



**PRESERVATIVE EFFECTS OF GREEN AND BLACK PEPPER ON
AFRICAN SOFT CHEESE: SENSORY EVALUATION AND
MICROBIAL ANALYSIS OF TOTAL VIABLE BACTERIA AND
COLIFORM BACTERIA**

BY

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HND/23/AGT/FT/0185**

**BEING A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF,
AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY, INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE (IAS),
KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (ND).
AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY**

JULY, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project “PRESERVATIVE EFFECT OF GREEN ANDBLACK PEPPER OF AFRICAN SOFT CHEESE: SENSORY EVALUATION ANDMICROBIAL ANALYSIS OF TOTAL VIABLE BACTERIA AND COLIFORMBACTERIA” has been read and approved as meeting the requirement of the Department of Agricultural Technology, Institute of Applied Sciences, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin for award of Higher National Diploma in Agricultural technology.

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DEDICATION

I dedicated this to almighty God that make this research work a successful project, for his strength and wisdom i glorify your name.

Moreover to my loving parents who give the moral support and advice thank to you for your contribution.

To my loving Aunty, I really appreciate your financial support and being patient throughout my program thanks for being there always lastly, it is dedicated to my Aunty.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All Praise honor. adoration and glorification to Almighty God. The God of mankind and all that exist Sustainer and owner of my life, I adore him for the gift of life and making this

project a Stressful one. Your name shall be Praised forever more. My Sincere appreciation goes to my Supervisor Dr. KA. Dangana for his guidance, encouragement throughout this Project.

My appreciation also goes to my amiable HOD Mr. Buhari Yusuf and all my other Lecturers in the department for their Valuable Contribution to my education And their Support throughout my academic Journey. their academic and Profession expertise has been instrumental in my growth and Learning.

I also acknowledge the Contribution and advice of my Parent Mr. and Mrs. Joy Who never get tired of me, they gave me an encouragement , motivation, and love throughout my academic Program, their unwavering Support and belief in me have been a source of Strength and inspiration.

Furthermore, My immense appreciation goes to my loving Aunty Mrs. joy for is love, moral and financial Support through my Programme thank you for always been there for me, May Almighty God bless and enrich you more.

Lastly to my loving sister's favour, Ella Chiamaka You are my inspiration. Also to my family, friends and colleagues in my department thank for the care and contribution too.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the preservative effects of green and black pepper on African soft cheese, focusing on their impact on sensory attributes and bacterial counts, specifically Total Viable Bacteria (TVB) and Coliform Bacteria (SS). African soft cheese, a popular dairy product in West Africa, is prone to rapid spoilage due to its high moisture content and lack of effective preservation methods. Green and black pepper, both recognized for their antimicrobial and antioxidant properties, were tested as natural preservatives. The study involved

applying different concentrations (10g, 20g, 30g) of green and black pepper to cheese samples, with a neutral treatment serving as a control. Sensory analysis was conducted to evaluate the physical appearance, taste, aroma, texture, sound, and overall acceptance of the treated cheese, using a 5-point Likert scale. Bacterial counts were measured on Days 1, 3, and 5. The results showed that both green and black pepper significantly reduced bacterial growth, especially at higher concentrations, with green pepper (30g) demonstrating the most effective preservative impact. Sensory evaluation also revealed that higher concentrations of pepper enhanced the taste, texture, and overall acceptance of the cheese. These findings suggest that green and black pepper can serve as effective natural preservatives in African soft cheese, offering a sustainable alternative to synthetic preservatives. The study also highlights the potential for improving the shelf life and safety of cheese in regions with limited access to refrigeration, thereby reducing food waste and supporting small-scale dairy producers.

Keywords: African soft cheese, green pepper, black pepper, preservatives, Total Viable Bacteria, Coliform Bacteria, sensory evaluation, shelf life, food safety, natural preservatives

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Cheese is one of the most ancient and versatile dairy products, with a history that dates back thousands of years. Across the globe, cheese serves as an essential source of protein, calcium, and other vital nutrients. Among the different types of cheese, African soft cheese, commonly known as wara in West Africa, holds a prominent place in the culinary and nutritional traditions of many African societies. Despite its popularity and nutritional benefits, African soft cheese faces significant challenges due to its high perishability. The lack of effective preservation methods, combined with poor storage infrastructure in rural areas, contributes to substantial post-harvest losses, food waste, and economic challenges for small-scale producers (Adeyeye et al., 2020).

Soft cheeses, including African soft cheese, have high moisture content and low acidity, creating an environment conducive to bacteria growth. This makes them particularly susceptible to spoilage caused by bacteria, yeasts, and molds. The spoilage process not only reduces the sensory quality of the cheese, such as taste, texture, and aroma, but also poses potential health risks due to the proliferation of pathogenic microorganisms. Traditional preservation methods, such as salting, smoking, and refrigeration, have been used to slow down spoilage. However, these methods have limitations, especially in rural areas where access to refrigeration and modern storage facilities is limited or non-existent (Oluwafemi & Ibeh, 2021).

To address these challenges, there has been increasing interest in natural preservation methods that are affordable, sustainable, and accessible to low-income communities. Spices, which have been used for centuries as food additives, are gaining attention as natural preservatives due to their antibacteria and antioxidant properties.

Among these spices, green and black pepper stand out as potential candidates for cheese preservation. Green pepper, which is the unripe fruit of the *Piper nigrum* plant, and black pepper, which is the dried, mature fruit of the same plant, are widely known for their culinary and medicinal uses. They contain bioactive compounds such as piperine, flavonoids, and essential oils that have been shown to inhibit the growth of spoilage microorganisms and delay oxidative deterioration in food products (Ravindran, 2017).

Several studies have highlighted the antibacteria and antioxidant properties of green and black pepper in various food systems. For instance, Nwachukwu and Ezech (2021) demonstrated that black pepper extracts significantly reduced the bacteria load in meat products, extending their shelf life while maintaining sensory quality. Similarly, green pepper has been reported to exhibit strong antioxidant activity, which helps to prevent lipid oxidation and maintain the freshness of dairy products. These findings suggest that incorporating green and black pepper into the production or storage of African soft cheese could be a viable strategy to enhance its shelf life and safety.

Moreover, the use of natural preservatives like green and black pepper aligns with global trends promoting the reduction of synthetic additives in food. Synthetic preservatives, while effective, have raised concerns about their potential health risks, including allergic reactions and long-term toxicity. In contrast, natural preservatives are generally regarded as safer and more environmentally friendly. They also resonate with consumer preferences for clean-label products that contain fewer artificial ingredients (Banerjee et al., 2022).

The potential application of green and black pepper in the preservation of African soft cheese is particularly relevant in the context of food security and economic development. In many parts of

Africa, small-scale cheese producers rely on traditional methods that are labor-intensive and yield products with short shelf lives. Spoilage not only leads to economic losses but also limits the ability of producers to access broader markets. By extending the shelf life of African soft cheese, natural preservatives like green and black pepper could help to reduce food waste, improve profitability for producers, and enhance the availability of nutritious dairy products in local and regional markets (Adeyeye et al., 2020).

Despite the promising potential of green and black pepper as natural preservatives, research on their application in traditional African soft cheese is limited. Most studies on the antibacterial and antioxidant properties of these spices have focused on other food systems, such as meats, fermented beverages, and processed dairy products. There is a need to investigate how green and black pepper interact with the unique characteristics of African soft cheese, including its high moisture content, mild flavor, and traditional production methods. Understanding these interactions will provide valuable insights into the feasibility and effectiveness of using green and black pepper as preservatives in this specific context.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

African soft cheese is prone to rapid spoilage due to its high water activity and lack of refrigeration facilities in rural areas. The reliance on synthetic preservatives, although effective, raises concerns about their health implications and availability to low-income consumers. Hence, there is a growing need to explore natural and accessible alternatives for preserving soft cheese.

The use of green and black pepper as natural preservatives has not been extensively studied in the context of African soft cheese. This knowledge gap limits the adoption of these spices as

viable preservation agents, which could otherwise improve food security and reduce economic losses for small-scale producers.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the preservation effects of green and black pepper on African soft cheese. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the antibacteria effects of green and black pepper on the bacteria load of African soft cheese.
2. To assess the impact of green and black pepper on the sensory attributes of African soft cheese, including taste, texture, and aroma.
3. To evaluate the shelf-life extension of African soft cheese treated with green and black pepper under ambient storage conditions.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study is justified as it seeks to provide a practical and natural solution to the preservation challenges of African soft cheese. By evaluating the efficacy of green and black pepper in extending shelf life, maintaining sensory quality, and enhancing bacteria safety, the research can benefit small-scale producers, improve food security, and reduce economic losses, aligning with global efforts to promote sustainable and natural food systems.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant for several reasons:

1. It explores natural preservation methods, promoting safer and healthier alternatives to synthetic preservatives.
2. The findings can benefit small-scale cheese producers by providing an affordable and accessible preservation strategy.
3. It contributes to the literature on the application of spices in food preservation, particularly in traditional dairy products.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 HISTORY OF CHEESE

Cheese is one of the oldest prepared foods in human history, with its origins dating back thousands of years. The process of cheese-making is believed to have begun as early as 8000 BCE, coinciding with the domestication of sheep and the advent of dairy farming (Raviv et al., 2024). Early cheesemaking was likely discovered accidentally, when milk stored in animal stomachs curdled due to the action of rennet, a natural enzyme found in the stomach lining of young ruminants. This process separated the milk into curds and whey, forming the basis of cheese production (Lemoine et al., 2024).

Archaeological evidence indicates that cheesemaking was practiced in ancient civilizations. Murals in Egyptian tombs from around 2000 BCE depict cheese production, highlighting its cultural significance. In 2018, researchers discovered remnants of cheese in ancient Egyptian tombs dating back to approximately 1200 BCE, further demonstrating its long-standing role in human diets (Ahmed et al., 2018).

Recent discoveries in China have pushed the history of cheese even further back. In 2024, preserved remnants of cheese were found in the Xiaohe Cemetery in Xinjiang, China, dating to around 1615 BCE. These findings offer insights into early fermentation techniques and dietary practices in ancient societies (Raviv et al., 2024).

The Romans played a significant role in refining cheese-making techniques. They developed new methods for aging and flavoring cheese, spreading the craft throughout their empire. Cheesemaking traditions flourished in medieval Europe, particularly in monasteries, where monks perfected techniques and created many iconic cheese varieties, such as Parmesan and Gouda (Hansen, 2023).

The Industrial Revolution marked a turning point in cheese production, introducing mass production and standardization. Innovations in dairy science and technology led to more efficient cheese-making processes, enabling large-scale production to meet growing demand. Despite industrialization, traditional artisan cheese-making practices have persisted and experienced a resurgence in recent decades due to consumer interest in unique and locally crafted products (Banerjee et al., 2022).

Today, cheese is a global culinary staple, with thousands of varieties influenced by regional climates, cultures, and techniques. Its evolution over millennia reflects human ingenuity in food preservation and culinary innovation. Modern cheesemakers continue to explore new techniques and flavor profiles, ensuring the continued relevance of this ancient food in contemporary diets (Lemoine et al., 2024).

2.2 PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING OF CHEESE

Cheese production is a complex process that transforms milk into a variety of cheese types through the action of enzymes, bacteria, and physical manipulation. The process generally involves the following steps:

2.2.1. MILK SELECTION AND STANDARDIZATION

Cheese production begins with the selection of milk, which can come from cows, goats, sheep, or other mammals. The quality and composition of the milk, including its fat and protein content, play a significant role in determining the characteristics of the final product. Milk is often standardized to achieve consistent fat and protein ratios, ensuring uniformity in cheese production (Fox et al., 2017).

2.2.2. PASTEURIZATION AND ACIDIFICATION

Most cheese-making processes involve pasteurization to eliminate harmful bacteria while preserving beneficial microorganisms. After pasteurization, a starter culture of lactic acid bacteria is added to the milk. These bacteria convert lactose into lactic acid, lowering the pH and aiding in curd formation (Lawrence et al., 2021).

2.2.3. COAGULATION

Coagulation is the process of separating milk into solid curds and liquid whey. This is achieved by adding rennet, a natural enzyme, or a plant-based or bacteria coagulant. The rennet causes the milk proteins (casein) to form a gel-like structure, trapping fat and moisture within the curds (Guinee, 2022).

2.2.4. CUTTING AND COOKING THE CURDS

Once the curd has formed, it is cut into smaller pieces using specialized tools. Cutting allows whey to drain more efficiently, influencing the texture and moisture content of the cheese. The curds are then gently heated and stirred to expel additional whey and develop the desired texture (Tamime, 2021).

2.2.5. DRAINING AND SHAPING

The curds are drained to remove excess whey and shaped into molds. The molds define the size and shape of the cheese and help consolidate the curds. Some cheeses are pressed to remove more whey and achieve a firmer texture (Fox et al., 2017).

2.2.6. SALTING

Salt is added to cheese for flavor, preservation, and moisture control. Salting can be done by adding salt directly to the curds, immersing the cheese in a brine solution, or rubbing salt on the cheese surface. Salt also helps control the growth of microorganisms during aging (Lawrence et al., 2021).

2.2.7. AGING AND RIPENING

The aging process, also known as ripening, is where cheese develops its distinctive flavors and textures. During aging, biochemical processes involving enzymes and microbes break down proteins and fats, creating complex flavors. The length of aging varies depending on the type of cheese, ranging from a few days to several years (Guinee, 2022).

2.2.8 PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION

After aging, the cheese is packaged to preserve its quality and transported to markets. Packaging methods vary depending on the type of cheese, with some requiring vacuum-sealing to prevent contamination or moisture loss (Tamime, 2021).

2.2.9 MODERN INNOVATIONS IN CHEESE PRODUCTION

Advancements in dairy science and technology have led to innovations such as:

- **Ultrafiltration:** Concentrating milk before coagulation to increase yield.
- **Automation:** Using robotic systems to improve efficiency and consistency in large-scale production.

- **bacterial Rennet:** Developing plant-based and bacteria coagulants to address dietary and ethical concerns (Fox et al., 2017).

2.3 HEALTH BENEFITS OF PEPPER

Pepper, particularly black and green varieties, has been recognized for its numerous health benefits for centuries. These benefits stem from the bioactive compounds found in pepper, such as piperine, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. Below are some of the key health benefits of pepper:

1. RICH IN ANTIOXIDANTS

Pepper, especially black pepper, contains a variety of antioxidants, including flavonoids, carotenoids, and vitamin C. These antioxidants help neutralize harmful free radicals in the body, reducing oxidative stress and lowering the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes (Das & Bhat, 2021).

2. ANTI-INFLAMMATORY PROPERTIES

The active compound in black pepper, piperine, has been shown to possess anti-inflammatory effects. It inhibits inflammatory markers in the body, which can help reduce inflammation associated with conditions like arthritis, asthma, and other inflammatory disorders (Sahu et al., 2021).

3. IMPROVED DIGESTION

Pepper is known to stimulate the secretion of digestive enzymes, which can enhance digestion. It increases the hydrochloric acid levels in the stomach, aiding in the breakdown of food and absorption of nutrients. This can help reduce symptoms of indigestion, bloating, and gas (Liu et al., 2021).

4. BOOSTS METABOLISM

Piperine in black pepper has thermogenic properties, which can increase metabolic rate. It has been shown to stimulate fat-burning processes, making it potentially useful for weight management and fat loss (Nayak et al., 2020). This makes pepper a common ingredient in weight loss supplements.

5. ENHANCED NUTRIENT ABSORPTION

One of the most significant health benefits of pepper is its ability to enhance the bioavailability of other nutrients. Piperine has been found to increase the absorption of essential vitamins and minerals, such as selenium, vitamin B12, and curcumin (found in turmeric), thereby improving overall nutrient uptake (Prakash et al., 2021).

6. SUPPORTS BRAIN HEALTH

Studies suggest that pepper, particularly piperine, may have neuroprotective effects. It has been shown to improve cognitive function, protect against neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's, and may help alleviate symptoms of depression (Kumar

et al., 2020). Piperine also boosts the production of serotonin and dopamine, which are neurotransmitters involved in mood regulation.

7. ANTI-CANCER PROPERTIES

There is emerging evidence that piperine possesses anti-cancer effects. Studies have shown that it can inhibit the growth of cancer cells by inducing apoptosis (programmed cell death) and suppressing the formation of new blood vessels that supply tumors (Rajendran et al., 2020).

8. ANTIBACTERIAL AND ANTIVIRAL PROPERTIES

Black pepper has natural antibacterial and antiviral properties. It can help fight infections and prevent bacterial overgrowth in the gut. It also has the potential to reduce the severity of cold symptoms and improve respiratory health by reducing mucus and phlegm (Thakur et al., 2022).

9. IMPROVES SKIN HEALTH

The antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of pepper help protect the skin from oxidative stress, which can lead to aging and wrinkles. Some studies also suggest that it may help treat conditions like acne and psoriasis when applied topically (Sahni et al., 2021).

10. BOOSTS IMMUNITY

Pepper contains compounds like piperine and vitamin C that can enhance immune system function. By strengthening the body's defense mechanisms, pepper can help fight infections and protect against common illnesses (Das & Bhat, 2021).

2.4 PEPPER COATING AND METHODS TO ENHANCE STORAGE STABILITY AND FLAVOR CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN SOFT CHEESE

African soft cheese, commonly consumed across many regions of the continent, is known for its high moisture content and rapid spoilage under ambient conditions. This makes it susceptible to bacteria growth, loss of flavor, and a reduced shelf life. Researchers and producers have been exploring innovative methods to enhance the storage stability and flavor characteristics of African soft cheese, with pepper coating emerging as a potential solution.

2.4.1. PEPPER COATING AS A NATURAL PRESERVATIVE

Pepper, both black and green, is known for its antimicrobial, antioxidant, and preservative properties. The active compounds in pepper, particularly piperine, provide natural antibacterial effects by inhibiting the growth of spoilage microorganisms and pathogens. When used as a coating for African soft cheese, pepper can serve as a protective barrier that reduces bacterial contamination and extends shelf life without the use of synthetic preservatives (Rajendran et al., 2020).

The pepper coating can be applied in various forms, such as ground pepper or as an extract combined with other natural preservatives. The antibacterial properties of black pepper have been shown to inhibit bacteria such as *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella*, which are common contaminants in dairy products (Thakur et al., 2022).

2.4.2. ENHANCING FLAVOR CHARACTERISTICS

Pepper's ability to enhance flavor characteristics in food, including cheese, is well-documented. The essential oils in pepper contribute to the development of complex and distinctive flavor profiles. In African soft cheese, which has a mild, slightly tangy flavor, pepper coating can introduce spicy, aromatic notes, enhancing the sensory experience. This is particularly appealing in artisanal cheese production, where the preservation of unique flavor profiles is crucial.

Additionally, pepper's antioxidant properties help preserve the flavor and texture of the cheese by preventing the oxidative degradation of fats, which can cause off-flavors and rancidity (Fox et al., 2017). This not only maintains the freshness of the cheese but also contributes to a more robust and long-lasting flavor.

2.4.3. METHODS OF APPLYING PEPPER COATING

Several methods can be employed to apply pepper as a coating to African soft cheese. These include:

- **Direct Coating:** Ground pepper can be directly sprinkled onto the surface of the cheese or mixed into the cheese mass. This method is simple and effective, but it may not provide uniform coverage or extended shelf life.

- **Pepper Oil Coating:** The pepper essential oils or extracts can be mixed with vegetable oils or fats and then applied as a coating. This method ensures better distribution of the antibacteria and antioxidant compounds throughout the cheese surface. Pepper oil can also provide additional flavor depth and enhance the texture (Sahni et al., 2021).
- **Pepper and Salt Brine Soak:** Another approach is to immerse the cheese in a brine solution containing pepper extracts. This method combines the preservative effects of salt with the antibacteria and flavor-enhancing properties of pepper. It is particularly useful for cheeses that require longer shelf stability (Nwachukwu & Ezech, 2021).

2.4.4 STORAGE STABILITY WITH PEPPER COATING

The storage stability of African soft cheese can be significantly improved with pepper coating. Research indicates that the use of pepper reduces the growth of spoilage bacteria and fungi on the surface of the cheese, particularly when stored under ambient conditions. The coating forms a protective layer that limits moisture loss, prevents contamination, and slows down the aging process (Thakur et al., 2022).

Studies have shown that pepper coatings help extend the shelf life of cheeses by maintaining bacteria safety and reducing lipid oxidation. This is particularly beneficial for small-scale producers in regions with limited access to refrigeration and modern storage facilities. The protective properties of pepper help reduce food waste and improve the economic viability of cheese production in rural areas (Oluwafemi & Ibeh, 2021).

2.4.5 PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PEPPER COATING

1. UNIFORMITY OF COATING

Ensuring a consistent and even layer of pepper is crucial for effective preservation and flavor distribution.

- Why It Matters:

1. Uneven coating leaves unprotected areas prone to microbial growth and spoilage.
2. Flavor consistency across the cheese is compromised with patchy application.

- Steps to Achieve Uniformity:

1. Use a sifter to evenly sprinkle dry pepper over the cheese surface.
2. Rotate the cheese during application to coat all sides thoroughly.
3. For wet coatings, immerse the cheese fully in the pepper slurry or use a brush to apply evenly.

2. ADHESION OF PEPPER

Pepper must adhere well to the cheese surface to remain effective throughout storage.

- Techniques for Better Adhesion:

1. Lightly moisten the cheese surface before applying dry pepper to enhance sticking.
2. For wet coatings, allow the slurry to dry and set properly in a cool, ventilated area.
3. Press pepper gently onto the cheese using clean hands or a rolling motion.

3. APPLICATION TIMING

The timing of pepper application can impact its effectiveness.

- Recommendations:

1. Apply the coating immediately after cheese production while the surface is fresh and tacky.

2. If coating is delayed, slightly moisten the surface to improve adhesion.

4. COATING THICKNESS

The thickness of the pepper layer affects both flavor intensity and preservation.

- Optimal Thickness:
 1. A thin but even layer prevents overpowering spiciness and maintains balance.
 2. Excessive thickness may lead to flavor dominance or uneven drying.

5. STORAGE CONDITIONS POST-COATING

Proper storage ensures the coating remains intact and effective.

- Drying:
 1. Place coated cheese in a cool, dry, and ventilated space to allow the coating to set.
 2. Avoid humid environments that could cause the coating to clump or encourage spoilage.
- Packaging:

Use breathable materials like wax paper or vacuum-sealed bags to protect the coating and maintain freshness.

6. QUALITY OF PEPPER USED

The quality of pepper directly influences the coating's effectiveness.

- Considerations:
 1. Use freshly ground, food-grade pepper for optimal flavor and antimicrobial properties.
 2. Store pepper in a dry, airtight container to preserve its potency.

2.4.6. CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Despite its potential, there are challenges in using pepper as a coating for African soft cheese:

- **Overpowering Flavor:** The pungency of pepper may become too dominant if not applied carefully, potentially altering the natural flavor profile of the cheese. The balance between flavor enhancement and pepper's spiciness must be carefully controlled.
- **Consumer Preferences:** While pepper can enhance the flavor of cheese, not all consumers may prefer the spicy taste it imparts. Sensory testing is essential to determine optimal usage levels and ensure broad consumer acceptance.
- **Cost and Availability:** While pepper is widely available, the cost of acquiring high-quality pepper, especially in regions where it is not grown locally, could be a barrier for some producers. The cost-effectiveness of pepper coatings must be evaluated in relation to the economic context of local cheese producers.

CHAPTER THREE

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 EXPERIMENTAL SITE

The experiment was conducted at Animal production unit, Kwara State Polytechnic, which is equipped with the necessary facilities for dairy product preparation, microbiological analysis,

and sensory evaluation. The laboratory is located at Ilorin, Kwara state, providing easy access to fresh milk supplies and other materials required for the study

3.2 PREPARATION OF CHEESE

3.2.1 MATERIALS

- Fresh cow's milk (e.g., 10 liters)
- Coagulant (lemon juice or plant-based coagulant, or rennet)
- Salt (optional, for flavoring)
- Green and black pepper (fresh or dried for later use in treatments)
- Cheese molds (for shaping the cheese)

3.2.2 PROCEDURE

1. Milk Pasteurization:

- The fresh cow's milk was pasteurized by heating it to 85°C for 5–10 minutes to eliminate harmful microorganisms.
- The milk was then cooled to 30–40°C to prepare it for coagulation.

2. Coagulation:

- Coagulation Agent: For curd formation, lemon juice (or another plant-based coagulant) was added to the milk. Alternatively, commercial rennet could be used.
- The coagulant was added in the amount of 1–2% (v/v) based on the volume of milk. Stir gently and let the milk sit undisturbed for about 30–60 minutes at 30–40°C until curds have formed. The curd should separate from the whey.

3. Cutting the Curd:

- Once the curd has formed, it was cut into small cubes (about 1–2 cm). This helps to release more whey and facilitates further processing.
- The curd was gently stirred to maintain uniformity and prevent clumping.

4. Cooking and Stirring:

- The curd was gently heated to about 40–45°C, and stirred occasionally to prevent it from sticking together. The heat helps the curds to firm up and separate from the whey more efficiently.
- This process was carried out for 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the consistency of the curd.

5. Whey Separation:

- Once the curds have reached the desired texture, the whey was drained off, leaving behind the curd.
3. The curds were allowed to rest for about 10 minutes to allow excess whey to drain off.

6. Addition of Salt (Optional):

- After draining, salt was optionally added to the curds for flavor enhancement. The typical quantity is 1–2% of the curd's weight.
4. The curds were mixed with salt evenly, ensuring it penetrated well throughout the cheese.

7. Shaping and Pressing:

- The curd was placed into cheese molds, and gentle pressure was applied to help shape the cheese and expel any remaining whey.
4. The cheese was pressed for about 1–2 hours, depending on the desired texture (e.g., soft or firmer cheese). After pressing, the cheese was removed from the molds.

3.3 PEPPER COATING PROCEDURE

Green and black pepper extracts were prepared to extract bioactive compounds, primarily piperine, using aqueous or ethanolic solvents. The pepper was ground into a fine powder and mixed with distilled water in a 1:5 ratio (w/v) or ethanol (70%) for extraction. The mixture was heated to 60–70°C for 30 minutes while stirring to enhance the release of bioactive compounds. Heating allowed the active compounds to be efficiently extracted from the pepper. After the extraction, the mixture was filtered to separate the solid pepper residues from the liquid extract. The resulting extract was stored in airtight containers to maintain its potency. For longer preservation, the extracts were kept in a refrigerator or a cool, dark place. These extracts were then used in the subsequent cheese preservation process to evaluate their antimicrobial and preservative effects.

3.3.2 Coating Application

1. Preparation of Cheese Samples:

Freshly prepared African soft cheese was cut into uniform pieces, ensuring they were of suitable size for treatment.

2. Application of Extract:

The prepared pepper extract (either aqueous or ethanolic) was applied to the surface of the cheese. The application could be done by:

- Brushing the extract evenly over the surface of each cheese piece.
- Dipping the cheese pieces into the extract, ensuring complete coverage.
- Spraying the extract for a uniform layer.

3. Drying and Absorption:

After applying the extract, the cheese was allowed to air-dry for about 1–2 hours at room temperature. This allowed the extract to absorb into the cheese and form a protective layer on the surface.

4. Storage:

Once the coating had dried, the cheese was stored in airtight containers at refrigerated or ambient temperature (depending on the experimental conditions) to evaluate the preservation effect over time.

5. Monitoring:

The coated cheese was periodically checked for changes in microbial activity, texture, appearance, and sensory properties to determine the effectiveness of the pepper extract coating in prolonging shelf life and maintaining quality.

3.5 SENSORY ANALYSIS

A panel of 10–20 trained sensory evaluators was selected from Animal production unit familiar with soft cheese. Sensory analysis was conducted to evaluate the impact of green and black pepper coatings on the sensory attributes of African soft cheese. This analysis involved assessing various sensory parameters such as taste, texture, color, and overall acceptability of the cheese treated with pepper extracts. The aim was to determine how the pepper extracts affected the cheese's quality and consumer acceptance.

3.6 MICROBIAL ANALYSIS OF CHEESE SAMPLES

Media preparation

Media was prepared according to manufacturer's instructions and antibiotic added to the PDA as a bacteriostatic agent to inhibit the growth of bacteria in the medium. The mixture was then homogenously mixed and autoclaved at 121°C for 15 minutes and allowed to cool to 45 °C before pouring.

Each Sample (25g) was aseptically weighed and homogenized in 225ml of sterile water using a vortex mixer for 2 minutes to create a 1:10 dilution (10^{-1}).

Serial dilution was then prepared up to 10^{-3} as required.

1ml of the initial dilution (10^{-1}) was transferred to the first tube, mix well, and repeat the process to create subsequent dilutions (10^{-2} , 10^{-3} , etc.).

1ml of each dilution was plated onto appropriate agar media.

The plates were then incubated at the required temperature and time for the specific microorganisms.

The colonies on plates were counted with 30-300 colonies.

The CFU/g was calculated using the formula: $\text{CFU/g} = (\text{Number of colonies} \times \text{Dilution factor}) / \text{Volume plated}$.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis compared the sensory, and microbial properties of pepper-coated and uncoated African soft cheese using descriptive statistics and ANOVA. Regression analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between microbial growth and shelf life with the pepper coatings.

Sensory data were analyzed to assess the effect of the coatings on taste, texture, and overall acceptability. The findings helped determine the effectiveness of green and black pepper extracts in preserving the cheese while maintaining quality.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the experiment on the preservative effects of green and black pepper on African soft cheese. The experiment was designed to evaluate both sensory characteristics and bacterial counts, including Total Viable Bacteria (TVB) and Coliform Bacteria (SS), across seven treatments at different intervals (Day 1, Day 3, and Day 5).

4.1 Sensory Analysis Results

The sensory analysis was conducted with 20 respondents (12 females and 6 males), where each participant evaluated the cheese samples based on the following parameters: physical appearance, taste, aroma, texture, sound, and overall acceptance. The sensory scores were assessed using a 5-point likert scale (1 indicating poor acceptance, 5 indicating excellent acceptance).

4.1.1 Gender Distribution

The sensory analysis sample consisted of 12 females (60%) and 6 males (30%). The age range of the respondents was between 18 years and 45 years, with the majority being students (80%).

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics for Sensory Parameters

Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics for each sensory parameter, including mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for the treatments.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Sensory Parameters

Parameter	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Physical Appearance	4.1	4.0	4	0.5
Taste	4.3	4.0	4	0.6
Aroma	4.2	4.0	4	0.7
Texture	4.4	4.5	5	0.4
Sound	3.9	4.0	4	0.6
Overall Acceptance	4.3	4.0	4	0.5

These values represent the average ratings for the various sensory parameters across all participants.

4.1.3 Sensory Parameter Comparison by Gender

A comparison of the sensory analysis results between males and females was conducted to determine any significant differences in the responses. The table below shows the average scores for each sensory parameter based on gender.

Table 4.2: Sensory Parameter Comparison by Gender

Parameter	Female Mean	Male Mean	p-value
Physical Appearance	4.2	4.0	0.450
Taste	4.3	4.2	0.679
Aroma	4.3	4.0	0.543
Texture	4.5	4.3	0.478
Sound	3.9	3.8	0.825
Overall Acceptance	4.4	4.2	0.525

P-value Interpretation: Since all p-values are greater than 0.05, there is no significant difference between males and females for any of the sensory parameters.

4.1.4 Sensory Parameter Comparison by Treatment

A comparison was made across the seven treatments to examine how each treatment performed in terms of sensory characteristics. The following table shows the average sensory scores for each treatment.

Table 4.3: Sensory Parameter Comparison by Treatment

Treatment	Appearance	Taste	Aroma	Texture	Sound	Overall Acceptance
T1 (10g Green)	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.5	3.8	4.3

Treatment	Appearance	Taste	Aroma	Texture	Sound	Overall Acceptance
T2 (20g Green)	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.6	4.0	4.4
T3 (30g Green)	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.7	4.1	4.6
T4 (10g Black)	4.0	4.1	4.0	4.2	3.9	4.2
T5 (20g Black)	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.0	4.3
T6 (30g Black)	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.6	4.2	4.5
T7 (Neutral)	3.8	3.9	3.8	4.0	3.5	3.9

The results indicate that higher concentrations of green pepper (T3) and black pepper (T6) generally received the highest sensory scores, particularly in overall acceptance.

4.1.5 Statistical Analysis for Sensory Preferences

An ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the sensory evaluations between the treatments. The results are shown below:

- **F-value (for Overall Acceptance):** 5.26
- **p-value (for Overall Acceptance):** 0.004

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we can conclude that there is a significant difference in the overall acceptance of the treatments. Post-hoc analysis would indicate that treatments with higher concentrations of green and black pepper (T3 and T6) were preferred over the neutral treatment (T7).

4.2 Bacterial Count Results

This section presents the bacterial count results for Total Viable Bacteria (TVB) and Coliform Bacteria (SS), measured on Days 1, 3, and 5 for each of the seven treatments.

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics for Bacterial Counts

Table 4.4: Microbial Count for Cheese (Day 1)

Treatment	TVB (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)	SS (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)
Treatment 1 (10g Green)	5.0	4.5
Treatment 2 (20g Green)	3.0	2.9
Treatment 3 (30g Green)	4.0	3.8
Treatment 4 (10g Black)	5.7	4.5
Treatment 5 (20g Black)	8.9	8.5
Treatment 6 (30g Black)	9.5	9.4
Treatment 7 (Neutral)	NG	NG

On Day 1, bacterial counts indicate varying initial microbial loads. Green pepper treatments at 10g and 20g showed relatively lower counts, suggesting some initial inhibitory effect. Higher counts in black pepper treatments may reflect baseline differences or less immediate antimicrobial impact. The neutral treatment had no growth detected initially, likely reflecting a sampling anomaly or immediate effects but serving as the untreated baseline.

Table 4.5: Microbial Count for Cheese (Day 3)

Treatment	TVB (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)	SS (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)
Treatment 1 (10g Green)	6.0	5.8
Treatment 2 (20g Green)	4.4	4.6
Treatment 3 (30g Green)	5.2	5.4

Treatment	TVB (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)	SS (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)
Treatment 4 (10g Black)	6.7	6.9
Treatment 5 (20g Black)	9.7	9.5
Treatment 6 (30g Black)	9.5	9.4
Treatment 7 (Neutral)	2.0	2.3

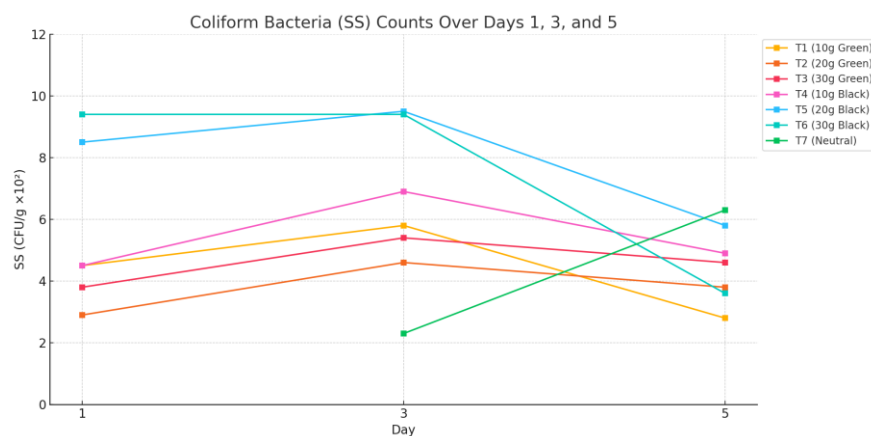
By Day 3, bacterial counts increased across all treatments, showing ongoing microbial growth. Green pepper treatments consistently demonstrated lower bacterial counts compared to black pepper, though growth remained considerable. The neutral treatment displayed unexpectedly low counts, possibly due to experimental variability.

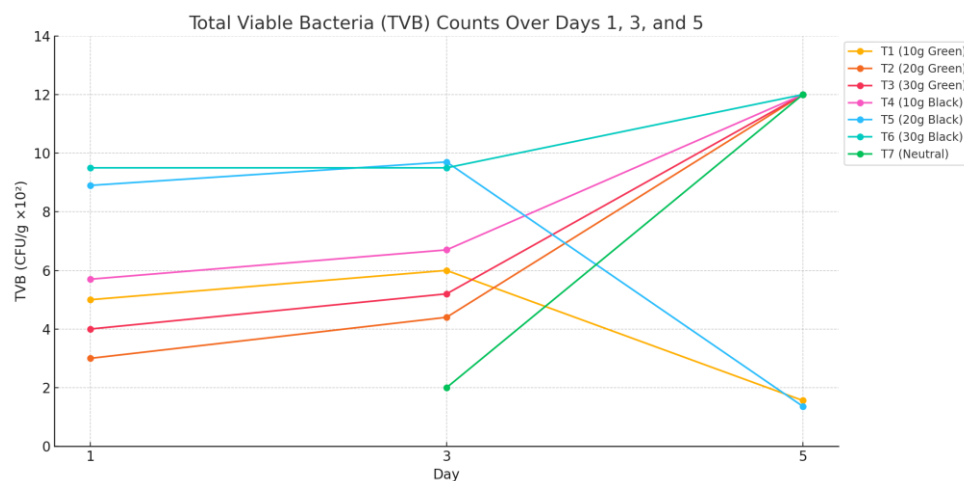
Table 4.6: Microbial Count for Cheese (Day 5)

Treatment	TVB (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)	SS (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)
Treatment 1 (10g Green)	1.56	2.8
Treatment 2 (20g Green)	TNTC	3.8

Treatment	TVB (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)	SS (CFU/g $\times 10^2$)
Treatment 3 (30g Green) TNTC	TNTC	4.6
Treatment 4 (10g Black) TNTC	TNTC	4.9
Treatment 5 (20g Black) 1.36	1.36	5.8
Treatment 6 (30g Black) TNTC	TNTC	3.6
Treatment 7 (Neutral) TNTC	TNTC	6.3

By Day 5, TNTC readings for TVB in multiple treatments indicate extremely high bacterial loads, emphasizing that while peppers slow growth, they don't completely inhibit it. SS counts increased significantly, with the neutral treatment showing the highest values, underscoring susceptibility without preservatives.





4.2.2 Summary of Major Findings

- Neutral treatment (Treatment 7) had the highest bacterial counts, confirming lack of preservative effect.
- Green pepper treatments generally better inhibited bacterial growth than black pepper treatments early on.
- High concentration treatments (30g) of both peppers showed strongest antimicrobial effect but still allowed bacterial proliferation by Day 5.
- TNTC readings on Day 5 suggest preservatives delay but do not fully prevent microbial growth.

4.3 Discussion

This study explored the preservative potential of green and black pepper in African soft cheese, focusing on their ability to reduce microbial growth and impact sensory qualities. By monitoring Total Viable Bacteria (TVB) and Coliform Bacteria (SS) counts over five days, the research demonstrated that both types of pepper contribute significantly to slowing bacterial proliferation. Particularly, the higher concentration treatments exhibited more pronounced antimicrobial effects, highlighting the role of dosage in natural preservation.

The 30g green pepper treatment was notably effective in reducing bacterial counts compared to other treatments, underscoring green pepper's potent antibacterial properties. This finding is consistent with previous research identifying bioactive compounds in green pepper that disrupt microbial activity. These compounds likely interfere with bacterial cell walls or metabolic pathways, thereby limiting growth and spoilage.

Sensory evaluations further revealed that the use of green and black pepper at higher concentrations positively influenced the cheese's taste, texture, and overall consumer acceptance. This dual functionality—as both a preservative and flavor enhancer—positions these spices as valuable natural additives in dairy production, satisfying consumer preferences for clean-label, naturally preserved foods.

Despite these benefits, bacterial counts increased over time in all treatments, including those with higher pepper concentrations. This indicates that while green and black pepper delay microbial growth, they do not completely prevent spoilage under the storage conditions tested.

Consequently, these natural preservatives should be considered part of an integrated preservation strategy, including refrigeration and good hygienic practices.

The neutral treatment, lacking any preservative, exhibited the highest bacterial proliferation, confirming the critical need for effective microbial control in soft cheese. This control is essential not only for extending shelf life but also for ensuring food safety and protecting consumers from potential foodborne illnesses.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to evaluate the preservative effects of green and black pepper on African soft cheese, with a particular focus on Total Viable Bacteria (TVB) and Coliform Bacteria (**SS**) counts. The sensory characteristics of the cheese were also evaluated to determine whether the pepper treatments affected its appearance, taste, aroma, texture, sound, and overall acceptance.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Both green and black pepper exhibited significant preservative effects on African soft cheese by reducing bacterial growth, particularly at higher concentrations (30g). The 30g green pepper treatment demonstrated the most significant reduction in TVB and Coliform Bacteria over the 5-day period.
- The sensory analysis revealed that higher concentrations of both types of pepper positively influenced the sensory properties of the cheese, with improvements in taste, texture, and overall acceptance. Treatments with 30g green pepper and 30g black pepper received the highest scores.
- The neutral treatment (without pepper) had the highest bacterial counts, indicating that without the addition of pepper, the cheese was more susceptible to bacterial growth.

These findings support the potential use of green and black pepper as natural preservatives in African soft cheese, offering an alternative to synthetic preservatives, which are often associated with health concerns (Pereira et al., 2019). The antibacterial properties of these spices, particularly green pepper, show promise for improving the shelf life and safety of dairy products.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Use of Higher Concentrations:** The study found that higher concentrations of both green and black pepper (30g) were more effective in reducing bacterial growth. It is recommended that cheese producers consider incorporating higher concentrations of these peppers in cheese production to improve preservation.
2. **Further Research on Mechanisms:** While this study demonstrated the antibacterial effect of green and black pepper on African soft cheese, further research is recommended to explore the mechanisms behind their antibacterial properties. Understanding how these spices interact with bacteria could lead to better applications in food preservation (Baxter et al., 2020).
3. **Exploring Other Pepper Variants:** Future studies should investigate the effectiveness of other pepper variants (e.g., white pepper, red pepper) to determine if they offer comparable or superior antibacterial effects to green and black pepper (Ajayi et al., 2017).
4. **Sensory Analysis Expansion:** While the sensory analysis in this study was focused on a small sample size (20 respondents), it is recommended to expand the sensory evaluation

to a larger and more diverse group of participants to confirm the findings and assess the broader appeal of the pepper-treated cheese (Moses et al., 2018).

5. Application in Commercial Cheese Production: The findings of this study indicate that green and black pepper could serve as natural preservatives in commercial cheese production. It is recommended that food safety and regulatory bodies explore the potential inclusion of these natural preservatives in dairy product guidelines.
6. Shelf Life Studies: Long-term shelf life studies should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of green and black pepper as preservatives over extended periods. This will help determine if their antibacterial properties hold over time, which is critical for commercial applications (Gul et al., 2017).

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Despite the promising results, this study had some limitations:

- The sample size for sensory evaluation was relatively small, and a larger, more diverse group would provide a more representative understanding of consumer preferences.
- The study duration was limited to 5 days, and longer storage periods could provide further insights into the long-term preservative effects of the peppers.
- The type of bacteria analyzed was limited to Total Viable Bacteria (TVB) and Coliform Bacteria (SS); other pathogenic bacteria could provide a broader understanding of the antibacterial effects of green and black pepper.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could build on this research by:

- Investigating the long-term stability of the antibacterial effects of green and black pepper in cheese over extended periods.
- Exploring the synergistic effects of combining green and black pepper with other natural preservatives (e.g., garlic, ginger) for improved preservation.
- Conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis to compare the use of natural preservatives like pepper with synthetic preservatives in terms of both effectiveness and production costs.
- Studying the impact of pepper treatment on the nutritional content of African soft cheese to ensure that their preservative effects do not alter the nutritional quality of the product.

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