

Coffee Aroma Profiling - Direct SICRIT® HR-MS Analysis

Introduction

Coffee is one of the most popular beverages and known for its manifold aroma profiles. Aroma is one of the first senses experienced when preparing or consuming a coffee beverage and arises from different volatile compounds produced during the roasting of coffee beans.



Figure 1 - Representative photograph of coffee olfactory testing.

However, the chemical composition of the coffee aroma is very complex. More than 1000 volatile compounds have been identified that are associated with flavour in coffee. The main volatile compounds in coffee include carbonyl, sulfur alicyclic, aromatic benzenoid, and heterocyclic compounds.

...SICRIT MS allows for real-time MS based aroma profiling either direct from a coffee bean or during the coffee roasting process

The aroma of roasted coffee beans allows conclusions about the bean origin, the roasting conditions, and the storage of the roasted beans. Therefore, a high-resolving analysis of volatile compounds would be helpful to optimize the roasting and blending process regarding the

resulting aroma profile. Furthermore, a comprehensive screening of VOCs in the beans would supply the manufacturer's quality control and their search for better aroma-conserving packaging materials.

The manufacturer's quality control is mainly based on sensory analysis of roasted beans by professional tasters and physical properties as roasting temperature, color, and weight of the beans after roasting. In lab analysis, coffee aroma compounds are commonly identified by GC-MS of brewed coffee extracts. However, this method requires tedious sample pretreatment by solid phase microextraction before headspace-GC analysis (HS-SPME/GC-MS).

Therefore, analytical methods which allow for direct online-monitoring of a broad range of VOCs would open new possibilities in the coffee bean processing.

Setup

The SICRIT® technology is particularly suitable for direct screening of complex samples without



Figure 2 -Coffee aroma profiling by direct VOC desorption in front of the SICRIT® ion source

sample pre-treatment. The special design of the SICRIT ion source allows for easy interfacing the direct sampling of VOCs out of the whole bean with untargeted and high-resolved detection by mass spectrometry.

For fast and direct online-screening purposes, the beans just have to be placed in front of the SICRIT® ion source. Even semivolatile compounds can be measured by application of a heated gas stream (100°C). The desorbed VOCs are drawn in the MS by the applied permanent vacuum and

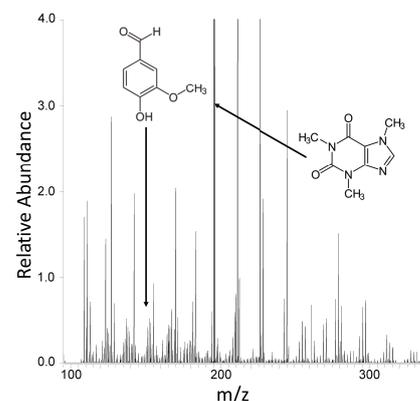


Figure 3 - Aroma profile of a single coffee bean acquired using a SICRIT® ion source attached to a Thermo LTQ Orbitrap MS; vanillin (m/z 153) and caffeine (m/z 195).

detected instantaneously. Of course, the SICRIT® solution is also applicable for SPME-sampling of coffee extracts and combinable with GC by using our GC/SPME-module.

Results

The singularity of the SICRIT® technology is the possibility to easily interface it with any mass spectrometer. Thus, there's no given limitation in the mass resolution by using the SICRIT®

