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Book Review

Food Flavours: Generation, Analysis and Process Influence. Ed. George Charalambous. Developments in Food Science Series No. 37, Elsevier, Amsterdam, 1995. xlii + 2280 pp. Price: Dfl775.00, US$442.75.

This very large, two-volume publication contains the proceedings of the 8th International Flavour Conference held in Cos, Greece in 1994. The series of conferences were the inspiration of George Charalambous and were the culmination of a long career in food science during which he organised many important flavour research symposia. Sadly, in the November following this conference , George died, aged 72. His enthusiasm and dedication will be greatly missed by his many friends.

The volumes contain over 130 papers from the Symposium and they cover a wide range of topics in food science, not all related to flavour. Of the 129 chapters in the publication, only 51 appear to deal with flavour-related topics. A wide range of subjects are covered in the remaining chapters, with topics as diverse as infant nutrition, the stability of saffron pigments and microbeam molecular spectroscopy of biological materials, although the majority of the papers relate to quality parameters in food and the influence of food processing. To add to the rather confusing range of contributions, the scientific quality and the standard of the presentation are, unfortunately, very variable. One reason for the very large number of pages in this two-volume tome is the excessive length of some of the chapters. Ten of the chapters contain over 30 pages, while three have over 70 pages. This seems somewhat excessive for conference proceedings. One paper contains 91 photographs illustrating field work on the development of food production in desert areas of third world countries. Many other papers also appear to have an unnecessarily large number of figures (the maximum I found was 158 figures in one paper). I was disappointed at the standard of many of the contributions, and these detract from the few good research and review papers which can be found by careful searching of the contents pages. One review which is worth mentioning is a particularly comprehensive and well referenced review on enzyme reactions in reverse micelles.

For the flavour scientist, who may be attracted by the title of the book, a separate contents section has been included in which the flavour related papers are grouped into categories. These include analysis of flavours (9 papers), aroma composition (15), formation of flavour compounds (4), application of biotechnology (9), factors influencing food flavour (12) and 2 papers investigating Wright's vibrational theory of olfaction.

I was somewhat disappointed with the overall publication for reasons outlined above, although I was able to find a few particularly interesting chapters. The book is likely to find its way on to the shelves of larger libraries, but the price and the general nature of many of the chapters will deter most other would-be purchasers.

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