

The Body of the *Espresso* Coffee: the Elusive Importance

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SUMMARY

The ‘body’ of the *espresso* coffee is the sensory attribute, which “is easier to recognise than to define”. This statement, originally adopted to underline the complexity in defining the gels, seems to be very appropriate for an attribute, which, in addition to visual aspect and flavour, greatly contributes to the enjoyment of drinking *espresso* coffee.

The ‘body’ of *espresso* coffee is often described as the tactile sensation due to the interaction between the beverage and the oral cavity (mouthfeel). However, ‘body’ may include also olfactive perceptions connected to the intensity of aroma and is described by resorting to terms like “rich”, “lingering”, or “long lasting”.

The classification of mouthfeel characteristics of *espresso* coffee and the subsequent development of a proper vocabulary, permitted to individuate a set of physico-chemical properties, which may contribute to *espresso* coffee mouthfeel perception.

The present study reports on the physico-chemical properties of *espresso* coffee, which may be relevant in the mouthfeel perception. In particular, total solids (concentration), density, rheological and interfacial properties have been determined as a function of cup volume and temperature. The correlation between physico-chemical properties and sensory properties have been described in the framework of oral processing problems.

In order to remove possible ambiguity, in addition to the term ‘body’, the use of the Italian term *corpo* to describe pure tactile sensation elicited by physico-chemical properties is proposed.