

INFLUENCE OF FAT CONTENT ON THE QUALITY AND SHELF LIFE OF CURED SARDINES

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The paper presents results of studies on the effect of seasonal variations in the fat content on the quality and shelf life of dry cured, pickle cured and smoke cured oil sardines. The merits and defects of each method of curing during different seasons are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Oil sardine (*Sardinella longiceps*) is the single largest fishery of India. But surprisingly modern methods of processing and preservation are not employed at present for utilizing this major fishery. In the coastal and nearby areas, the fish is consumed as fresh fish. But bulk of the landings is converted to cured products by traditional methods. The quality of these products is often deplorably poor. Considering the volume of cured products prepared from oil sardine, improvement of the quality of these products becomes an important problem.

Oil sardine exhibits a remarkable seasonal variation in fat content, recording a maximum during November-January and minimum during June-August (Vasavan, Gangadharan and Padmanabhan, 1960; Gopakumar, 1965). Any attempt

for the improvement of curing methods for this fish should, therefore take into consideration the effect of this variation in fat content on the quality and shelf life of the final cured products. This paper reports results of such a study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Fresh oil sardine was procured in prime condition from the local landing centre. The fish after cleaning, dressing and washing, were divided into three lots. The first lot was dry cured, second lot pickled and the third smoke cured. No special preservative was used for curing. Samples were taken every month to study the effect of seasonal variations in the fat content on the quality and shelf life of the cured products.

For dry curing, the cleaned dressed fish were salted with refined salt (salt :

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