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Extraction and characterization of carotenoid pigments from plant sources

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SUMMARY

The discovery of numerous health problems with the use of synthetic colorants (including carcinogenicity and chronic toxicity) led to renewed interest in natural pigments derived from different sources (plants, fungi, microorganisms and animals).

The aim of the study was to obtain and characterize pigment extracts rich in carotenoids from 4 plant sources – carrot, tomato, red pepper and pumpkin.

Three versions of each type of raw material were tested: fresh, freeze-dried and dried in a conventional dryer. As solvents were used isopropanol, 90% acetone and heptane. The highest content of total carotenoids was obtained from dried red pepper after extraction with heptane – 246,65 mg/l, followed by freeze-dried pumpkin and carrot in isopropanol solvent, 74,50 mg/l and 35,20 mg/l respectively. In tomato variety "Bella", the highest yield was obtained from freeze-dried material and solvent 90% acetone – 21,95 mg/l. The fresh raw materials are not suitable for extraction of

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3 :
, 90%
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- 246,65mg/l,
mg/l 35,20 mg/l.
" " -
90% - 21,95 mg/l.

pigments. In general, the lyophilized samples give a higher yield, except red pepper, wherein the best results are obtained after conventional drying.

Keywords: natural pigments, carotenoids, extraction

INTRODUCTION

Color is an important factor for consumers when choosing a final product which is of great importance for the food and pharmaceutical industries in the production of paints, cosmetics, animal feed, etc. (Jivkova, 2012; Boo et al., 2011).

The accumulated evidence that many synthetic colorants cause health problems, including toxicity and carcinogenicity led to extensive use of natural dyes (Scotter, 2011, Scotter and Castle, 2004).

In response to this trend and to protect human health people are increasingly looking for ways of obtaining and application of natural dyes in the production of new healthy and functional foods, cosmetics, textile, paint and others (Bener et al 2010; Kumar and Sinha, 2004).

Higher and lower plants are the biggest sources of natural pigments that can be used as food dyes.

Plant pigments can be classified into two broad groups - fat-soluble and water-soluble.

(Socaciu, 2007).

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(Arvayo-Enriquez H. et al., 2013).

(Updike and Schwartz, 2003).

- Among the fat-soluble pigments
- most common are the chlorophylls
and carotenoids (Socaciu, 2007).

- Carotenoids are yellow to
orange-red pigments ubiquitous in
nature – higher plants, mosses,
algae, bacteria and fungi. Most are
hydrocarbons with 40 carbon
atoms containing two end ring
systems linked by conjugated
double bonds. There are two
groups of carotenoids: carotenes,
composed only of carbon and
hydrogen; and xanthophylls, which
are their oxidized analogs. In the
last, oxygen may be part of a
hydroxyl group (e.g. zeaxanthin) of
the keto group (for example,
canthaxanthin) or a combination of
both (e.g. astaxanthin) (Arvayo-
Enriquez et al., 2013).

- The polyene system of
carotenoids their characteristic
molecular structure determines
their chemical properties and their
ability to absorb light. Each double
bond of the polyene chain can
exist in two configurations: as
: geometric isomers (cis or trans).
- Trans-isomers are
thermodynamically more stable
than the cis-isomers. Most natural
carotenoids are trans-isomers
(Updike and Schwartz, 2003).
- Carotenoids are effective
antioxidants.

- Regardless of their varied
biological action, individual
carotenoids or their mixtures are
used as natural coloring agents for

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 (Solomosi et. al., 2015).
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 (Limbo et al., 2007).
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food and beverages. The intense color of coloring agents based on carotenoids (or based on oleoresin containing them) ranges from yellow through orange to red, depending on which representatives of this group prevail (Solomosi et. al., 2015).

Conventional extraction of carotenoids uses their solubility in lipids or nonpolar solvents. If the plant material is pre-dried, water-immiscible liquids such as petroleum and ethyl ether are used. When working with fresh material, it is better to use with ethanol or acetone that perform two functions – extraction and dehydration.

The solvents should not contain oxygen, acids or halogens, in order to avoid degradation (Limbo et al., 2007).

There is no optimal extractant for all carotenoids: carbon disulfide is the best solvent, but is volatile, toxic and flammable, which severely limits its use. Ether is also effective, but is not used because of its volatility and flammability.

Other solvents such as hexane, heptane and isooctane are weaker extractants of carotenoids but are preferred because of other properties they have. On the other hand the selection of the appropriate extractant depends on which compounds are to be

(Arvayo-Enriquez et al., 2013).

extracted: polar solvents (acetone, methanol, ethanol) are good with xanthophylls, but not with carotenes (Arvayo-Enriquez et al., 2013).

Therefore it is considered that for complete extraction of carotenoids should be used low moisture content samples that are treated with mixtures of low polar and non-polar solvents. Moreover, extraction should be carried out quickly, avoiding contact with light, oxygen or high temperatures.

The aim of the study is preparation and characterization of pigment extracts rich in carotenoids from 4 plant sources – carrot root and tomato, red pepper and pumpkin fruits.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Plant material: The selection of plant materials considered the following factors: high content of carotenoids; accessibility; species typical for Bulgaria and respectively offered by Bulgarian farmers and low cost. We tested the following raw materials: carrot root (*Daucus carota ssp. Sativus*), tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*), red pepper (*Capsicum annuum*) and pumpkin (*Cucurbita moschata*) fruits.

(*Daucus carota ssp. sativus*),
(*Solanum lycopersicum*),
(*Capsicum annuum*)
(*Cucurbita moschata*).

With regard to the used varieties: "Super Muscat" carrot, "Bella" tomato, "Gorogled" red pepper, "Violina" pumpkin.

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 0,5-1,0 cm.
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 .
 50° .
 8 24 h.
 TG-16.50 ("Hochvacuum"-
)
 24
 -
 :
 , 90%
 1:10
 -
 -
 "Sartorius
 thermo-control"
 .
 (TLC) -

The preliminary preparation
 - of raw material included the
 - following steps - washing, removal
 - of the green parts and the injured
 areas and cutting into pieces
 measuring 0,5-1,0 cm. Three
 - variants of each type of raw
 - material were tested: freeze-dried,
 - dried in a conventional dryer and
 - fresh. Fresh raw material was
 - subjected immediately to extraction
 - with appropriate solvent. For the
 - second variant, the material was
 - distributed as a thin layer into trays
 and dried in an oven with air
 ventilation at a temperature 50°C.
 The duration of drying varies
 depending on the type of raw
 material from 8 to 24 h. In the first
 case freeze-drying is performed in
 a freeze-drier type TG-16.50
 ("Hochvacuum"-Germany) in
 automatic mode and duration – 24
 hours.

Extraction – As extractants
 were used the following organic
 solvents: isopropanol, 90%
 acetone and heptane. The
 correlation between plant material
 and solvent was 1:10 and for each
 variant adjustment was made
 based on moisture content.

Residual moisture content –
 The residual moisture content of
 the plant raw materials was
 measured with Sartorius Thermo
 Control balance YTC 01L with
 infrared heating.

Thin layer chromatography
 (TLC) – Qualitative analysis and

1 cm
F₂₅₄ (Merck),
60 µl.

TLC Silica gel 60
40
1:9 (v:v).

– *Method of Mean*
(Biehler et al., 2009).

450 nm.

(mol/l)

$$C \text{ (mol/l)} = \frac{A_{450} * Fd}{135310} \quad (1)$$

, A₄₅₀

Fd

(g/mol),

(g/l).

identification of carotenoids in
- extracts were carried out using thin
- layer chromatography. The
samples were sprayed as 10.0 mm
bands on TLC Silica gel 60 F₂₅₄
plates (Merck). Sample volumes
ranged between 40 and 60 µl.
Development was performed with
a mixture of petroleum ether:
benzene = 1 : 9 (v : v). After
development, the plate was dried
at ambient temperature and
observed in visible light.

*Quantitative determination of
carotenoids* - The method is based
on the average of the absorption
coefficients and the wavelength at
which the carotenoids have the
greatest absorption – *Method of
Mean* (Biehler et al., 2009).
Samples of the extracts were
diluted with the appropriate solvent
and the absorbance at 450 nm was
measured.

To calculate the average
carotenoid concentrations (mol/l),
the following equation was used:

where A₄₅₀ is the mean
absorbance maximum, and Fd - a
dilution factor. Using an average
molar mass (g/mol), results can
also be expressed as gram per
liter (g/l).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Three experimental variants
- were developed depending
3 | pretreatment of plant material:

Variant 1 (freeze-dried material), Variant 2 (dried material) and Variant 3 (fresh material). The results for the moisture content of the various samples, prior to submission for extraction are given in Table 1. As can be expected, lower moisture content is observed in the freeze-dried material - from 2.25 to 3.10 %.

Table 1. Moisture content in plant material at different variants of pretreatment (mean ± SD, n=3)

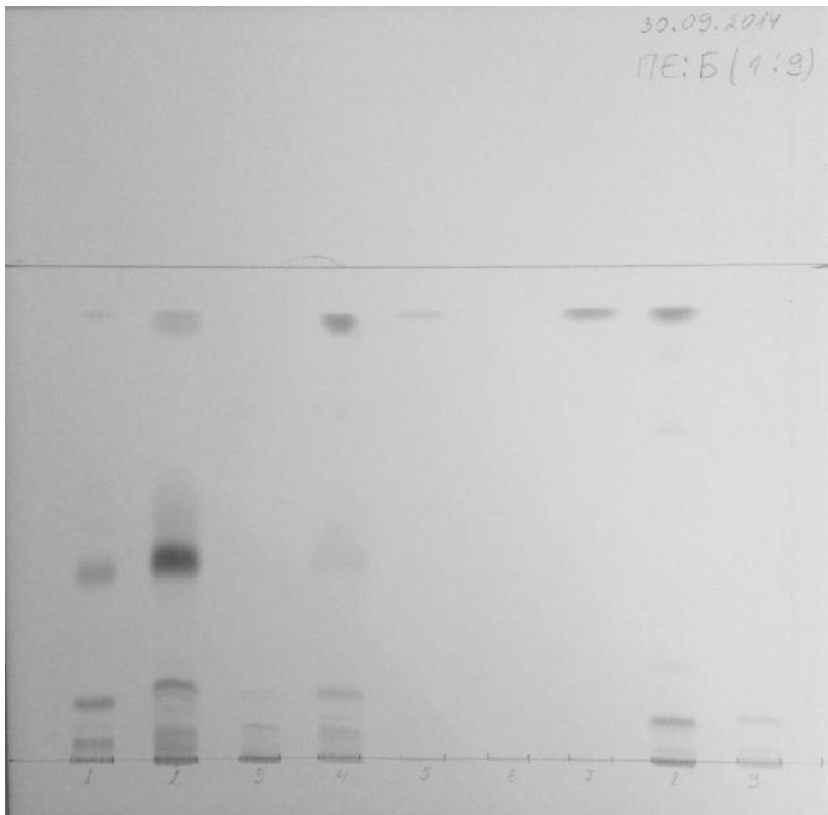
	Name	Moisture content (%)		
		1 Variant 1	2 Variant 2	3 Variant 3
1	Red pepper, fruit	3,10±0,20	6,54±0,43	89,99±1,20
3	Tomato, fruit	2,87± 0,15	7,05±0,41	92,05±0,96
4	Carrot, root	2,25±0,21	6,42±0,18	86,95±0,75
5	Pumpkin, fruit	2,85±0,30	6,90±0,28	90,05±1,03

For each of the variants, extraction with three kinds of solvents was conducted – 90% acetone, isopropanol and heptane. Before extraction variants 1 and 2 were ground to a particle size of 2 mm (grinder Fritch), and variant 3 was homogenized for 3 min with high speed homogenizer. To each of the samples was added a portion (1/2) of the corresponding solvent, and then they were treated with ultrasound for 30 min. After 24 hours at room temperature, centrifugation (2000

(2000 rpm, 10min)

rpm, 10min) and collecting of supernatant, the extraction was continued with the remainder of the solvent under the same parameters. The obtained extracts were united and stored in the dark until analysis.

Results from the thin layer chromatographic examination of acetone extracts from pepper, tomato and carrot (variations) are shown in Figure 1.



1. TLC ; 1 - ;
2 - ; 3 - ; 4 - ; 5 - ;
6 - ; 7 - ; 8 - ; 9 - ;

Fig. 1. TLC analysis of the acetone extracts: 1 – lyophilized pepper; 2 – dried pepper; 3 – fresh pepper; 4 – lyophilized tomato; 5 – dried tomato; 6 – fresh tomato ; 7 – lyophilized carrot; 8 – dried carrot; 9 – fresh carrot

0,92.

Rf =

Almost all samples were observed to have intense yellow or yellow-orange stripe with Rf = 0,92. This fraction corresponds to the β -carotene. In the sample of lyophilized carrot this stripe is the only one that occurs. Differences in the composition of the extracts were noticed, depending on the pre-treatment of the raw material. Almost no extraction of carotenoids was observed among the fresh raw materials. The extract of dried red pepper has a richer pigment composition than the lyophilized sample, while out of the three tomato variants the best results were observed through the extraction of lyophilized material.

The summarized results of the quantification of total carotenoids in each of the extracts obtained are presented graphically in Figure 2.

The comparative analysis of the results of Fig. 2 shows that out of the studied plant materials the greatest amount of carotenoids was observed in the extracts of dried red pepper. In this material large differences in extraction depending on the used extractant were reported (110 to 246 mg/l). The highest amounts were extracted with heptane. In tomato extracts contents of total carotenoids was relatively low.

Better results were obtained in a lyophilized material, extracted with 90% acetone (22 mg/l). Similarly, for carrot and pumpkin variants,

110 246 mg/l).

mg/l).

90%

(22

mg/l),
(30 35
(56 75 mg/l).

the highest values were reported in lyophilized material. In carrot no significant differences depending on the type of extractant were reported (30 to 35 mg/l), while the pumpkin samples extracted with acetone and isopropanol have a significantly higher yield (56 to 75 mg/l).

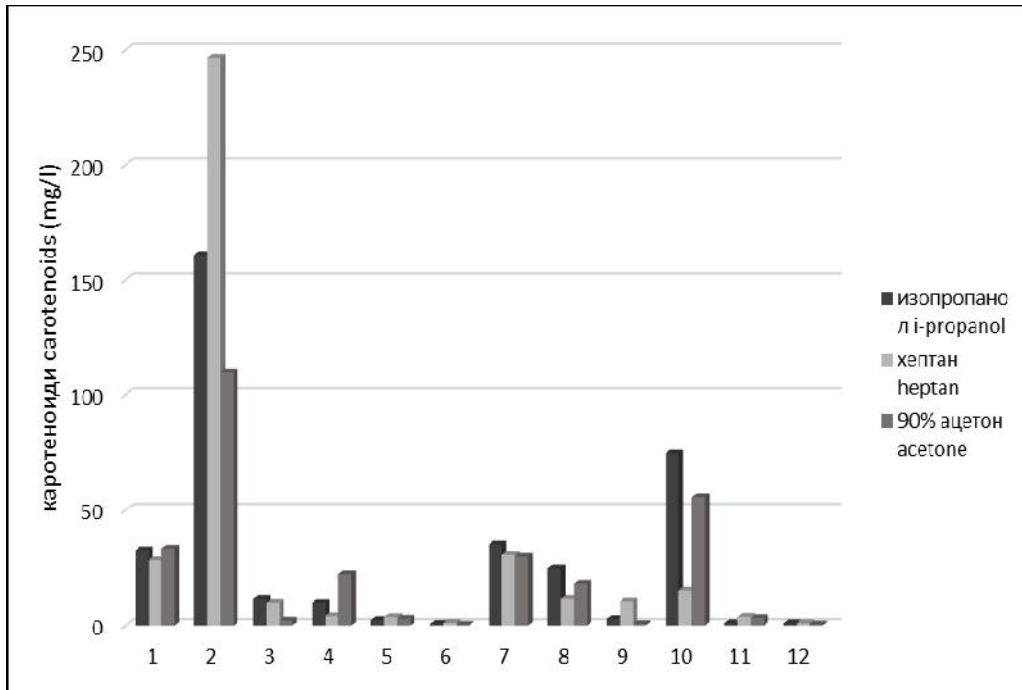


Fig. 2. Summarized data of the content of carotenoids in the extracts: 1 – lyophilized pepper; 2 – dried pepper; 3 – fresh pepper; 4 – lyophilized tomato; 5 – dried tomato; 6 – fresh tomato; 7 – lyophilized carrot; 8 – dried carrot; 9 – fresh carrot; 10 – lyophilized pumpkin.; 11 – dried pumpkin; 12 – fresh pumpkin

CONCLUSIONS

The yield of the carotenoids pigments depends on several

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factors:

1) Type of plant material. Of the studied material, the greatest amount of extractive substances were isolated from red pepper, followed by pumpkin and carrot. In red pepper pigment composition is the richest and includes a wide variety of carotenoids: capsanthin, capsorubin, capsanthin-5,6-epoxide, -cryptoxanthin, zeaxanthin, and -carotene. The combination of these components is the cause for the deep red color of the extract. On the other hand in the other two materials, the the total amount of carotenoids is less, but they are represented almost entirely as -carotene.

2) Pretreatment of raw material. The fresh raw materials are not suitable for extraction of the carotenoid pigments. Generally, the lyophilized samples give a higher yield, except for red pepper, wherein the best results were obtained after conventional drying. From an economic point of view, the conventional drying method is suitable for processing carrots and pumpkins (satisfactory yields at a lower price), but not for tomatoes.

3) Extractant used. Carotenoids are fat-soluble compounds and therefore organic solvents are suitable for their isolation.

Of the tested extractants, heptane is most suitable for the extraction

of red pepper, while for other raw materials good results were obtained with isopropanol.

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