



**PHYSICAL CHEMISTRY 2010**

**10th International Conference on  
Fundamental and Applied Aspects of  
Physical Chemistry**

Proceedings

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**The Conference is dedicated to the  
100th Anniversary of the academician Pavle Savić birthday  
and  
20th Anniversary of the Society of Physical Chemists of Serbia**

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*On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Academician Pavle Savić and twentieth anniversary of founding Society of Physical Chemists of Serbia, instead of the usual introduction, here is given translation of the text **20 years of Society of Physical Chemists of Serbia 1989 – 2009**, published in a special Issue of Chemical Industry Vol. 63 (5a).*

*Editors*



# THE APPLICATION OF PHYSICOCHEMICAL METHODS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF RADIATION PROCESSED FOOD PRODUCTS

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the occurrence and stability of free radicals in freeze-dried samples of cow milk, pineapple and banana after irradiation (10 kGy dose), using the ESR spectroscopy, as well as to assess possible changes in their protein structure by means of electrophoresis.

## Introduction

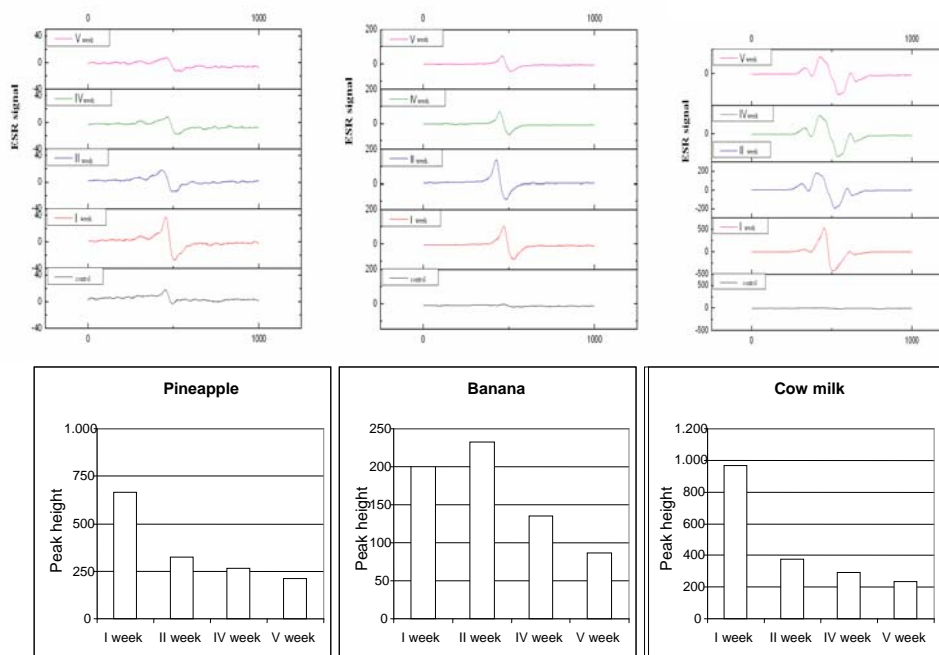
The application of irradiation in order to preserve food quality has been neglected for a long time in comparison to other methods, mainly due to prejudices. However, the attitude of consumers towards food irradiation is now becoming more positive due to spreading of information and knowledge of this process as well as to the availability of a number of analytical methods to detect aftermath of radiation treatment [1]. ESR spectroscopy due to its ability to reveal the presence of minute amounts of free radicals generated by irradiation plays a leading role in such studies [2]. The procedure for food samples used in these experiments is based on the fact that non-irradiated samples give poor signals, while in irradiated samples the significant increase of amplitude of EPR signal is noticed. Although the nutrient proprieties of irradiated food are no longer in question, there is a need for irradiation control in the international food trade in order to enhance consumer confidence in the regulation [3].

## Experimental

Samples of cow milk, pineapple and banana were cryogenically dried, pulverized and then freeze-dried. The ESR spectra of irradiated and non-irradiated samples (control) of the same mass were obtained using X-band EPR spectrometer, and standard SDS-PAGE electrophoreses was used for detection of radiation induced protein degradation products.

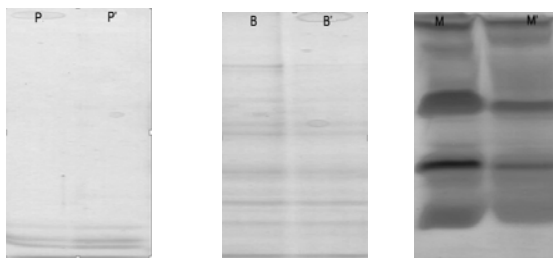
## Results and Discussion

The difference in the EPR peak heights of free radicals of the control and irradiated samples is obvious (Fig.1). Radiation induced signal decay with time (banana sample week II shows aberration most likely due different orientation of the sample in the EPR cavity), but clearly indicate that radiation treatment can be detected long after its application.



**Fig.1.** Typical ESR spectra and calculated absolute EPR peak heights of different food samples

In the second part of the experiment samples were subjected to SDS electrophoresis in order to detect any changes in the concentration of proteins.



**Fig.2.** SDS-PAGE gels of: P - pineapple, P' - irradiated pineapple, B - banana, B' - irradiated banana, M - milk, M' - irradiated milk.

Pineapple (Fig.2.P, P') sample shows very small number of low molecular weight proteins, but also no change in the concentration of proteins. Banana (Fig.2.B, B') shows different molecular weight proteins, as well as the loss of some higher molecular mass proteins during radiation. Milk sample (Fig.2.M, M') is extremely sensitive to radiation. Gel presents proteins in a wide range of molecular weight, as well as many proteins of similar molecular weight. Reduction of the intensity and of the number of strips on gel of irradiated milk sample is present. Tested samples of banana and cow milk showed the destruction of proteins, while a change in the sample of pineapple is negligible. Changes in the number and width of protein fragments in gel are a clear proof that during the radiation degradation of existing protein molecules into smaller molecular fragments occurred.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results obtained by ESR spectroscopy and electrophoresis, we demonstrated that the tested samples suffered a series of changes after the application of 10 kGy ionizing radiation which is commonly used for food preservation.

Electrophoresis shows that radiation treatment undoubtedly breaks peptide links affecting the decomposition of certain proteins, reducing their concentration, and decays polypeptide chains of high molecular weight proteins into smaller fragments.

EPR spectra showed that ionizing radiation enhances cellulose and sugar radical EPR signal in tested samples of cow milk, banana and pineapple. By investigating EPR signal attenuation in time it can be reliably determined whether any of these groceries had been treated by radiation even after longer periods of time after the radiation. Furthermore, we concluded that sample of cow milk powder could potentially be used as radiation dosimeter since free radicals generated under the influence of ionizing radiation showed a weak recombination in time.

## **Acknowledgments**

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