Original article

Effects of adding chickpea and chestnut flours to layer cakes

Cristina Gallego, Mayara Belorio, Priscila Guerra-Oliveira & Manuel Gómez

Food Technology Area, College of Agricultural Engineering, University of Valladolid, Palencia 34071, Spain

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Summary Chestnut and chickpea flours have interesting nutritional characteristics and can be incorporated into layer cake formulations. This study aims to evaluate the effect of incorporating mixtures of these flours with wheat flour in the elaboration of layer cakes. With this aim, layer cakes were elaborated with the three different flours. Mixes of 50% of these flours and a mixture of the three flours in the same proportion were analysed. Batter density, microstructure and viscosity, as well as the specific volume, texture and acceptability of layer cakes were evaluated. Chickpea flour reduced the batter density and increased viscosity compared to wheat flour, while chestnut flour reduced viscosity and did not clearly affect density. Although both flours produced layer cakes with lower specific volume, as well as less cohesive and springiness, the effect on specific volume was clearer in chestnut flour. With 50% of chickpea flour, it was possible to obtain layer cakes with the same specific volume and hardness as those made with wheat flour. Layer cake acceptability decreased with the reduction in wheat flour, regardless of the type of flour incorporated. No improved acceptability has been found when combining chickpea and chestnut flours.

Keywords Acceptability, baked product, batter, chestnut, pulse.

Introduction

In recent times, there has been a growing interest in the incorporation of flours with nutritional advantages into the elaboration of baked products. Studies on the incorporation of legume flours in cakes are extensive (Bravo-Nuñez & Gómez, 2021) as is the use of leftovers from fruit and vegetable processing (Gómez & Martínez, 2018). Chestnut flour is characterised by its high content of sugars and resistant starch, as well as antioxidants and other bioactive compounds (de Vasconcelos et al., 2010). The chestnut processing industry values whole chestnuts. However, in the process, part of the chestnuts breaks, constituting a by-product that can be reused after conversion into flour. Because of this, chestnut flour incorporation into breads and cookies has been proposed (Zhu, 2017). However, studies on the incorporation of chestnut flour in cakes are scarce, and are limited to the work of Yildiz & Dogan (2014), who analysed mixtures of chestnut flour, potato starch and hydrocolloids. In turn, legume flours have a high protein and fibre content; they are also a source of health-promoting antioxidants (Hall et al., 2017). As in the case of chestnuts, when chickpea grains are processed, part of them break and are not suitable for commercialisation in form of whole grains or canned chickpeas. Therefore, the use of chickpea flour from these broken grains can be useful to take advantage as an industry by-product. However, the incorporation of legume flours reduces the acceptability of baked products (Bravo-Nuñez & Gómez, 2021), something that is related to the off-flavours that appear (Roland et al., 2017).

Regrettably, in the literature, there is not much information about how to mask pulses off-flavours other than the traditional methods, namely adding sugars, salt, acids or aromas (Roland et al., 2017). These authors also noted that most of the literature reports that, in relation to off-flavours, chickpea is the most suitable legume for substituting traditional ingredients such as wheat flour. Furthermore, Torra et al. (2021) observed that the combination of chickpea flour with reduced percentages of chestnut resulted in masking the off-flavours in cookies.

This study aims to analyse the effect of replacing wheat flour with chickpea and chestnut flours, and whether the use of their combinations can help increase the acceptability of layer cakes with these flours. For this purpose, layer cakes were elaborated with different mixes of chickpea flour (CPF), chestnut flour (CF) and wheat flour (WF). Batter density, viscosity and microstructure, as well as cake specific

*Correspondent: Fax: +34 979108302; e-mail: pallares@iaf.uva.es
volume, weight loss, texture and acceptability, were evaluated.

Materials and methods

Materials

Layer cakes were elaborated using three different flours, wheat (WF), chestnut (CF) and chickpea (CPF) flours. Chestnut flour was supplied by Sortegel (Sortes, Portugal) and chickpea flour was provided by Molendinum Ingredients (Zamora, Spain). These flours were previously sieved to obtain a fraction of less than 130 μm for each one. Wheat flour was supplied by Harinera Castellana (Valladolid, Spain); it was used without sieving. Other ingredients used were white sugar (AB Azucarera Iberia, Valladolid, Spain), fluid whole milk University (Feiraco Lacteos S.L., Ames, La Coruña, Spain), pasteurised liquid eggs Ovopak (Alvarez Camacho S.L., Sevilla, Spain), refined sunflower oil (Remensol, Navarra, Spain) and baking powder (Puratos, Gerona, Spain).

Methods

Flour pasting properties

The pasting properties were studied using a Rapid Visco Analyser (RVA) (Model RVA-4C, Newport Scientific Pty. Ltd., Warriewood, Australia). The test was performed with a constant temperature of 30 °C at 160 rpm for 4 min. The viscosity obtained at 3 min was considered the viscosity of the pycnometer. Samples were evaluated in duplicate for each formulation.

Cake batter properties

Batter density was obtained using an Elcometer 1800 pycnometer (Elcometer, Manchester, UK). Density was calculated as the relation of weight (g) of batter placed in the filled pycnometer and the volume capacity of the pycnometer. Samples were evaluated in duplicate for each formulation.

Cake microstructure was examined with a DM750 microscope (Leica Microsystems, Wetzlar, Germany). A drop of the batter was placed on a microscope slide and covered with a coverslip. The slide was compressed under a constant weight (1 kg) to obtain a batter layer of uniform thickness. The images were taken with a Leica EC3 video camera incorporated to the microscope (Leica Microsystems, Heerbrugg, Switzerland).

Batter samples of 28 g were placed in aluminium cans to perform viscosity analysis using a Rapid Visco Analyser (RVA-4) (Newport Scientific model 4-SA, Warriewood, Australia). The test was performed with a constant temperature of 30 °C at 160 rpm for 4 min. The viscosity obtained at 3 min was considered the cake batter viscosity and the samples were evaluated in duplicate.

Cake characteristics

All the following cake characteristics were evaluated 24 h after baking:

- Weight loss was calculated as the difference between the value of the batter weight before baking and the cake sample. For each formulation, four cake samples were obtained and the weight loss of each formulation was calculated as the average value between the weight losses of these samples.
- Volume was evaluated using a Volscan Profiler volume analyser (Stable Microsystems, Surrey, UK). Specific volume for each cake was calculated considering the relation between the cake volume and the cake weight. An average value was calculated between the four cake samples for each formulation.
- Texture was evaluated through a texture profile analysis (TPA) test performed using a TA-XT2 texture analyser (Stable Microsystems, Surrey, UK). The test was performed using a 25-mm-diameter cylindrical aluminium probe, at a test speed of 2 mm s⁻¹ and a double compression at 50% of depth penetration with a 30 s delay between the first and the second compression. Pre- and post-test speed was 1 and 5 mm seg⁻¹, and a

Seven different layer cakes were made: one formulation was elaborated with 100% of wheat flour (WF100); another one with 100% of chestnut flour (CF100) and another with 100% of chickpea flour (CPF100). The rest of the layer cakes were produced with flour mixes using different proportions of WF, CF and CPF: 50%WF + 50%CF (WF50-CF50), 50%WF + 50%CPF (WF50-CPF50), 50%CF + 50%CPF (CF50-CPF50), and 33%WF + 33%CF + 33%CPF (WF33-CF33-CPF33). White sugar (315 g) and flour (350 g) were first weighed in a bowl, followed by the liquid ingredients: fluid whole milk (210 g), sunflower oil (105 g) and pasteurised egg (175 g) which were weighed separately in another bowl. The baking powder (10.5 g) was added over the other ingredients at the end. All ingredients were mixed using a Kitchen Aid 6KPM50 mixer (Kitchen Aid, Benton Harbor, Michigan, USA) at a speed 6 for 1 min, followed by speed 4 for 9 min. Portions of 185 g of cake batter were placed in aluminium pans which were anointed previously with sunflower oil. Cakes were baked at 190 °C for 25 min. After 1 h, each cake was removed from its pan, packaged in plastic bags and stored for 24 h at 24 °C. All layer cakes were prepared in duplicate.
5 kg cell load was used. Results of hardness, cohesiveness and springiness were calculated. The central slice (2 cm of thick) of four cakes of each elaboration was evaluated.

Acceptability test
Acceptability of WF100, WF50-CFF50, WF50-CPF50 and WF33-CF33-CPF33 was evaluated by 100 volunteers, who were between 16 and 65 years of age. Cakes were divided into pieces of 2 cm wide, coded with four-digit numbers and served in random order. One entire cake was presented to consumers for its appearance evaluation. Cakes were evaluated according to five attributes (visual appearance, odour, texture, taste and overall acceptability). This evaluation was carried out using a hedonic scale of 9 points, which ranged from “I like it very much” (9 score) to “I dislike it very much” (1 score).

Statistical analysis
The statistical analysis was conducted using Statgraphics Plus 5.1 software (Statpoint Inc., Warrenton, USA). The results were evaluated by analysis of variance (One-way ANOVA). Fisher’s least significant difference (LSD) was used to describe the significant differences between the results with 95% confidence intervals.

Results and discussion

Flour pasting properties
As shown in Figure 1, wheat flour viscosity is higher than chestnut and chickpea flour, from the moment of starch gelatinisation. Among these other flours, chickpea flour has the lowest viscosity profile. Specifically, both the viscosity peak and the final viscosity are much higher in the case of wheat flour, and somewhat higher in chestnut flour than in chickpea flour. The viscosity after heating is determined by starch gelatinisation and the increase generated in this process (Balet et al., 2019). For this reason, the differences between flours may be due to the lower starch content of chestnut and chickpea flour, with chestnut flour being richer in simple sugars, mainly sucrose (Miguel et al., 2004), and chickpea flour being richer in protein, lipids and fibre (Rachwal-Rosiak et al., 2015) than wheat flour. This has already been observed in previous studies with chestnut flour (Zhou et al., 2021) and with chickpea flour (Mohammed et al., 2014; Bigne et al., 2021). In the case of chickpea flour, less rise in viscosity after final cooling is also observed, related with a lower tendency to retrogradation. Retrogradation is usually associated with the percentage of amylose. The starch fraction is responsible for this phenomenon. However, it is also related to amylose characteristics, such as molecular weight (Román et al., 2020), and would therefore indicate differences in this respect. Nevertheless, it is also possible that this less rise in viscosity after final cooling is only due to the lower starch content, a component that retrogrades and causes the final increase in viscosity during cooling.

Cake batter properties
The effect of the use of chestnut and chickpea flour in batter density and viscosity is shown in Table 1. Layer cakes with chickpea flour showed the lowest batter density and, therefore, a higher air incorporation. The incorporation of this flour into the various mixes reduced the density of the batters. This effect has already been observed by Gómez et al. (2008). In the case of chestnut batters, no significant differences were observed with wheat batters. However, chestnut flour incorporation in mixtures with wheat flour reduced batter density, although to a lesser extent than chickpea flour. On the other hand, batter viscosity was much higher in layer cakes with chickpea flour, and it increased as this flour was included in the mixtures. Chestnut batters viscosity was lower than in wheat batters. The increase in batter viscosity with legume flour incorporation has already been observed by Gularte et al. (2012) in gluten-free cakes, and may be related to their higher protein content. This effect, which has also been perceived with the incorporation of vegetable proteins, has been related to the higher water absorption capacity of these proteins (Sahagún et al., 2018). On the contrary, in the case of chestnut flour, viscosity was lower since it had a higher sucrose content, and sucrose is soluble in water.

In terms of air bubbles distribution (Figure S1), the average size of the bubbles was greater as the amount of wheat flour was reduced. Nevertheless, this effect was not very clear in the 50% mixtures. It is known that the larger the average size of the bubbles, the greater their instability. This facilitates the coalescence phenomena and the escape of these gases from the batter during baking (Stauffer, 1990), reducing cake volume (Gómez et al., 2011).

Cake characteristics
The specific volume (Table 1 and Figure S2) of wheat layer cakes was higher than the volume of the cakes elaborated with chickpea and chestnut flours. Concerning the flour blends, chestnut flour incorporation reduced specific volume more clearly than chickpea flour. The specific volume of cakes with wheat and chickpea flour blends at 50% or even those with blends of all flours (WF33-CF33-CPF33) – where 66%...
of flour corresponds to wheat and chickpea—was not significantly different from that of wheat cake. The reduction in volume with the addition of chickpea flour has already been observed in previous studies (Bravo-Nuñez & Gómez, 2021) and has been attributed to the larger particle size of these flours. The negative effect of larger particle size has already been proven in studies with wheat flour (Gaines, 1985) or pulse flour (de la Hera et al., 2012). Yet, in this study, only particles smaller than 130 µm were used to reduce particle size. Perhaps, for this reason, the results with the 50% mixtures were better than those observed in other studies. Specific volume reduction with chickpea flour has also been attributed to the higher protein content and the lower starch content. Therefore, less changes in batter rheology occur during baking due to gelatinisation (increase in G' and G'') and these changes are necessary to stabilise the structure (Wild-erjans et al., 2013). This negative effect of high protein content in layer cakes has also been demonstrated with the incorporation of protein-rich fractions from micronised pea flour (Gómez et al., 2012), or directly from legume proteins (Sahagún et al., 2018). In addition, the larger average bubble size mentioned above does not help achieve a high specific volume.

Regarding chestnut cakes, no work has been published except for Yildiz & Dogan (2014), where chestnut flour and potato starch were mixed, and it was observed that the higher the amount of chestnut flour, the lower the cake volume. However, these results are not comparable to our study due to the differences in formulation. It is not easy to explain the lower specific volume of these cakes since multiple factors are involved. Handleman et al. (1961) found a relationship between batter density, viscosity and surface tension and the resulting cake characteristics. Nevertheless, among these factors, batter viscosity is what most differentiates the products made with chestnut flour, so it could be the reason for these low volumes. To obtain a better volume, the addition of gums, which increase the viscosity of the batter, could be used (Yildiz & Dogan, 2014).

### Table 1: Characteristics of batter and layer cakes elaborated with different combinations of wheat flour (WF), chestnut flour (CF) and chickpea flour (CPF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Density (g mL⁻¹)</th>
<th>Viscosity (cp)</th>
<th>Specific volume (mL g⁻¹)</th>
<th>Weight loss (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WF100</td>
<td>1.046 ± 0.021d</td>
<td>4408±14bc</td>
<td>2.443 ± 0.132d</td>
<td>8.25 ± 0.72ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF100</td>
<td>1.035 ± 0.001 cd</td>
<td>3764±130a</td>
<td>1.823 ± 0.128a</td>
<td>9.41 ± 0.47bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFP100</td>
<td>0.914 ± 0.008a</td>
<td>6076±29e</td>
<td>2.037 ± 0.157ab</td>
<td>8.24 ± 0.41ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF50-CF50</td>
<td>1.015 ± 0.007c</td>
<td>4295±211b</td>
<td>2.161 ± 0.025bc</td>
<td>9.65 ± 0.09c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS50-CFP50</td>
<td>0.959 ± 0.017b</td>
<td>4774±48d</td>
<td>2.413 ± 0.001 ed</td>
<td>7.66 ± 0.76a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFP50-CFP50</td>
<td>0.982 ± 0.002b</td>
<td>4751±8 cd</td>
<td>1.889 ± 0.080a</td>
<td>8.53 ± 0.89abc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF33-CFP33-CFP33</td>
<td>0.984 ± 0.006b</td>
<td>4355±58b</td>
<td>2.217 ± 0.126bcd</td>
<td>8.35 ± 0.18abc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values with the same letter in the same column do not present significant differences (P < 0.05).

![Figure 1: Pasting profile of flours used in layer cake elaborations.](image-url)
Concerning weight loss, layer cakes made with chestnut flour presented the highest values, although differences from the rest of the cakes are under 1.5%. In general, layer cakes with lower specific volume have lower weight loss values (de la Hera et al., 2013) due to the lower surface area (Zhou & Therdthai, 2008). Nonetheless, this did not occur in chestnut flour cakes which not only had a lower specific volume but also presented a higher weight loss. Both legume protein (Bravo-Núñez & Gómez, 2019) and gelatinised starch (Belorio et al., 2020) have a high water absorption capacity, especially when compared to ungelatinised starch or other soluble components. In the case of chickpea flour, the lower starch content and, therefore, the gelatinised starch in the final product may be compensated by its higher protein content. But in the case of chestnut flour, the lower content of these components may be the reason for the greater weight loss during baking and subsequent cooling.

Table 2 shows the effect of adding chestnut and chickpea flour to cake texture parameters. Previous studies have found a negative correlation between the specific volume of cakes and their hardness (Aydogdu et al., 2018); in this case, a similar trend is observed in the case of wheat and chickpea flour mixtures. Thus, the hardness of chickpea flour layer cakes with lower specific volume was higher than those with wheat flour. However, in the 50% mixtures (WF50-CF50) with a specific volume similar to the control, hardness was also similar. Nevertheless, no significant differences were observed between layer cakes made with chestnut flour, which had a specific volume clearly lower than wheat cake. The lower starch content of chestnut flour may produce this effect since starch is mainly responsible for crumb texture after retrogradation (Román et al., 2021). Yet, the high sugar content of these flours may also play a role as sugar reduces retrogradation (Wang et al., 2016).

It is also noteworthy that layer cakes elaborated with chickpea or chestnut flour had a lower cohesiveness and a lower springiness than those made with wheat flour. The reduction in cohesiveness has already been observed in other studies where wheat flour is replaced by gluten-free flours (Gómez et al., 2008, 2012; de la Hera et al., 2012). In commercial gluten-free cakes, the egg or egg white percentage used is higher to minimise this effect (Belorio & Gómez, 2020). Therefore, the reduction in cohesiveness may be related to the lower gluten content of these flours and the effect of these proteins on the cohesiveness of the batters after baking.

Acceptability

After physical measurements, wheat flour cakes and cakes elaborated with mixtures of wheat and the other flours at 50% and 33% were chosen for consumer evaluation (Table 3). Wheat layer cakes were the best rated in terms of overall acceptability. As the content of non-conventional flours increased, acceptability decreased and it was even lower in the case of the mixture of all flours with a low percentage of wheat flour. Reduced acceptability of layer cakes with the incorporation of legume flour is common (Bravo-Núñez & Gómez, 2021). This is mainly due to lower acceptability values for texture and flavour when wheat flour is reduced. In 50% of the blends, it was observed that the addition of chickpea flour reduced taste rating, while chestnut flour had a more negative effect on appearance. The latter seems to be related to the smaller volume of chestnut flour layer cakes and their darker colour (Figure S2), which is different from the usual colours of wheat cake, both externally and internally. However, only a reduction of approximately 1 point (on a scale of 1 to 9) in overall acceptability was observed in these 50% mixes; the ratings obtained for these cakes were quite positive. Previous studies on the use of chickpea and chestnut flour blends in cookie elaboration showed a positive effect of these mixtures. This is because chestnut flour allowed masking the typical flavours of chickpea flour, usually less appreciated by consumers (Torra et al., 2021). This is in agreement with Roland et al. (2017), who indicated that the presence of sweet flavours can mask pulses off-flavours. However, in our case, this effect was not observed and the flavours of these flours, which are foreign to a layer cake, reduced its acceptability. This indicates that the various modifications to components, such as starch gelatinisation, produced in the elaboration of layer cakes, or the different formulation ingredients, influence the organoleptic quality of the products obtained.

Conclusion

The replacement of wheat flour by chickpea or chestnut flour in layer cake elaboration generates products
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Table 3 Consumer test results of layer cakes elaborated with different combinations of wheat flour (WF), chestnut flour (CF) and chickpea flour (CPF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Odour</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Taste</th>
<th>Overall acceptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WF100</td>
<td>8.11 ± 0.88b</td>
<td>7.35 ± 1.42b</td>
<td>7.81 ± 1.08c</td>
<td>7.71 ± 1.20d</td>
<td>7.82 ± 0.99c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF50-CF50</td>
<td>6.25 ± 1.60a</td>
<td>7.03 ± 1.65b</td>
<td>7.07 ± 1.44b</td>
<td>6.74 ± 1.75c</td>
<td>6.88 ± 1.41b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF50-CPF50</td>
<td>8.31 ± 0.91b</td>
<td>7.01 ± 1.49b</td>
<td>7.32 ± 1.40b</td>
<td>6.10 ± 2.06b</td>
<td>6.89 ± 1.68b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF33-CF33-CPF33</td>
<td>6.11 ± 1.46a</td>
<td>6.26 ± 1.75a</td>
<td>6.54 ± 1.91a</td>
<td>5.18 ± 2.09a</td>
<td>5.76 ± 1.74a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values with the same letter in the same column do not present significant differences (P < 0.05).

with lower specific volume, lower cohesiveness and lower acceptability. The negative effect on volume is more pronounced with chestnut flour. In contrast to cookies (Torra et al., 2021), the mixture of chestnut and chickpea flours does not show advantages in the acceptability of the layer cakes obtained.

Acknowledgments

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical guidelines

The sensory evaluation was performed according to a protocol previously approved by the Committee of Tests and Research from Hospital Rio Carrión (Palencia, Spain).

Author contribution

Cristina Gallego: Data curation (equal); Formal analysis (lead); Methodology (equal); Validation (equal); Writing – original draft (equal). Mayara Belorio: Data curation (equal); Formal analysis (supporting); Investigation (equal); Methodology (equal). Priscila Guerría-Oliveira: Data curation (equal); Formal analysis (supporting); Investigation (equal); Methodology (equal). Manuel Gómez: Conceptualization (lead); Funding acquisition (lead); Project administration (lead); Writing – review & editing (lead).

Peer review

The peer review history for this article is available at https://publons.com/publon/10.1111/ijfs.15719.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

References


**Supporting Information**

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

**Figure S1.** Photomicrograph of cake batters with different wheat (WF), chestnut (CF) and chickpea (CPF) flours mixtures.

**Figure S2.** Cross-section of cakes with different wheat (WF), chestnut (CF) and chickpea (CPF) flours mixtures.