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► **To cite this version:**

Paul Colonna, Alain Buleon, Christiane Mercier. Hydrolysis of native wheat starch by an alpha-amylase from *Bacillus subtilis*. 72. annual meeting of the American Association of Cereal Chemists, Oct 1987, Nashville, TN, United States. hal-02855923

HAL Id: hal-02855923

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02855923>

Submitted on 8 Jun 2020

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AACC 72nd Annual Meeting
October 31-November 5, 1987, Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN

Inventaire Pub
N° 392

73 Hydrolysis of native wheat starch by an alpha-amylase from *Bacillus subtilis*. P.Colonna, A. Buleon and Christiane Mercier, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, Rue de la Géraudière, 44072 Nantes Cédex, France.

Suspensions (2%) of native starch granules from wheat have been degraded by an alpha-amylase from *Bacillus subtilis*. Crystalline fractions have been prepared either by crystallization from short chain amylose or mild acid hydrolysis of native wheat starch. Complete (98%) depolymerization into small soluble oligosaccharides is obtained within 24h at high enzyme concentrations (above 189 microg. protein/mL). Electron microscopy, particle size analysis, differential scanning calorimetry and X-ray diffractometry reveal that enzymic degradation occurs granule-by-granule: the enzyme does not preferentially hydrolyze the more amorphous regions of the granules. Intrinsic viscosity, gel permeation chromatography on Sepharose CL-2B show off that the remaining material has a macromolecular structure close to the native starch: there is no preferential hydrolysis of either amylose or amylopectin. In contrast, acid erodes simultaneously all the granules, leading to a splitting into small crystalline particles. *De novo* crystalline fractions are completely degraded by alpha-amylase. These results support evidence for an active disentanglement of chains, carried out by the different subsites of alpha-amylase molecules. A simple mathematical treatment is proposed in order to explain the results of the kinetics.