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Aroma Volatiles: Food Composition and Factors

Noura Al-Khalifa*

Department of Food Chemistry, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar

Introduction

The intricate world of food aroma is largely defined by a complex symphony of volatile organic compounds, the identification and characterization of which are paramount to understanding and manipulating flavor profiles. Advanced analytical techniques have revolutionized our ability to dissect these complex mixtures, offering unprecedented precision in identifying the specific molecules responsible for desirable sensory attributes. Gas chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and its variants, such as selected ion flow tube mass spectrometry (SIFT-MS), have emerged as indispensable tools in this endeavor, enabling researchers to pinpoint and quantify even trace amounts of aroma-active compounds [1].

Roasted coffee, a beverage beloved globally, owes its distinctive and complex aroma to a fascinating array of volatile compounds generated during the roasting process. Through the application of sophisticated analytical methods like gas chromatography-olfactometry (GC-O) combined with GC-MS, scientists have been able to meticulously identify the key contributors to this characteristic scent. These investigations frequently highlight the significant role of sulfur compounds, furans, and pyrazines in creating the appealing aroma profile associated with freshly roasted coffee beans [2].

Fermented dairy products, such as yogurt, possess unique and often highly desirable sensory qualities that are intrinsically linked to their volatile compound profiles. The application of techniques like headspace solid-phase microextraction (HS-SPME) in conjunction with GC-MS allows for the effective extraction and detailed analysis of these aroma-defining molecules. Studies in this area consistently reveal a prevalence of aldehydes, ketones, and short-chain fatty acids as principal contributors to the distinct sensory characteristics of fermented dairy products [3].

The distinctive aroma of extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) is a critical factor in its perceived quality and consumer appeal, and this aroma is directly attributed to a specific suite of volatile compounds. Employing advanced analytical methodologies, including GC-MS and GC-O, researchers have identified several key volatile constituents, such as hexanal, (E)-2-hexenal, and various C6 alcohols and esters. The concentration and presence of these compounds are often correlated with the olive cultivar and the specific processing parameters employed [4].

Herbs, integral to culinary traditions worldwide, derive a significant portion of their aromatic appeal from volatile compounds that can be markedly influenced by post-harvest processing. For instance, drying methods applied to herbs like basil can lead to substantial alterations in their volatile compound composition. Techniques such as GC-MS and solid-phase microextraction (SPME) have been instrumental in demonstrating how oven drying and freeze-drying can significantly modify the profiles of key aroma-contributing compounds, thereby affecting the final sensory quality of the herb [5].

The complex and comforting aroma of bread, particularly during the baking process, is a result of intricate chemical reactions that generate a diverse range of volatile compounds. Through the application of GC-MS and GC-O, researchers have identified crucial aroma compounds including aldehydes, ketones, and pyrazines, which are primarily formed via Maillard reactions and lipid oxidation. The study of these volatile compounds sheds light on how variations in baking time and temperature critically influence their formation and distribution within the bread matrix [6].

Red wine, a beverage celebrated for its complex olfactory and gustatory experiences, owes much of its allure to a specific set of volatile compounds that evolve throughout its production and aging. Analytical techniques such as GC-MS and GC-O have been pivotal in identifying esters, alcohols, and volatile phenols as the primary contributors to red wine's aroma. Furthermore, these studies underscore the significant impact of grape variety, fermentation conditions, and aging processes on the development and complexity of these aroma compounds [7].

Fermented soybeans, a staple in many Asian cuisines, possess a unique and characteristic aroma profile that is shaped by the complex biochemical transformations occurring during fermentation. The application of GC-MS and GC-O has been essential in identifying key aroma contributors, including pyrazines, aldehydes, and volatile sulfur compounds. Research in this domain highlights how the intricate fermentation process plays a pivotal role in the formation of these aroma-defining compounds [8].

Tropical fruits, such as mangoes, are prized for their distinct and often intensely appealing aromas, which are largely dictated by their volatile compound composition. Through the application of GC-MS and GC-O, scientists have been able to identify a diverse array of esters, terpenes, and aldehydes as essential components responsible for the characteristic aroma of mangoes. This research also illuminates how different ripening stages can significantly influence the concentration and profile of these volatile molecules [9].

Baked potato chips, a popular snack food, possess a characteristic aroma that is a direct consequence of the volatile compounds generated during their production. Using GC-MS and SPME, researchers have identified key aroma contributors, including furans, pyrazines, and aldehydes, which arise from Maillard reactions and lipid degradation. This area of study further investigates how processing parameters, such as the type of oil used and frying temperature, critically influence the formation of these flavor-active compounds [10].

Description

The comprehensive investigation into the volatile compounds responsible for the diverse aromas found in various food products underscores the indispensable role of advanced analytical techniques. Specifically, gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and selected ion flow tube mass spectrometry (SIFT-MS) are highlighted for their precision in identifying and quantifying these complex molecules, revealing the specific contributions of esters, aldehydes, and sulfur-containing compounds to desirable flavor profiles, and how processing methods can influence them [1].

The characteristic aroma of roasted coffee is meticulously dissected in a study employing gas chromatography-olfactometry (GC-O) coupled with GC-MS to pinpoint key aroma-active compounds. This research effectively identifies sulfur compounds, furans, and pyrazines as major contributors to the coffee aroma, while also exploring the impact of different roasting degrees on the concentration and profile of these volatile molecules [2].

Volatile compound profiling of yogurt using headspace solid-phase microextraction (HS-SPME) combined with GC-MS is detailed in a study that elucidates the aroma of fermented dairy products. The research identifies aldehydes, ketones, and short-chain fatty acids as prevalent aroma contributors and examines the influence of starter cultures on the resulting aroma profiles [3].

The volatile compounds in extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) and their correlation with sensory properties are explored through advanced analytical methods, including GC-MS and GC-O. The study pinpoints key contributors such as hexanal, (E)-2-hexenal, and various C6 alcohols and esters, linking their presence and concentration to olive cultivar and processing parameters [4].

The effect of drying methods on the volatile aroma profile of basil is investigated using GC-MS and SPME. This research demonstrates that oven drying and freeze-drying significantly alter the composition of volatile compounds compared to fresh basil, affecting key aroma-contributing compounds like linalool and eugenol and influencing the final sensory quality [5].

A comprehensive analysis of volatile compounds formed during the baking of bread is presented, utilizing GC-MS and GC-O. The study identifies crucial aroma compounds such as aldehydes, ketones, and pyrazines, formed through Maillard reactions and lipid oxidation, and emphasizes how baking time and temperature variations impact their formation and distribution [6].

The characterization of volatile compounds contributing to the aroma of red wine is achieved through GC-MS and GC-O, identifying esters, alcohols, and volatile phenols as key contributors. The research further discusses the impact of grape variety, fermentation conditions, and aging on the development of these aroma compounds, offering insights into the wine's complex sensory profile [7].

Fermented soybeans, a traditional food with a distinct aroma, are analyzed for their volatile aroma compounds using GC-MS and GC-O. The study identifies pyrazines, aldehydes, and volatile sulfur compounds as key contributors, highlighting the significant influence of the fermentation process on their formation and the resulting characteristic flavor [8].

The volatile profile of mangoes and their contribution to aroma are investigated using GC-MS and GC-O. The research identifies esters, terpenes, and aldehydes as crucial to the fruit's aroma and explores how different ripening stages affect the profile and concentration of these volatile compounds [9].

Finally, the volatile compounds responsible for the aroma of baked potato chips are characterized using GC-MS and SPME. The study identifies furans, pyrazines, and aldehydes as key contributors, formed through Maillard reactions and lipid degradation, and examines how processing parameters like oil type and frying temperature influence the formation of these flavor-active compounds [10].

Conclusion

This collection of research explores the volatile compounds responsible for the aroma of various food products, including food in general, coffee, yogurt, olive oil, herbs, bread, red wine, fermented soybeans, tropical fruits, and potato chips. Advanced analytical techniques such as GC-MS, GC-O, and SPME are consistently employed to identify and quantify these aroma-active molecules. Key compound classes identified across these studies include esters, aldehydes, ketones, furans, pyrazines, and sulfur-containing compounds. The research also highlights how various factors, including processing methods, roasting degrees, fermentation, drying, ripening stages, and baking conditions, significantly influence the formation and concentration of these volatile compounds, ultimately shaping the distinct sensory profiles of these foods.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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***Address for Correspondence:** Noura, Al-Khalifa, Department of Food Chemistry, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar, E-mail: n.alkhalifa@qu.edu.qa

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