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Changes in Amino Acid Profile of African Yam Bean (*Sphenostylis sternocarpa*): The Effect of Different Processing Methods.

**ABSTRACT:** The effect of different processing methods namely conventional cooking, microwave cooking and roasting compared with fresh samples on the amino acid profile to

determine protein quality of *Sphenostylis sternocarpa* (African yam bean) flour was investigated. Results indicated that processing had various effects which were in this order:

roasting    microwave cooking    conventional cooking. Total amino acid values were 78.25,

67.57, 72.25 and 80.0 g/100g protein for flour from raw, conventionally cooked, microwave

cooked and roasted samples respectively. Essential amino acids namely valine, methionine

and phenylalanine in both raw and processed samples were not sufficient to meet human

nutritional needs based on FAO/WHO (1991) reference pattern for amino acids. The predicted protein efficiency ratio (P-PER) was 2.26 for flour from the raw sample while PPER

of flour from conventionally cooked, microwave cooked and roasted samples were 2.05, 2.19 and 2.31 respectively.

**Keywords:** African yam bean, Amino acids, processing, predicted protein efficiency ratio

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leguminous seeds are good sources of plant proteins [1]. They are nutritious foods and a

substitute for an animal protein which arises from the knowledge of the functional properties

of the seed flour and other products [2]. Due to malnutrition in Africa as a result of

insufficient animal protein, there is an intensive search for alternative sources of protein from

minor proteins [3]. Their nutritional and functional properties dramatically affect the overall

quality and its technological performance [4].

Foods are processed by various means to get them to a state the body can absorb nutrients

maximally. For the legumes, they contain anti-nutritional factors like protease inhibitors,

phytates, oxalates, saponins which inhibit or limit maximum absorption of amino acids from

them. However, there is a remarkable improvement in the nutritive value and quality of

legume seeds which have been achieved through dehulling, heat treatment, germination,

fermentation, soaking and partial hydrolysis by proteolytic enzymes [5]. Heat treatments

employed in food processing include roasting, grilling, boiling/cooking, microwave cooking,

ohmic heating, baking, toasting, frying, etc. These processing methods may have the potentials of reducing antinutritional factors which interfere with protein

digestibility and

amino acid absorption. The reason stems from the fact that protein quality is defined by its

amino acid composition and this influences nutrients derived from them [6].

*Sphenostylis sternocarpa* (African yam bean) is a legume found in the tropics. It is called

'odudu', 'Ukpodudu', 'Okpodua' [1], 'Azuma' by some Igbo clans 'Bebe' by the

Yorubas and in Northern states of Nigeria 'Kashin kaji' [7]. It is a leguminous crop of the family Leguminosae and sub-family Papilionaceae [1,8]. It is a herbaceous climbing vine which

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produces ellipsoid, round or truncated seeds which vary in size and colour ranging from creamy-white or brownish yellow to dark brown [1]. This work was aimed at studying the

changes effected by various heating methods on amino acid composition of *S. sternocarpa*

seeds which were used in producing flour respectively.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1<sup>[3]</sup> Sourcing and Preparation of Materials

*Sphenostylis sternocarpa* (African yam bean) seeds used for this study was purchased from

Ohafia and Umuahia in Abia State, Nigeria. The seeds used was a mixture of coloured cultivars of brown, red and white. They were winnowed, and extraneous materials were

removed. The cleaned seeds were divided into four portions of 150g each. Three out of the

four portions were heat processed by conventional cooking for 120 minutes, microwave

cooking (Sonic 5mw-70017, Japan) for 810 minutes and roasting at 150°C for 20 minutes

respectively. The fourth portion was raw, this was used as a control. After heat processing,

the various samples, the conventionally cooked and microwave prepared samples were oven

dried (Ocean Med., Mode DHG- 9053A, England) at 65°C for 6h. The individual seed samples were milled and sieved to obtain flour samples. Powder (i.e flour) samples generated

were microwave cooked, conventionally cooked, roasted and raw African yam bean flour.

Amino acid compositions to determine protein quality of the respective powder samples were

investigated.

### 2.2<sup>[14]</sup> Amino Acid Determination

Amino acid composition of the individual powder samples was determined by the method

described by [9] using Ion Exchange chromatography (Technicon Sequential Multisample

(TSM) amino acid analyser, Technicon Instruments Cooperation, New York, USA).<sup>[9]</sup> Each flour sample was hydrolyzed while 10µl of the hydrolyzed sample was loaded into the TSM

amino acid analyser. The analysis lasted for 76minutes.<sup>[9]</sup> The net height of each peak produced

by the chart record of TSM (each representing an amino acid) was measured and calculated.

Norleucine was used as internal standard. Tryptophan was not determined.<sup>[9]</sup> Amino acid values

from the chromatogram peaks were calculated whereby the half height of each peak on the

chart was found and width of the peak on the half height was accurately measured and

recorded.<sup>[9]</sup> Area of each peak was then obtained by multiplying the height by the width at the

half height the Norleucine equivalent (NE) for each amino acid in the mixture.

<sup>[7]</sup> NE = Area of Norleucine Peak

Area of each amino acid

A constant 'S' was calculated for each amino acid in the standard mixture as:

<sup>[1]</sup> Sstd= NEstd × molecular weight × μAstd

The amount of each amino acid present in each sample was calculated in g/100g protein =

this method, essential amino acids were scored methionine + cysteine, and

phenylalanine +

tyrosine was taken as two distinct units. Amino acid scores (AMSS) were estimated by [11]

formula:

AMSS = mg of amino acid /g of test protein × 100

mg of amino acid /g of reference protein 1

The predicted protein efficiency ratio (P-PER) was calculated from the amino acid composition using the equation developed by [12] stated thus:

P-PER = - 0.468 + 0.454 (Leu) - 0.105 (Tyr)

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The effect of different processing methods on amino acid composition of African yam bean

flour (Sphenostylis sternocarpa) flour is shown