

## **Effect of Chitosan Coating Supplemented with Sugar Beet Leaf Extract (*Beta vulgaris L.*) on Quality Attributes of Sevruga Fillets (*Acipenser stellatus*) during Refrigeration**

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**ABSTRACT:** This research examines the impact of a chitosan coating infused with sugar beet leaf extract (SBLE), obtained through microwave extraction, on the quality of sevruga fillets during refrigerated storage. The experimental treatments consisted of T<sub>1</sub>(0.5%chitosan), T<sub>2</sub>(1%chitosan with 0.5% SBLE), T<sub>3</sub>(1%chitosan with 1%SBLE), and T<sub>4</sub>(2%chitosan with 1.5%SBLE) and C (Pure fillet). The fillets were stored in polythene bags at 4°C for seven days. The findings from the chemical assessment indicated that the control sample exhibited higher levels of pH, free fatty acids, thiobarbituric acid, and peroxide value (PV) compared to the coated samples; however, these differences were not statistically significant (p >0.05). Total volatile basic nitrogen (TVB\_N) displayed an upward trend, with the control sample showing significantly elevated levels relative to the other samples (p <0.05). The findings from the microbial assessment indicated a significant increase (p <0.05) in total viable count (TVC) within the control treatment group; however, this increase was not statistically significant for lactic acid bacteria. Additionally, the counts for Enterobacteriaceae and Pseudomonas were recorded at less than 2 Log CFU/g, while *Clostridium perfringens* was found to be below 1 Log CFU/g across all samples. The analysis of sensory attributes utilizing the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method revealed that the T<sub>2</sub>, T<sub>3</sub>, T<sub>4</sub> exhibited significant influences from the characteristics of color, taste, aroma, texture hardness, and overall acceptability. In contrast, the control sample and T<sub>1</sub> did not align with these sensory characteristics, with the C sample demonstrating lower levels of acceptability. The primary characteristic of T<sub>2</sub> was its texture hardness, while T<sub>3</sub> was significantly (p <0.05) shaped by the aroma produced and the overall acceptance. In contrast, T<sub>4</sub>, which exhibited greater acceptance, was influenced by a combination of attributes, such as taste, color, and overall acceptance, when compared to the other samples.

**Keywords:** *Aquatic Food Products, Beetroot, Herbal Extracts, Hurdle Effect*

### **Introduction**

In more than two decades, there has been a notable increase in consumer demand for healthy and nutritious food

options, resulting in a rise in the consumption of aquatic food products, considering the per capita consumption of 23.3 kg by 2023 (Rathod *et al.*, 2021; Esua

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et al., 2020; FAO, 2018). Fish, recognized as a nutritious source, plays a significant role in a balanced diet (Vieira et al., 2019; Ceylan et al., 2019). Due to its advantageous geographical position, the Caspian Sea serves as a natural habitat for esteemed fish species, including the Sevruga, scientifically classified as *Acipenser stellatus*. This species is recognized as a migratory sturgeon (Khorshidi Sedehi & Shabanipour, 2018). The main factors leading to the decline in fish quality are enzymatic and chemical reactions. In contrast, secondary factors pertain to microbial activity and spoilage that typically arise in the final days of storage (Kalteh et al., 2015). Fish contains a significant amount of unsaturated fats, which can lead to oxidation and chemical degradation of its flesh, a notably pronounced phenomenon in the *Acipenseridae* family (Saini et al., 2021). Fat oxidation primarily yields peroxides, with secondary products including aldehydes, hydroxys, and ketones. Notably, malondialdehyde is the most significant aldehyde produced during the secondary oxidation of fats. This toxic molecule, characterized by its low molecular weight, can react with proteins and organic acids, posing risks for cancer and atherosclerosis (Celi, 2010; Lykkesfeldt, 2001; Del Rio et al., 2005; Lykkesfeldt, 2007). Following the death of a fish, bacteria initiate the breakdown of lactic acid and trimethylamine oxide through the process of glycolysis. This biochemical activity leads to a decrease in trimethylamine oxide levels and the formation of volatile compounds with low molecular weights, such as ammonia and hydrogen sulfide. Additionally, the oxidation of fats results in the production of ketonic and aldehydic compounds, ultimately contributing to the unpleasant odor associated with fish (Prabhakar et al.,

2019; Summers et al., 2017; Burt, 2004; Valipour et al., 2017).

The adoption of innovative preservation techniques, including Hurdel's concept, combining multiple methods to control/eliminate pathogens in food items, guaranteeing their safety for consumption and stability over time, all while preserving their quality, that incorporates films and coatings, is on the rise as a means to enhance food quality and extend shelf life. However, these methods remain underutilized in the context of meat products. Edible films and coatings are formulated using proteins, lipids, and polysaccharides sourced from plant and animal materials, which can be utilised separately or in mixtures on fillets. Furthermore, incorporating minimal emulsifiers can improve food product coatings' effectiveness (Feng et al., 2017; Korkmaz et al., 2019; Sathivel, 2005). Chitosan is an edible coating derived from a polysaccharide structure that includes glucosamine and N-acetylglucosamine, characterized by beta 1,4 linkages. It is extracted from the exoskeletons of crustaceans such as crabs and shrimp. This compound exhibits the capability to inhibit the activity of various Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria (Bautista-Banos et al., 2006; Coma et al., 2002; Vasconez et al., 2009). This antimicrobial property may be attributed to the penetration of chitosan into the microbial nucleus, where it interacts with DNA (Sebti et al., 2005). Extensive research has validated the advantageous effects of chitosan coatings containing a variety of extracts and essential oils (Lan et al., 2024; Ucak & Afreen, 2022; Fadiloglu & Coban, 2018; Li et al., 2020; Shoja et al., 2023; Rezaeifar et al., 2020).

Sugar beet, scientifically known as *Beta vulgaris L.*, is a biennial plant belonging to the Chenopodiaceae family. It is utilized in

various forms, including fresh, fermented, and cooked, as noted by Latorre *et al.* (2012). Certain types of antioxidants, such as oxalic acid, are present in beet greens. The consumption of beet greens may enhance the functionality of the antioxidant system, including glutathione, and can contribute to the reduction of sugar and fat levels, as well as alleviate some diabetic complications, such as skin issues (Kayashima & Katayama, 2002; Tunali *et al.*, 1998; Sener *et al.*, 2002). The antioxidant properties of *Beta vulgaris L.* extract has been investigated, revealing the presence of nine bioactive polyphenols, including quercetin, sinapic acid, p-coumaric acid, syringic acid, gallic acid, coumarin, caffeic acid, chlorogenic acid, and catechin in the freeze-dried aqueous extract (Indu *et al.*, 2017). The DPPH assay was employed to assess the antioxidant capacity of this extract, which demonstrated an impressive inhibition activity of 97.63% at a concentration of 1000 micrograms per milliliter. Consequently, the application of 600 ppm of antioxidants derived from microwave-extracted sugar beet leaves shows competitive potential against the synthetic antioxidant BHT (Izadi *et al.*, 2021). Research on adding dried beetroot leaves (DBLP) to cookies demonstrated that higher concentrations of DBLP facilitate improvements in both nutritional components and phytonutrient levels. The DBLP-enriched cookies showed significant increases in moisture, protein, total dietary fiber, crude fiber, fat, ash, hardness, phenolic compounds, and antioxidant activity. In contrast, the carbohydrate content was diminished in these cookies (Asadi & Khan, 2020).

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of chitosan-based coatings infused with an extract from beetroot leaves in prolonging the shelf life of

Sevruga fillets when stored under refrigeration, focusing on the chemical, microbial, and sensory characteristics of the product.

## Materials and Methods

### - *Ingredients*

Sevruga (purchased from the local market in Noor, Mahmmudabad, Mazandaran Province),

The medium molecular weight chitosan (Sigma Co.), Beetroot leaves (purchased from local market in Ahvaz, Khoozestan Province)

### - *Sample Preparation*

Immediately after collection, fresh Sevruga fish with a typical weight of 5 kg were placed in a polystyrene refrigerator with ice weighing three times that of the fish. The samples were washed with tap water, and filleted. Solutions of chitosan were formulated following the methodology outlined by Souza *et al.* (2010), with concentrations of 0.5%, 1%, and 2% prepared individually. Extracts from dried autumn beet leaves were procured utilizing a polar water solvent through a microwave-assisted extraction technique (Samsung, South Korea) conducted at a power setting of 90 watts for a duration of 10 minutes (Talebi Haghgo *et al.*, 2024). In the preparation of coatings incorporating the extract, 0.5% and 1% concentrations of sugar beet leaf extract (SBLE) were individually introduced into a 1% chitosan solution. Additionally, a 1.5% concentration of SBLE was incorporated into a 2% chitosan solution. These mixtures were subjected to magnetic stirring (Heidolph, Germany) for a duration of 10 minutes (Ojagh *et al.*, 2012).

Sevruga fillets, weighing 250 grams, underwent a coating procedure involved immersion in a series of chitosan

solutions. The initial treatment consisted of soaking the fillets in a 0.5% chitosan solution (T<sub>1</sub>), followed by a 1% chitosan solution containing 0.5% SBLE (T<sub>2</sub>), and subsequently in a 1% chitosan solution with a 1% SBLE concentration (T<sub>3</sub>). The fourth group (T<sub>4</sub>) was immersed in a solution with 1.5% SBLE, while the control group (C) was prepared without chitosan or extract treatment. After a brief exposure to air for one minute, the fillets were re-immersed in the respective solutions for an additional two minutes. To ensure the development of a consistent coating, the fillets were allowed to remain in the air for two hours. The coated and uncoated control fillets were stored in zippered bags and refrigerated at 4°C for seven days. Chemical, microbial, and sensory evaluations of the fillets were performed on days 0, 3, 5, and 7. All experiments were performed in triplicate.

#### - **Chemical Analysis**

pH (Metrohm, Germany) was measured following the approach outlined by Kavitha and Mofi (2006), while acidity was determined through titration based on lactic acid as described by Shelef and Jay (1970). The peroxide value was assessed via titration with Sodium Thiosulfate according to the AOAC (2002) methodology. Additionally, the free fatty acid content was calculated as a percentage of oleic acid using the technique developed by Woyewoda *et al.* (1986). The determination of volatile nitrogenous bases was performed using Kjeldahl's method as per AOAC (1995). Furthermore, the quantity of thiobarbituric acid was measured following the protocol established by Namulema *et al.* (1999), and the absorbance of the resulting solution was recorded using a spectrophotometer (Thermo, Germany) at wavelength of 560 nanometer.

#### - **Microbial Analysis**

In the process of microbial testing, 10 grams of samples from each experimental group were combined and homogenized using a Heidolph mixer (Germany) with 90 ml of a 0.85% NaCl solution, all performed under sterile conditions. Subsequently, the necessary dilutions were prepared. The identification of lactic acid bacteria was conducted utilizing MRS agar medium, which was incubated at 37°C for a duration of 48 hours. *Clostridium perfringens* was cultivated on SPS agar medium and incubated at 37°C for a period ranging from 48 to 72 hours. *Pseudomonas* was propagated on *Pseudomonas* agar, enhanced with a CFC selective supplement, and incubated at 37°C for 24 hours. Total viable counts (TVC) were assessed on TSA medium after incubation at 35°C for 48 hours, while Enterobacteriaceae was cultured on VRBG agar, incubated at 37°C for 24 hours, in accordance with the protocols established by Olatunde *et al.* (2019), Yetim *et al.* (2006), Hamed *et al.* (2017), and Öz and Ucak (2023).

#### - **Sensory evaluation**

A sensory analysis was conducted with a cohort of 40 untrained participants, randomly selected, whose palates were attuned to aquatic food products. Notably, the evaluators were not informed about the composition of the samples they were assessing. Prior to frying in canola oil, the fillets were seasoned with 1.5% salt. Every four days, the participants received a scoring questionnaire to evaluate the samples. The sensory evaluation employed a five-point hedonic scale to assess various attributes, including color, flavor, taste, hardness, and overall acceptance. This structured scale allowed participants to rate their preferences, with scores ranging from 1, indicating extreme dislike, to 5,

representing extreme liking, and including intermediate options for nuanced responses. It is important to highlight that the control sample was excluded from sensory evaluation owing to safety and health concerns regarding the evaluators, particularly in relation to ensuring confidence in terms of microbial load (Nirmal & Benjakul, 2011).

- **Statistical Analysis**

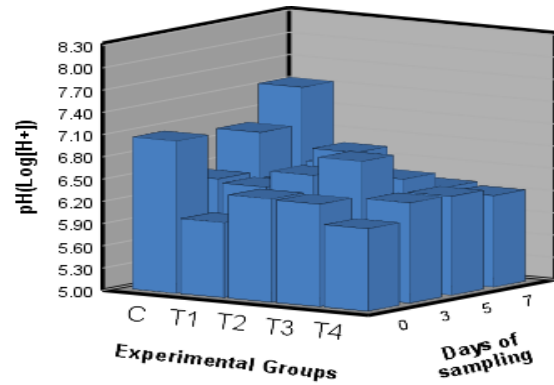
For the purpose of statistical analysis, SPSS software version 26 was utilized alongside the K-S test, with a significance criterion established at  $P < 0.05$ . One-Way Analysis of Variance and Duncan's post hoc test were employed when the data conformed to a normal distribution, maintaining the significance level at  $P < 0.05$ . In cases where the data did not meet the normality assumption, the Kruskal-Wallis test was utilized to evaluate differences across the experimental groups. Furthermore, principal component analysis (PCA) and Spearman correlation matrix were conducted on the sensory evaluation data using XLSTAT.

**Results and Discussion**

- **Chemical Analysis**

- **pH**

pH measurements and their comparative evaluations were performed among distinct experimental groups. The data presented in Figure 1 reveal that no significant differences were detected among the samples ( $p=0.625$ ). In general, the levels of this factor showed a decline in the treatment groups on both the third and fifth days relative to the first day of incremental production. Additionally, by the seventh day, a further decrease was noted, with the control sample retaining the highest concentration after a week of storage.

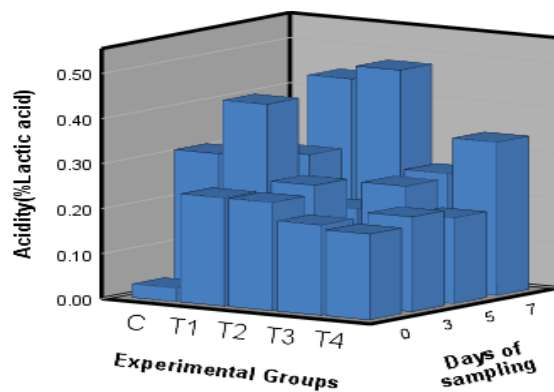


Error Bars: 95% CI

**Fig.1.** pH value of experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at  $P < 0.05$ ).

- **Acidity**

According to the data depicted in Figure 2, it is evident that the acidity levels among the experimental groups do not differ significantly ( $p=0.241$ ). The trend observed in all samples shows a gradual increase from the initial day of production to the seventh day of storage, with the first and second treatments demonstrating a more substantial rise in acidity on the seventh day compared to the remaining groups.

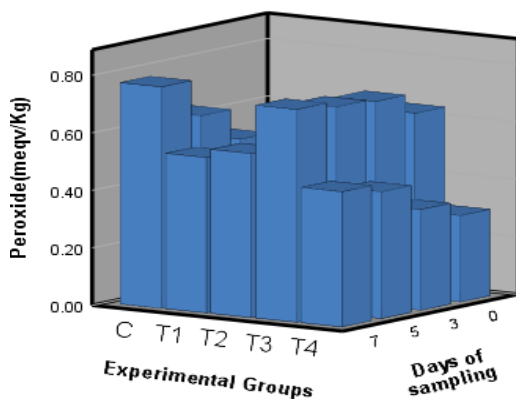


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**Fig. 2.** Acidity value of experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at  $P < 0.05$ ).

- **Peroxide Value (PV)**

Utilizing a one-way analysis of variance, the peroxide index was assessed among twenty experimental groups, maintaining a significance level of  $P < 0.05$ . The results demonstrated a progressive increase in the peroxide index from day one to day seven ( $p = 0.469$ ) across all groups. The maximum index value was noted on the seventh day for groups C and T<sub>3</sub>, whereas T<sub>4</sub> exhibited the minimum value on that day (Figure 3).

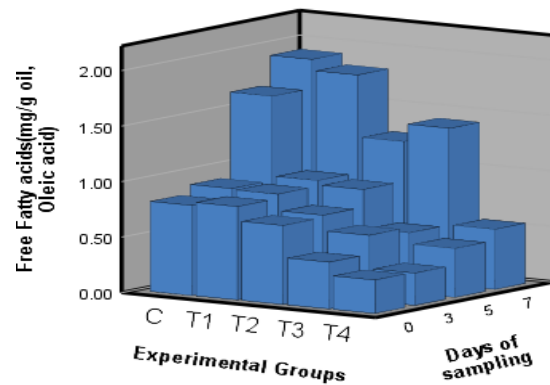


Error Bars: 95% CI

**Fig. 3.** Peroxide index of experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at  $P < 0.05$ ).

- **Free Fatty Acids Index**

A comparative analysis of free fatty acid levels, based on oleic acid, was conducted between treatment and control samples across the experimental groups. The findings depicted in Figure 4 reveal that the differences in free fatty acid concentrations among the samples were not statistically significant ( $p = 0.103$ ). In general, there was a progressive increase in this parameter from the first day of production in all groups, with the highest levels observed in the control group and the first treatment, whereas the fourth treatment exhibited the lowest levels on the seventh day.

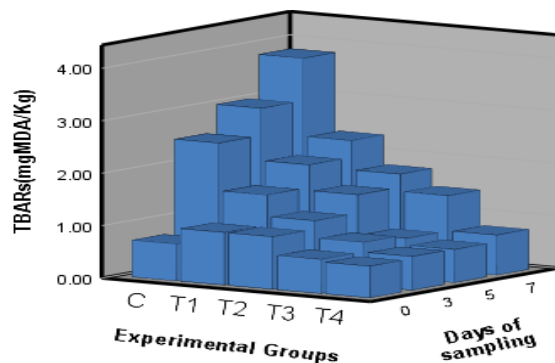


Error Bars: 95% CI

**Fig. 4.** Free fatty acids content of experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at  $P < 0.05$ ).

- **Thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARs)**

A one-way ANOVA test was employed to compare the experimental groups, with a significance threshold set at  $P < 0.05$ . The data indicated that the index values exhibited an upward trend across all groups from the first to the seventh day of maintenance (Figure 5). Notably, the control group demonstrated the most substantial increase, while T<sub>4</sub> showed the least. However, statistical analysis revealed no significant differences among the groups ( $p = 0.180$ ).

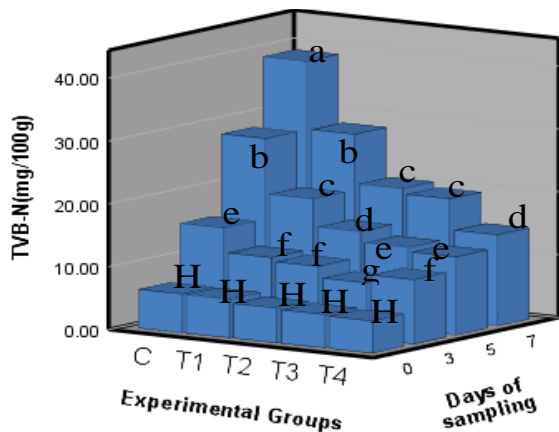


Error Bars: 95% CI

**Fig. 5.** Thiobarbituric acid reactive substances of experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at  $P < 0.05$ ).

- **Total Volatile Basic-Nitrogen (TVB-N)**

A comparative analysis was conducted on the total content of volatile nitrogenous bases between the treated and control samples within the experimental groups. The findings illustrated in Figure 6 indicate a statistically significant difference in this parameter among the samples ( $p=0.01$ ). Notably, the levels of this index exhibited an upward trend across all groups from the first to the seventh day of observation (Figure 6), with the control group demonstrating the most substantial increase, while the T<sub>4</sub> showed the least.



Error Bars: 95% CI

**Fig. 6.** TVB-N content of experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at  $P<0.05$ ).

- **Microbiological assessment**

An increasing trend in the TVC was noted from the first to the seventh day of storage across experimental groups. The data presented in Figure 7 indicate a significant difference ( $P<0.05$ ) in the overall bacterial counts among the samples, which can be linked to the growth in microbial populations from the first day of production to the seventh day of storage. The control group experienced the most pronounced increase, whereas the

T<sub>4</sub> showed the least variation ( $P>0.05$ ). Throughout the storage period, from the first to the seventh day, there was a notable upward trend in the population of lactic acid bacteria across all groups. The data presented in Figure 8 indicates that the overall counts of these bacteria among the samples showed no significant variation ( $P>0.05$ ). During the seven-day examination, the quantification of Enterobacteriaceae bacterial colonies in both control and treatment samples at less than 2 Log CFU/g. Likewise, the Pseudomonas bacterial colonies in all samples, including both control and treatment, were measured at less than 1 Log CFU/g during this period. Additionally, the counts of bacterial colonies in all samples remained below 1 Log CFU/g after the seven days of analysis.

- **Sensory evaluation results**

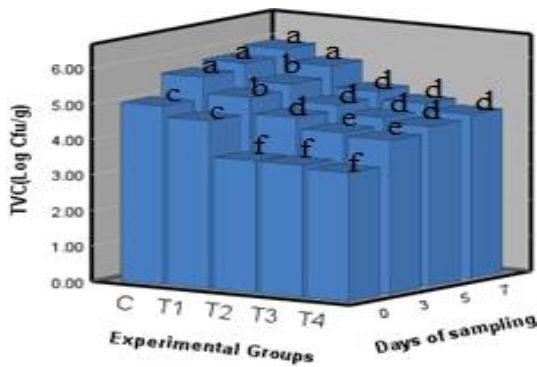
PCA analytical technique allowed for generating a lower-dimensional data representation by identifying the most relevant principal components. Table 1 demonstrates a consistent correlation between color, taste, texture, hardness and overall acceptance. The distribution of variance explained by four principal components is presented in Table 2, highlighting that F1 and F2 contribute a considerable share of the total variation in the dataset, exceeding the threshold of 1 and elucidating 91.84% of the variance.

The eigenvalues associated with each principal component are depicted in Figure 9, which visually represents the variance accounted for by the four components. Notably, the "elbow" point, indicating where eigenvalues begin to decrease markedly, is found beyond F2. A review of the scree plot suggests that two components should be preserved for further examination.

Table 3 illustrates the association of each attribute with the principal components. Notably, color, taste, hardness, and overall acceptance are highly correlated with F1, while flavor exhibits a strong correlation with F2. Figure 10 demonstrates that following a storage duration of 7 days, sample T<sub>3</sub> was predominantly distinguished by its potentially appealing flavor and general acceptability. In contrast, samples T<sub>4</sub> and T<sub>2</sub> exhibited low ratings in terms of taste, color, and texture hardness. Meanwhile, T<sub>1</sub>

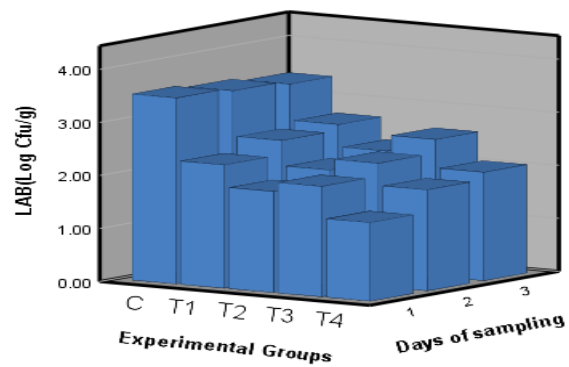
and the control sample were primarily recognized for their less desirable sensory characteristics.

The pH level of muscle tissue in live fish is approximately 7, depending on the fish species, fishing condition and environmental factors. Following the death of the fish, this pH can fluctuate between 6 and 7, influenced by several factors including the species of fish and the season. A pH exceeding 7 is indicative of spoilage in fish (Ozogul *et al.*, 2006; Jamali, 2023; Ozogul & Ucar, 2013). The



Error Bars: 95% CI

Fig. 7. Changes in the total viable count in the experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at P<0.05).



Error Bars: 95% CI

Fig. 8. Changes in the total Lactic acid bacteria count in the experimental groups (significance indicated by superscripts at P<0.05).

Table 1. Spearman correlation matrix indicates a statistically significant relationship among the sensory characteristics of the samples, with a p-value of less than 0.05

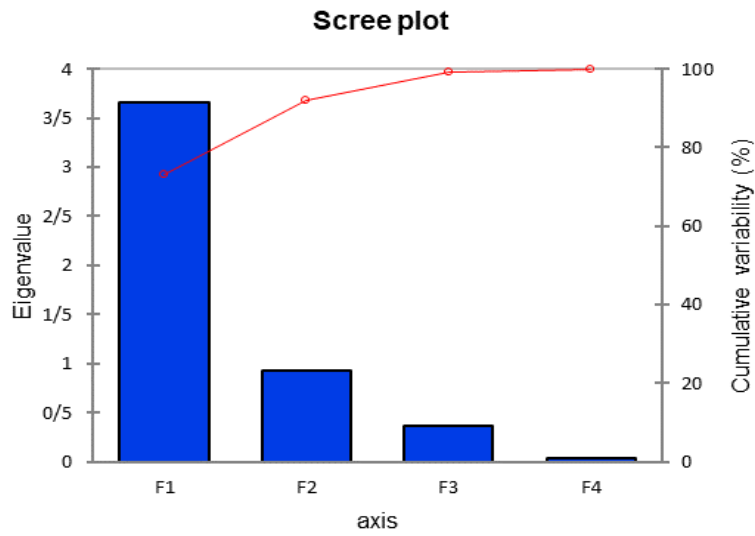
| Variables          | Color | Flavor | Taste | Hardness | Overall acceptance |
|--------------------|-------|--------|-------|----------|--------------------|
| Color              | 1     | 0.256  | 0.712 | 0.725    | 0.912              |
| Flavor             | 0.256 | 1      | 0.340 | 0.117    | 0.297              |
| Taste              | 0.712 | 0.340  | 1     | 0.957    | 0.921              |
| Hardness           | 0.725 | 0.117  | 0.957 | 1        | 0.886              |
| Overall acceptance | 0.912 | 0.297  | 0.921 | 0.886    | 1                  |

Values in bold are different from 0 with a significance level alpha=0.05.

Table 2. The computed eigenvalues within the principal component analysis process framework

|                 | F1     | F2     |
|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Eigenvalue      | 3.658  | 0.935  |
| Variability (%) | 73.152 | 18.697 |
| Cumulative %    | 73.152 | 91.849 |

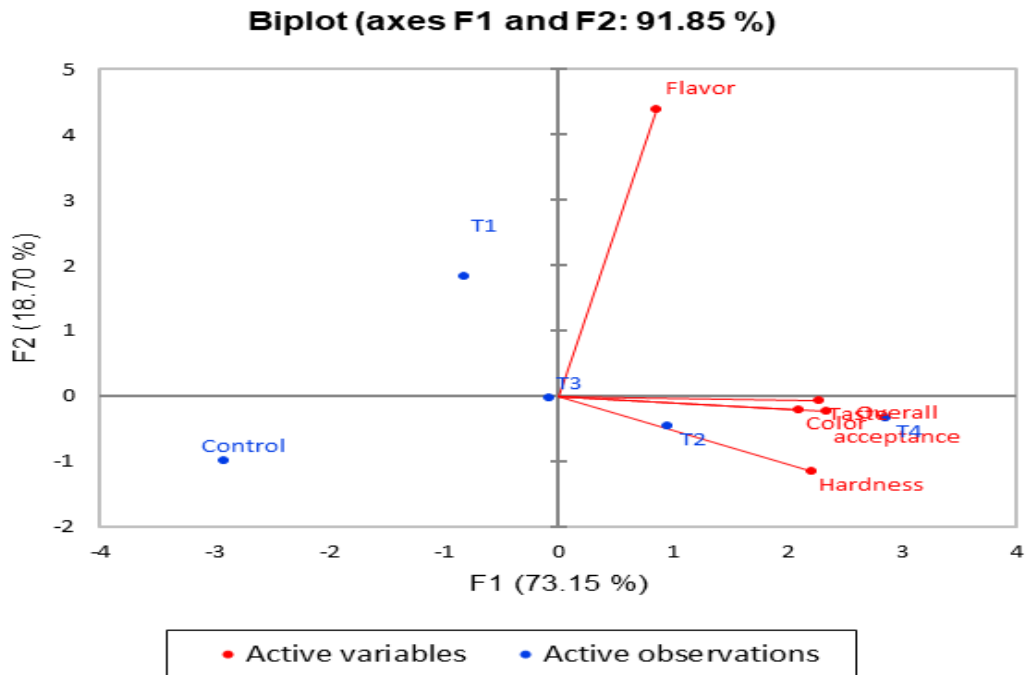




**Fig. 9.** Presentation of the computed eigenvalues pertaining to the sensory attributes of sevruga fillet samples.

**Table 3.** The relationship between the examined sensory attributes and their corresponding eigenvalues is represented by correlation values.

|                    | F1    | F2     |
|--------------------|-------|--------|
| Color              | 0.882 | -0.47  |
| Flavor             | 0.358 | 0.932  |
| Taste              | 0.958 | 0.14   |
| Hardness           | 0.929 | -0.246 |
| Overall acceptance | 0.984 | -0.051 |



**Fig. 10.** A biplot demonstrating the distinct separation of samples as a result of evaluator influence.

data reveal that the intended factor rose on the third and fifth days relative to the first day. The lowest pH measurement was noted for T<sub>1</sub> on the first day at 6.01, while the highest pH value was recorded in the control sample on the seventh day at 7.45. Over the course of seven days of refrigerated storage of fish fillets, only the control group's pH exceeded the spoilage limit, the pH level of fish flesh rises from 6.2 to 7.5 with extended storage duration (Kim *et al.*, 2023), on the seventh day, with the pH levels in the other treated groups remaining below this threshold. The investigation by Berizi *et al.* (2018) focused on the effects of chitosan coatings containing pomegranate peel extract on the microbial, chemical, textural, and sensory properties of rainbow trout over a six-month storage period. The highest recorded pH was 7.29 in the uncoated samples. In comparison, the fish fillets that received coatings with various proportions of chitosan and pomegranate peel extract displayed a lower pH, which is consistent with the outcomes of the current study. According to the findings of Abdullahi *et al.* (2014), the silver carp sample that was coated with a chitosan-clay bio nanocomposite activated by rosemary essential oil demonstrated a markedly reduced pH level in contrast to the control sample. The analysis revealed that acidity levels increased throughout the storage duration. The maximum acidity observed in T<sub>2</sub> and T<sub>1</sub> was 0.48% and 0.45% of lactic acid, respectively. This increase in acidity can be explained by the transformation of glucose into organic acids by lactic acid bacteria (Hernandez-Herrero *et al.*, 1999; Fraqueza *et al.*, 2008). According to the findings of Barbosa *et al.* (2023), all treatments exhibited an increase in acidity up to the eighth day of storage, after which a decrease was observed. The research

conducted by Salami *et al.* (2021) revealed that the fish marinade with 10% khandel plant extract exhibited the highest acidity levels. The control sample followed this, while an increase in the concentration of the extract resulted in a decrease in acidity. Additionally, the sugar beet leaf extract treatment demonstrated greater acidity than all other treatments, including the control. Another investigation's outcomes suggested that prolonged refrigeration of minced meat resulted in a reduction of its acidity. The control group recorded the minimum acidity on the sixth day, in contrast to the sevruga-treated fillets, which did not exhibit this trend. Among the various treatments, the uncoated fillets had the lowest acidity. In contrast, minced meat with 5% ginger powder displayed the highest acidity levels during storage, decreasing from 1.22 on the initial day to 0.98 by the sixth day (Terefe, 2017). The measurement of peroxide content, which serves as the primary product of fat oxidation, indicates an acceptable range up to 10 milliequivalents per kilogram of fat (Kirk & Sawyer, 1991; Martinsdottir *et al.*, 2001). Findings from this study revealed that the peroxide levels across all tested groups remained within the acceptable threshold throughout the duration of the maintenance period. Chitosan coatings infused with sugar beet leaf extract, particularly the T<sub>4</sub>, demonstrated superior efficacy in inhibiting peroxide accumulation. Antioxidants play a crucial role in mitigating fat rancidity by either eliminating peroxides or diminishing the activity of singlet oxygen (Kucukgulmez, 2012). Consistent with the current study's findings, previous research has shown that uncoated samples exhibited significantly higher peroxide levels than their coated counterparts (Naghibi *et al.*, 2016; Nowzari *et al.*, 2013). The proliferation and metabolic activity of certain spoilage

bacteria, particularly *Pseudomonas* species, contribute to an elevation in the levels of free fatty acids within food products. This phenomenon is attributed to the enzymatic hydrolysis of phospholipids by phospholipases and the breakdown of triglycerides by lipases (Nirmal & Benjakul, 2011; Nowzari *et al.*, 2013). In the present investigation, sevruga fish samples exhibited an increase in free fatty acid content; however, this increase remained below the 5% threshold. On the seventh day of storage, the control group exhibited the highest concentration of oleic acid at 1.91 mg/g, while the fourth treatment group recorded the lowest concentration at 0.54 mg/g. The observed increase in this parameter within fish fillets can be attributed to the catalytic action of internal enzymes on fats, as well as the influence of spoilage bacteria (Kykkidou *et al.*, 2009). Consistent with the current study's findings, Pourkargar and Rafati (2020) also reported a rising trend in free fatty acids, noting that the fish sample with this index coverage was lower than that of the control sample. Thiobarbituric acid serves as an indicator for assessing the extent of fat oxidation in fish, specifically by quantifying the aldehydes generated during this oxidative process. The acceptable threshold for this parameter in fish intended for consumption is established at 1 to 2 mg of malondialdehyde per kilogram of fish flesh (Kim *et al.*, 2006; Connell, 1990). Observations revealed a steady rise in this measurement throughout all samples from the first to the seventh day. Notably, the control group demonstrated the highest concentration on the seventh day, measuring 3.81 mg MDA/kg, whereas the fourth treatment exhibited the lowest concentration at 0.76 mg MDA/kg, likely attributable to the specific treatment conditions applied to the fillets; treatments

incorporating sugar beet leaf extract displayed a variable range throughout the storage duration. The observed reduction in thiobarbituric acid levels on certain days can be attributed to a decline in malondialdehyde levels, which occurs due to its interaction with amino acids and proteins. The overall rise in this parameter during the storage period is linked to the partial dehydration of the fish, an increase in the oxidation of unsaturated fatty acids, and the subsequent formation of aldehydes resulting from hydroperoxide decomposition (Pezeshk *et al.*, 2011; Estaca *et al.*, 2007). According to the findings of Sabu *et al.* (2020), at the conclusion of the tenth day of storage for yellow tuna meat, the control group exhibited a TBARs value of 3.03 mg MDA/kg. In the current investigation, the highest concentration of thiobarbituric acid in the control group was recorded on the final day of storage. Both studies indicated that the TBARs levels in the control group surpassed 3 mg MDA/kg, exceeding the acceptable consumption threshold. Notably, the lowest thiobarbituric acid concentration on the tenth day was observed in the group treated with 2% chitosan and lemon peel extract. Furthermore, research by Sadeghi *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that chitosan coatings infused with Paneerbad extract, as well as the work of Pirouz Zarrin *et al.* (2023) involving chitosan coatings with *Dunaliella* algae extract, effectively mitigated the rise of TBARs in fish fillets compared to untreated samples. TVB-N is a critical parameter for assessing fish quality, as it quantifies non-protein nitrogenous compounds produced through bacteria's proteolytic degradation of proteins and nucleic acids. A 25 mg or less measurement per 100 grams of fish flesh indicates superior quality, while values under 30 mg are considered acceptable.

However, values approaching 35 mg warrant careful consideration regarding fish consumption and are associated with spoilage (Jouki *et al.*, 2014; Ozyurt *et al.*, 2009). The research outcomes revealed that the level of TVB-N in the fourth treatment during a seven-day storage period was recorded at less than 20 mg per 100 grams of fish fillet. Conversely, the control group exceeded the allowable limit, with a nitrogen concentration of 38.88 mg/100 grams on the seventh day, categorizing it within the spoilage range. The fourth treatment exhibited the lowest value for this metric on the last day of storage, measuring 14.46 mg of nitrogen/100 grams. Furthermore, various studies have similarly reported an increase in volatile nitrogenous bases in uncoated fish samples compared to coated ones (Jafari *et al.*, 2023; Farsanipour *et al.*, 2020).

The diversity of microorganisms isolated from marine products is influenced by several factors, including the fishing technique employed, the species of fish, and the temperature at which they are stored (Gram & Dalgaard, 2002). According to the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF, 1986), the acceptable limit for this index in food intended for human consumption is set at 7 Log CFU/g. In the present study, a significant increase in the total viable bacterial population was observed across all experimental groups; however, this increase remained within the acceptable threshold until the conclusion of the seventh day. Notably, on the seventh day, the control sample exhibited the highest bacterial count at 5.95 Log CFU/g, while the T<sub>4</sub> sample recorded the lowest at 4.60 Log CFU/g. The binding of chitosan to bacterial membranes creates an impermeable barrier, which effectively

eliminates vital nutrients required for bacterial proliferation. Increasing the concentration of chitosan within edible coatings enhances their antimicrobial characteristics by elevating the positive charge of amino groups, thereby fostering electrostatic interactions. This robust connection between chitosan and the microbial cell wall is further reinforced (Knorr, 1991; Helander *et al.*, 2001; Kong *et al.*, 2008). In this context, research conducted by Sharafati Chaleshtori *et al.* (2015) demonstrated that salmon samples coated with chitosan and lemon essential oil showed a marked decrease in bacterial populations, with higher essential oil concentrations leading to enhanced antibacterial effects. Additionally, control samples exhibited significantly greater total viable counts (TVC) compared to the coated samples (Pilmal *et al.*, 2018; Tingting *et al.*, 2013). Lactic acid bacteria constitute a significant component of the anaerobic microbial flora found in meat. Certain strains of these bacteria play a role in the spoilage of meat products (Jay *et al.*, 2005). The findings from the study indicated that the population of lactic acid bacteria increased during the refrigeration storage of fish, particularly in the control sample. Conversely, fish fillets treated with chitosan and sugar beet leaf extract exhibited a reduced presence of lactic acid bacteria. Notably, the control group recorded the highest concentration of these bacteria on the seventh day of storage, measuring 3.38 Log CFU/g, while the fourth treatment demonstrated the lowest concentration at 2.04 Log CFU/g. Remya *et al.* (2017) demonstrated that the combination of chitosan film, ginger essential oil, and an oxygen absorber effectively suppresses the proliferation of lactic acid bacteria in fish fillets (*Rachycentron canadum*) stored at 2°C. In the current investigation, the chitosan

coating enriched with the highest concentration of extract exhibited superior efficacy in inhibiting the growth of these bacteria in sevruga fish fillets. The presence of Enterobacteriaceae in fishery products necessitates thorough examination, as this bacterial family encompasses pathogens like Salmonella, which pose significant health risks to consumers. Studies have indicated that fishing in contaminated waters, along with secondary pollution, contributes to the aquatic environment's contamination with Enterobacteriaceae (Shakhawat *et al.*, 2006; Papadopoulou *et al.*, 2003; Jeevanandam *et al.*, 2001). Analysis of the samples revealed that the levels of Enterobacteriaceae were relatively low in both the coated and control groups; however, the control group exhibited a significantly higher concentration. On the seventh day, end of the storage period, the lowest concentration of this bacterium was observed in the fourth treatment (T<sub>4</sub>), while the control group recorded the highest level (1.60 Log CFU/g) on the same day. Research conducted by Nagarajan *et al.* (2021) demonstrated that the application of a chitosan-gelatin coating combined with *Lansium domesticum* (lansat) extract on black tiger shrimp stored at refrigeration temperatures for 20 days effectively reduces the proliferation of Enterobacteriaceae. The coated samples consistently showed lower bacterial counts compared to the uncoated samples, with none of the treatments exceeding 2 Log CFU/g. Furthermore, an increase in the extract concentration within the coating correlated with enhanced inhibition of bacterial growth. In this investigation, the quantification of *Pseudomonas* bacteria remained below 1 Log CFU/g throughout the storage duration across all experimental treatments. However, a noticeable increase

in bacterial counts was recorded in all samples up to the seventh day. Notably, treatments incorporating sugar beet leaf extract exhibited lower *Pseudomonas* bacteria levels than the control group, which measured 0.84 Log CFU/g. Additionally, research by Jasour *et al.* (2014) assessed the impact of chitosan coating and the combination of chitosan with lactoperoxidase on the quality of rainbow trout. Their findings indicated that over a 16-day storage period, higher counts of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* were detected in samples lacking the chitosan coating. The findings indicate that sevruga fillets with coatings exhibit less *Pseudomonas* bacteria than their uncoated counterparts. Furthermore, the incorporating chitosan into the coatings enhances their antibacterial properties, effectively suppressing the proliferation of *Pseudomonas* in the fish fillets throughout the entire duration of refrigerated storage. *Clostridium perfringens* is not a naturally occurring bacterium in aquatic environments or organisms. The potential for contamination arises post-capture and during storage of aquatic products. This bacterium can be transmitted through aquatic animals exposed to sewage, leading to foodborne illnesses and diarrhea in humans (Hill *et al.*, 1996; Chattopadhyay, 2000). In the samples analyzed in this study, the concentration of *Clostridium perfringens* was found to be below 1 Log CFU/g, likely due to effective preservation methods employed after the fish were caught, which mitigated the risk of secondary contamination. Consistent with findings from similar studies, *Clostridium* species were either undetected or present in minimal quantities in the samples tested. A study involving 652 raw marine and cultured shrimp revealed that none of the samples contained sulfite-

reducing *Clostridium* (Mohammadi Golrang, 2004).

The sensory evaluation data analysis demonstrated that the coating applied to the sevruga fillets, combined with storage at 4°C, significantly affected the overall acceptance, color, texture hardness, flavor, and taste of the fillet samples on both the first and seventh days after production. Additionally, the findings suggested that neither the control sample nor the first treatment could be effectively described regarding color, flavor, taste, texture hardness, and overall acceptance, while the second, third, and fourth treatments exhibited notable variations influenced by these sensory attributes. The alterations in the color, taste, and flavor of meat are influenced by bacterial activity, oxidation processes, and the formation of volatile compounds. These modifications vary across different meat types and are attributed to multiple factors (Brannan & Mah, 2007). Its texture's hardness negatively impacted the second treatment, while the third treatment was significantly shaped by the aroma it produced, resulting in a favorable overall acceptance. Compared to other samples, the fourth treatment was influenced by a combination of attributes, i.e. taste, color, and overall acceptance, positioning it in second place following the third treatment sample. Numerous studies have demonstrated that applying chitosan coatings and chitosan in conjunction with various extracts and essential oils has enhanced sensory characteristics compared to control groups (Shokri *et al.*, 2020; Chamanara *et al.*, 2015). The influence of the trigeminal gland on assessors' evaluations of specimens is significant, as color may affect both flavor perception and overall acceptance. This consideration should be integrated into the treatment of samples and the application of hurdle techniques.

## Conclusion

While no significant differences were observed in the measurements of pH, acidity, peroxide value (PV), Free fatty acids (FFA), and thiobarbituric acid (TBARs), it was noted that the uncoated samples exhibited higher levels of these parameters when compared to the fillets treated with chitosan and sugar beet leaf extract. On the final day of storage, the fillets coated with chitosan that contained the highest concentration of extract (T<sub>4</sub>) showed greater effectiveness in reducing the increase in most of the evaluated parameters, with the exception of the pH index, which was lower in the second treatment. Importantly, T<sub>4</sub> significantly improved the control of total volatile basic nitrogen (TVB-N) levels in comparison to the other experimental groups; moreover, the bacterial count was also lower in this group, suggesting its efficacy in inhibiting bacterial proliferation. Additionally, T<sub>4</sub> received higher sensory acceptance ratings from evaluators than the other treatments.

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