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Study on the Qualitative Characteristics of Superior Cultivars of Litchi Fruits in Jorhat, Assam

Pansurika Saikia^{a*} and Utpal Kotoky^{b#}

^a Department of Horticulture, College of Agriculture, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam, India.

^b Department of Horticulture, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam, India.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The present experiment was carried on five superior cultivars of litchi fruit in the Department of Horticulture in Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam during 2020-2021. All the biochemical parameters studied under this experiment were found to be significant in character. Generally, in most of the biochemical parameters, the cultivar Bilati recorded the highest among all, such as in juice content (13.62cc), reducing sugar (8.37%), invert sugar (17.44%), sucrose (8.60%), total sugar (16.99%), sugar-acid ratio (40.71), potassium (1263.75mg/100g), vitamin C (62.11mg/100g), anthocyanin content (38.41mg/100g) and colour density (3.87) while in Titratable acidity, Anthocyanin degradation and polymery colour recorded to be the lowest. Thus, it was concluded that the cultivar Bilati turned out to be the most superior one among all the rest cultivars in terms of biochemical characteristics.

Keywords: Litchi; cultivars; quality; bilati; Jorhat.

Professor;

*Corresponding author: E-mail: saikia.pansurika4@gmail.com;

1. INTRODUCTION

Litchi (*Litchi chinensis*) of Sapindaceae family originated from Southern part of China. Its domestication in China dates back to more than 2300 years ago [1]. And later its cultivation extended to many parts of the world and currently it is cultivated in over 20 countries in tropical and subtropical region of the world [2]. Litchi plant is highly specific to the subtropical climatic conditions because it thrives best under moist and humid atmospheres. In summer, the temperature required for the growth of litchi plants should not go above 40°C and in winter should not fall below the freezing point [3]. The importance of litchi in the international market is tremendously increasing because of its uniqueness, pleasant aroma and flavor and attractive colour. It is highly export oriented in nature and has great potential to earn foreign exchange in the international market [4]. The fruits can be eaten fresh as well as used as processed products like juice, vinegar, wine, ice creams etc. The composition of litchi varied in different climatic conditions. Litchi fruit contains juice (60%), seed (19%), pericarp (13%) and rag (8%) [5]. Litchi fruits have a high nutritional value. The nutritional constituents of the fruit per 100gm comprises 81-85% of moisture, 0.68-1.0g of protein, 0.30-0.58g of fat, 13-16g of carbohydrate, 8-10mg of Calcium(Ca), 0.4mg of Iron(Fe), 28g of Thymine, 0.05mg of Riboflavin, 0.40mg of Niacin, 24-60mg of Ascorbic acid and 18-22% of TSS [6].

Keeping these facts in view, the experiment entitled “Study on the Qualitative Characteristics of superior cultivars of Litchi fruits in Jorhat, Assam” was to study the biochemical constituents of the five superior cultivars of litchi fruits in Jorhat (Assam).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The experiment was laid out in Randomized Block Design(RBD) and conducted in the laboratory of Department of Horticulture, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat (Assam) during 2020-2021 consisting of five treatments viz. Bombay(T₁), Seedless(T₂), Piajee(T₃), Bilati(T₄) and Elaichi(T₅) with four replications. The climatic condition of Jorhat is sub-tropical and humid with hot summer in the months from June-August and cool winter in the months of December- January. The region was blessed with an average rainfall of 171.21mm, most of which occurred from June to September and were also unevenly distributed throughout the year.

2.1 Juice Content and Total Soluble Solids (TSS)

Centrifugal juice extractor was used to extract and measure the amount of juice content available in the fruits. It was expressed in cc. TSS of the fruit of litchi was recorded by using Hand Refractometer and expressed in degree Brix.

2.2 Total Sugar and Titratable acidity

Total sugar was calculated by using the standard method of A.O.A.C [7]. A 50ml of filtered fruit solution was taken in a volumetric flask and added 5ml of concentrated HCl into it and kept overnight, then the solution was neutralized with 1N NaOH and made up the volume to 150ml with distilled water and the solution was titrated against a mixture of 10ml boiling Fehling's solution (5ml Fehling's A+ 5ml Fehling's B).

Total sugar was calculated using the following formula and expressed as percentage.

Total sugar (%) = Sucrose (%) + reducing sugar (%)

Sucrose (%) = { Total invert sugar (%) - reducing sugar(%) } x 0.95

$$\text{Total invert sugar(\%)} = \frac{\text{mg of invert sugar} \times \text{volume made up} \times \text{titre value} \times \text{weight of sample taken} \times \text{sample kept overnight}}{\text{x 2nd volume made up} \times \text{x 100} \times \text{x 1000}}$$

Reducing sugar was determined by using the A.O.A.C. method [7]. A 25g of fruit sample was taken in a beaker then 10ml of lead acetate and 5ml of potassium oxalate was added to it. The volume was then made up to 250ml with distilled water in a volumetric flask. The madeup solution was then filtered and titrated against 10ml Fehling's solution (Fehling's solution A+ 5ml of Fehling's solution B). Methylene blue was used as the indicator and thus, the endpoint indicated to be the deep brick red colour of the solution. The result was expressed in percentage by using the formula:

$$\text{Reducing sugar (\%)} = \frac{\text{mg of invert sugar} \times \text{dilution} \times 100}{\text{Titre value} \times \text{weight of the sample}}$$

Titrateable acidity (TA) was determined by the standard method of A.O.A.C. [7]. A 5ml of litchi fruit juice was taken and poured in a 50ml of volumetric flask and made up the volume with

distilled water and filtered. 5ml of the filtrate was taken and titrated against 0.1N NaOH solution using phenolphthalein indicator. The following was the formula to determine Titratable Acidity.

$$\text{Titrateable acidity (\%)} = \frac{\text{Titre value} \times \text{normality of alkali} \times \text{volume made up} \times \text{Eq. wt of citric acid}}{\text{weight of the sample} \times \text{volume of aliquot taken}}$$

Sugar-acid ratio was calculated as $\frac{\text{Total sugar}}{\text{Total acid}}$

2.3 Vitamin C and Potassium

Vitamin C content was determined by the volumetric method. A 10 g of fruit sample was taken in a 100ml volumetric flask and volume was made up with 4% oxalic acid and filtered. 10ml of filtrate titrated against the dye and the endpoint appeared to be a pink colour.

$$\text{Vitamin C (mg/100g of pulp)} = \frac{\text{Titre value} \times \text{Dye factor} \times \text{volume made up}}{\text{weight of sample taken} \times \text{aliquot of sample taken for estimation}} \times 100$$

The potassium content of fruit pulp was determined by the Flame photometric method [8].

2.4 Anthocyanin Content

Total anthocyanin content was determined by the pH differential method [9]. The anthocyanin content of the pericarp of litchi fruit was measured using a modified spectrophotometric pH differential protocol.

$$\text{Anthocyanin content (mg/100g of fresh pericarp)} = \frac{A \times MW \times 1000}{\epsilon \times C}$$

where A =Absorbance; MW=molecular weight; ϵ = molar absorptivity; C=concentration of buffer in mg/ml.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Juice Content and TSS

The juice content ranged from 5.60 to 13.62cc which shows a significant difference among the cultivars (Table 1). The highest juice content was observed in the cultivar T₄ (Bilati) and lowest in T₁ (Bombay). An increase in juice content in T₄ (Bilati) might be due to the increased aril weight of that cultivar. The juice content of litchi fruit varied from 6.20cc to 18.46cc [10].

TSS helps in determining the quality of the fruit. The TSS content of litchi cultivars ranged from 13.10 to 16.82°Brix. The highest and lowest TSS was found in the cultivars T₄ (Bilati) and T₁ (Bombay) respectively (Table 1). Differences observed in TSS content among the cultivars might be due to the inherent characteristics of the litchi plant and the agroclimatic condition in which they were grown. This result was in conformity with Kumar et al. [3] and Islam et al. [11]. Kumar et al. [12] revealed that, high boron content might also be one of the reasons for high TSS in fruits. Accumulation of sugars and other soluble components from hydrolysis of ascorbic acid might increase TSS content in fruits [13].

3.2 Total Sugar and Titratable Acidity

Total sugar content ranged from 14.61 to 16.99% showed in the Table 2, where the findings were lesser than those reported by Haq et al. [14]. Sanjay [15] reported the total sugar content varied from 10.18 to 15.50%. The high sugar content cultivars were T₄ (Bilati) and T₃ (Piajee), whereas, lowest sugar found in T₅ (Elaichi). Likewise, Reducing sugar, invert sugar and sucrose content in the fruits of litchi cultivars varied from 6.89-8.37% , 15.00-17.44%, 7.71-8.60% respectively, where the highest and lowest was observed in T₄ (Bilati) and T₅ (Elaichi).

Table 1. Juice content and TSS

| Treatment | Juice content(cc) | TSS(°B) |
|----------------|-------------------|---------|
| T ₁ | 5.60 | 13.10 |
| T ₂ | 6.35 | 14.87 |
| T ₃ | 7.75 | 16.55 |
| T ₄ | 13.62 | 16.82 |
| T ₅ | 12.00 | 14.02 |
| S.Ed± | 0.34 | 0.21 |
| C.D(0.05) | 0.76 | 0.47 |

According to Mandal and Thokchom [16], total sugar in Elaichi was recorded to be 11.70%. Reducing sugar of litchi cultivars in Pakistan recorded from 4.47 to 6.92% [17]. 70% of total sugar represent by reducing sugar [18]. Considerable variations observed in total sugar content, reducing sugar, invert sugar, and sucrose among the cultivars might be due to maximum conversion of starch into sugar due to its inherent behavior of the cultivar [4]. The present study revealed that, T₄ (Bilati) was the highest sugar accumulator of the rest cultivars.

Acidity is considered to be the most important quality trait whose percentage decrease with the maturity of fruits [15]. Highest and lowest titratable acidity found in T₅ (Elaichi) and T₄ (Bilati) respectively among the litchi cultivars (Table 3). Variation observed in the findings of titratable acidity of the fruit might be due to fluctuating environmental conditions. The fruits having a high sugar content and low acidity result high sugar/acid ratio in T₄ (Bilati) *i.e.* 40.71.

3.3 Vitamin C and Potassium

Vitamin C is a water soluble antioxidant that helps to build the immunity system in the human body and get rid of harmful diseases. Variation among the cultivars ranged between 50-62 mg/100g which was higher than the findings reported by Kumari et al. [19]. Fruit with highest

Vitamin C content in T₄ (Bilati) *i.e.* 62.11mg/100g and lowest in T₅ (Elaichi) *i.e.* 50.60mg/100g (Table 4). Similar findings were also observed in Longan fruit by Trong et al. [20]. Wide variations in vitamin C content among the cultivars under study might be due to cultural practices, stages of maturity during harvesting, and climatic conditions. Mondy and Leja [21] reported that, any mechanical injury in fruits during harvesting might cause degradation of Vitamin C. Litchi is a rich source of vitamin C when compared with lime (27mg/100g) and lemon (43/100g) [22]. High Vitamin C in T₄ (Bilati) might be due to high potassium content in T₄ (Bilati) because potassium promotes the synthesis of secondary metabolites like Vitamin C [23].

Potassium content present in litchi cultivars were ranged from 1,029.75 to 1,263.75mg/100g under study. The data were illustrated in Table 4 showed the highest content in T₄ (Bilati) and lowest in T₅ (Elaichi). Fruits having a high potassium content enhance fruit weight and pulp weight. T₄ (Bilati) was such cultivar containing the maximum potassium content along with high fruit weight and pulp weight under study. In terms of quantity, it has a vital role in photosynthesis that helps to manufacture food materials in fruits, while in terms of quality, it was equally responsible in increasing TSS, improving of fruit colour and flavour. And the cultivar T₄ (Bilati) exhibits all such characters due to its high potassium content.

Table 2. Invert sugar, reducing sugar and sucrose content

| Treatment | Invert sugar (%) | Reducing sugar (%) | Sucrose (%) |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| T ₁ | 15.53 | 7.31 | 7.82 |
| T ₂ | 16.09 | 7.47 | 8.19 |
| T ₃ | 16.67 | 7.86 | 8.37 |
| T ₄ | 17.44 | 8.37 | 8.60 |
| T ₅ | 15.00 | 6.89 | 7.71 |
| S.Ed± | 0.02 | 0.10 | 0.03 |
| C.D(0.05) | 0.05 | 0.23 | 0.07 |

Table 3. Total sugar and acidity

| Treatment | Total sugar(%) | Titratable acidity(%) | Sugar/acid ratio |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| T ₁ | 15.14 | 0.88 | 17.12 |
| T ₂ | 15.67 | 0.62 | 25.02 |
| T ₃ | 16.24 | 0.53 | 30.31 |
| T ₄ | 16.99 | 0.42 | 40.71 |
| T ₅ | 14.61 | 1.03 | 14.78 |
| S.Ed± | 0.02 | 0.04 | 2.44 |
| C.D(0.05) | 0.06 | 0.09 | 5.39 |

Table 4. Vitamin C and potassium content

| Treatment | Vitamin C(mg/100g) | Potassium(mg/100g) |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| T ₁ | 55.12 | 1102.50 |
| T ₂ | 53.21 | 1044.25 |
| T ₃ | 58.11 | 1058.50 |
| T ₄ | 62.11 | 1263.75 |
| T ₅ | 50.60 | 1029.75 |
| S.Ed± | 0.27 | 4.92 |
| C.D(0.05) | 0.60 | 10.84 |

Table 5. Anthocyanin content of different cultivars of litchi

| Treatment | Anthocyanin content(mg/100g) | Degradation index | Colour density | Polymery colour |
|----------------|------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| T ₁ | 35.07 | 3.56 | 3.81 | 0.60 |
| T ₂ | 35.99 | 3.55 | 3.68 | 0.64 |
| T ₃ | 37.77 | 3.64 | 3.72 | 0.70 |
| T ₄ | 38.41 | 3.52 | 3.87 | 0.60 |
| T ₅ | 37.03 | 3.73 | 3.61 | 0.67 |
| S.Ed± | 0.35 | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.004 |
| C.D(0.05) | 0.78 | 0.09 | 0.07 | 0.01 |

3.4 Anthocyanin Content

Significant differences in Anthocyanin content, Degradation index, colour density, and polymery colour were observed in different cultivars of litchi under study. Among the cultivars, T₄ (Bilati) recorded the highest anthocyanin content and colour density. On the other hand, the highest degradation index and polymery colour were recorded in the cultivar T₅(Elaichi) and T₃ (Piajee) respectively. The data were presented in Table 5. Anthocyanins are the pigments that are responsible for bright reddish colour in litchi pericarp during maturation. Highest anthocyanin content in T₄ (Bilati) might be due to the presence of deep red fruit colour. In the findings of Duan et al. [24], the anthocyanin content of litchi fruits were 18.6mg/100g which was lower than the levels recorded in the present study. The anthocyanin content in rambutan was much higher i.e. 181.3mg/100g [25] than the present study values. With the advancement of ripening, the anthocyanin concentration increased in non climacteric fruits [26]. Lowest degradation index (3.52) in T₄ (Bilati) cultivar fruits, resulting in the highest retention of total anthocyanin content (38.41mg/100g) (Table 5). Similarly, high colour density in T₅ (Bilati) cultivar might be due to the lowest anthocyanin degradation index found in the fruits of T₄ (Bilati). Increase of polymery colour in litchi fruits results to increase in the contribution of tannin to the total colour of the fruit which considers that the cultivar had the lowest nutritional value.

4. CONCLUSION

From the experiment, it was found that the fruits of Bilati cultivar attained the topest quality among all studied, in almost all the biochemical parameters such as in Juice content, TSS, Sugar content, Vitamin C and Potassium. Thus, the cultivar Bilati turned out to be the best and most suitable one evaluated under the experiment. Bilati cultivar would fetch a good return for farmers among all the studied cultivars of litchi in terms of both quantitative and qualitative characteristics. The pest and disease infestation was found to be less in the litchi fruits under the Assam condition. Overall the performance of all the selected elite cultivars of litchi in Jorhat(Assam) was found to be good based on soil type and climatic conditions.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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