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Changes in pasta protein network induced by drying and their relationship to protein digestibility and allergenicity

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Pasta is a popular food which possesses interesting nutritional quality but may trigger allergic reaction in sensitized people. Many questions remain open for research area, including the relationship between pasta processing, pasta structure and resulting nutritional properties. The purpose of this study was to characterise the structure of pasta dried at different conditions and to relate it to the *in vitro* digestibility and allergenicity of proteins. Four drying profiles were studied: Low Temperature 55°C (LT), High Temperature 70°C (HT), Very High Temperature 90°C applied either from the beginning of the cycle, when the moisture content of spaghetti was high (20%) (VHT) or at the end of the drying cycle, when the moisture content of pasta was low (12%) (VHT_LM).

**Methods**

**Proteins**: Size Exclusion HPLC (SE-HPLC) after protein extraction with SDS (detergent), then with DTE (reducer) in dried and cooked pasta (Fig.1).

**Microstructure**: Confocal Laser Scanning Microscope of cross sectioned cooked pasta after protein staining with fuchsine acid (Fig. 2).

**Protein digestibility**: *In vitro* digestion of cooked pasta composed of a buccal phase (α-amylase, pH7), a gastric phase (pepsin, PH2) and an intestinal phase (pancreatin, pH7). Protein hydrolysis was evaluated by measuring the increase in free amino groups in protein extracts (Fig. 3).

**Protein allergenicity**: Juices from *in vitro* bucco-gastric or pancreatic digests were used to inhibit recognition of wheat proteins by IgE from a pool of allergic patients (table 1).

**Microstructure of cooked Pasta**

![Microstructure of cooked Pasta](image)

**Allergenicity of Digests from Cooked Pasta**

![Allergenicity of Digests from Cooked Pasta](image)

**Table 1. Competitive ELISA with digestion juices from cooked pasta and a pool of sera from allergic patients to wheat. Percentage of inhibition obtained with digestion juices at the end of the gastric phase (5 minutes by α-amylase and 3 hours by pepsin) and at the end of the intestinal phase (end of gastric phase + 3 hours by pancreatin) are presented.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digestion juice from the end of</th>
<th>LT</th>
<th>HT</th>
<th>VHT</th>
<th>VHT_LM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>α-gliadin gastric phase</td>
<td>66 a</td>
<td>64 a</td>
<td>44 b</td>
<td>40 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intestinal phase</td>
<td>16 cd</td>
<td>14 cd</td>
<td>10 d</td>
<td>19 c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α-gliadin gastric phase</td>
<td>88 a</td>
<td>79 ab</td>
<td>80 ab</td>
<td>81 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intestinal phase</td>
<td>78 bc</td>
<td>75 bc</td>
<td>72 c</td>
<td>77 c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low MW glutenin gastric phase</td>
<td>93 a</td>
<td>91 ab</td>
<td>90 ab</td>
<td>87 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intestinal phase</td>
<td>51 d</td>
<td>66 c</td>
<td>46 d</td>
<td>63 c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albumin/ globulin fraction gastric phase</td>
<td>28 a</td>
<td>26 ab</td>
<td>24 ab</td>
<td>24 ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intestinal phase</td>
<td>14 c</td>
<td>16 c</td>
<td>14 c</td>
<td>21 b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wheat fraction IgE reactive peptides from different wheat fractions are present in all tested digestion juices.

**Digestion step**: digests from gastric phase are richer in IgE reactive peptides than those from intestinal phase, difference depends on wheat fraction.

**Drying process**: compared to LT process, increasing the drying temperature led to a reduction in gastric digests and an increase in intestinal digests of IgE reactive peptides, specially for VHT_LM.

**Fig. 1**: Peak surfaces of SE-HPLC elution profiles of SDS-soluble, DTE-soluble and calculated unextractable protein fractions in semolina and dried pasta (A) and in cooked pasta (B).

**Fig. 3**: Mean degree of protein hydrolysis after 3 hours of intestinal phase.

VHT_LM decreased significantly protein digestibility (by 10%) and increased allergenicity of intestinal digests. This could not be explained by a different protein spatial distribution at a microscopic level. VHT_LM cooked pasta presented a higher proportion a high molecular weight protein aggregates (data not shown) which may have contributed to this lower digestibility and higher allergenicity. Both gluten and soluble proteins seemed to be involved. It appears that applying VHT at the end of the drying cycle led to the formation of specific protein aggregates.

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d3 remplacer 20 ppm
gluten par 20 ppm

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