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EFFECTS OF POSTHARVEST TREATMENTS ON STORAGE QUALITY OF LIME (CITRUS LATIFOLIA TANAKA) FRUIT

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Abstract

Limes (*Citrus latifolia* Tanaka) are an attractive fruit crop but generally suffer a loss in value as their colour changes from green to yellow. Various approaches were taken to slow degreening including low temperature storage, use of controlled atmosphere (CA) environments, and treatment of fruit with physiologically active agents such as gibberellic acid (GA₃). However, the cold storage life of lime fruit can also be restricted by a number of factors including chilling injury (CI) and rots. Various pretreatments such as the use of fungicide (thiabendazole, TBZ) and hot water dipping (HWD) and several postharvest regimes based on temperature conditioning (step down technique) and intermittent warming (IW) regimes were further investigated to protect the fruit against rots and CI during cold storage. The objective of this study was to determine what storage conditions and pretreatments would permit long term storage of NZ limes with minimal loss of quality.

CA storage (10% O₂ with 0 or 3% CO₂) was compared to regular air storage (RA) and IW (varying durations) treatments across a range of temperatures. Although some CA storage regimes could assist in delaying degreening, none of the treatments provided protection against CI. CA storage at 3% CO₂ delayed yellowing and gave better fruit quality than the low CO₂ treatment. High CO₂ CA treatments at 5 or 7°C decreased the rate of colour change compared to other constant temperature treatments but did not protect against CI. CI limited storage of fruit under all conditions at constant low temperatures.

Including fungicide (TBZ) in the dip water reduced the incidence of rots and had a secondary effect on protection against CI of lime fruit. However, fungicide use may sometimes exacerbate stresses such as heat injury on lime peel. Hot water dipping has been shown previously to hold potential as a storage pretreatment, but this technique may give risk of damage on produce if it is dipped at too high a temperature. Some HWD treatments did delay degreening, but there was no major effect on CI. HWD at > 47°C for ≥ 4 min caused heat injury to NZ limes. All HWD treatments showed severe CI (>15%) after 10 weeks of cold storage; and HWD fruit stored under RA at 13°C did not

show any CI but showed some pitting ($\leq 10\%$) and degreened rapidly. Overall no suitable HWD treatment for limes was identified in this trial.

This project identified the critical periods and temperature conditions for successful IW of limes. The IW conditions successfully delayed losses in quality of lime fruit provided the first warming period was applied within the first 20 days of storage. At least 2-cycle IW was required to maintain lime quality during long term storage. Some benefits were found after just one cycle of IW treatment but there were not enough to extend storage life.

IW storage benefited fruit quality and provided the highest overall fruit quality of all postharvest treatments tested. The degreening of lime during cold storage at 5°C could be delayed by IW treatments in which the fruit were stored at 5°C for 12, 16 or 20 days then moved to 15°C for 2 days. Both 2- and 6-cycle IW treatments proved satisfactory for maintaining colour on the green and yellow side of lime for 12 weeks of storage. IW treatments in which fruit were warmed within 20 day of cold storage did not show significant CI symptoms after 12 weeks of storage, and the 2-cycle IW treatment showed only a low percentage of CI fruit at this time. A 2-cycle IW treatment was almost as effective as 6 cycles, and a step down treatment also showed some promising results, indicating that it may be possible to further optimize the time and duration of variable temperature storage regimes to meet both quality requirements and the constraints of temperature management in commercial coolstores. The application of these regimes to other citrus species may also be beneficial. There are a number of physiological explanations that may account for the effectiveness of IW including positive effects on heat shock protein (HSP) and cell membranes. Nutritional factors such as vitamin C and flavonoid compositions were also investigated and fruit that did not show visible CI were found to retain at-harvest levels of these factors. Practical ways of implementing IW are discussed.

In order to understand the effectiveness of IW on degreening, I used a logistic model to describe degreening of lime peel. This modelling approach demonstrated that IW did not change the mechanism of lime degreening based on the similarity between the hue values predicted by the model and the actual hue values measured during lime storage. The activation energy (E_a) for degreening based on either hue angle (H°) or colour score (CS) during air storage was estimated to be ~53 and ~86 KJ.mol⁻¹, respectively. Relationship

between colour (H° and CS) and chlorophyll content, relationship between reflectance spectra (%), chlorophyll content and H° of lime fruit stored under different conditions are presented and discussed. This data allowed deduction to be made about the changes in individual pigments that are driving colour change during "good" and "bad" storage.

Effects of postharvest treatments on storage quality of lime (Citrus latifolia Tanaka) fruit

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Effects of postharvest treatments on storage quality of lime (Citrus latifolia Tanaka) fruit

Abbreviations

a* CIE Lab 'a' value measured by a colorimeter

ABA abscisic acid

ACC 1-aminocyclopropane carboxylic acid

ANOVA analysis of variance
APX ascorbate peroxidase

b* CIE Lab 'b' value measured by a colorimeter

°C degrees Celsius

CAT catalase

 $\begin{array}{ll} \text{cm} & \text{centimetre} \\ C_2H_4 & \text{ethylene} \\ C_{20}H_{39} & \text{phytol} \\ C^* & \text{chroma} \end{array}$

CA controlled atmosphere

 C_a chlorophyll a C_b chlorophyll b C_{x+c} carotenoids

CF compression firmness

d day

PFR Plant and Food Research

CI chilling injury
CO₂ carbon dioxide

CS colour score

DNA deoxyribonucleic acid

DSM diosmin

e exponential

E_a activation energy

EB extraction buffer

Eq. equation ERC eriocitrin

°F degrees Fahrenheit

FC fluorescent compound

FW fresh weight

GA₃ gibberellic acid

GAs gibberellins

GC gas chromatography

GR glutathione reductase

hr hour

H° hue angle

 H°_{C} H°_{CR200} (hue angle measured by chromameter CR200)

H°_S H°_{Spectrophotometer} (hue angle measured by spectrophotometer CM-2600d)

H- ∞ maximum hue

 $H+\infty$ minimum hue

H1 Harvest 1

H2 Harvest 2

H3 Harvest 3

H4 Harvest 4

H5 Harvest 5

HI heat injury

HPLC high performance liquid chromatography

HSP hesperidin

HWD hot water dipping

HWRB hot water rinsing and brushing

IRF isorhoifolin

IW intermittent warming

J Joule

K degrees Kelvin

k reaction rate constant

 k_0 preexponential Arrhenius constant (time⁻¹)

kD kiloDaltons

kg kilogram

kJ kiloJoule

KOAc potassium acetate

L* Lightness measured by a colorimeter

l litre

LCMS liquid chromatography mass spectrometry

LSD least significant difference

MA modified atmosphere

MAV measurement area value

MeOH methanol MET methionine

Mg²⁺ magnesium ion

mm millimetre
min minute
mol mole

microgram μg milligram mg microlitre μl ml millilitre n.d. no data nl nanolitre nm nanometre NPO neoponcirin NRG naringin **NRT** narirutin

PAs polyamines

 O_2

PCA principal components analysis

PC1 principal component 1
PC2 principal component 2
PGRs plant growth regulators

oxygen

ppm parts per million

Put putrescine

R the universal gas constant

R² R-squared value

R800 reflectance at 800 nm
R700 reflectance at 700 nm

R680 reflectance at 680 nm R520 reflectance at 520 nm R480 reflectance at 480 nm

RA regular air

RH relative humidity
RNA ribonucleic acid

ROS reactive oxygen species

RP rusty pigment

RTN rutin

rpm revolutions per minute

s second

SAM S-adenosylmethionine

SAM dec. S-adenosylmethionine decarboxylase

SCE spectral component excluded

SCI spectral component included

SE standard error

SOD superoxide dismutase

Spd spermidine Spm spermine

SSC soluble solids content or Brix°

t time

 t_0 reference time at day 0

 t_{ref} reference time (d)

T temperature (Kelvin)

TA titratable acidity

TBZ thiabendazole

TC temperature conditioning

UV ultra violet light