PREPARATION AND STORAGE OF PINEAPPLE BLEND WATERMELON READY-TO-SERVE (RTS) BEVERAGE

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ABSTRACT

Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) is one of the under-utilized fruit having nutritional and medicinal values. Only a few value added products of watermelon fruit are available in the market of Sri Lanka. There is a need for the development of more value added products using this fruits. A Ready-To-Serve (RTS) fruit beverage is becoming popular among Sri Lankans which can be produced with simple and low cost technology. Therefore, this study was carried out to develop a RTS beverage using watermelon fruit juice.

Six recipes of pineapple blend watermelon RTS beverage (RTS beverage of 70, 75, 80, 85, 90 and 100% of watermelon juice and 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30% of pineapple juice were prepared with sugar, citric acid and 70 ppm of Sodium Metabisulphite (SMS), considering the findings of prelimary studies and Sri Lanka standards (SLS 729:1985) for RTS fruit beverages. The RTS beverages were assessed for physiochemical qualities, organoleptic characters and microbial test to evaluate the suitability of these beverages for consumption and for long shelf life.

The physio-chemical (titrable acidity, ascorbic acid, pH, total soluble solids (TSS) and total sugars) and organoleptic (colour, aroma, taste, consistency, absence of off-flavour and overall acceptability) qualities and total plate count were analyzed after formulation and during storage. The titrable acidity, ascorbic acid, total soluble solids (TSS) and total sugars of freshly made pineapple blend watermelon RTS beverages increased while pH decreased with the increased concentration of pineapple juice from 10-30%. Nine point hedonic scale ranking method was used to evaluate organoleptic characters. According to Tukey's test, the mean scores for all assessed

sensory characters varying significantly (p<0.05) in the freshly made pineapple blend watermelon RTS beverages.

Based on the quality characters, the most preferred pineapple blend watermelon RTS beverages with 85% watermelon juice and 15% pineapple juice, 80% watermelon juice and 20% pineapple juice and 75% watermelon juice and 25% pineapple juice combinations were selected and subjected to storage studies in ambient temperature of 30°C. Analysis was carried out 2 weeks interval throughout the experiment period of 3 months.

The findings of the storage study revealed that, the decline trend was observed in the ascorbic acid, pH, total soluble solids (TSS) and total sugars with storage period and an increasing trend was observed in titrable acidity with storage period for all the treatments. The results of physio-chemical analysis revealed that, there were significant differences (p<0:05) between the treatments and the period of storage the sensory analysis also showed that there were significant differences (p<0.05) for the organoleptic characters between the treatments. The highest overall acceptability was observed in the RTS beverage with 80% watermelon juice and 20% pineapple juice combinations.

Based on the results of physio-chemical characters, sensory attributes and microbial tests, the RTS beverage with 80% watermelon juice and 20% pineapple juice combinations as the best treatment. This RTS beverage could be stored at ambient condition for 3 months without significant losses in quality attributes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABS	IRACTI
ACK	NOWLEDGEMENTII
TAB	LE OF CONTENTSIV
LIST	OF TABLESXI
LIST	OF FIGURESXII
LIST	OF PLATESXIII
СНА	PTER 01 - INTRODUCTION1
СНА	PTER 02 - LITERATURE REVIEW
	2.1 WATERMELON
	2.1.1 Taxonomy 5
	2.1.2 Origin and distribution
	2.1.3 Description
	2.1.4 Economic Importance and uses of Watermelon
	2.1.5 Varieties
	2.1.6 Cultivation
	2.1.6.1 Sri Lanka
	2.1.6.2 World
	2.2 FLOWERING, FRUITING, HARVESTING AND YIELD
	2.2.1 Flowering
	2.2.2 Fruiting
	2.2.3 Harvest index and harvesting methods
	2.2.4 Yield and Storage 10

2.3 WATERMELON FRUIT 10
2.3.1 Watermelon Composition10
2.3.2 Lycopene 11
2.3.3 Sugar 12
2.4 WATERMELON JUICE 12
2.4.1 Watermelon juice extraction methods
2.4.2 Limitation in watermelon juice extraction
2.5 PINEAPPLE
2.5.1 Description
2.5.2 Pineapple juice and its composition
2.6 BLENDED JUICE 14
2.6.1 Postulating of blending14
2.6.2 Importance of blend juices 15
2.7 READY-TO-SERVE (RTS) FRUIT BEVERAGES 16
2.7.1 Basic Ingredients of RTS Beverages
2.7.1.1 Fruit
2.7.1.2 Sweetening ingredients 16
2.7.1.3 Portable water
2.7.2 Optional ingredients of RTS beverages 17
2.7.2.1 Preservatives
2.7.2.2 Acidulants 17
2.7.2.3 Others
2.7.3 Requirements to be fulfilled in RTS Beverages

2.7.3.1 Fruit ingredient
2.7.3.2 Appearance 17
2.7.3.3. Flavour and odour
2.7.3.4 Packaging material
2.7.3.5 Other Ingredients
2.7.4 Specification of RTS fruit beverages
2.8 PREPARATION OF RTS FRUIT BEVERAGES
2.8.1 Selection of Fruits
2.8.2 Cleaning of Fruits 19
2.8.3 Preparation of juice 19
2.8.4 Mixing
2.8.5 Heating
2.8.6 Hot filling
2.8.7 Capping
2.9 MICROBIOLOGY OF FRUIT DRINKS
2.9.1 Microbiology Limits of the RTS Fruit Beverages
2.10 SENSORY EVALUATION 22
2.10.1 Tests used to achieve the objective
2.10.1.1 Hedonic Rating Test
2.10.2 Qualities assessed by sensory tests
2.10.2.1 Colour
2.10.2.2 Taste
2.10.2.3 Aroma
2.10.2.3 Aroma 24 2.10.2.4 Absence of off-flavour 24
2.10.2.3 Aroma 24 2.10.2.4 Absence of off-flavour 24 2.10.2.5 Consistency 24

2.10.3 Benefits of using Sensory Evaluation
2.10.4. Problem associated with Sensory Evaluation
2.10.5. Rules of Sensory Evaluation
CHAPTER 03 - MATERIALS AND METHODS
3.1 MATERIALS
3.1.1 Materials used for the Study
3.1.2 Materials collection
3.2 METHODS 28
3.2.1 Preparation of Raw materials
3.2.1.1 Extraction of watermelon juice
3.2.1.2 Extraction of pineapple juice
3.2.1.3 Preparation of RTS beverage
3.2.2 Sterilization glass bottles
3.2.3 Sterilization of other equipments and materials
3.3. PRELIMINARY STUDIES 29
3.3.1 Development of Pineapple blend Water melon
, RTS Beverage Recipes
3.4 CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF PINEAPPLE BLEND
WATERMELON RTS BEVERAGES
, 3.4.1 Determination of Titrable acidity
3.4.1.1 Principle
3.4.1.2 Materials
3.4.1.3 Procedure
3.4.1.4 Calculations
3.4.2 Determination of pH 32
3.4.2.1 Materials

3.4.2.2 Procedure
3.4.3 Determination of Ascorbic Acid
3.4.3.1 Principle
3.4.3.2 Materials
3.4.3.3 Procedure
3.4.3.4 Calculation
3.4.4 Determination of Total Soluble Solids
3.4.4.1 Materials
3.4.4.2 Procedure
3.4.5 Determination of Total Sugar (Lane-Eynon method)
3.4.5.1 Principle
3.4.5.2 Material
3.4.5.3 Procedure
3.4.5.4 Calculation
3.5 STORAGE STUDIES
3.6 MICROBIOLOGICAL TEST 36
3.6.1 Preparation of Nutrient Agar
3.6.2 Preparation and Dilution Series of the RTS
Beverage sample
3.6.3 Inoculation
3.6.4 Identification of Microbes 37
3.7 SENSORY EVALUATION
3.7.1 Materials for Sensory Evaluation
3.7.2 Coding the Samples
3.7.3 Serving the Samples
3.8 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS 39

CHAPTER 04 - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 PREPARATION OF PINEAPPLE BLEND WATERMELON
RTS FRUIT BEVERAGE 40
4.2 PRELIMINARY STUDIES 40
4.3 QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF FRESHLY MADE
RTS BEVERAGES 41
4.3.1 Chemical Qualities of Freshly Made
RTS Beverages 41
4.3.1.1 Titrable Acidity 41
4.3.1.2 Ascorbic Acid
4.3.1.3 pH
4.3.1.4 Total Soluble Solids (TSS) 44
4.3.1.5 Total sugar
4.3.2 Sensory qualities of Freshly Made RTS Beverages
4.3.2.1 Colour
4.3.2.2 Aroma 46
4.3.2.3 Taste
4.3.2.4 Consistency 46
4.3.2.5 Absence of off-flavour
4.3.2.6 Overall acceptability
4.4 CHANGES IN QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF RTS
BEVERAGES DURING STORAGE
4.4.1 Chemical Qualities of Beverages at storage
4.4.1.1 Tirable Acidity 49
4.4.1.2 Ascorbic Acid 50
4.4.1.3 pH 51

4.4.1.4 Total sugar 52
4.4.1.4 Total Soluble Solids (TSS)
4.4.2 Sensory qualities of RTS Beverages during Storage
4.4.2.1 Colour
4.4.2.2 Aroma
4.4.2.3 Taste
4.4.2.4 Consistency 55
4.4.2.5 Absence of off-flavour
4.4.2.6 Overall Acceptability
4.5 MICROBIOLOGICAL TESTS FOR RTS BEVERAGES 56
4.5.1. Microbial Test for Freshly Made RTS Beverages
4.5.2 Microbial Test for RTS Beverages Stored at
Ambient Temperature after One Month
4.5.3 Microbial Test for RTS Beverages Stored at
Ambient temperature after Two month
4.5.4 Test for RTS Beverages Stored at ambient
Temperature after Three Months
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CHAPTER 05 - CONCLUSION
SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 61
REFERENCES
APPENDIX