

Study on the Production of Cellulase by Using *Aspergillus Oryzae* and its Application on the Green Coffee Treatment

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the production of microbial cellulase by using *Aspergillus oryzae* and its application in the treatment of coffee. The cellulase producing method used for microbe medium was in submerged fermentation with malt extract medium. The method used for determining the cellulase activity was spectrophotometry at the wavelength 540 nm with 3,5-DNS reagent to measure the production of reducing sugar (the product of enzymatic reaction). Then, cellulase was applied on green Robusta coffee bean to enhance the extraction of total soluble solids. The result showed that at 6% (v/w) cellulase and 50°C of enzyme treatment, lasting for 24 hours, the extraction of soluble solids was highest at 4.47±0.06°Brix. The efficiency of extraction improved 21.79% compared to the control. This result could be applied in the production of coffee to improve the quality of coffee products.

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1. Introduction

The production of microbial enzymes has various advantages, including huge production, high enzyme activity and low cost [1], [2]. There are many researches which studied the production of enzymes by bacteria, yeast, and/or molds. The paper [3] produced cellulase from *Candida tropicalis*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Aspergillus niger* and applied them into the treatment of coffee to demucilage and increase the extraction of soluble solids content of coffee [3]. The paper [4] studied the production of cellulase by using *Aspergillus oryzae* (*A. oryzae*) in molasses. *Aspergillus oryzae* is belong to *Aspergillus* family and is considered as GRAS (generally recognized as safe) which has been applied for years in the making of “tuong ban” (or Vietnamese fermented soybean paste) in Vietnam or miso in Japan. They can produce cellulase enzyme at appropriate conditions and substrates [5].

Cellulase is one kind of enzymes which catalyze the hydrolysis of cellulose into its monomers – glucoses. Going along with amylase (25%) and protease (18%), cellulase accounts for 15% of the enzyme market and also plays important roles in the industry [6]. In green coffee bean, cellulose appears in the insoluble or holocellulose fraction and takes 13-23% of the polysaccharides content in Robusta coffee [7]. The cellulose located mostly in the cell wall of the bean and enzymatic treatment hydrolyzes them to form tiny pores on the surface of cell wall and initiates the liberation of soluble solids content of coffee bean [8].

Coffea canephora or commonly named Robusta coffee is responsible for nearly 90% of the coffee planted area in Vietnam and make this country becoming one of the largest producers of green coffee in the world [9]. Robusta coffee has bitter taste and higher total soluble solids content compare to Arabica coffee. However, its price is low since Arabica has better flavor, aroma and is preferred by many

Western countries. This leads to a demand in increasing added value for Robusta coffee and the treatment of coffee by microbial enzymes is the solution for this problem [4].

There were some previous researches on the microbial enzymes from bacteria, yeast and mold... For instances, article [3] produced cellulase from *Candida tropicalis*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Aspergillus niger* and applied them on coffee cherries to remove the mucilage layer and increase the extraction of soluble solids content from three species of coffee, including *Coffea arabica*, *Coffea robusta* and *Coffea chari*. In 2016, Nguyen et al. in [4] also investigated the enzyme production from *Aspergillus oryzae* by submerged fermentation using molasses and treated on *Coffea robusta*. However, there are limited studies focus on the production of cellulase by *Aspergillus oryzae* using different cultured media and applied on coffee to improve the extraction of soluble solids content.

This research aimed to study the production of cellulase by using *A. oryzae* using malt extract as cultured media and its application on the green *Coffea robusta* treatment to enhance the extraction of total soluble solids from coffee.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Materials

2.1.1 Microorganism

The microorganism used in this research was *Aspergillus oryzae* and was purchased from the Institute of Microbiology and Biotechnology – Vietnam National University in Hanoi (Accession number: VTCC-F-037).

2.1.2 Green coffee bean

The green bean of *Coffea robusta* (*Coffea canephora*) was brought from Quang Tin commune, Dak R'lap district, Dak Nong province, Vietnam.

2.1.3 Chemicals

For malt extract cultured medium: Carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC), $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$;

For analysis of cellulase activity: 3,5-dinitrosalicylic acid (3,5-DNS), glucose, potassium sodium tartrate ($\text{C}_4\text{H}_4\text{O}_6\text{KNa}\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$), and sodium hydroxide (NaOH).

2.2 Methods

2.2.1 Preparation of cultured medium

Cultured medium used in this study was malt extract media with the supplement of 1% $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$ for nitrogen source and carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC) for substrate. The composition of medium was as following: Distilled water: 1000 mL, ground malt: 250 g, pH was 5.5 – 6.

2.2.2 Production of microbial cellulase

Microbial cellulase was produced by submerged fermentation in a 50 mL fancel with the above culture medium. It was sterilized at 121°C for 15 min, and then *A. oryzae* was cultured into the medium with the ratio of 10^7 spores/mL. The fermentation occurred for 2 days (48 hours). After fermentation, the fancel was centrifuged at 7000 rpm for 30 min using the equipment namely ROTANTA 460 Hettich Zentrifugen (Germany) and filtered by sterilized filter paper with the pore's size 0.2 μm to completely eliminate the microorganisms. Crude enzyme was collected in the supernatant after centrifugation.

2.2.3 Determination of cellulase activity

One unit of cellulase activity was defined as the amount (μmol) of glucose produced by the hydrolysis reaction of CMC 1% for 1 min. To measure, 1 mL of cellulase (sample) was reacted with 1 mL of CMC 1% for 10 min. Then, 1 mL of 3,5-DNS was added and the reaction was boiled for 5 min. The absorbance (OD) of reacted solution was measured by the spectrophotometer at wavelength $\lambda = 540$ nm. Finally, concentration of glucose was calculated based on the standard curve of glucose 0.1%. Blank sample was the sample without enzymatic reaction.

$$\text{Cellulase activity (U/mL)} = (A_T - A_B) \cdot F \cdot \frac{1000}{180} \cdot \frac{1}{10} \cdot D \quad (1)$$

In which:

A_T : The absorbance of samples F: Glucose efficient

A_B : The absorbance of blank D: Dilution factor

2.2.4 Investigation of the optimal conditions for cellulase production

2.2.4.1 Effect of total soluble solids of the cultured media

The total soluble solids of the cultured media were varied from 2 to 12°Brix with the interval of 2°Brix. The other factors were unchanged. The duration of fermentation was 48 hours (2 days) at room temperature, pH was 5.5.

2.2.4.2 Effect of initial pH

The initial pH of cultured media was varied from 3.5 to 6 with the interval of 0.5. The value of total soluble solids was obtained from the previous experiment. The duration of fermentation was 48 hours (2 days) at room temperature.

2.2.4.3 Effect of duration of fermentation

The duration of fermentation was varied from 48 to 96 hours with the interval of 12 hours. The values of total soluble solids and initial pH of cultured media were obtained from the previous experiments. The fermentation occurred at room temperature.

2.2.5 Investigation of the optimal conditions for enzymatic treatment to improve the extraction of total soluble solids from coffee

The green beans of Robusta coffee were immersed into the mixture including cellulase and distilled water, using 250 mL Erlenmeyer flask as a container. It was put in the shaking incubator for treatment.

2.2.5.1 Effect of concentration of enzyme

The concentration of cellulase was varied from 2 to 10% (w/w – in distilled water) with the interval of 2%. The duration and temperature of treatment were unchanged for 18 hours, at 35°C.

2.2.5.2 Effect of duration of treatment

The duration of treatment was varied from 12 to 28 hours with the interval of 4 hours. The value for concentration of enzyme was collected from the previous experiment. Temperature of treatment was at 35°C.

2.2.5.3 Effect of temperature of treatment

The temperature of treatment was varied from 30 to 60°C with the interval of 10°C. The values for concentration of enzyme and duration of treatment were obtained from the previous experiments.

2.2.6 Determination of total soluble solids from coffee

First, 50 gram of green coffee beans was roasted at 200°C for 15 mins. Then, it was ground into powder. For the extraction of soluble solids, 10 grams of coffee powder was stirred well with 70 mL of hot distilled water. The mixture was shaken at 175 rpm for 10 mins. Finally, it was filtered by filter paper two times before measuring the total soluble solids in the coffee extract using the refractometer ATAGO Master (0.0 – 33.0°Brix), Japan.

2.2.7 Statistical analysis

All experiments were in triplicate. The data were collected and analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics 20 Program with One-way ANOVA and Duncan Standard ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) to calculate the means, standard deviation and significant difference between samples. All the graphs were drawn by Microsoft Excel 2010.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Production of microbial cellulase

3.1.1 Effect of total soluble solids of the cultured media

Figure 1 shows the effect of total soluble solids on the production of cellulase by using *A. oryzae*. As the result, the highest cellulase activity was 6.20 U/mL and achieved at 8°Bx. This result is in the agreement with the study of **Nguyen et al. in** [4] which also claimed that the optimal total soluble solids for cellulase production by *A. oryzae* was from 6 to 8°Bx.

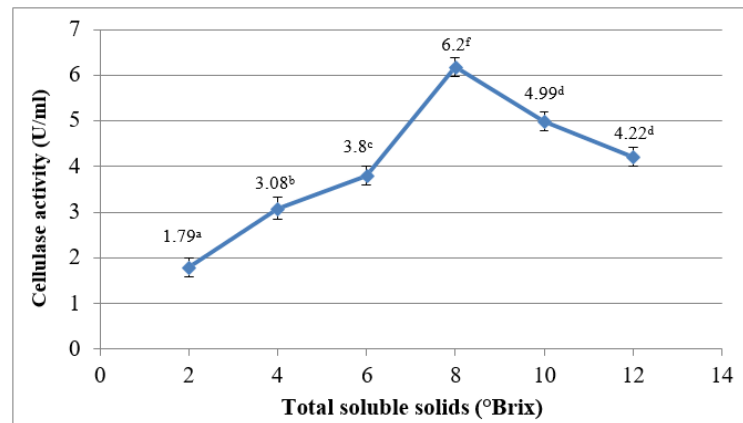


Figure 1. Effect of total soluble solids on cellulase activity

(The values with the same superscript were not significantly different)

Total soluble solids in cultured medium play an important role in the growth of microorganisms. They not only supply the required nutrients, but also influence the osmotic pressure of the cells. If the concentration of total soluble solid in molasses was too high, the hypertonic environment could be occurred, the cell of microorganism would be dehydrated and shrunk. In contrast, the low concentration of total soluble solid in molasses could cause hypotonic in which the cell would absorb solution from the outer environment. Then, the cell would be swollen and busted [10]. Moreover, total soluble solids supplied the nutrients for the growth of *A. oryzae*. If the nutrients were excessive, the mold would use this source of energy instead of producing enzyme. On the other hand, if the nutrients were insufficient, the mold could not grow well [11].

3.1.2 Effect of initial pH

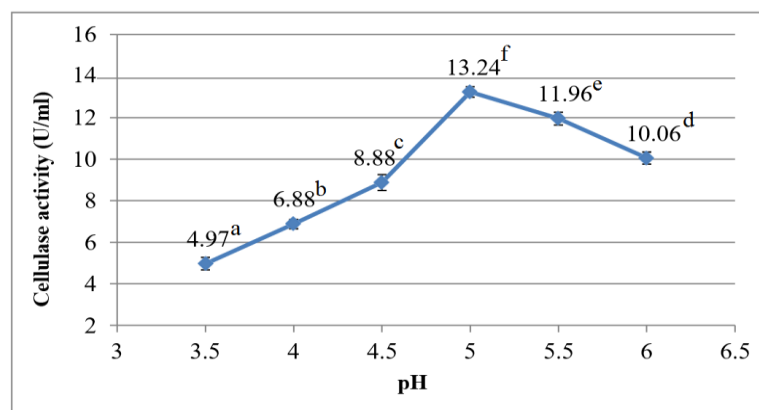


Figure 2. Effect of initial pH on cellulase activity

(The values with the same superscript were not significantly different)

The result indicated that initial pH 5 was optimal for the production of cellulase by using *A. oryzae*. The enzymes from mold worked well in acidic rather than in basic medium [12]. The enzymes would

lose their activity when the pH was out of the optimal range [13]. This also in the agreement with the studies [14]– [17] which claimed that the pH 5 was optimal for cellulase activity. Enzyme activity depends on the level of ionization of the amino acids in the active site, therefore pH plays an important role in maintaining the proper structure of an enzyme [18]. Changes in pH can significantly affect the degree of dissociation of the active sites of enzyme and substrate [14].

3.1.3 Effect of duration of fermentation

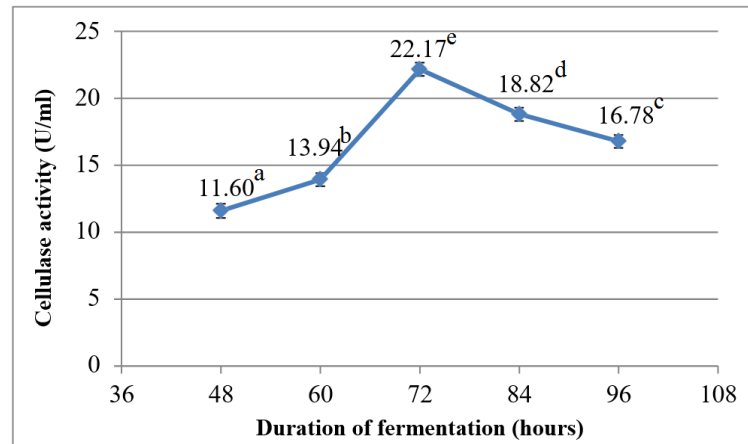


Figure 3. Effect of duration of fermentation on cellulase activity
(The values with the same superscript were not significantly different)

The cellulase activity increased by the time of fermentation, reaching the peak at 22.17 U/mL for 72 h. After that, cellulase activity decreased significantly.

The results obtained from the experiment are similar to the data of [19] and [20]. Besides, this fermentation time is shorter than the results obtained by [21], which are 4 days and 5 days by [22]. While the data obtained on the fermentation time of *A. oryzae* in [23] only 60 h is optimal. The results in the present study differ from previous studies due to different organisms, isolated from different types of cellulolytic materials, and climatic conditions [24].

The curve of microbial growth describes an entire growth cycle. When filamentous fungi were added to the cultured medium, the enzyme could not be produced immediately to the maximum extent. They first used monosaccharides and minerals in the cultured medium as an immediate source of nutrients for the lag phase. This trend maintained until the beginning of the log phase. During the log phase, the fungus grew and reproduced at the maximum rate. The biosynthesis of enzyme began only when most of these immediate sources of nutrients were exhausted. The type of enzyme produced and its quantity depended on the type of substrate. During the lag phase and early log phase, the fungus tried to adapt and only a limited amount of enzyme was produced. As a result, the enzyme will be excreted at a faster rate. And this rate will reach the stationary phase. Then, in the early stages of death, enzyme activity decreases due to certain toxins present in the culture media that affect microbial growth and lead to cell death [25]. Moreover, in the early stages, microorganisms only grow and create biomass, not producing enzyme. If the duration is too long, the source of nutrients decreased, then microorganisms had to use other sources of nutrients, such as cellulose, for growth. Therefore, enzyme activity would also decrease when it catalyzes the hydrolysis reaction of cellulose into its simpler molecules to generate energy for the use of microorganisms [26].

3.2 Application of microbial cellulase on green Robusta coffee

3.2.1 Effect of the concentration of enzyme

The concentration of enzyme is one of the important factors in coffee treatment. The insufficient amount gives low quality of treatment, while the excess amount of enzyme can waste both the resources and money.

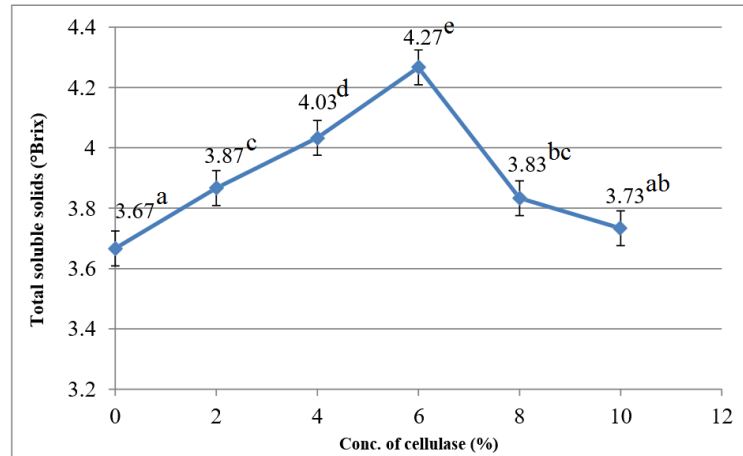


Figure 4. Effect of concentration of cellulase on the enzymatic treatment of coffee
(The values with the same superscript were not significantly different)

Green Robusta coffee was treated by microbial cellulase at 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10% (volume of enzyme/weight of green coffee sample). Control is sample without enzymatic treatment. All samples were incubated at 35°C for 18 h. As the result, the highest extraction of total soluble solids was 4.27°Bx with 6% of enzyme. The crude enzyme ratio below 6% is not enough to extract the solute, while the ratio above 6% will dissolve the solute into the medium, resulting in a decrease in the extraction of total soluble solids of green coffee beans. In addition, when increasing the amount of enzyme used, the cost for production would be also higher.

The results of Ouyang et al. in [27] mentioned that the yield of corn cob hydrolysis was increased with the increase of cellulase rate under treatment. The high content of hydrolysates in the solution indicates that carbohydrates are released into the solution, confirming that hydrolysis of cellulose has occurred. Cellulase enzyme hydrolyzes β - 1,4 glycosidic bonds in cellulose to form oligosaccharides or glucose. The results in [28] also showed that increasing the enzyme dosage beyond the optimal level did not improve enzymatic hydrolysis. In addition, the paper [29] demonstrated that when using higher enzyme concentrations, similar yields were obtained in a shorter time period.

3.2.2 Effect of the duration of treatment

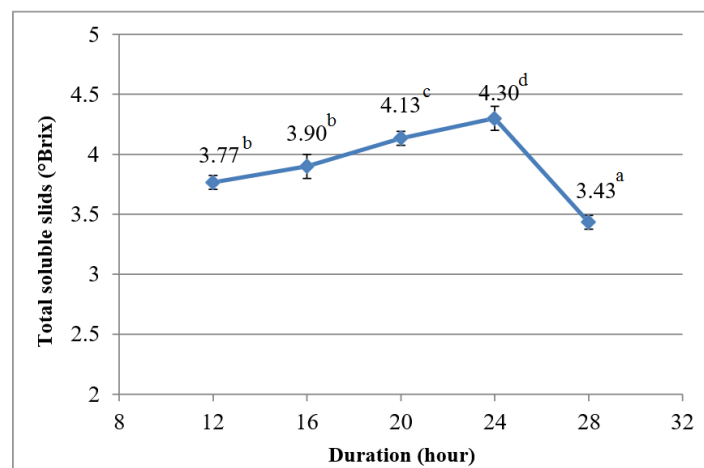


Figure 5. Effect of duration of treatment on the enzymatic treatment of coffee
(The values with the same superscript were not significantly different)

Enzymes can break down the cell walls and help release biologically active substances, increasing the efficiency of the extraction process. Enzymes need time to function and work under specific conditions. If the time is too short, the enzyme will not have enough time to work. Conversely, if the processing time is too long, the cell wall of the coffee bean may undergo excessive treatment and lead

to a decrease in the extraction of soluble content since it is dissolved from the coffee bean into water. The results showed that the optimal duration of treatment was 24 h and the total soluble solids reached 4.30°Bx. This result was similar to the research [30] which pointed out that 24 h was the optimal time to reach 90% of the yield by cellulase treatment.

Furthermore, the washing step in the process also plays an important role. In this step, after undergoing enzymatic treatment, the coffee beans are washed under running water to remove the silk skin and residual enzymes. However, this step can also wash away the dissolved substances, leading to a reduction in their content in the final coffee bean product. After washing, the beans are dried at 60°C to the initial moisture content, roasted and ground into a powder before measuring the extract content with a refractometer.

3.2.3 Effect of the temperature

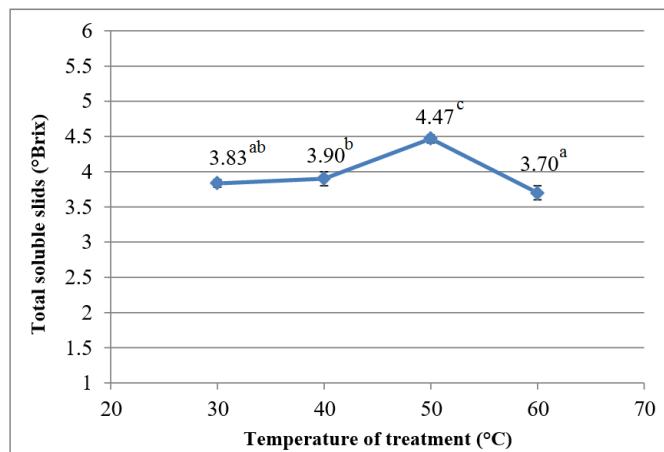


Figure 6. Effect of temperature on the enzymatic treatment of coffee
(The values with the same superscript were not significantly different)

Temperature plays an important role in enzyme processing, because enzymes are protein and sensitive to heat. If the temperature of treatment is too low, the enzyme cannot be activated. On the other hand, high temperature can denature proteins and lead to the loss of enzyme activity due to the destruction of the secondary or tertiary structure of the enzyme.

The results showed that at 50°C, the highest extraction of total soluble solids was 4.47°Bx. According to the paper [31], the soluble solids reached 17% by mannanase treatment. Cellulase enzyme hydrolysis at 60°C is not optimal. However, when treating cellulase, the yield was equivalent to that of mannanase treatment [31]. The results are similar to those of study [32], who suggested that 60°C was not optimal for cellulase activity [32]. Meanwhile, 45°C is the optimum temperature for cellulase purified from *A. oryzae*, according to [33] and 55°C was optimal for cellulase activity obtained from strain *A. oryzae* according to [34]. Cellulase from other sources also gives a result of 55°C [15], [16]. Comparing the results with [17], [30], [35], also gave similar results to this research, showing that the optimal temperature for cellulase is 50°C. High optimum temperature is a characteristic of many filamentous fungi. The chemical nature of enzymes is protein. Therefore, it is different from chemical reactions, the speed of catalysis reaction of enzymes only increases when the temperature is increased within a certain limit, without affecting the structure of enzyme [36]. Temperature affects enzyme activity, leading to an impact on the extraction of total soluble solids. Besides, temperature also regulates product quality during the enzymatic treatment [37].

4. Conclusions

This research successfully produced microbial cellulase by using *A. oryzae* with the conditions of cultured medium as following: total soluble solids was 8°Bx, pH 5, duration of fermentation was 72 h. The highest cellulase activity was 22.17 U/mL. Then, cellulase was applied in coffee treatment to enhance the extraction of total soluble solids. The highest total soluble solids extracted from the treated

coffee was 4.47°Bx (21.79% higher than the control) and achieved at 6% (v/w) cellulase, 50°C and for 24 h of treatment. This result could be applied in the production of coffee to not only improve the efficiency of treatment, but also the whole quality of coffee products.

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