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Special Edition 2

Article Ref. #: 1000AFTNSOJSE2107

Article History

Received: January 19th, 2018

Accepted: February 7th, 2018

Published: February 14th, 2018

Citation

Ejiofor NC, Ezeagu IE, Ayoola M, Umera EA. Determination of the chemical composition of avocado (*Persea americana*) seed. *Adv Food Technol Nutr Sci Open J*. 2018; SE(2): S51-S55. doi: [10.17140/AFTNSOJ-SE-2-107](https://doi.org/10.17140/AFTNSOJ-SE-2-107)

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Determination of the Chemical Composition of Avocado (*Persea Americana*) Seed

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This research work was carried out to determine chemical components of *Persea americana* seed. *Persea americana* (avocado) is widely grown fruit in parts of South East, Nigeria, where it is used as a medicinal plant in the treatment of several ailments by alternative medical practitioners.

Materials and Methods: The chemical components of *Persea americana* seed includes the proximate and minor components. The fleshy part of the fruit was removed to obtain the seed. The dried seeds were ground to powder and dried to constant weight.

Results: The seed is high in carbohydrate (49.03±0.02 g/100 g), lipid (17.90±0.14 g/100 g), protein (15.55±0.36 g/100 g) and moisture (15.10±0.14 g/100 g). It also showed low amounts of ash (2.26±0.23 g/100 g). The seed also presented total oxalate (14.98±0.03 mg/100 g). Levels of tannin (6.98±0.04 mg/100 g) and phytic acid (3.18±0.16 mg/100 g) were also present in low amounts.

Conclusion: It seems *P. americana* seed contains substantial amount of nutrients that could warrant its utilization in animal feed or food.

KEYWORDS: Chemical components; *Persea americana*; Proximate; Nutrients.

INTRODUCTION

The fruit of *Persea americana*, commonly known as avocado, is an edible fruit from Central America which is easily adaptable in tropical regions including Nigeria.¹ The species belongs to the family Lauraceae. *P. americana* is one of the 150 varieties of avocado and pear. The fruit tree can attain a height up to 20 m, with large spreading and flat topped crown. The avocado is classified as an evergreen, although some varieties lose their leaves for a short time before flowering. The tree canopy ranges from low, dense, and symmetrical to upright and asymmetrical. Leaves are 7-41 cm in length and variable in shape (elliptic, oval, and lanceolate). They are often pubescent and reddish when young, becoming smooth, leathery, and dark green when mature. Fruits are large, 5-15 cm long, ovate to spherical, shining green and fleshy.² In addition, the fruit is a large fleshy berry with a single seed. It is pyriform, green, with a high oil content rich in vitamins A, B and E.^{3,4} The fruits are edible and the bark; leaves, stem and roots are used as local medicine against diseases.⁵⁻⁷

The avocado has an olive-green peel and thick pale yellow pulp that is rich in fatty acids such as linoleic, oleic, palmitic, stearic, linolenic, capric, and myristic acids. This fruit is normally used for human consumption, but it also has been used as a medicinal plant in Mexico and elsewhere in the world.⁸ The avocado seed represents 13-18% of the fruit, and it is a by-product generally not utilized. Usually, the seed is discarded during the processing of the pulp. The seed waste may represent a severe ecological problem.⁹ But it may be of interest to industry as a source of bioactive compounds. It is reported to contain phytosterols, triterpenes, fatty ac-

ids, and two new glucosides of abscisic acid.¹⁰ Several biological activities of the avocado seed have been reported such as anti-oxidant, antihypertensive, larvicidal, fungicidal, hypolipidemic, and recently amoebicidal and giardicidal activities.¹¹ Additionally, several studies have also focused on the evaluation of acute toxicity of the fruit and leaves.¹²

The seed of *P. americana* has a diverse application in ethnomedicine, ranging from treatment for diarrhea, dysentery, toothache, intestinal parasites to the area of skin treatment and beautification.¹³ The seeds are rich in tannins and carotenoids and tocopherols from the fruit were shown to inhibit the *in vitro* growth of prostate cancer cell lines.¹⁴

Currently, the seed represents an under-utilized resource and a waste issue for avocado processors. The avocado seed is discarded in the majority of countries, although in some countries such as Niger Republic, it is consumed.^{15,16} This waste may represent an ecological or human contaminant. On the other hand data on its chemical composition could qualify it for use in food or animal feed. The avocado seeds are rich in phenolic compounds, and these may play a role in the putative health effects.¹⁷ This study is therefore seeks to evaluate the nutrients and select minor components of the avocado seed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample Collection and Preparation

Samples of ripe avocado pear (*P. americana*) were purchased from the New market, Enugu, Nigeria. The succulent fleshy part of the fruit is removed to obtain the seed. The seeds were minced by means of a grater and dried to a constant weight in an oven at 50 °C. It was then ground to powder and then stored in a container.

Proximate Analysis

Proximate analysis for protein, crude fat, moisture, ash and carbohydrate were analyzed using the methods as described by AOAC (Table 1).¹⁸

Tannin content determination was determined using the method as described by Van Burden and Robinson.¹⁹

Total oxalate determination was done using the titration method of Day and Underwood,²⁰ as described by Rathod and Valvi.²¹

Phytate was determined using the method as described by Reddy and Love.²¹

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the proximate composition of *P. americana* seed presented in Table 1 shows that the carbohydrate in the seed is 49.03 g/100 g. This value was slightly higher than 48.11±4.13 g/100 g, reported by Arukwe et al²³, but was found to be quite higher than 17.32±0.09 g/100 g and 19.02±0.30 mg/100 g, as reported by Ayoola et al²⁴ and Okolo et al²⁵ respectively for both groundnut and soya beans. Carbohydrates are related to energy generation.²³ Observed carbohydrates in the investigated samples may be an indication that the samples could produce energy to power the cells and tissues of the body on consumption. The seed also presented high lipid content. The lipid content presented by the sample was higher than 12.24±0.07g/100 g and 16.54±2.10 g/100 g reported by both Oluwole et al²⁶ and Arukwe et al²³ respectively. The lipid content presented by the seed is lower than those of groundnut (48.53±0.40 g/100 g) and soya beans (23.92±0.51 g/100 g).^{24,25} However, it was higher than the 11.68±0.59 g/100 g reported for maize by Okolo et al.²⁵ It also showed a favorable amount of fat content as against popular beans variety consumed in Nigeria.^{25,27,28} This is an indication that it could be an oil fruit. Generally, fats have many functions. Aside insulation and conservation of body temperature in organisms, their fatty acid components such as lauric acid, etc, have been reported to improve health.²⁹ The sample presented a protein content of 15.55±0.36 g/100 g. This value is lower than the 17.94±1.40 g/100 g and 4.44±0.06 g/100 g presented by both Arukwe et al²³ and Oluwole et al²⁶ respectively. The protein content of 7.05±0.01 g/100 g reported for maize by Okolo et al²⁵ was quite lower than that of the present study. However, groundnut and soybeans presented a much higher values of 24.50±0.20 g/100 g and 37.51±0.15 g/100 g respectively.^{24,25} A study by Okolo et al²⁵ showed that avocado seed contained more protein than both sorghum and millet (13.09±1.23 g/100 g and 12.09±0.05 g/100 g) respectively; however, the same report revealed that both staple food samples contained more carbohydrate than avocado seed (72.00±1.44 g/100 g and 67.80±0.01 g/100 g). Aside contributing to diets, the relative impact of pro-

Table 1: A Comparative Table of the Proximate Composition between Avocado seed and Major Food Items in Nigeria.

Parameter (g/100 g)	Avocado Seed	*Groundnut	Maize**	**Soybeans
Protein	15.55±0.36	24.50±0.20	7.05±0.01	37.51±0.15
Lipid	17.90±0.4	48.53±0.40	11.68± 0.59	23.92±0.51
Carbohydrate	49.03±0.02	17.32±0.09	71.21±0.05	19.02±0.30
Ash	2.26±0.23	1.45±0.03	1.50±0.10	9.01±0.01
Moisture	15.10±0.14	7.31±0.31	9.05±1.20	8.30±0.29

Values are mean±S.D (n=4) *Ayoola et al²⁴; **Okolo et al²⁵.

Table 2: Anti-Nutritional Constituents of *P. americana* Seed (mg/100 g).

Parameter	Value (mg/100 g)
Tannin	6.98±0.04
Total oxalate	14.98±0.03
Phytic acid	3.18±0.16

Values are mean±S.D (n=4).

teins in body system should not be over looked. As chemical compounds, they repair and replace worn out cells, form structural and globular materials that holds the body, form blood proteins, boost immune system, etc.³⁰

The ash content is the measure of the mineral content present in a plant. The ash content of *P. americana* in the present study was slightly lower than the 2.40±0.19 mg/100 g reported by Arukwe et al.²³ However, the value was higher than the 1.15±0.03 g/100 g recorded by Oluwole et al.²⁶ The ash content (2.26±0.23 g/100 g) of *P. americana* indicates higher mineral content present in the seed when compared to both groundnut (1.45±0.03 g/100 g) and maize (1.50±0.10 g/100 g).^{24,25} Soybeans on the other hand presented a much higher mineral content having presented an ash content of 9.01±0.01 g/100 g as reported by Okolo et al.²⁵ The moisture content reported in the present study showed that the seed is rich in moisture. The moisture content however, is higher than the 2.40±0.19 g/100 g reported by Arukwe et al.²³ Avocado seed presented higher moisture content than groundnut (7.31±0.31 g/100 g), maize (9.05±1.20 g/100 g) and soybeans (8.30±0.29 g/100 g).^{24,25} Moisture content helps in maintaining the protoplasmic content of cells. However, when compared with results of proximate analysis from other climes, there was evident difference. These differences were seen in the results reported by both Oluwole et al.²⁶ and Bora et al.³¹ These differences could be attributable to environmental conditions.

Anti-nutritional properties also showed presence of phytate, tannin and oxalate. The tannin content is higher than the value reported (0.24±0.12) by Arukwe et al.²³ Tannin has been reported to be responsible for decreases in feed intake, growth rate, feed efficiency, net metabolizable energy, and protein digestibility in experimental animals. Therefore, foods rich in tannins are considered to be of low nutritional value. However, recent findings³² indicate that the major effect of tannins was not due to their inhibition on food consumption or digestion but rather the decreased efficiency in converting the absorbed nutrients to new body substances. Incidences of certain cancers, such as esophageal cancer, have been reported to be related to consumption of tannins-rich foods such as betel nuts and herbal teas, suggesting that tannins might be carcinogenic.³² However, recent reports have shown these plant tannins are related to polyphenols. Polyphenols are a diverse group of plant secondary metabolites found throughout the plant kingdom, encompassing such subgroups as tannins and flavonoids, among others.³³ Polyphenolic compounds have shown to be bioactive, due to their antioxidative, antimicrobial, antiviral, and antitumor activities.^{34,35} The

tannin being polyphenols have been shown to have antioxidant property.³⁶ This antioxidant property of tannins is responsible for its anticarcinogenic and antimutagenic potentials by protecting cellular oxidative damage, including lipid peroxidation.³⁷ The generation of superoxide radicals was reported to be inhibited by tannins and related compounds. The antimicrobial property of tannic acid can also be used in food processing to increase the shelf-life of certain foods, such as catfish fillets.^{32,37} Tannins have also been reported to exert other physiological effects, such as to accelerate blood clotting, reduce blood pressure, decrease the serum lipid level, and modulate immune-responses (Table 2).³⁸

Oxalate content of avocado seed is also at same level with soursop fruit (2.79±0.48 mg/100 g) as reported by Degnon et al.³⁹ Phytate content of soursop fruit is slightly different from that of avocado seed. Oxalate binds with calcium to form calcium-oxalate crystals which are deposited as urinary calcium (stones) that are associated with blockage of renal tubules.⁴⁰ Proper food processing would reduce these anti-nutrients. The phytate content of avocado seed is lower than that of locust bean pulp as reported (6.28±0.06 mg/100 g) by Dahouenon-Ahoussi et al.⁴¹ Adegoke et al.⁴² reported higher values for tannin, oxalate and phytic acid (11.29 g/100 g, 4.07 g/100 g and 12.87/100 g) respectively for avocado seed; however, boiling for 25 min and soaking for 24 hrs effectively reduced the anti-nutritional factors without any adverse effect on the nutritional quality. The anti nutritional components of *Terminalia catappa* (almond) seeds shows higher values when compared with those of avocado seed.⁴³ However, the anti-nutrient parameters tannin, phytate and oxalate reported in the present study were lower than the lethal doses (30 mg/kg, 50-60 mg/kg and 2-5 g/kg) reported by Inuwa et al.⁴⁴ respectively. It can be concluded that the levels of oxalate, phytate and tannin values of avocado seed is considered low and would not be unsafe for animal consumption as most of the values are below the lethal doses of these phytochemicals. It contains substantial contents of nutrients that can warrant its trial and utilization in feed formulation.

The variations in the results from this study and other reported works may be due to geographical factors of the study area, sampling period and other factors.

CONCLUSION

It was observed that *P. americana* seed contains substantial nutrients that could meet the needs and requirements of the body, thus it is good for human and animal consumption. It can be rec-

ommended for inclusion in animal feeds formulation. It would be important to assess the toxicity in greater detail, however.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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