

(19)



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(11)

EP 0 713 526 B1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

(45) Date of publication and mention
of the grant of the patent:
09.07.1997 Bulletin 1997/28

(51) Int Cl.⁶: **C11D 13/14**, C11D 13/16,
C11D 17/00

(21) Application number: **94922322.6**

(86) International application number:
PCT/GB94/01745

(22) Date of filing: **10.08.1994**

(87) International publication number:
WO 95/05450 (23.02.1995 Gazette 1995/09)

(54) **SOAP PRODUCT**

SEIFENPRODUKT

PRODUIT DE SAVON

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB

(30) Priority: **13.08.1993 GB 9316900**

(43) Date of publication of application:
29.05.1996 Bulletin 1996/22

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D21, AN 90-198272 & JP,A,2 132 198 (MIYAZAKI
K) 21 May 1990
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Derwent Publications Ltd., London, GB; Class
D21, AN 90-198272

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Description

This invention relates to the implementation of an expansion, or aeration, process in the manufacture of both body and detergent soap.

Conventional modern soap tablets are generally made by firstly manufacturing a soap base which is dried to the required moisture level, and then mixing with pieces of the soap base the desired additives and triglycerides according to the properties of the product to be made, i.e. perfumes, colorants, moisturisers, super-fattening agents, preservatives, oils, germicides and detergents, tallow etc. After the mixing operation in which the additives are coarsely distributed over the pieces of soap base, the mixture of the soap base and the additives is rendered homogenous. Finally the homogeneous soap is either moulded or extruded to form a bar which is cut into billets from which soap tablets of the desired shape are stamped.

The soap base used may be made by any conventional soap-making process, for example by saponification of fats or by direct neutralisation of fatty acids by sodium or potassium hydroxides. Usually the soap base is a sodium or potassium soap, or a mixture thereof, but if desired other alkali metal, alkaline earth metal, ammonium or amine soaps may be used as well as soap of the triglyceride family. Normally the soap base comprises an amount of water that, after drying, will not generally exceed 20% by weight. Usually the soap base contains no additives but, if desired, additives necessary for the production of soap pieces, for example, preservatives, may be incorporated into the soap base before its formation into bars.

Soap tablets may be opaque, translucent or transparent, depending upon their method of manufacture. A transparent soap may be made, for example, by cooling a suitable soap base solution, such as a fatty acid/alkali soap base dissolved in alcohol or a fatty acid/alkali reactant mixture to which has been added alcohol, sugar solution and glycerol. Translucent soaps may be made, for example, by mechanically working a soap base at controlled temperatures.

Soap tablets may also be made using alternative surfactants, such as synthetic detergents (so-called "soapless soaps"), such alternative surfactants being used in addition to or in replacement of a conventional fatty acid/alkali soap base.

Soap tablets may be formulated for personal washing or alternatively for other cleaning or detergent purposes.

Aerated or floating soaps are described in, for example, UK 539718, US 2048286 and UK 2118058A where air is introduced during vigorous mechanical working of a soap product which is subsequently shaped.

Microwave irradiation has been proposed for treatment of soap products. BE-A-1 004 876 and US-A-4 118 333 disclose the production of soap powders by appli-

cation of microwaves to expand a soap and water slurry.

GB-A-2 203 752 discloses formation of a floating soap by moulding a soap particle water mixture where the soap has been subjected to microwave irradiation.

According to the present invention there is provided a process for producing an expanded soap product characterised by applying microwaves to soap in the form of a soap piece to cause said soap piece to expand forming an expanded honeycombed soap piece.

According to the present invention a soap piece may be made generally as described above. The soap may thus comprise a soap base in the form of any suitable surfactant or combination of surfactants including conventional fatty acid/alkali soap bases obtainable by the saponification of fats or by neutralisation of fatty acids and synthetic detergent soap bases. The soap base may be combined with desired additives according to the intended use to form a homogenous soap, which may be optionally shaped by, for example, extrusion, moulding or stamping.

The process of this invention is then applied to permit the manufacture of expanded or aerated soap. In particular aerated soap tablets may be produced where each tablet lasts one wash.

The invention will be more clearly understood from the following description by way of example only with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a cross-sectional view through a soap piece after a small burst of microwaves have been applied.

Figure 2 shows in perspective a piece of soap having the cross-sectional shape shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3a shows a soap piece prior to application of the method of the invention.

Figure 3b shows the same soap as in Figure 3a, after an application of microwaves.

Figure 4a shows a cross-sectional view of a sponge implanted with soap pieces.

Figure 4b shows the same cross-sectional view of a sponge as Figure 4a after an application of microwaves.

Figure 5a shows a cross-sectional view of a two-part soap mould containing a soap piece.

Figure 5b shows the same cross-sectional view of a mould as Figure 5a after an application of microwaves.

In Figure 1, the cross-sectional shape of an aerated honeycombed soap 1, shows an expanded, aerated, honeycombed internal structure 2 made up of flakes of soap chained together. The soap's internal structure 2 is surrounded by a skin 3 of the same substance and of a varying thickness for example between 0.5mm to 0.005mm. This expanded, aerated or honeycombed soap may be arranged to allow each tablet to serve one hand/face wash or one body wash in which case the dosage is dependent upon the size of the soap tablet.

The manufacture of such a soap relies upon a further step added to the known soap-making processes.

This step involves applying microwaves, preferably by way of small but frequent bursts of microwaves, to soap pieces. Figure 3a shows a soap piece 4. Figure 3b shows the same piece after applying microwaves. The result is a soap tablet 1 that has increased in size by a ratio of 1:7 or more and has a cross section as illustrated in Figure 1. For a single hand or body wash expanded soap piece as illustrated in Figure 3b with a minimum dimension of 4 mm and a maximum dimension of 150 mm the starting soap piece of Figure 3a may have a minimum dimension of 2.5 mm and a maximum dimension of 50 mm, to which microwaves may be applied for a period of 20-40 seconds (2450 MHz, intermittently applied) at a power of 500W.

It is believed that, since the soap tablet, before treatment of microwaves, may have between 5-20% water content or higher, heat is produced by normal microwave action on the moisture within the soap when microwaves penetrate it. The power or frequency of microwaves applied can be increased e.g. by increasing the intensity or burst frequency, allowing the exposure time to be decreased and vice versa. As a result, the soap is caused to inflate and with this, form a honeycomb/aerate structure.

The size expansion ratio can be further increased if desired, by the application of water (in the form of a fine spray) which rests on the surface of the expanded soap tablet. When the wetted expanded soap tablet is exposed to a further burst of microwaves, the surrounding soap skin repeats the affects explained earlier.

Soft soap bases, show good expansion according to this invention. Such a soap base may have the composition - aside from any non-soap particulate, lying within the ranges:

total fatty matter	70-80% by weight
accompanying cations	6-9% by weight
electrolyte	0.1-1.0% by weight

It is preferred that the soap base has a yield stress at 40 degrees centigrade of at least $1.8 \times 10^{-5} \text{ Nm}^{-2}$.

The final soap tablet with its resultant honeycombed state dissolves in contact with water (at a faster rate than conventional soap, since much of the water from its original state has now evaporated) into a uniform froth with excellent lathering qualities as the chains of soap flakes start to break up. The common occurrence of cracked soap where undue cracking and deterioration of soap bars during handling is caused by age and temperature variation within a domestic situation can now be avoided. A single use size expanded tablet presents major hygiene benefits, since the soap tablet is never shared, with possible cross-infection avoided. Therefore the expanded soap presents itself as a new way of washing with significant improvements for the environment when adopted in areas such as hotel/guest soap, where only what is needed is used - rather than what is not used

being disposed of.

In Figure 4a, the cross-sectional shape of a sponge product 5 shows sponge 6, which may be a man-made sponge, impregnated with soap pieces 7. Figure 4b shows the same cross-sectional shaped sponge 6 impregnated with soap pieces after the application of microwaves for a period of 20 - 40 seconds at a power of 500W (2450 MHz, intermittently applied). As can be seen, the now aerated soap tablets 8 have increased in size by a ratio of roughly 1:7 and have therefore spread across the sponge area to form a semi-rigid sponge block 9. The block 9 is then cooled with the assistance of cold air.

The final sponge block 9 with its resultant honeycombed soap tablets starts to dissolve in contact with water to form a uniform lathering froth as the chains of soap flakes gradually start to break down. What is left after all of the soap has dissolved is only the sponge 6. This enables washing of the body with only one piece of equipment, i.e. the soap sponge 9. This has advantages in situations of small living space or where hygiene is of paramount importance.

In Figure 5a a cross-section of a two-part mould 10,11 is shown. Inside is placed a soap piece 12 of, for example, 10-20% of the size of the mould. Figure 5b shows the same mould as illustrated in Figure 5a, but after the application of microwaves for a period of 20-40 seconds at a power of 500W (2450 MHz, intermittently applied). As shown, the now aerated soap piece 13 has increased in size by aeration to fill the mould. A cooling step then follows after which the soap tablet is released. This moulding process has advantages where exact dosage of soap are required i.e. for personal and medical care, and other household or industrial cleaning purposes, allowing a measured dose to be repeated precisely.

Claims

1. A process for producing an expanded soap product characterised by applying microwaves to soap in the form of a soap piece to cause said solid soap piece to expand forming an expanded honeycombed soap piece.
2. A process according to claim 1 further comprising:-
applying water in the form of a fine spray to the expanded soap;
further expanding the soap by a further application of microwaves.
3. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein said soap is expanded to a volume at least 7 times that of the starting material.
4. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 3

wherein said expanded soap has a density less than that of water.

5. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said soap piece is located in a mould cavity. 5
6. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein soap tablets of varying or uniform size, are impregnated into a sponge before the application of microwaves. 10
7. An expanded honeycombed soap product produced by a process according to any preceding claim.
8. A product according to claim 7 comprising sufficient material for a single wash.
9. A product according to claim 7 or claim 8, having a cross-sectional dimension from 4mm to 150mm. 20

Patentansprüche

1. Ein Verfahren zum Herstellen eines expandierten Seifenprodukts, **gekennzeichnet durch** Anwendung von Mikrowellen auf die Seife in der Form eines Seifenstücks, um das feste Seifenstück zu veranlassen, sich zu expandieren, um ein expandiertes wabenförmiges bzw. zellenförmiges Seifenstück zu bilden. 25
2. Ein Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 1, ferner aufweisend: 30

Anwenden von Wasser in der Form eines feinen Sprays auf die expandierte Seife;
Weiterexpandieren der Seife durch weitere Anwendung von Mikrowellen. 35
3. Ein Verfahren nach Anspruch 1 oder Anspruch 2, bei welchem die Seife bis zu einem Volumen von wenigstens 7-mal desjenigen des Ausgangsmaterials expandiert wird. 40
4. Ein Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3, bei welchem die expandierte Seife eine Dichte geringer als diejenige von Wasser hat. 45
5. Ein Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, bei welchem das Seifenstück in einer Formhöhle angeordnet wird. 50
6. Ein Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, bei welchem Seifentabletten von sich ändernder oder gleichförmiger Größe vor der Anwendung von Mikrowellen in einen Schwamm imprägniert werden. 55
7. Ein expandiertes wabenförmiges bzw. zellenförmiges Seifenprodukt, das durch ein Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche hergestellt ist.
8. Ein Produkt gemäß Anspruch 7, welches ausreichendes Material für eine einzige Waschung aufweist.
9. Ein Produkt gemäß Anspruch 7 oder gemäß Anspruch 8, mit einer Querschnittsabmessung von 4 mm bis 150 mm.

15 Revendications

1. Procédé pour produire un produit de savon expansé, caractérisé en ce qu'on applique des micro-ondes à du savon sous la forme d'un morceau de savon pour amener ledit morceau de savon solide à s'expanser en formant un morceau de savon expansé à structure en nid d'abeilles.
2. Procédé selon la revendication 1 comprenant en outre les étapes consistant à :
 - appliquer de l'eau sous forme finement pulvérisée au savon expansé ;
 - expanser davantage le savon par une autre application de micro-ondes.
3. Procédé selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2, dans lequel le savon est expansé à un volume égal à au moins 7 fois celui du matériau de départ.
4. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, dans lequel ledit savon expansé a une densité inférieure à celle de l'eau.
5. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel ledit morceau de savon est placé dans une cavité de moule.
6. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel des tablettes de savon de dimensions variables ou uniformes sont imprégnées dans une éponge avant l'application de micro-ondes.
7. Produit de savon expansé à structure en nid d'abeilles produit par un procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes.
8. Produit selon la revendication 7 comprenant suffisamment de matière pour un lavage unique.
9. Produit selon la revendication 7 ou la revendication

8 possédant une dimension en section transversale de 4 mm à 150 mm.

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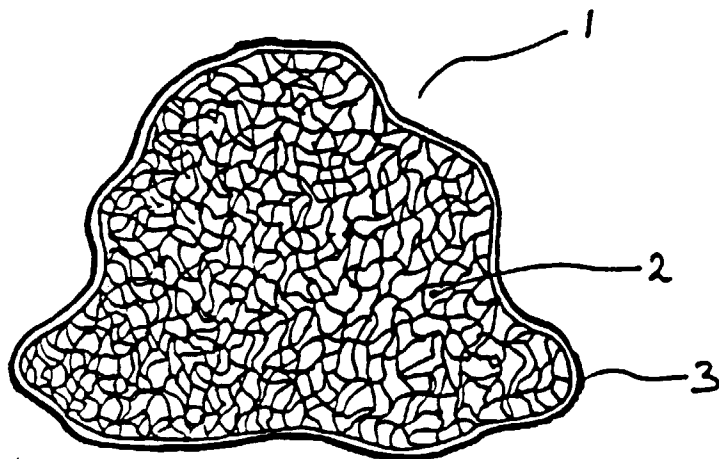


fig. 1

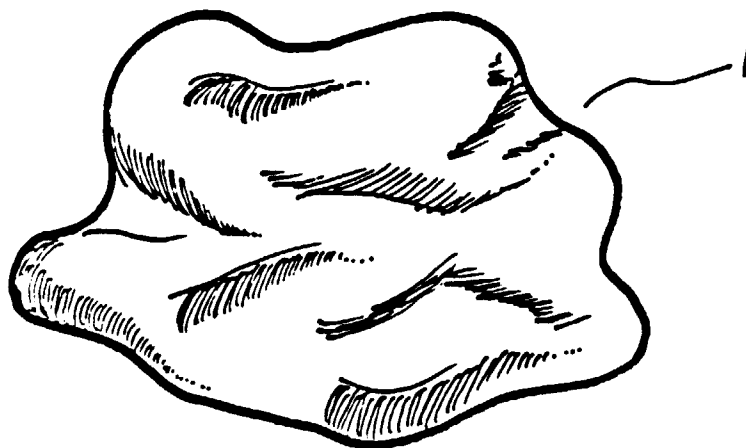


fig. 2



fig. 3a

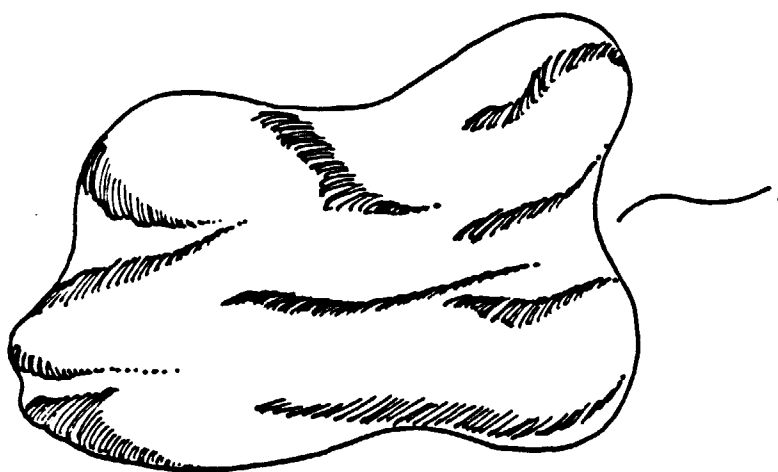


fig. 3b

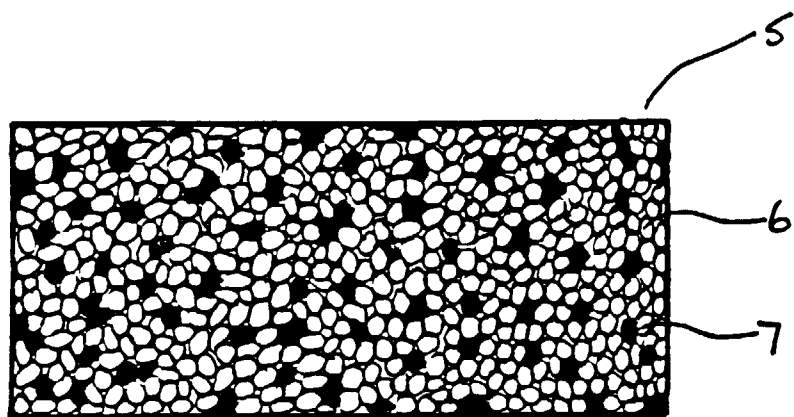


fig. 4a

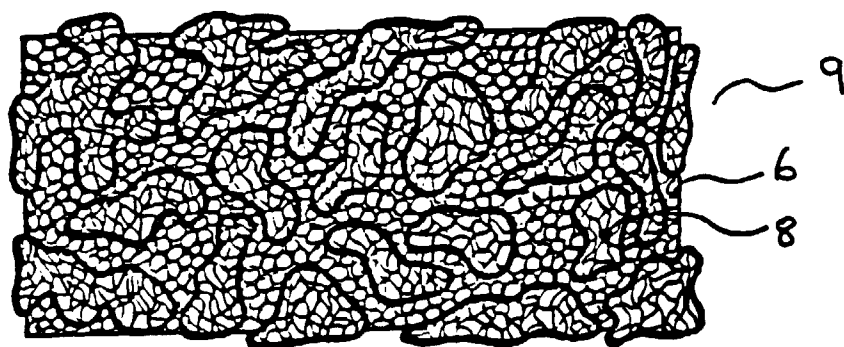


fig. 4b

