Methylcellulose

A very effective thickening agent which displays unique gelling properties in that it gels on heating and melts on cooling, in the opposite way to gelatine. In addition, methylcellulose can act as an emulsifier and be used to form foams, mousses and edible films. Also, methylcellulose can reduce the uptake of batter during frying and make batter crispier.

What is it?

Methylcellulose is synthetically produced by heating cellulose – derived from plant matter – with various compounds. It exists in several different forms and is used in the food industry in a number of applications – typically in ice creams and fat based desserts as a thickening agent – but also as filler, dietary fibre, anti clumping agent and emulsifier.

What will it make?

At ambient temperatures, a solution containing methylcellolose can be whisked to form a foam or mousse or can be mixed with oil to form an emulsion. When heated, a methylcellulose solution will gel but will revert to its original consistency on cooling.

How should it be used?

Methylcellulose is water soluble. However, to aid dispersion of the powder into the water, the liquid should first be heated, and then the powder added while it is hot, mixing thoroughly. The solution should be mixed continuously as it cools to allow the methylcellulose to fully dissolve. Avoid over-whisking as this causes air bubbles to get trapped. Allow to cool before using.

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