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## THE EFFECT OF ADDED MELON PUREE AND XANTHAN GUM ON LOW-FAT PROBIOTIC YOGURT

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**Abstract:** Yogurt is a popular fermented milk product consumed primarily for its nutritional value, health benefits, and therapeutic attributes. The addition of fruit to yogurt contributes to the improvement of its functional properties and affects syneresis and sensory quality. Hydrocolloids are often incorporated into yogurt during production to enhance its technological characteristics. Although there is research on the impact of added fruit in yogurt, there is a lack of data on the effect of melon puree added to yogurt after fermentation, with or without xanthan gum as a stabilizer. For this purpose, four yogurt samples were prepared: a commercial probiotic yogurt with 1% m.m. as the control sample (JP), a sample with 85% commercial probiotic yogurt and 15% melon puree (JD), a sample with 100% commercial probiotic yogurt and 0.15g xanthan gum (JK), and a sample with 85% commercial probiotic yogurt, 15% melon puree, and 0.15g xanthan gum (JDK). Physico-chemical parameters, including moisture %, water activity ( $a_w$ ), active acidity (pH), titration acidity ( $^{\circ}\text{SH}$ ), and syneresis, were analyzed in all samples during storage for 0, 3, and 6 days. The results are presented as  $\bar{x}$  - mean value,  $\pm$  Sd - standard deviation, from n-3 – number of repetitions. Sensory evaluation was also performed for all yogurt samples, assessing quality indicators such as appearance, color, taste, smell, aroma, and consistency. From the obtained results, we can conclude that the moisture content of all yogurt samples increased during storage. Melon puree increased syneresis in the JD sample, whereas the addition of xanthan gum in the JK sample led to a decrease in syneresis. However, the lowest syneresis values were observed in the JDK sample compared to the other samples, with  $10.92 \pm 0.064$  and  $18.06 \pm 0.206$  for the 0th and 6th days, respectively. This is likely a reflection of the synergistic effect of the melon puree and xanthan gum. The water activity ( $a_w$ ) of all samples during the analyzed periods ranged from  $0.980 \pm 0.001$  to  $0.974 \pm 0.005$ , indicating minimal influence from the added melon puree and xanthan gum. The addition of xanthan gum in the JK sample led to a reduction in both pH value and titration acidity ( $^{\circ}\text{SH}$ ), while higher values for these parameters were observed in the JD sample due to the addition of melon puree. Sensory evaluation revealed that the highest-rated samples were J and JK, which, with average weighted scores of 4.8 and 4.69, respectively, were classified as excellent quality products.

**Keywords:** Fruit yogurt, melon puree, xanthan gum, water activity, active acidity, titration acidity, syneresis, sensory analysis

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Yogurt is a popular fermented dairy drink enjoyed in many parts of the world (Bankole et al., 2023). The popularity and high consumption of yogurt are primarily due to its nutritional value and its health and therapeutic properties (Park et al., 2019). From a nutritional point of view, yogurt is very similar to the dairy from which it is made, partially changed, with certain therapeutic effects, related to starter cultures added to the production process (Kalevska et al., 2019). Yogurt acts as a probiotic carrier and contains nutritionally rich fats, high levels of biologically important proteins, calcium, zinc, magnesium, phosphorus, riboflavin ( $B_2$ ), thiamin ( $B_1$ ), vitamin  $B_6$ , vitamin  $B_{12}$ , niacin as well as folic acid (Matela et al., 2019). Quality yogurt should be smooth, with a shiny surface, free from lumps and cracks, without whey separation (syneresis), and without an undesirable odor (Boghra &

Mathur, 2000). Also, the taste, texture and aroma of yogurt depend on the country of origin, the quality of the raw materials and the production process (Hossain et al., 2012).

The addition of fruit to yogurt before fermentation improves its functional properties (Fernandez & Murette, 2017) and also affects viscosity, syneresis, and sensory quality (Najgebauer-Lejko, 2014; Othman et al., 2019). The pectins and fructose from the fruit enhance the consistency and viscosity of the yogurt, improving the mouthfeel. They reversibly adsorb to casein, causing an increase in steric hindrance and thus a decrease in aggregation (Roy et al., 2015; Amal et al., 2016; Forena et al., 2024). From a nutritional point of view, fruit is a rich source of carotenes, lycopene, phenolic compounds, antioxidants, minerals and vitamins (Jideani et al., 2021; Rahaman et al., 2023). Melon (*Cucumis melo L.*) is an annual diploid plant belonging to the *Cucurbitaceae* (Nunez-Palenius et al., 2008). Its composition includes 6-12% of sugar, vitamins B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>3</sub>, C, folic acid and iron. The vitamin C content in melons is three times greater than that in watermelon. Whereas, iron absorption from melon is 17 times greater than from milk and twice as great as from chicken (Khujayeva et al., 2024).

In addition to fruit, additives are often incorporated into yogurt to improve its technological characteristics (Bankole et al., 2023). Hydrocolloids have long been the focus of scientific interest. The global hydrocolloid market was estimated at USD 11.2 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach USD 14.5 billion by 2028 (Zhang et al., 2024). Xanthan gum (E415) is a complex extracellular polysaccharide synthesized by the bacterium *Xanthomonas campestris* and is known for its superior rheological properties (Berninger et al., 2021). Xanthan gum is used in yogurt production to improve texture, increase firmness, and prevent syneresis (El-Sayed et al., 2002). Its popularity is due to the ability to reduce syneresis without affecting pH and active acidity, while improving the texture of yogurt is without altering sensory characteristics (Mohsin et al., 2019).

Although most authors explore the impact of added fruit in yogurt before fermentation Sengupta et al., (2014); Amal et al., (2016); Kamber & Harmankaya, (2019), there is still a lack of data on the impact of added melon pure in yogurt after fermentation, without or in combination with xanthan gum, as a stabilizer. For this purpose, we analyzed commercial probiotic yogurt with 1% milk fat, both with and without the addition of melon pulp and xanthan gum.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### *Materials*

The materials for this research included commercial probiotic yogurt with 1% milk fat and melon, both purchased from a local market in the Republic of North Macedonia. Xanthan gum was produced by Foodchem, phenolphthalein by Fisher Chemical, and NaOH by Alkaloid, Macedonia.

### *Fruit preparation*

The preparation of the fruit includes washing, peeling and separating the seeds from the melon. Using a blender, the melon is pureed, and the liquid phase is decanted. The solid phase is then blanched at  $83 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$  for 3 minutes. After refrigeration, it is stored in a sterile bottle and stored in a refrigerator at a temperature of  $4^\circ\text{C}$  until its use.

### *Sample preparation*

Five samples were analyzed: melon puree (DP); commercial probiotic yogurt with 1% m/m as the control sample (JP); 85% commercial probiotic yogurt with 1% m/m plus 15% melon puree (JD); 100% commercial probiotic yogurt with 1% m/m and 0.15 g xanthan gum (JK); and 85% commercial probiotic yogurt with 1% m/m plus 15% melon puree and with the addition of 0.15 g xanthan gum (JDK). Samples are prepared in the amount of 2L. The prepared samples were stored in sterile glass bottles and refrigerated at  $4^\circ\text{C}$  until analyses were carried out on days 0, 3 and 6 of storage. From each samples n-3 probes were analyzed.

### *Methods*

The water activity (*aw*), in the tested yogurt samples was determined using a LabTouch-aw device from Novasina. Moisture content was determined according to Roy et al., (2015), using a DRY-Line dryer, in VWR production. Active acidity (pH) was measured using laboratory pH Meter PL-600, in MRC production, the sample was prepared according to Matela et al., (2019), while titration acidity °SH was determined according to (Tomovska et al., 2016). The syneresis of the yogurt samples is determined according to (Amal, et al., 2016). Sensory evaluation of yogurts was conducted according to the system of scoring corrected five-point score, according to Radovanovic & Popov-Raljić (2000/2001), by 20 evaluators of different sexes and ages. Statistical processing and calculations were done in Excel, as  $\bar{x}$  - mean  $\pm$  Sd - standard deviation, from n-3 number of samples.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the results of the physico-chemical analyses of the melon pure and yogurt samples (JP, JD, JK and JDK) during storage of 0, 3 and 6 days are presented. The moisture content of the melon pure was  $80.72 \pm 0.05\%$ , the water activity  $0.971 \pm 0.005$  and the pH value  $5.96 \pm 0.01$ . According to, Gouda et al., (2020), the pH of the pulp of

Japanese persimmon, mango and guava were 5.2, 4.53 and 3.7, respectively. The lowest titration acidity of  $28.2 \pm 1.410$  °SH on the 6th day was determined in yogurt JK, and the highest in JKD  $37.2 \pm 0.305$ , which is approximate to the titration acidity of  $38$ °SH that they determined in yogurt (Kalevska et al., 2019).

During storage from 0 to 6 days in the JP control sample, the moisture content increased from  $90.94 \pm 0.10\%$  to  $93.34 \pm 1.95\%$ . The addition of 15% melon pure to the JD yogurt contributed to a decrease in moisture content relative to the JP yogurt control sample during storage. The addition of 15% papaya pulp contributed to a decrease in moisture content of 89% to 85.12% (Amal et al., 2016). The increase in dry matter content of fruit yogurt was proportional to the added percentage of fruit puree (Blassy et al., 2020). The addition of 0.15% xanthan to the JK sample affected a decrease in moisture by 0.09% compared to the JP sample on day 0. However, during the storage period of the yogurt, the moisture content of the JK sample increased. Increases in the moisture content of yogurt with added xanthan during storage were also reported and El-Sayed et al., 2002 and Hematyar et al., 2012. In contrast, the moisture content of the JDK sample decreased during storage, with the lowest moisture content measured on day 6 compared to the other yogurt samples and storage periods studied.

Table 1. Results of physico-chemical analysis of pureed melon and yogurt samples

Samples/storage time		% Moisture	<i>aw</i>	pH	°SH	% Syneresis
DP	Day 0	$80.72 \pm 0.05$	$0.971 \pm 0.005$	$5.96 \pm 0.01$	/	/
JP	Day 0	$90.94 \pm 0.10$	$0.980 \pm 0.001$	$4.37 \pm 0.005$	$26.6 \pm 0.195$	$21.64 \pm 0.092$
	Day 3	$91.34 \pm 0.13$	$0.978 \pm 0.001$	$4.37 \pm 0.030$	$27.8 \pm 0.351$	$21.90 \pm 0.802$
	Day 6	$93.34 \pm 1.95$	$0.975 \pm 0.003$	$4.33 \pm 0.005$	$29.2 \pm 0.251$	$26.16 \pm 0.305$
JD	Day 0	$89.23 \pm 0.53$	$0.978 \pm 0.001$	$4.46 \pm 0.015$	$27.4 \pm 0.203$	$24.82 \pm 0.030$
	Day 3	$90.04 \pm 0.05$	$0.977 \pm 0.001$	$4.43 \pm 0.055$	$25.4 \pm 0.451$	$27.55 \pm 0.180$
	Day 6	$90.28 \pm 0.15$	$0.974 \pm 0.005$	$4.40 \pm 0.015$	$36.4 \pm 0.208$	$27.35 \pm 0.397$
JK	Day 0	$90.85 \pm 0.12$	$0.978 \pm 0.001$	$4.34 \pm 0.036$	$24.2 \pm 0.210$	$22.49 \pm 0.030$
	Day 3	$91.42 \pm 0.05$	$0.977 \pm 0.005$	$4.26 \pm 0.072$	$26.5 \pm 0.264$	$13.33 \pm 0.091$
	Day 6	$91.18 \pm 0.62$	$0.976 \pm 0.001$	$4.23 \pm 0.015$	$28.2 \pm 1.410$	$17.28 \pm 0.065$
JDK	Day 0	$89.55 \pm 0.10$	$0.977 \pm 0.005$	$4.42 \pm 0.021$	$26.6 \pm 0.251$	$10.92 \pm 0.064$
	Day 3	$90.23 \pm 0.28$	$0.976 \pm 0.005$	$4.37 \pm 0.030$	$28.9 \pm 0.416$	$7.35 \pm 0.036$
	Day 6	$89.92 \pm 0.06$	$0.975 \pm 0.001$	$4.34 \pm 0.011$	$37.2 \pm 0.305$	$18.06 \pm 0.206$

DP - melon, JP-100% yogurt, JD-85% yogurt + 15% melon pulp, JK-100% yogurt + 0.15g xanthan gum and JDK-85% yogurt 15% melon pulp + 0.15g xanthan gum.

Source: Authors research

Syneresis is one of the basic defects of yogurt, characterized by the accumulation of serum or whey on its surface (Alsaleem et al., 2024). The JD sample is characterized by the highest percentage of syneresis, which increased during storage from  $24.82 \pm 0.030\%$  to  $27.35 \pm 0.397\%$ . An increase in syneresis due to the addition of 15% papaya is also reported by Amal et al., (2016), while according to Sengupta et al., (2014), the addition of watermelon juice reduces syneresis compared to the control sample from 36.54% to 28.78%. The addition of 0.2% xanthan gum to low-fat yogurt resulted in an increase in syneresis from 37% to 41% during 7 days of storage (Alsaleem et al., 2024). In contrast, our findings showed a decrease in syneresis in the PK sample, from  $22.49 \pm 0.030\%$  to  $17.28 \pm 0.065\%$  during storage. The decrease in syneresis is attributed to increased tension in the yogurt due to protein interactions with the added xanthan gum (El-Sayed et al., 2002). An increase in xanthan gum concentration from 0.2% to 1% significantly reduced syneresis ( $p < 0.05$ ) during 21 days of storage (Alsaleem et al., 2024). The JDK sample is characterized by the lowest values for syneresis, which we attribute to the synergistic action of melon puree and xanthan gum.

The water activity (*aw*) in all samples in the analyzed periods ranged from  $0.980 \pm 0.001$  to  $0.974 \pm 0.005$ , in all samples of the three test periods, indicating a minimal impact of the added melon puree and xanthan gum of the *aw* value. The highest initial value was measured in the JP control sample, while the lowest was found in the JDK sample. It is also interesting to note that the *aw* value in all samples of yogurt decreases during storage.

the pH value of the JP sample ranged from  $4.37 \pm 0.005$  on day 0 and  $4.33 \pm 0.005$  on day 6. The decrease in pH value is expected and occurs as a result of the development of lactic acid bacteria and the production of lactic acid (Wang et al., 2021). A decrease in pH was observed in all yogurt samples during storage. The addition of melon pulp influenced an increase in the pH value of JD, as a result of the higher pH value of cantaloupe pulp. The pH value of fruit yogurt is dependent on the pH value of the added fruit (Blassy et al., 2020). In strawberry, peach, apricot and banana fruit yogurts, the following pH values, 3,872, 4,380, 4,400 and 4,326, respectively, were measured on the 1st day of storage (Kamber & Harmankaya, 2019). The JK sample showed lower pH values relative to JP over the entire

storage period. According to Rafiq et al., (2020), added xanthan affects a decrease in pH, which decreases proportionally with an increase in the added amount of xanthan (Alsaleem et al., 2024). While in the JDK sample, the pH ranged from  $4.42 \pm 0.021$  to  $4.34 \pm 0.011$ .

Titration acidity °SN increased in all yogurt samples during storage. The largest increase in titration acidity was observed in the JD and JDK samples, which we hypothesize was due to the added fruit. The increase in titration acidity due to added fruit is confirmed in their studies by Sengupta et al., 2014; Roy et al., 2015; Kamber & Harmankaya, 2019. In contrast, Amal et al., (2016) indicate a decrease in titration acidity by increasing the percentage of added fruits (papaya and pear cactus). The added xanthan in the JK sample contributed to a lower value for titration acidity relative to the control, which is confirmed by Rafiq et al., 2020.

In Table 2, the results of sensory evaluation of the JP, JD, JK, and JDK samples are presented with the following quality indicators: appearance, color, taste, smell, aroma, and consistency of the yogurts. The addition of melon puree contributed to a decrease in the color, taste, smell, aroma, and consistency scores of the JD and JDK samples compared to the JP and JK samples. On the other hand, the added xanthan in JK contributed to an improved appearance compared to other samples.

**Table 2. Results of sensory evaluation**

Quality Index	CV	Score JP	Score JD	Score JK	Score JDK
Appearance	4	4.485	4.500	4.875	4.375
Color	2	5.000	4.375	4.875	4.375
Taste	4	4.750	3.000	4.625	3.375
Smell	3	4.750	3.000	4.375	3.250
Aroma	3	4.750	3.125	4.625	3.250
Consistency	4	4.750	3.625	4.750	3.875
Overall score	Σ20				
Weighted mean score		4.8	3.58	4.69	3.74
% of possible quality		96	71.62	93.75	74.75

Source: Authors research

According to the German Standard for Sensory Assessment (Deutsche Landwirtschafts-Gesellschaft-DLG), weighted mean scores are categorized as follows: excellent quality with a score of 4.5 to 5.0, very good quality with a score of 3.5 to 4.5, good quality with a score of 2.5 to 3.5, and not meeting quality requirements with a score of less than 2.5 (Nakov et al., 2018). Comparatively, the DLG samples of JP and JK yogurt characterized by mean weighted scores of 4.8 and 4.69, respectively, fall into the category of excellent quality products. The JD and JDK samples are categorized as very good quality products, with weighted mean scores of 3.58 and 3.74, respectively. The higher percentage of 96% control yogurt compared to JD and JDK yogurts of 71%, 62%, and 74.75% respectively, indicates consumers' consumption habits of classic yogurt compared to yogurt with added fruits.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The addition of 1.5% xanthan and 15% melon puree to low-fat probiotic yogurt after fermentation affects moisture content, syneresis, active and titration acidity. That is, during storage, the moisture content of all yogurt samples increases. Melon puree increased syneresis in the JD sample, while the addition of xanthan gum to the JK sample contributed to a decrease in syneresis. The lowest values for syneresis were observed in the JDK sample, with  $10.92 \pm 0.064$  on day 0 and  $18.06 \pm 0.206$  on day 6. The water activity  $a_w$  in all samples in the analyzed periods ranged from  $0.980 \pm 0.001$  to  $0.974 \pm 0.005$ , indicating a minimal impact of the added melon puree and xanthan gum. The addition of xanthan to the JK sample affects a decrease in pH value and titration acidity °SH, while higher values for these parameters are observed in the JD sample due to the added melon puree. The addition of melon puree also influenced the sensory acceptability of the yogurts, placing the JD and JDK samples in the category of very good quality products. The added xanthan 0.15% had little impact of sensory perception and placed the JK sample in the category of products of excellent quality. Concerning the process of designing a new food product, further studies are needed toward the nutritional characterization and understanding the functional properties of the products.



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