

Preface

The use of polymers in foods is widespread and is a major thrust in the food and the specialty chemicals industries. In the past several years, intensive research coupled with new analytical tools have provided a better understanding of polymer structures and properties. There is increasing awareness that the principles of polymer physics and polymer chemistry can be applied to food systems. This awareness has spurred fundamental structure/property studies relating to polymer additives in foods and their functions.

Since research is being carried out in academia, industry, and government labs, albeit with different emphases, we thought it would be useful and timely to bring together many leading researchers in this area in order to promote collaborations and to furnish a valuable update of this area from different perspectives. Accordingly, we organized an international symposium held at the National Meeting of the American Chemical Society at Dallas, Texas on March 31 – April 2, 1998. The symposium was entitled “Application of Polymers in Foods” and was jointly sponsored by the ACS Polymer Chemistry Division and the ACS Carbohydrate Division. Financial support was provided in part by ACS Polymer Chemistry Division, the ACS Corporate Associates, and Hercules Incorporated.

The symposium attracted a large number of distinguished scientists that are active in this area. The following topics were covered:

- Structure/property relationships
- Product development of food polymers
- Analysis and characterization of food polymers
- Novel technologies and methodologies

The program consisted of 4 oral sessions and one poster session, with a total of 27 papers. These were very well received by the attendees. In addition, Professor J. N. BeMiller led a stimulating discussion on the current trends and problems in this area of research with active participation from the audience.

While the symposium was concluding at one part of the city in Dallas, another meeting was getting started at another part of Dallas. Through the sponsorship of Fine Particle Society, one of us (Baianu) organized a mini-symposium on the use of NMR for food polymers. A number of the ACS attendees went over to this meeting, and several very interesting talks were presented.

In view of the success of these two symposia, we decided to edit a symposium volume combining most of the contributions from the ACS symposium and four talks from the NMR symposium. We wish to thank the contributors to this symposia volume for their contributions and for their cooperation. In view of the excellent quality of the scientific work being represented, this symposium volume should be a very useful and timely reference for people working in this area.

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