Hot air drying characteristics and nutrients of apricot *armeniaca vulgaris* lam pretreated with Radio Frequency(RF)

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**Abstract**

Apricot pretreated with RF and then dried with convective hot air at 65℃, 3.0m/s in this research. RF pretreatment time of 20, 30, 40 and 50min were chosen. Results showed that, there is only falling rate period during apricot hot air drying, and the drying rate of apricot is improved significantly; Herdenson and Pabis model is suitable for apricot hot air drying; retentions of flavonoids, polyphenols and Vc in dried apricot were higher than those of fresh apricot; when RF treating time was chosen 30mins, nutrients retentions of Vc, flavonoid and polyphenols were 0.9543mg/100g, 5.4089mg/100g and 7.3382mg/100g, separately.

**Keywords:** apricot fruit, hot air drying, drying rate, nutrients, radio frequency
1. Introduction

Apricot originated in China. It has a wide distribution, high yield, good quality and unique flavor. However, fresh apricot fruit with high moisture content above 80% is easy to corrupt at normal temperature even cold storage[1]. Drying is an effective method to extend shelf life of apricot. Half dried preserved apricot fruits are popular to Chinese. So, there are several literatures about drying of apricot fruits. Wang studied on thin layer drying of apricot fruits, and temperature is the main factor affecting drying rate [2]. Natural air drying of apricot is time consuming and induces serious browning which affects the quality of dried apricot[3]. In order to prevent browning, blanching before drying or sulphur treated during drying is usual applied. And these treatments either high temperature, nutrients loss[4] or unsafe for health. New type of heating method, RF receives more and more attentions in recent years for lots of advantages such as selective heating, self-balancing effect of moisture content, large energy penetration depth and fast heating rate[5], etc. There are several literatures on RF used in drying of agricultural products, deinsectization, sterilization[6,8]. Zhang and others [9] investigated RF combined with hot air drying red jujube, drying time was shortened by 2/3. In order to reduce drying time and improve the quality of dried apricot, RF technique was applied in this paper, and then convective hot air drying at 65°C was conducted.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Samples preparation

Apricot armeniaca vulgaris lam was provided by the institute of plum and apricot, Xi’an, in May to July, 2017. Fresh apricots were stored at 3-4°C and must be used within one week. The initial moisture of fresh apricot ranged from 85% to 86% wet basis which was determination by oven drying at 103°C. Samples were cut in half and the cores were removed, and then immersed in 2% sodium bisulfite solution for 1 hour to restrain browning.

2.2. RF pretreatment of apricot

Apricot fruits were moved into the RF equipment and the plate distance was set 60.0mm. The power of the radio frequency equipment is 6.0KW and the frequency is 27.1Hz. RF treated time was chosen for 20, 30, 40, and 50min.

2.3. Hot air drying experiment of apricot

After RF pretreatment, apricot was dried with convective hot air at 65°C and air velocity of 3.0m/s. During the drying period water content of apricot was declined from nearly 84% to about 20%. In order to analyze the drying characteristics of apricot pretreated with RF, the weights of samples were obtained by electronic balance with an accuracy of 0.001g every 60 minutes.
2.4. Nutrients assay

The flavonoid content of apricot fruit pulp was analyzed according the method described by Liang\[10\] with slight amendent. 1.0ml of filtrate was placed in a 25ml volumetric flask, and then 6ml of distilled water and 1.0ml of sodium nitrite (1:20) were added in turn and shaked well. After 6 minutes, 1.0ml of aluminium nitrate (1:10) was added and shaked well, and 6minutes later, 10.0ml of sodium hydroxide (1:10) was added and shake well. After 15 minutes’ standing, the final volume was made up to 25ml with distilled water and shade well. And the sample was placed in colorimetric tube and the absorbance was measured at 510nm.

Phenolic content in apricot was determined by the Folin-Ciocalteau method\[11\]. 2,6-dichlorophenol indophenol method\[12\] was applied to assay vitamin C content of apricot in this study.

All measurements were conducted in triplicate.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Drying characteristics of apricot preteated with RF

After RF pretreatment, the apricot fruit was dried with hot air at 65°C and on the velocity of 3.0m/s. There is only falling rate period during apriod hot air drying, shown in Figure 1. The drying rate of apricot pretreated with RF was obviously higher than that of control sample, because RF treatment can improve the permeation of apricot, that would induce moisture migrate quickly. In the range of 20-50minutes RF treated, the drying rate of apricot fruit increased with the increase of RF treated time. And the drying rate of apricot fruit with 50 minutes’ RF pretreatment was the highest, while that of apricot with 20minutes’ RF treatment was the lowest. May be the longer RF treated time, the permeation of apricot tissue was better, which makes it easier for moisture migrate in subsequent drying process.

In this paper, moisture ratio was applied to analyze the drying characteristics, shown in equation (1)\[13,14\].
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\[
MR = \frac{M_f - M_e}{M_0 - M_e} \tag{1}
\]

Where, \(M_0\), \(M_e\) and \(M_f\) stand for initial moisture content, equation moisture content and moisture content at any time, respectively, dry basis, %. As \(M_e\) was difficult to determine at laboratory, it was neglected in this paper. So, equation(1) was simplified as equation(2).

\[
MR = \frac{M_f}{M_0} \tag{2}
\]

From the curves of moisture content of apricot pretreated with RF during hot air drying, as showed in figure 2, moisture content of apricot pretreated with RF defined more fast than that of control samples. And the drying time was shorten by 10% to 34%. That means RF pretreatment could save drying time and energy.

![Fig.2 Curves of moisture ratio of apricot changing with drying time during hot air drying](image)

**3.2. Hot air drying model of apricot pretreated with RF**

There are many mathematics models to describe drying characteristics of fruits and vegetables\(^{15-19}\). Through analyse of experiment data, it was found that, Herndson and Pabis model, Page model and Lemus model, showed in table 1, were better consistent with experiment data. \(R^2\), \(\chi^2\), and RMSE of every model, as equations from (3) to (5), were used as indications to evaluate drying model. Henderson and Pabis model has the highest \(R^2\) ranging from 0.9715 to 0.9955, and has lower \(\chi^2\) and RMSE. So Henderson and Pabis model was better fit for experiment data.

\[
R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(MR_{exp,i} - MR_{pre,i})^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(MR_{exp,i})^2} \tag{3}
\]

\[
\chi^2 = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(MR_{exp,i} - MR_{pre,i})^2}{N - n} \tag{4}
\]

\[
RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(MR_{exp,i} - MR_{pre,i})^2}{N}} \tag{5}
\]
**Table 1** $R^2$, RMSE, $\chi^2$ of hot air drying models for apricot pretreated with RF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RF treatment time/min</th>
<th>Model name</th>
<th>Model equation</th>
<th>Model parameters</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>RMSE</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$a$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Henderson and Pabis</td>
<td>$MR=a \exp(-kt)$</td>
<td>1.0432, -8.7×10^{-7}</td>
<td>0.9900</td>
<td>0.0386</td>
<td>0.0016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9867, -9.8×10^{-4}</td>
<td>0.9715</td>
<td>0.0525</td>
<td>0.0031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.1035, -9.5×10^{-4}</td>
<td>0.9879</td>
<td>0.0703</td>
<td>0.0057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0839, -10.8×10^{-5}</td>
<td>0.9927</td>
<td>0.0505</td>
<td>0.0030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                       |            |                | $k$              |       |      |        |
| 20                    | Page       | $MR=\exp(-kt')$ | 6.6177×10^{-5}, 1.0237 | 0.9895 | 0.0279 | 0.0009 |
| 30                    |            |                | 2.4486×10^{-5}, 0.6724 | 0.9255 | 0.0593 | 0.0039 |
| 40                    |            |                | 3.9567×10^{-5}, 1.0796 | 0.9929 | 0.0394 | 0.0018 |
| 50                    |            |                | 0.5086×10^{-5}, 1.3344 | 0.9871 | 0.0607 | 0.0043 |

|                       |            |                | $a_1$, $a_2$ |       |      |        |
| 20                    | Lemus      | $MR=a_1+a_2t^{1/2}$ | 0.9070, -4.6×10^{-3} | 0.9644 | 0.0460 | 0.0027 |
| 30                    |            |                | 0.8862, -4.8×10^{-3} | 0.9872 | 0.0403 | 0.0018 |
| 40                    |            |                | 0.8856, -4.6×10^{-3} | 0.9751 | 0.0460 | 0.0024 |
| 50                    |            |                | 0.9826, -5.8×10^{-3} | 0.9820 | 0.0349 | 0.0014 |

3.3. Analyze of nutrients in dried apricot

3.3.1. Flavonoids in apricot pretreated with RF

At the bigining of drying, total flavonoid content was the one of fresh apricot. From figure 3(a), it was known that, as moisture decrease, total flavonoid contents of apricots pretreated with RF were increased firstly and then declined, but higher than that of fresh apricot. The reason might be RF treatment induce fruits tissue collapsed that would favorable for testing nutrients. It also can be found that, when RF treatment time was chosen 40min, flavonoid contents of apricot maitaned highest level during the hole drying process, those of apricots pretreated with 30min and 50min were flowed by, and the last was 20minutes’ RF pretreatment. The main reason might be tissue permeation of apricot would improve as the RF treated time but there exists a limit level for permeation; and prolong RF pretreated time, nutrients were degraded or decomposed.

When dying was finished, flavonoid content in dried apricots also maintained higher than of fresh apricot (0.9075mg/100g). The main reason would be that RF destroyed internal structures of apricots, and flavones in tissue were easy to dissolve out.

3.3.2. Polyphenol content in apricot pretreated with RF

It was obvious showed that, after 30 and 40 minutes’ RF pretreatment, polyphenol contents of apricot during hot air drying maintained the highest level, and those of samples with 20 munites’ RF pretreatment were follow by, and those of samples with 50 minutes’ RF
pretreatment were the lowest, showed in figure 3(b). The reason for this phenomena as the above. But, longer time RF pretreatment may destroy polyphenol tissue and induced oxidation. The result from this study were consistent with that from Zhao et al\[20]. During the hot air drying process, polyphenol contents maintain stable level and did not decline with the decrease of moisture content of apricot.

![Graphs of nutrients of apricot pretreated with RF changing with moisture content in hot air drying](image)

**Fig.3 Nutrients of apricot pretreated with RF changing with moisture content in hot air drying**

3.3.3. Vitamin C in apricot pretreated with RF

As soon as RF pretreated, Vc content in apricot were sharply increased compared to that of fresh sample, showed in figure 3(c). However, Vc is heat sensitive material, as drying
processing, it was decreased as the decrease of moisture content of apricot. And the 40 minutes’ RF pretreatment could induce the better permeation of apricot tissue analized above, so more Vc in apricot was exposed on the surface of wet matial, that meant more Vc would degrade when exposed in high temperature condition. When hot air drying was finished, Vc contents of dried apricot with different RF pretreated were slightly higher than that of fresh fruit (0.7817mg/100g).

From the above nutrients analyze, when RF treating time was chosen 30 minutes, nutrients retentions of flavonoid, polyphenols and Vc were 5.4089mg/100g, 7.3382mg/100g, and 0.9543mg/100g, separately.

4. Conclusions

RF treatment could improve the hot air drying rate of apricot, and saving time and energy. After RF pretreatment, nutrients of flavonoids and polyphenol in apricot were improved and maintain higher levels during hot air drying, although vitamin C was higher just after RF pretreatment, it was degraded during hot air drying. Overall, RF would be a new pretreatment technique for fruit and vegetables drying.

Acknowledgements

The work was financially supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities of China (NO. GK201503072 and GK201601007).

5. References


