additives, components, integers or steps.

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THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A food product comprising:
a body with a layered structure, at least one of the layers of the body
5 fashioned during manufacture to define a cavity, and a praline, comprising a
confectionary shell of chocolate or like material containing a liquid or creamy
filling, housed in said cavity.
2. A product according to claim 1, the praline comprising a shell of material
10 which is relatively resistant to chewing containing a liquid and/or creamy filling.
3. A product according to claim 2, the shell being constituted by a chocolate-
based material.
- 15 4. A product according to claim 2 or claim 3, the filling comprising a syrup.
5. A product according to any one of claims 1 to 4, the at least one layer
being an outer layer of the body, whereby the praline housed in the cavity is at
least partially visible from the exterior of the product.
- 20 6. A product according to any one of claims 1 to 5, the body comprising
layers selected from the group consisting of layers of baked product and layers of
cream-based filling.
- 25 7. A product according to claim 6, the cavity being defined by at least one
layer of baked product.
8. A product according to any one of claims 1 to 7, the body being of
prismatic shape.
- 30 9. A product according to claim 8, the body being of parallelepipedal shape.



10. A product according to any one of claims 1, 8 or 9, the body having a coating of creamy material on at least one of its faces.
11. A product according to claim 10, the coating including granular material.
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12. A product according to claim 10 or claim 11, the coating extending over the upper face of the body.
13. A product according to claim 5 and claim 10, at least part of the coating
- 10 extending towards the cavity and connecting with the outer surface of the praline.
14. A product according to claim 5, a substantial part of the praline being housed in the cavity whereby the praline projects marginally from the imaginary surface enveloping the body.
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15. A product according to any one of claims 1 to 14, the body having garnishing on its upper surface.
16. A product according to claim 15, in the garnishing comprising piped
- 20 formations of creamy material.
17. A product according to any one of claims 1 to 16, the top of the praline having respective garnishing formations.
18. A product according to claim 17, the garnishing formations being thread-
- 25 like formations of a foodstuff.
19. A product according to any one of claims 1 to 18, further including, as a packaging element, a tray on which the product is deposited and which has
- 30 lateral formations which can be folded against the body.
20. A product according to any one of the preceding claims 1 to 19 having bite-sized dimensions.



21. A product substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

5 DATED: 15 December, 1999
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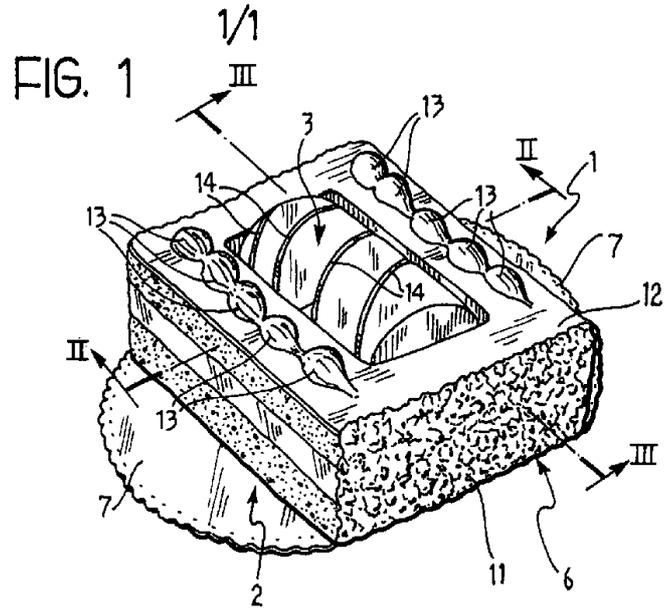


FIG. 2

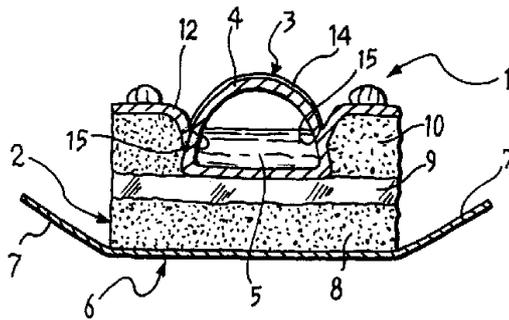


FIG. 3

