Long-Term Preservation of Carotene in Alfalfa Meal

Alfalfa stems and leaves were steam-blanching, dried, and ground to a meal containing 374 ppm of carotene. Samples stored in vacuo in darkness at 90° for 27, 35, and 55 weeks retained 98% of the carotene. A final sample, kept 27 years at room temperature, retained 95.5% carotene. Isomerization of carotene was negligible in all samples. Possible importance for space trips is suggested.

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Soon after the development of a reliable and simple method for determination of carotene in alfalfa (Zscheile and Whitmore, 1947) samples of first-cutting alfalfa were prepared for accelerated storage tests at the Department of Botany, University of Chicago. Stems with leaves were harvested in mid-afternoon of a bright sunny day (May 8, 1945) and blanched with steam for 3 min at 15 lb within 10 min of cutting. After drying in a circulating hot air

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enzyme</th>
<th>Digestion time, hr</th>
<th>Soluble fraction</th>
<th>Insoluble fraction</th>
<th>Mercury content, ppm</th>
<th>% FPC recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soluble fraction</td>
<td>Insoluble fraction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific hake, 0.49</td>
<td>± 0.03 ppm of Hg</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swordfish, 6.39</td>
<td>± 0.51 ppm of Hg</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pancreatin 1 6 3 3.4 3.4 0.08 ± 0.02 1.33 ± 0.06 97.7 104
Pronase 1 6 84.3 41.3 0.12 ± 0.01 2.49 ± 0.10 101.1 105
Monzyme 1 6 89.6 57.6 0.14 ± 0.01 1.13 ± 0.07 98.9 112
Monzyme 1 6 77.7 34.4 0.15 ± 0.02 3.71 ± 0.15 101.7 116

Effect of Enzyme Treatment on Mercury Content of Soluble and Insoluble Fractions of FPC Made from Pacific Hake and Swordfish

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Michael C. Archer*
Bruce R. Stillings
Steven R. Tannenbaum
Daniel I. C. Wang

Department of Nutrition and Food Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

National Marine Fisheries Service
College Park Fishery Products Technology Laboratory
College Park, Maryland 20740

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oven 2.5–4 hr, they were ground (to 40-mesh) and the meal was mixed. Analysis showed 374 ppm of carotene, primarily a mixture of all-trans-β-carotene (81%) and neo-β-carotene (ca. 19%) (Beadle and Zscheile, 1942).

Four samples were sealed in Pyrex tubes in vacuo after pumping for 2.5 hr to a pressure of 1 mm or less. Each sample of ca. 6 g was sealed in a 25-ml glass tube.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One sample, after storage in darkness at 90° for 27 weeks, contained 365 ppm, indicating 98% retention of carotene. The characteristic curve (Beadle and Zscheile, 1942; Zscheile and Whitmore, 1947) of this sample was superposable on that of the original material at wavelengths of 400–500 nm, indicating negligible additional isomerization of the all-trans form of β-carotene. Similar results were obtained on two other samples stored 35 and 55 weeks at 90°; characteristic curves of the carotene fraction were similar but had higher absorption at the shorter wavelengths. Other samples in potentially commercial bags, sealed but containing air, retained only 21–56% carotene after 27 weeks.

A final sample, sealed in vacuo in Pyrex, was kept wrapped in cloth in a desk drawer at room temperature for 27.5 yr before analysis on Nov 8, 1972. The vacuum was still good, as tested with a Tesla coil before breaking the tube open. Analysis by the same method showed a carotene content of 356 ppm, or 95.5% retention. The writer is not aware of any other controlled study of carotene stability covering such a long period of time. The characteristic curve of the carotene fraction matched that for the original sample very closely from 400 to 500 nm. When analyzed at 478 nm, the all-trans-β-carotene fraction was 79%.

It may be concluded that carotene of such food materials, blanched before drying and kept in darkness in the absence of O₂, will be retained essentially unchanged at room temperature or below for indefinite periods of time. This fact might assume importance in the future for possible application in the maintenance of vitamin A activity in foods prepared for space trips of many months or years duration.

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Frederick P. Zscheile, Jr.

Department of Agronomy and Range Science
University of California
Davis, California 95616

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Suppression of Fungal Growth by Isolated Trypsin Inhibitors of Corn Grain

Isolated corn trypsin inhibitor retarded growth of six fungi when added to dextrose agar cultures of time of inoculation. Greatest activity was against Fusarium roseum and least was against Helmin-

thosporium maydis. It is proposed that the inhibitor may protect the seed against fungal invasion under moist conditions.

METHODS

Trypsin inhibitors were isolated from a normal hard endosperm corn and from an opaque-2 strain. The isolation procedure was that of Chen and Mitchell (1973), which consists of grinding and defatting the whole grain, extracting with 0.2 M NaCl, precipitating the inhibitor by adding (NH₄)₂SO₄ to 40% saturation, and removing inactive proteins by passing the isolated material consecutively through columns of Sephadex G75 and CM-cellulose. Inhibitory activity was measured by Method II of Erlanger et al. (1961), using benzoyl-lys-arginine-p-nitroanilide as trypsin substrate.

In the first experiment, the effects of the two inhibitors were compared by adding them to sterile potato dextrose agar medium at 0, 25, 50, and 100 μg/ml of medium. In the second experiment, only the opaque-2 inhibitor was used, at concentrations of 200 and 400 μg/ml of medium. Each fungus species was plated in the center of a petri dish on the solidified medium, with three replications for each concentration of inhibitor. The dishes were kept at