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**THESIS
MASTERS IN TECHNOLOGY
(BIOTECHNOLOGY & BIOPROCESS ENGINEERING)**

**OPTIMISATION
OF
TOMATO PASTE PRODUCTION, STORAGE AND USE**

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ABSTRACT

The manufacture of tomato products is one of the key activities of Heinz-Watties. The optimisation of tomato paste in terms of its production, storage and use is important to understand as it is the base ingredient to many of the 21 major food brands Heinz-Watties supply in New Zealand. This thesis describes the work carried out to characterise tomato paste products in terms of the quality and quantity, correlations that exist between variables, the process variability at Heinz-Watties Hastings and formulation using tomato paste.

This thesis has identified that tomato paste needs to be accurately characterised in terms of both quality and quantity. Characteristics which influence the quality of tomato paste are factors such as the flavour, sweetness and viscosity to which the °Brix, total solids and insoluble or soluble solids must be known. °Brix measurement is affected by insoluble solids (which scatter light) resulting in an inaccurate reading when employing the refractometer °Brix method. To solve this, the tomato paste must be centrifuged in order to separate the insoluble from soluble portion within the tomato paste.

Colour, acidity and microbial stability are also important quality characteristics of tomato paste. These are measured by specific tomato paste colorimetric methods, pH and Howard mould count methodologies respectively. The quantity of tomato paste produced or the amount to use within recipes has been identified in this thesis to be accurately measured by measuring the tomato solids, insoluble and soluble solids and °Brix. This is due to the tomato paste being made up of total tomato solids and water which can be further broken down into solids which are insoluble (fibrous) & solids which are soluble.

Several different methods were identified within the thesis for measuring total solids. The best method in terms of repeatability was identified to be the vacuum oven method, however due to the twelve hour wait prior to obtaining results coupled with the large amount of equipment needed this would be restricted to a lab environment. Within the factory processing environment the best total solids method to employ would be that of the microwave oven method. Further testing beyond the scope of this thesis would need to be completed to perfect the methodology.

Correlations between variables were also explored within this thesis, to save time and equipment usage within the processing environment or to give an indication of variables during production. For example specific gravity can be measured instead of total solids (as long as the insoluble solids portion is known) and with the use of correlations the other parameters can be predicted. Further experimental validation beyond this thesis, using Heinz-Watties tomato paste does need to occur prior to use.

Other correlations investigations were that of the variables during dilution. The °Brix levels and viscosity were found to not change linearly during dilution. Therefore, by constructing simple mechanistic models on the interactions of the °Brix levels and viscosity on the proportions of insoluble and soluble solids simple equations have been devised within this thesis to allow the prediction of these parameters after dilution.

The current process of producing tomato paste at Heinz-Watties was characterised to identify the extent and cause of process variability. This work showed that although total solids levels are well controlled, the ratio of insoluble solids to total solids is not. The cause of this was most likely due to poor control over the break process and the extent of enzymatic pectin hydrolysis that occurs. Some suggestions on online measurement options to enable better control of this were explored within this thesis, such as, measuring specific gravity using an online densitometer (Coriolis mass flow meter) and to use previously mentioned correlations to determine total solids. Or alternatively online viscosity by the use of a tubular viscometer or refractive index meter.

Further work should be carried out beyond this thesis to investigate how tomato ripeness and break processing conditions could be controlled to ensure reduced variability in the ratio of insoluble solids to total solids. This is the key to good control of tomato paste and diluted tomato paste viscosity.

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CONTENTS PAGE

Chapter.	DESCRIPTION	Pg.
	Abstract	i
	Acknowledgements	ii
	Contents Page	iv
	List of Figures	viii
	List of Tables	xi
1	Project Overview	1
2	Review of Literature	2
2.1	Introduction	2
2.2	Definitions	4
2.3	Composition	5
	2.3.1 <i>Composition of tomatoes</i>	5
	2.3.1.1 Structure and major constituents of the tomato fruit	5
	2.3.1.2 Water	7
	2.3.1.3 Carbohydrates	7
	2.3.1.4 Protein and fat	9
	2.3.1.5 Nutrients, vitamins & acids	9
	2.3.1.6 Carotenoids & chlorophylls	11
	2.3.2 <i>Composition of tomato paste</i>	12
	2.3.2.1 Water	13
	2.3.2.2 Carbohydrates	13
	2.3.2.3 Protein	14
	2.3.2.4 Nutrients	14
	2.3.2.5 Vitamins & acids	15
	2.3.2.6 Carotenoids & chlorophylls	15
	2.3.2.6.1 Lycopene	15
2.4	Chemical Changes in Tomato Systems	17
	2.4.1 <i>Changes during ripening</i>	17
	2.4.2 <i>Pectin & enzyme activity</i>	18
	2.4.3 <i>Changes during processing</i>	19

2.5	Physical Properties & Measurements	21
	2.5.1 <i>Variety</i>	21
	2.5.2 <i>Soluble solids</i>	22
	2.5.3 <i>Total Solids</i>	23
	2.5.4 <i>Colour</i>	25
	2.5.5 <i>Density Predictions</i>	27
	2.5.6 <i>Rheology</i>	28
	2.5.6.1 Experimental data and rheological model fitting	29
	2.5.6.2 Viscosity	41
2.6	Production Process	43
	2.6.1 <i>Tomatoes are received from the field</i>	43
	2.6.2 <i>Preparation of tomatoes for processing</i>	44
	2.6.3 <i>Hot break process</i>	45
	2.6.4 <i>Warm break process</i>	45
	2.6.5 <i>Packaging of the tomato paste for later use</i>	45
	2.6.6 <i>Flow chart</i>	47
2.7	Quality	48
	2.7.1 <i>Quality within the field</i>	49
	2.7.1.1 Soil-Borne Micro-organisms	49
	2.7.2 <i>Quality of the field</i>	50
	2.7.2.1 Field Diseases	50
	2.7.3 <i>Quality in processing</i>	51
3	Characterisation of Tomato Products	54
3.1	Introduction	54
3.2	Identification of key properties for measurement	55
3.3	Separation of the pulp and serum fractions of tomato paste	65
3.4	Soluble solids measurement	66
	3.4.1 <i>Brix measurement principles</i>	66
	3.4.1.1 Operation	66
	3.4.1.2 Calibration	67
	3.4.1.3 Mechanism	67
	3.4.1.4 Time & temperature	68
	3.4.2 <i>Initial investigations</i>	69
	3.4.3 <i>Effect of time on °Brix readings</i>	71
	3.4.4 <i>Effect of temperature on °Brix readings</i>	72
	3.4.4.1 Methodology	72
	3.4.4.2 Results	72
	3.4.5 <i>Effect of insoluble solids on °Brix measurements</i>	74
3.5	Total solids Measurement	78
	3.5.1 <i>Methods</i>	79
	3.5.1.1 FAO	79
	3.5.1.2 MOS	79
	3.5.1.3 VOS	79
	3.5.1.4 Freeze	80

3.6	Insoluble solids measurement	83
3.7	pH measurement	85
3.8	Colour measurement	86
3.9	Mould count measurement	87
3.10	Conclusions	88
4	Correlations Between Variables	90
4.1	SG and TS	91
	4.1.1 <i>Literature</i>	91
	4.1.1.1 Dr Andy Crawford's correlation	91
	4.1.1.2 Tomato Bulletin data	92
	4.1.1.3 Heinz Watties Analytical Bench Manual	92
	4.1.2 <i>Modelling</i>	94
	4.1.3 <i>Temperature</i>	98
	4.1.4 <i>Comparisons</i>	99
	4.1.5 <i>Experimental data</i>	100
	4.1.6 <i>Inline mass-flow meter</i>	102
4.2	°Brix, SS, IS and TS	103
	4.2.1 <i>Modelling</i>	103
	4.2.2 <i>Experimental</i>	105
4.3	Viscosity	106
	4.3.1 <i>Modelling</i>	106
	4.3.2 <i>Experimental</i>	110
	4.3.2.1 Method	110
	4.3.2.2 Results	111
	4.3.2.2.1 Power law	111
	4.3.2.2.2 Behaviour index	112
	4.3.2.2.3 Consistency index	113
	4.3.3 <i>Viscosity Conclusion</i>	116
4.4	Correlation Conclusions	117
	4.4.1 <i>SG vs TS</i>	117
	4.4.2 <i>°Brix</i>	117
	4.4.3 <i>Viscosity</i>	118
5	Process Variability	120
5.1	Long term variability over a tomato paste production season	120
	5.1.1 <i>°Brix</i>	121
	5.1.2 <i>Total solids</i>	122
	5.1.3 <i>Specific gravity</i>	123
	5.1.4 <i>Bostwick consistency</i>	125
	5.1.5 <i>More detailed examination of in-plant variability</i>	127

5.2	Preliminary investigation on causes on variability in insoluble solid levels	130
5.2.1	<i>Pectin levels in initial fruit</i>	130
5.2.2	<i>Ripeness of fruit</i>	130
5.2.3	<i>Proportion of fruit ripeness</i>	132
5.2.4	<i>Break tank operation</i>	133
5.2.5	<i>Fruit variety variability through variety differences</i>	133
5.2.6	<i>Post production storage</i>	134
5.3	On-line measurement of process variability	135
5.4	Conclusions	140
6	Formulation	141
6.1	Introduction	141
6.2	Derivation of equations	142
6.2.1	<i>Dilution of total, soluble and insoluble solids</i>	142
6.2.2	<i>Dilution with respect to °Brix</i>	143
6.2.3	<i>Effect of dilution on specific gravity (density)</i>	146
6.2.4	<i>Effect of dilution on apparent viscosity</i>	148
6.3	Experimental validation of dilution equations	150
6.3.1	<i>Dilution of total, soluble and insoluble solids</i>	150
6.3.2	<i>Dilution with respect to °Brix</i>	152
6.3.3	<i>Effect of dilution on specific gravity (density)</i>	153
6.3.4	<i>Effect of dilution on apparent viscosity</i>	154
6.4	Conclusions	156
7	Conclusions & Recommendations	159
	References	168
	Appendices	176
	Appendix One. Varieties of tomatoes used by Heinz Watties Ltd	176
	Appendix Two. Tomato paste process flow chart	177

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure.	Description	Pg.
2.1	Cross-Section of a Tomato Fruit	5
2.2	Shear rate verses apparent viscosity for 25% and 30% total solids hot break tomato paste at 32°C	29
2.3	Graph of shear stress vs temperature for 25% and 30% total solids (%TS) for hot break tomato paste at a constant shear rate of 500s ⁻¹ (Temperature Range 32.3-82.2°C)	30
2.4	K values for hot break (HB) and cold break (CB) tomato paste vs total solids (%TS) using exponential and power equations to determine K (consistency index).	33
2.5	Apparent viscosity vs shear rate for hot break and cold break tomato paste using the simple power law as per Rao <i>et al.</i> (1981) and Harper & El Sahrigi (1965)	34
2.6	Yield stress vs total solids for hot break (HB), cold break (CB) and all concentrates of tomato paste	37
2.7	Apparent viscosity vs shear rate for hot break (HB) and cold break (CB) tomato paste using the Casson model	38
2.8	Shear stress vs shear rate for cold break tomato paste using the Herschel-Bulkley model (TS=30%)	40
2.9	Flow chart of tomato paste processing	47
2.10	Mould count to the %minimum rot (by weight) in tomato paste samples as per Goose & Binsted (1973)	52
3.1	Munsell colour system	57
3.2	Production of hexenal products	61
3.3	Refractometer working principle	68
3.4	°Brix vs time for whole warm break tomato paste	71
3.5	°Brix vs g insoluble solids/g tomato paste	75
3.6	Quality parameter vs g insoluble solids/g tomato paste	76
3.7	°Brix vs quality	77
3.8	Progressive decrease in °Brix of the wash waters as the insoluble solids fraction is washed and re-centrifuged in order to isolate the insoluble solids fraction	83

4.1	Specific gravity (SG) vs %total solids (%TS) using Dr Crawford, Tomato Bulletin and Heinz Watties analytical manual data correlations at 25°C	93
4.2	Specific gravity (SG) vs % total solids (%TS) at differing insoluble solids to total solids ratios (IS/TS) at 25°C using Choi & Okos (1986) model with literature data overlaid.	96
4.3	Specific gravity (SG) vs % total solids (%TS) using Choi & Okos (1986) density functions at different temperatures	98
4.4	Specific gravity (SG) vs % total solids (%TS) at different ratios of insoluble solids to total solids (IS/TS) for warm break tomato paste	100
4.5	Specific gravity (SG) vs %total solids (%TS) of experimental values with Choi & Okos (1986) model (using CRC Handbook 1988) density values) and literature data at differing IS/TS ratios overlaid (also repeated in Chapter 5)	101/124
4.6	°Brix vs fraction of total solids (X_{TS}) over a range of X_{IS}/X_{TS} typical of that of warm break tomato paste at 30% total solids	104
4.7	°Brix vs total solids fraction (X_{TS}) at differing X_{IS}/X_{TS} fractions of experimental data and model data overlaid	105
4.8	Apparent viscosity vs total solids (%TS)	109
4.9	Log apparent viscosity vs log shear rate	111
4.10	Flow behaviour index (n) vs insoluble solids content (% X_{IS})	112
4.11	Consistency index (k) vs insoluble solids (X_{IS})	113
4.12	Log insoluble solids content (X_{IS}) vs Log consistency index (k)	114
4.13	Arrhenius plot (ln(viscosity) vs 1/T(°K)	115
4.14	Prediction of apparent viscosity vs % insoluble solids content for tomato paste at 500s ⁻¹ and actual experimental data overlaid	116
5.1	°Brix vs samples over the production period of 20/1/01 to 25/4/01	121
5.2	Total solids (%TS) vs samples over the production period of 20/1/01 to 25/4/01	122
5.3	Specific gravity (SG) vs samples over the production period of 20/1/01 to 25/4/01	123

5.4	Bostwick consistency vs samples over the production period of 20/1/01 to 25/4/01	125
5.5	Bostwick consistency vs specific gravity (SG) over the production period of 20/1/01 to 25/4/01	126
5.6	Solids content (X_{IS} , X_{SS} and X_{TS}) vs time of processing	128
5.7	Fraction of insoluble solids to total solids (X_{IS}/X_{TS}) vs time of processing	128
5.8	Total solids (%TS) vs time of processing	129
5.9	Enzyme activity vs ripeness of tomatoes entering the tomato paste process	131
5.10	Green and breaker tomatoes proportion within truckloads vs time from 17/4/00 0:05 to 21/4/00 15:11 (approximately 3-4 truckloads per hour)	132
6.1	$^{\circ}\text{Brix}(\text{undiluted})/^{\circ}\text{Brix}(\text{diluted})$ vs water added (W)	144
6.2	$^{\circ}\text{Brix}(\text{u})/^{\circ}\text{Brix}(\text{d})$ ratio vs amount of water added (W) with different insoluble solids contents ($r = X_{IS(\text{u})}/X_{TS(\text{u})}$) of the original paste changing	145
6.3	Specific gravity predicted (SG) vs amount of water added (W) with different insoluble solids contents (X_{IS}/X_{TS})	147
6.4	Apparent viscosity ratio vs dilution	149
6.5	Total solids (%TS) vs water added (%) with average model overlaid	150
6.6	$^{\circ}\text{Brix}$ vs water added (%) with average model overlaid	152
6.7	Specific gravity (SG) vs water added	153
6.8	Apparent viscosity ratio of diluted tomato paste/undiluted tomato paste vs water added	154

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Description	Pg.
2.1	Composition of a tomato	6
2.2	Daily dietary allowance of nutrients for USA and NZ	10
2.3	Composition of tomato paste	12
2.4	Polysaccharide content within an average tomato and tomato paste	22
2.5	Simple power law experimental values used in Figure 2.2	31
2.6	Constants for consistency index equations for hot break and cold break tomato paste at 25°C	32
2.7	Coefficient values for determining yield stress for the Casson model (eqn 2.5)	37
2.8	Variables for the Casson model as used in Figure 2.7	38
2.9	Variables for Herschel-Bulkley model used in Figure 2.8	39
3.1	Repeatability of °Brix measurements	69
3.2	Summary of °Brix measurements over a range of temperatures	72
3.3	Total solid method comparison	78
3.4	Summary of total solid measurement results	80
3.5	Advantages and disadvantages of the four total solid methods	81
3.6	Repeatability of the pH measurement	85
3.7	Precision of colour measurements using the Minolta digital colorimeter	86
3.8	Precision of the Howard mould count	87
4.1	Variables used in Rao <i>et. al.</i> (1981)	109
5.1	Specifications for Endress and Hauser coriolis mass flowmeter; model Promass 63I	136

1.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Tomato paste is used as a base ingredient to many of the 21 major food brands Heinz-Watties supply and it is estimated at having an input value of \$4.8 million per annum in factories around New Zealand. At the Hastings site of Heinz-Watties, tomato paste is produced during the months of November to March (depending on harvesting of the tomatoes) and used all year round for products such as spaghetti, baked beans, soups, meat and pasta sauces. During the time tomato paste is not being used, it is stored aseptically in 200L drums outside, within the factory premises.

The optimal utilisation of the tomato paste is reliant on the following issues:

- i) The adequate control of the paste quality during paste manufacture.
- ii) The accurate recording of stock levels in terms of quantity and quality of the stored product
- iii) The appropriate calculation of the amount of paste used during the formulation of the final products.

Each of the aspects listed above are dependent on the accurate characterisation of the tomato paste that is produced. This requires appropriate measurement methods which are being used that are repeatable, have the accuracy needed and are also suitable for use in an industrial environment. If such methods are available then the stock levels would accurately reflect the amount of tomato paste ingredient is in storage and the manufacturing process could be better controlled to produce more consistent paste quality. In addition to this the most appropriate measure of the paste composition could be used to calculate the amount of paste needed to achieve the required formulated product functionality (in terms of such aspects as flavour and colour).

The specific aims of this project were to firstly determine the most appropriate measurement methods for complete tomato paste characterisation. These methods were then used to assess the degree of variability of tomato paste production during the 2000 season at Heinz-Watties Australasia, King Street, Hastings. The project also investigated how physical and compositional properties of tomato paste are correlated and how they can be related to the functionality of formulated products.