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Food preservation

Dr. Bhakti Anoop Kshirsagar

Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology, Hind Seva Mandal's Pemraj Sarda College, Ahmednagar, Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University, Maharashtra, India

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Bhakti Anoop Kshirsagar

Abstract

Food preservation is the practice of extending the shelf life and maintaining the quality of food by inhibiting microbial growth and delaying natural enzymatic and chemical reactions. Various techniques such as heat treatment, refrigeration, and the use of preservatives like organic acids are employed to achieve this. These methods not only prevent spoilage but also ensure that nutritional content, flavor, and texture are preserved. With increasing consumer demand for minimally processed and preservative-free foods, modern food preservation focuses on innovative approaches that enhance safety and extend shelf life without compromising product quality.

Keywords: Food preservation, shelf-life extension, microbial inhibition, enzymatic and chemical reactions, modern preservation techniques

Introduction

The process of treating food to prevent or delay rotting, loss of quality, edibleness, or nutritional value is known as food preservation. Food preservation is the process of processing and preserving food in order to prolong its shelf life by preventing or delaying food deterioration, loss of quality, edibility, or nutritional content. In order to preserve food, it is typically necessary to stop bacteria, fungus, and yeasts, from growing, as well as to delay the oxidation of fats that leads to rancidity. There are several preventative techniques that can be applied to either completely avoid, postpone, or lessen food deterioration. Food can have its shelf life extended with preservatives, allowing it to be collected, prepared, sold, and stored in the consumer's home for a respectable amount of time. While some methods of food preservation have historically significantly changed the character of the food being preserved, maintaining or generating nutritional content, texture, and flavor is an important part of food preservation. As is the case with cheese, yogurt, and pickled onions, these alterations are now frequently seen as positive attributes. Since many food items are perishable by nature, they must be kept safe from deterioration during preparation, storage, and distribution in order to retain their intended shelf life. Food goods today have a greater demand for a longer safe shelf life since they are frequently sold in parts of the world that are far from their places of production. The necessity to increase food shelf life has prompted the development of food preservation techniques. The constant battle against microorganisms that contaminate or pose a threat to food is known as food preservation. To lower the danger of food poisoning outbreaks, a number of food preservation strategies, including heating, chilling, and the addition of antimicrobial chemicals, can be employed; however, these methods usually result in unfavorable changes in organoleptic features and loss of nutrients.

Because consumers are demanding more flavorful, healthy, natural, and easily handled food products, the food industry is increasingly looking into replacing old food preservation methods with new ones within the disposable armory of preservation techniques. The ability to trade perishable foods internationally has been facilitated by advancements in the cold distribution network; yet, refrigeration is insufficient to guarantee the safety and quality of all perishable items.

The weak organic acids, such as sorbic, acetic, lactic, and benzoic acids, are the most often used traditional preservatives. These compounds stop the growth of fungal and bacterial cells, and sorbic acid is also said to stop bacterial spore germination and outgrowth. When producing food, it is essential to take the right precautions to guarantee the product's stability and safety during the course of its

whole shelf life. Specifically, the food business faces greater challenges in achieving this goal due to contemporary consumer habits and food regulations. First and foremost, consumers need more premium, safe, moderately processed, preservative-free foods with longer shelf lives. This could entail, for instance, treating food at mild-pasteurization temperatures as opposed to sterilization temperatures and preserving it at higher pH levels. Since the prevention of harmful spore forming bacteria, including Clostridium botulinum, is mostly dependent on acidity and sterilizing procedures, meeting this consumer demand necessitates creative solutions to guarantee product preservation. Second, laws have limited the amount and usage of certain currently approved preservatives in various foods. Because some microbes are becoming less susceptible to the majority of preservatives now in use, this has caused issues for the industry.

A growing percentage of consumers favor meals that have been prepared with little to no processing and no artificial preservatives. Regarding health hazards and the relationship between spoiling and innovative food kinds, many of these ready-to-eat foods reflect new food systems. In light of this, and with the help of enhanced comprehension and awareness of the intricacy of microbial interactions, contemporary methods are becoming more focused on the opportunities presented by biological preservation.

Butter's serum-in-lipid emulsion has a high concentration of salt, which restricts the growth of contaminating bacteria to the tiny amount of nutrients trapped within the microbe-containing droplets. However, if the moisture and salt are not distributed equally in chilled salted butter, psychrotrophic bacteria can proliferate and generate lipases. Condensed, or concentrated, milk needs to be refrigerated until use when used in bulk. By adding approximately 44% sucrose and/or glucose, it can be conserved by bringing the water activity down below the point at which live spores would germinate (aw 0.95). About 53% of the nonfat milk solids include lactose, which is one of the factors lowering the water activity. Cans of evaporated milk and sweetened condensed milk are industrially sterilized within the cans, ensuring that spoiling is rare. Freezing stops enzyme activity and microbial growth. As a result, the only places where frozen desserts undergo microbial deterioration are in the mixes or ingredients that are utilized before freezing. "Preserved" refers to any food that has been processed without sacrificing its nutritional value or flavor profile.

- Stored products: those that are packaged and kept for an extended period of time at room temperature or below (frozen, dried, canned, lyophilized, etc.).
- Semi-preserved goods: those that have undergone less invasive processes (pasteurization, chilling, etc.) and are stored for a brief period of time.
- Processed goods: goods that have seen significant structural changes (fermented goods, salted, seasoned, smoked, etc.).

Principles of Food Preservation

A good food preservation technique is one that inhibits or stops the agents of spoiling from acting. Food shouldn't be harmed throughout the preservation procedure either. Food preservation follows these principles:

1. Eliminating or deactivating microorganisms: This is accomplished by taking out the air and moisture, adjusting the temperature, and adding more salt, sugar, or acid to the food. Green leafy vegetables should be preserved by removing the water from the leaves, making it impossible for microorganisms to live there. The green leaves are dried until all of the moisture has evaporated.
2. Enzymes can be rendered inactive by altering their environmental parameters, such as moisture content and temperature, in food items. One way to preserve peas is to place them in boiling water for a short while. By deactivating enzymes, this technique helps to preserve the food.
3. Elimination of insects, worms, and rats: Foods are kept safe from insects, worms, or rats by being stored in dry, airtight containers.
4. Reducing or stopping the breakdown of microorganisms:
   a. By preventing the entry of germs (asepsis).
   b. By eliminating the microorganisms, such as through filtration.
   c. By impeding the development and activity of microbes through the use of chemicals, low temperatures, drying, anaerobic environments, or other means.
   d. By eliminating the microbes using radiation or heat.

5. Preventing or postponing the food's natural breakdown
   a. By inactivating or destroying food enzymes, such as during blanching
   b. By stopping or delaying only chemical reactions; for example, using an antioxidant to stop oxidation.

6. Preventing damage from insects, animals, mechanical sources, etc., a topic outside the purview of this book. The techniques employed to manage microorganisms are typically successful in suppressing enzymatic activity in food or chemical reactions. However, techniques like drying and using low temperatures allow auto breakdown to proceed until extra care is taken. Techniques for food preservation and application are used. For instance, before being frozen, the majority of vegetables are blanched, or boiled, to deactivate their enzymes.

Applications to Food Preservation

In food preservation, or the prevention of spoilage, it is especially important to extend as much as possible the lag phase and the phase of positive acceleration. There are two ways to achieve this:

1. By introducing as few spoilage organisms as possible, that is, by lowering the amount of contamination; the fewer organisms present, the longer the lag phase;
2. By avoiding the addition of actively growing organisms (from the logarithmic phase of growth), which may be growing on unclean containers, equipment, or utensils that come into contact with food.
3. By one or more unfavorable environmental factors, such as the presence of inhibitors, unsuitable food, moisture, temperature, pH, or O-R potential. The longer it takes for growth to begin, the more unfavorable the

circumstances.
4. By really causing harm to organisms through processing techniques like heating or radiation.

As a result, it has been discovered that, in comparison to unheated organisms, bacteria or their spores exposed to sublethal heat treatments need a better culture media for growth. To give food the appropriate shelf life, it is frequently sufficient to employ a variety of techniques to postpone the onset of growth.

Asepsis

It is the process of excluding microorganisms as a preservative. In healthy plants and animals, microorganisms are typically absent from their interior tissues. Food that has a protective layer on it will either delay or completely prevent microbial breakdown. For example, nut shells, fruit and vegetable skins, ear corn husks, and egg shells. Fish or meat with fat on it. If the protective layer is compromised, microorganisms can cause breakdown in the interior tissues as a result of decomposition spreading from the outer surface. The food sectors are paying more and more attention to preventing food contamination, from the raw material to the final product. Food packaging is one common application of asepsis. The covering could get contaminated during handling from a hermetically sealed container. In the dairy business, microorganism contamination is prevented at every stage of milk production and handling before it reaches the consumer. The amount of bacteria in milk is a measure of its quality. In the canning business, the heat procedure required to preserve food is determined by the bioburden of microorganisms. Sanitary techniques for handling, processing, and slaughtering animals lower load and enhance the quality of meat or meat products' ability to be preserved. The less competing organisms there are in the fermenting material, the more likely it is that the fermentation will succeed in sectors involving controlled food fermentation, such as cheese manufacturing.

Removal of Microorganisms

Although eliminating microorganisms from food is not always beneficial, there are certain exceptions. Centrifugation, cleaning, cutting, and filtration are among methods that can be used to remove.

a. Filtration: It works exclusively with clear liquids and is the only effective way to remove all organisms. The liquid is forced through a "bacterial proof" filter composed of sintered glass, diatomaceous earth, and other materials that has been previously sterilized, under either positive or negative pressure. Water, wine, beer, soft beverages, and fruit juices have all been successfully mixed using this technique.

b. Sedimentation or centrifugation: This process is inefficient. Not every microorganism gets eliminated. For example: 1) Used to treat drinking water, but not enough to get rid of microorganisms 2) The primary goal of centrifugation in milk is to extract other suspended components rather than bacteria.

c. Washing: By washing raw foods, spoilage microorganisms are eliminated. Example: Before being fermented into sauerkraut and pickles, cabbage heads or cucumbers eliminate the majority of surface-dwelling soil microorganisms. Fresh produce that has been cleaned helps get rid of soil organisms that might withstand canning's beating process. It is risky to wash food if the water introduces microorganisms that cause spoiling and raises the moisture content, which promotes the growth of these organisms.

d. Trimming: The process of removing contaminated food pieces. In this method, a large percentage of spoilage organisms are eliminated. Ex: When making sauerkraut, it's best to trim the outer leaves of the cabbage heads.

e. Maintenance of Anaerobic conditions: Foods that have been packaged and scaled may have anaerobic conditions inside the container. Anaerobic conditions are created by full filling, emptying the head space in a can, or replacing the air with CO2 or another inert gas, such nitrogen. Aerobic bacteria spores can withstand heat and endure in food cans, but they cannot proliferate in the absence of oxygen.

Conclusion

Food preservation plays a crucial role in ensuring food safety, extending shelf life, and maintaining nutritional quality. Through various preservation methods such as heat treatment, refrigeration, and the use of natural preservatives, the industry meets the demand for safe and minimally processed foods. Modern advancements continue to address challenges such as microbial contamination and consumer preferences for natural ingredients. As we move forward, the focus remains on developing innovative techniques that not only enhance food preservation but also preserve the sensory attributes and nutritional value of food products, meeting both industry standards and consumer expectations.

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