

**Effects of high hydrostatic pressure processing on *Bacillus cereus* spores in  
fresh blue crab meat (*Callinectes sapidus*)**

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**EFFECTS OF HIGH HYDROSTATIC PRESSURE PROCESSING ON  
BACILLUS CEREUS SPORES IN FRESH BLUE CRAB MEAT (*Callinectes sapidus*)**

Kannapha Suklim

(ABSTRACT)

The Food and Drug Administration has recently expressed concern for the safety of seafood and seafood products. One of the concerns is the presence of *Bacillus cereus* in fresh blue crab meat. *Bacillus cereus* is a spore-forming pathogen whose spores survive the customary thermal treatments applied during cooking and pasteurization; therefore it could potentially present a health concern to consumers as the microorganism could increase to pathogenic levels.

The objectives of this study were to evaluate the effects of a post-processing method i.e. high hydrostatic pressure treatment on the quality of fresh crab meat and to evaluate the effectiveness of high pressures on the inactivation of *B. cereus* spores.

Fresh blue crab meat was pressurized at 300 and 550 MPa at 25° C for 5 min and stored at 4° C for 31 days to determine the pressurization effects on the microbiological, physical, and sensory quality of the meat. A pressure of 300 MPa caused a 1 log reduction in total aerobic plate count and a 3 day lag period, whereas 550 MPa inactivated 2 logs in total aerobic plate count with no evident lag phase. Physical and sensory qualities of pressurized crab meat were not statistically different from the untreated crab meat ( $P>0.05$ ). A pressure of 300 MPa extended the shelf-life from 17 to over 24 days with the prevalence of *Carnobacterium piscicola* at the time of spoilage. Crab meat treated with 550 MPa was not rejected by sensory panels at day 31 and *Enterococcus spp.* was identified as the predominant microorganism.

High hydrostatic pressure (550 MPa at 40° C for 15 min) inactivated less than 1 log (0.66 log) of *B. cereus* spores inoculated in fresh crab meat. The meat essentially had a protective effect on pressure inactivation of the spores. During storage (31 days), surviving *B. cereus* was suppressed and outgrown by the other pressure resistant microflora at a storage temperature of

12° C. At 4° C, *B. cereus* could compete with the other pressure-resistant microflora and was isolated even at the end of the storage period (day 31); however, diarrheal toxin was not detected in any stored samples.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Food and Drug Administration's Office of Seafood has recently expressed concerns over the safety of seafood and seafood products. Two of the four food safety concerns listed are associated with the presence of spore-forming pathogens: *Bacillus cereus* and *Clostridium botulinum* in processed and vacuum or modified packaged seafood. These microorganisms are of concern because their spores are able to survive the customary thermal treatments applied during cooking and pasteurization due to their high heat resistance, and their survival could lead to food spoilage and food poisoning. Processed seafood is therefore in need of a post-processing method to increase the safety of this ready-to-eat seafood.

*Bacillus cereus* is a Gram-positive, aerobic, facultative anaerobic sporeformer which produces endospores. This bacterium produces spores following vegetative growth when nutrients in the growing environment are depleted. Spores exhibit high resistance to various physical (heat, radiation, drying) and chemical agents, thus they are difficult to inactivate. Spores have a high resistance to their surroundings and are frequent inhabitants of soil, vegetation, dust, sediment, and water and are spreaded to food through cross-contamination.

The common food vehicles for *B. cereus* range from dairy products, rice and oriental foods, spice and dried products, to meat and meat products and seafood. Although spores have no detectable metabolic activities in their dormant state, they are considered still viable and respond to external changes. When nutrients become available they germinate and resume vegetative growth. Consumption of foods contaminated with *B. cereus* vegetative cells or with *B. cereus* toxins could result in both a diarrheal and an emetic type foodborne illness. To maintain quality and increase the safety of foods, especially processed seafood, an effective post-processing method that would inactivate spoilage and pathogenic bacteria while retaining the food quality is required.

High hydrostatic pressure processing is a new technology and has been reported to inactivate spoilage and pathogenic bacteria in a variety of food products. It is regarded as a non-thermal treatment that causes only minimal changes in foods compared to traditional thermal treatments. The objectives of this study are to investigate the use high hydrostatic pressure processes to increase the shelf-life of fresh crab meat, and to evaluate whether this technology would effectively inactivate *B. cereus* spores.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 *Bacillus cereus*

*Bacillus cereus* is a large, Gram-positive, rod-shaped, aerobic, facultative anaerobic sporeformer which produces central to terminal ellipsoid or cylindrical spores that do not swell the sporangium (vegetative cells). The organism is a member of the *B. cereus* group consisting of *B. cereus* itself and other closely related species having highly similarities in phenotypic and genetic properties. The other members of *B. cereus* group are *Bacillus anthracis*, *Bacillus mycooides*, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, *Bacillus weihenstephanensis*, and *Bacillus pseudomycooides*. It is reported that the similarity in the 16rRNA sequences among *B. anthracis*, *B. cereus*, *B. mycooides*, and *B. thuringiensis* is more than 99% which complicates taxonomy of the genus *Bacillus* (Kotiranta et al., 2000).

However, there are some characteristics that differentiate members of the *B. cereus* group as shown in Table 1. Among the members of *B. cereus* group, *B. thuringiensis* cannot be differentiated from *B. cereus* using the procedures normally used to identify *B. cereus* due to the loss of plasmids harboring a gene encoding for a crystalline inclusion (Cry protein) or  $\delta$ -endotoxin that distinguishes *B. thuringiensis* from *B. cereus* (Granum, 2001 and Kotiranta, et al., 2000).

Table 1: Criteria for differentiating members of the *B. cereus* group

<i>Bacillus</i> spp.	Colony Morphology	Motility	Hemolysis	Crystalline Inclusion	Penicillin Susceptibility
<i>B. cereus</i>	White	+	+	-	-
<i>B. anthracis</i>	White	-	-	-	+
<i>B. thuringiensis</i>	White/gray	+	+	+	-
<i>B. mycooides</i>	Rhizoid	-	(+)	-	-
<i>B. weihenstephanensis</i>	Differentiated from <i>B. cereus</i> based on growth at <7° C and not at 43° C; can be identified rapidly using rDNA or cspA (cold shock protein A) targeted PCR				
<i>B. pseudomycooides</i>	Not distinguishable from <i>B. mycooides</i> by physiological and morphological characteristics; clearly differentiated based on fatty acid composition and 16S RNA sequences				

*B. cereus* is widely distributed in the environment, its vegetative cells and spores are frequent inhabitants of soil, vegetation, dust, sediment and water. It then spreads to foods of plant origin and other foods through cross-contamination. The common food vehicles for *B. cereus* range from dairy products, rice and oriental foods, spices and dried products, to meat and meat products. In 1906, *B. cereus* was first associated with a food poisoning in Europe, 300 hospital patients developed gastroenteritis after consuming meatballs containing large numbers of *B. peptonificans* (later *B. cereus*). In 1950, *B. cereus* was first recognized and established as a food poisoning agent as a result of Steinar Hauge's investigation on consumption of vanilla sauce in Norway (Johnson, 1984). During 1947 to 1949, four outbreaks of food poisoning were investigated affecting 600 persons, which were traced back to vanilla sauce prepared from cornstarch contaminated with *B. cereus* spores. Steiner Hauge demonstrated that *B. cereus* was the causative agent by consuming a pure culture of the microorganisms with the symptoms of "diarrheal type" *B. cereus* food poisoning (abdominal pain and water diarrhea) which developed after 13 hr. The incidence of *B. cereus* food poisoning was reported to include at least 230 outbreaks of the diarrheal type food poisoning worldwide between 1950 and 1976. Implicated foods were meat and vegetable soups, cooked meat and poultry, raw and cooked vegetables, pasta, milk and ice cream (Shinagawa, 1990).

The first outbreak of "emetic type" of *B. cereus* foodborne illness was reported in England in 1971. This type of food poisoning is characterized by nausea and vomiting within 0.5 to 6 hr after consumption of contaminated foods. Shinagawa (1990) stated that at least 170 outbreaks of the emetic type of *B. cereus* food poisoning have been reported worldwide since 1971. More than 110 outbreaks were reported in Great Britain alone between 1971 and 1978. Cooked and fried rice were implicated in 108 of the 110 outbreaks of which 104 were related to boiled or fried rice from Chinese restaurants. Although all the emetic outbreaks are associated with consumption of cooked rice, other starchy foods such as macaroni and cheese, vanilla slices, and a product similar to cream puffs have been implicated (Johnson, 1984).

In the United States, 52 outbreaks of *B. cereus* food poisoning were reported to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) between 1972 and 1986. During 1993 to 1997, *B. cereus* was reported as the cause of 14 outbreaks and 691 cases of foodborne illness (Doyle, 2001).

*B. cereus* is not a common cause for foodborne outbreaks in the United States, since it accounts for only 1.3% of the bacterial food poisoning cases reported between 1972 and 1982 (Kotiranta et al., 2000). Nonetheless, *B. cereus* is one of pathogens of concern in processed seafood listed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s Office of Seafood since its spores are considerably heat-resistant and may survive thermal treatments applied during processing. In addition, heating may activate spores which can germinate and outgrow when environmental conditions becomes favorable.

There are two distinct forms of *B. cereus* foodborne illness: diarrheal and emetic type. The characteristics of the two types of illness caused by *B. cereus* are summarized in Table 2. The diarrheal type is characterized by watery diarrhea, abdominal pain and cramps and rarely vomiting after 6 to 15 hr of consumption of contaminated food. The symptoms persist for 12 to 24 hr in most instances. The symptoms of this illness mimic the symptoms of *Clostridium perfringens* food poisoning. The emetic type of food poisoning is characterized by nausea and vomiting, occasionally abdominal cramp and diarrhea, within 0.5 to 6 hr after consumption of contaminated foods and last less than 24 hr. The symptoms of emetic type resemble those of *Staphylococcus aureus* food poisoning (FDA/CFSAN, 2005 and Johnson, 1984). The pathogenicity of *B. cereus* has been associated with ability to produce toxic metabolites during its growth.

Table 2: Characteristics of the two types of illness caused by *B. cereus*

Characteristics	Diarrheal syndrome	Emetic syndrome
Infective dose	$10^5$ - $10^7$ (total)	$10^5$ - $10^8$ /g
Toxin production	Small intestine of host	Preformed in foods
Toxin types	Protein; enterotoxin(s)	Cyclic peptide; emetic toxin
Incubation time (h)	6-15 (periodically >24)	0.5-6
Illness duration (h)	12-24 (periodically several days)	6-24
Symptoms	Abdominal pain, watery diarrhea, occasionally nausea	Nausea, vomiting, malaise (sometimes followed by diarrhea due to production of enterotoxin)
Implicated foods	Meat products, soups, vegetables, puddings and sauces, milk and milk products	Fried and cooked rice, pasta, pastry, noodles

Turnbull (1981) extensively reviewed and elaborated the characteristics as well as pathogenicity of certain toxic metabolites of *B. cereus*. These included lethal toxin, hemolysins, phospholipases-C, loop fluid-inducing/skin test/necrotic toxin and emetic toxin. However, the literature differently characterizes the types of toxins. In general, the diarrheal type is caused by enterotoxin complexes and is sometimes referred to as diarrheal toxins, whereas the emetic type is caused by the emetic toxin. It has been shown that *B. cereus* produces at least five different proteins or enterotoxins e.g. Hemolysin bl (Hbl), Nonhemolytic enterotoxin (Nhe), Enterotoxin T (BceT), Enterotoxin FM (EntFM), and Cytotoxin (CytK). Three of these five enterotoxins (Hbl, Nhe, and CytK) are likely to be involved in food poisoning; the other two have not been recently reported.

Hemolysin bl is the first known three-component bacterial toxin and the best-characterized enterotoxin by far. The genes for all three components have been cloned and the sequences have been determined. The Hbl is composed of three components (a binding component, B [37.8 kDa], and two lytic components, L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> [38.5 and 43.2 kDa]). It has been shown that all three components are required for maximal toxic activities: hemolysis, cytotoxicity, enterotoxicity, necrosis in rabbit skin and vascular permeability as well as fluid accumulation in ligated rabbit ileal loops. Neither B and L<sub>1</sub> nor any of the components alone was hemolytic (Beecher and Macmillan, 1991). The mechanism and the interactions of Hbl components at the molecular level was studied by Beecher and Wong (1997), generally it is a binding of the protein B component to the cell surface before the L components cause cell lysis. In addition to Hbl, other hemolysins have been identified in *B. cereus* strains, but the Hbl is potent and therefore has been suggested as the primary virulence factor in diarrhea caused by *B. cereus*.

Lund and Granum (1996) characterized a Nonhemolytic enterotoxin (Nhe) complexes which is also a three-component enterotoxin complex consisting of three proteins of 39, 45, and 105 kDa. Although these three proteins are not identical to those of Hbl, the 39 kDa showed some similarity (70% identity) to the L<sub>1</sub> component of Hbl. Cytotoxin K (CytK), which has been recently characterized, is a one-component enterotoxin (34 kDa). The two three-component enterotoxins, Hbl and Nhe, are currently regarded as etiological causes of diarrheal food poisoning due to *B. cereus*.

The emetic toxin has been extensively studied after an investigation of using the HEp-2 cell assay showed a potential for toxin detection by Hughes et al., 1988. Prior to this assay the most reliable toxin assay was the oral challenge in primates. It was discovered that culture filtrates from an emetic type *B. cereus* isolate caused a vacuole formation in HEp-2 cells, the epithelial cell line, and correlated with the toxin activity. After the emetic toxin was purified, its structure was analyzed to reveal a ring structure, a cyclic dodecadepsipeptide, having a molecular weight of 1.2 kDa and named as cereulide by Agata et al. (1994). It is assumed that cereulide is more likely an enzymatically-synthesized peptide in the growth medium not a gene product like Hbl and Nhe which are transcribed from the *hbl* and *nhe* operon.

In addition to enterotoxin complexes and emetic toxin, phospholipase C or lecithinase is also considered to be a virulence factor of *B. cereus*. Three types of phospholipase C (phosphatidylinositol hydrolase, phosphatidylcholine hydrolase and hemolytic sphingomyelinase) are produced with a different mechanism. It is suggested that phospholipase C influences the healing process by destroying the epithelium of the infected tissues and increasing the degradation of the subepithelial matrix (Kotiranta et al., 2000).

There are currently two commercial rapid methods marketed for the detection of *B. cereus* enterotoxins in food and food-related samples and enrichment cultures, Tecra<sup>®</sup> and Oxoid<sup>®</sup>. The TECRA *Bacillus* diarrheal enterotoxin (BDE) visual immunoassay (VIA) detects the NheA (45 kDa) component of the Nhe enterotoxin. The TECRA BDE VIA is an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) performed in a “sandwich” configuration. If BDE antigens are present in the food sample, they are captured by the antibodies coated on the surface of microwells. The antigens are then bound to enzyme labeled antibodies (conjugate) specific for BDE. The presence of BDE is indicated when the bound conjugate converts substrate to a green color (Tecra International Pty Ltd, Australia). The BCET-RPLA toxin detection kit provided by Oxoid detects the presence of the HblC (L<sub>2</sub>) component of the enterotoxin by reversed passive latex agglutination (RPLA). In a reversed agglutination assay, the antibody, which is attached to the particles (latex), reacts with the soluble antigen. The cross-linking of the latex particles by the specific antigen/antibody reaction results in the visible latex agglutination reaction (Oxoid Limited, United Kingdom).

In contrast to enterotoxins detection, a method to detect emetic toxin immunochemically is not yet currently available due to the low antigenicity of this small molecular weight toxin; however, bioassays by using HEp-2 cells assay have been developed, as previously mentioned. An improved quantitative analysis method to detect emetic toxin of *B. cereus* with vacuole response assay has been developed and applied to various food samples e.g. boiled rice, fried rice, noodle, pasta, bread, cake, mashed potato, egg and egg products, meat and meat products, milk and soybean curd (Mikami et al., 1994; and Agata et al., 2002).

Isolation and enumeration of *B. cereus* from food samples is normally performed by surface plating onto a selective medium such as mannitol egg-yolk polymyxin (MYP) agar. The presumptive colonies are pink, galaxy-liked colonies which do not ferment mannitol and produce lecithinase or phospholipase with a precipitation of egg yolk around its colony. The presumptive colonies are then transferred to nutrient agar slants, incubated 35° C for 24 hr, and inoculated into confirmation medium. Confirmation tests based on biochemical reactions e.g., anaerobic utilization of glucose, reduction of nitrate, production of acetylmethyl-carbinol, decomposition of lysine, resistance to lysozyme, and production of acid from mannitol are used to differentiate *B. cereus* from other *Bacillus* as shown in Table 3 (FDA/CFSAN, 2005).

Table 3. Differential characteristics of large-celled Group I *Bacillus* species

Feature	<i>B. cereus</i>	<i>B. thuringiensis</i>	<i>B. mycoides</i>	<i>B. anthracis</i>	<i>B. megaterium</i>
Gram reaction	+( <sup>a</sup> )	+	+	+	+
Catalase	+	+	+	+	+
Motility	+/-( <sup>b</sup> )	+/-	-( <sup>c</sup> )	-	+/-
Reduction of nitrate	+	+	+	+	-( <sup>d</sup> )
Tyrosine decomposed	+	+	+/-	-( <sup>d</sup> )	+/-
Lysozyme-resistant	+	+	+	+	-
Egg yolk reaction	+	+	+	+	-
Anaerobic utilization of glucose	+	+	+	+	-
VP reaction	+	+	+	+	-
Acid produced from mannitol	-	-	-	-	+
Hemolysis (sheep RBC)	+	+	+	-( <sup>d</sup> )	+
Known pathogenicity/characteristic	Produces enterotoxin	Endotoxin crystals pathogenic to insects	Rhizoidal growth	Pathogenic to animals and humans	

<sup>a</sup>+, 90-100% of strains positive.

<sup>b</sup>+/-, 50-50% of strains are positive.

<sup>c</sup>-, 90-100% of strains are negative.

<sup>d</sup>-, Most strains are negative.

## **2.2 High hydrostatic pressure processing**

The use of high hydrostatic pressure in the field of food science and technology was first demonstrated by Hite in 1899 (Hite, 1899). He applied pressure to milk to destroy microorganisms and extend shelf-life. He demonstrated that after an application of a pressure treatment at 600 MPa for 1 hr at room temperature, milk shelf-life could be extended for 4 days. However, it took nearly a century before the first high-pressure processed food (jam) was introduced to the Japanese market in 1990 by the Meidi-ya Company. Since then, high hydrostatic pressure has been extensively researched in various aspects e.g. mechanism of microbial inactivation and enzyme inactivation to ultimately achieve high-quality food products. Examples of the commercial pressurized products currently available on the market are jam, fruit juices, yogurts, guacamole, salad dressing, ham, and seafood (Lado, 2002).

The reason high hydrostatic pressure has gained considerable interest is because of increasing demand for minimally processed, additive-free, shelf-stable products. High hydrostatic pressure has been shown to preserve the sensory and nutritional qualities of a food usually lost during traditional thermal treatments which eliminate spoilage microorganisms and pathogenic bacteria. High hydrostatic pressure is one of several existing alternatives to thermal treatments such as irradiation, pulsed electric fields, ultraviolet radiation, and high magnetic fields. It is sometime referred to as “cold-pasteurization”.

High hydrostatic pressure (HHP) also referred to as high pressure processing (HPP) or ultra high pressure (UHP) processing is defined as a process applied to liquid or solid foods, with or without packaging, with pressures between 100 and 800 MPa. Pressures used in commercial systems are usually between 400-700 MPa. Generally, pre-packaged food is placed into a cylindrical pressure vessel, which is later filled with a pressure transmitting fluid. The fluid is pressurized by an intensifier which uses liquid from the low-pressure pump to generate a high-pressure fluid for the system compression. Food is held for a desired period of time and temperature during a compression cycle. After the compression cycle is achieved, the vessel is

decompressed and the pressure released. The decompression cycle is accomplished within seconds and the food is cooled to its original temperature.

The temperature in commercial system during a pressure treatment can be programmed from below 0° C to above 100° C. The exposure time of food under pressure is limited from a millisecond to over 1200 seconds or 20 min, the practical exposure time is usually less than 20 min (Farkas and Hoover, 2001). The pressure transmitting medium is normally a low-compressibility liquid such as water rather than gases as liquid compression results only in small volume change comparing to gases, in addition, liquid posses less potential hazards when operating machines. The general schematic diagram for discontinuous equipment for high pressure processing of packaged food products is shown in Figure 1.

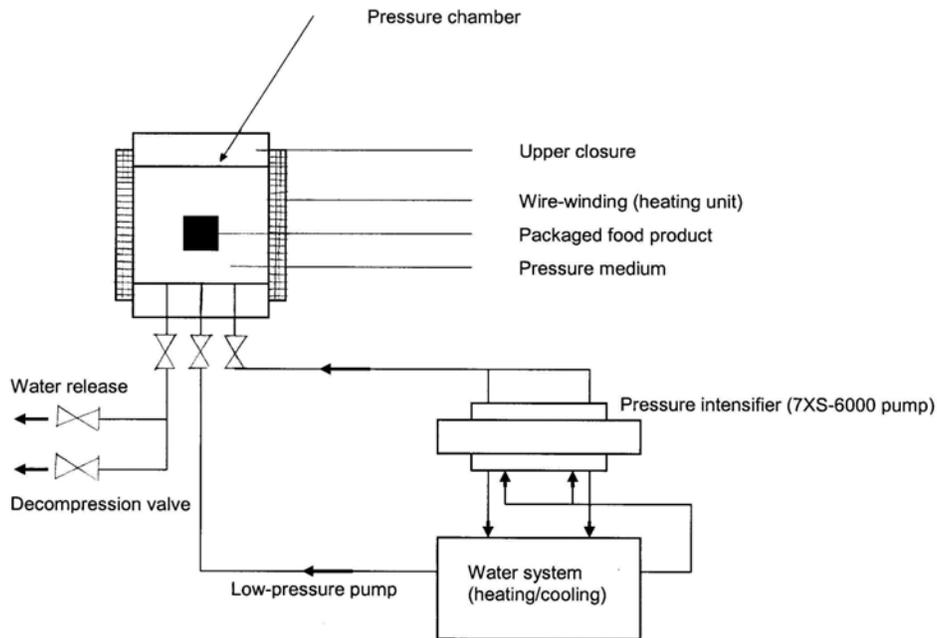


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of a discontinuous equipment for high pressure processing of packaged food products

### **2.2.1 Mechanisms of high hydrostatic pressure processing**

The effects of high hydrostatic pressure are based on two important principles: Le Chatelier's principle and the isostatic principle. According to Le Chatelier's principle, high hydrostatic pressure affects any biochemical systems where a change in volume is involved and favors any system which results in a volume decrease (Tewari et al., 1999). Interactions (covalent bonds, hydrogen bonds, electrostatic and hydrophobic interactions) among biomolecules are modified by high pressure in one way or another depending on whether the formation of these interactions results in positive or negative changes (Yuste et al., 2001). It is generally accepted that high pressure has little effect on covalent bonds as only non-covalent interactions are disrupted. Therefore, food subjected to high pressure treatments near or at room temperature will not undergo significant chemical changes due to the pressure treatment itself (Farkas and Hoover, 2001). Low molecular weight molecules responsible for nutritional and sensory characteristics are not affected, thus, freshness and flavor do not markedly change and are retained. Also, with no breakage of covalent bonds, the development of flavors not naturally present in food products does not occur.

The other principle is the isostatic transmission, which indicates that the transmission of pressure is uniform and almost instantaneous independent of size, shape and composition of food. Therefore package size, shape and composition are not factors in process determination. Since high pressure processing is isostatic, food does not become deformed under such high pressure. The pressurization time is independent of sample volume in contrast to conventional thermal processing, once the pressure reaches the desired pressure the sample can be kept for an extended period of time with no additional energy required. High pressure can be applied at room temperature thus reducing the amount of thermal energy needed during conventional thermal treatment. Although high pressure processing is generally regarded as non-thermal treatment, the temperature of food will increase through adiabatic heating (an increase in temperature due to an increase in pressure) during compression. If water is the compression vehicle, an approximate 3° C per 100 MPa will occur depending on the composition of food, with a larger increase for fatty foods (Cheftel, 1995; Thakur and Nelson, 1998; Tewari et al., 1999; and Yuste et al., 2001).

### **2.2.2 Effects of high hydrostatic pressure on food and food components**

Conventional (thermal) treatment and non-conventional (non-thermal e.g. high pressure) treatments have been implemented with an ultimate goal to achieve food safety and quality. However, high pressure processing has become increasingly more popular because it inactivates pathogenic and spoilage microorganisms in foods with minimal changes in texture, color, and flavor as compared to conventional technologies. Effects of high pressure on food and food components on microorganisms as well as its effects on modifying function have been studied and reviewed (Cheftel, 1995; Thakur and Nelson, 1998; and Knorr, 1999). Pressure effects on the composition of food i.e. water, proteins, enzymes, starch, and lipids are well described.

Physicochemical properties of water are modified under pressure e.g. a decrease in water volume, an increase in water temperature, ionic dissociation of water (a lowering in pH), and phase transition of water. Knorr (1999) stated that at about 1,000 MPa water freezes at room temperature, whereas the freezing point can be lowered to  $-22^{\circ}\text{C}$  at 207.5 MPa. This allows for pressure shift freezing of foods with instant and small ice crystal formation, storage of food at subzero temperatures without ice formation, or fast thawing of frozen food by pressurization.

The effects of pressure on the structure and activity of proteins and enzymes depend on the kind of protein, processing condition, and the pressure applied. It is generally accepted that high pressure induces the breakage of ionic or salt bonds and part of hydrophobic interactions, whereas hydrogen bonds and covalent bonds are almost unaffected under pressure as mentioned earlier. Therefore the primary structure of proteins will remain intact during pressure treatments, secondary, tertiary and quaternary protein structures are significantly affected and modified as follows, pressure causes a dissociation of oligomeric structures into their subunits, a partial unfolding and denaturation of monomeric structures, protein aggregation and protein gelation. Pressures have been shown to coagulate and modify functional properties of proteins e.g. egg yolk, fish muscle proteins, rabbit meat paste, soy protein as a result of changes in their protein structures (Tewari et al., 1999).

The effects of high-pressure treatment on enzyme activity are different depending on the type of enzymes involved and other parameters of processing (the pressure level, the process time and temperature). At room temperature, pressure may cause partial, total enzyme inactivation, or enzyme activities enhancement, reversible or irreversible. Enhanced enzyme activities may be due to enzyme released from cellular components and closer contact with substrates. Inactivation of enzyme is probably due to intra-molecular structural changes by high pressure. In general, enzymes such as pectin methyl esterase, peroxidase, polyphenol oxidase or lipoxygenase are resistant to pressure and require higher pressures for inactivation.

Starches are reported to gelatinize with the use of high pressures which may increase resistance to enzyme digestion or increase susceptibility to enzymes depending on the processing condition. Lipids or triglycerides are crystallized under pressure which results in an increase in the melting temperature of lipids. Crystallization of phospholipids in cell membrane of microorganisms is thought to be one of the reasons of pressure inactivation which later will be discussed in detail (Cheftel, 1995; Thakur and Nelson, 1998; and Knorr, 1999).

### **2.2.3 Effects of high hydrostatic pressure on microorganisms (vegetative bacterial cells)**

Resistance of microorganisms to pressure is extremely variable; in general, vegetative cells in the early growth phase or exponential phase are more sensitive than cells in stationary or dormant phase. Gram-positive bacteria are more resistant to pressure than Gram-negative bacteria, this may be linked to the rigidity of the teichoic acids in the peptidoglycan layer of the Gram-positive cell wall. Bacteria in small size and coccoid shape are generally more resistant to pressure than the larger rod-shaped ones. In most cases, at ambient temperatures it is necessary to apply pressures above 200 MPa in order to induce inactivation of vegetative microbial cells. Vegetative cells of yeast and molds are inactivated by pressure between 200 and 300 MPa. The degree of inactivation depends on several parameters such as the type of microorganisms, the pressure level, the process temperature and time, and the composition of the medium. In spite of a number of fundamental studies concerning the effects of pressure on the microstructure, the metabolism, and the genetic mechanisms of given microorganisms, the causes of microbial inactivation are still poorly understood (Cheftel, 1995; and Smelt, 1998).

#### **2.2.4 Mechanisms of microbial inactivation by high hydrostatic pressure**

High hydrostatic pressure induces a number of changes in microorganisms. Hoover et al. (1989) described changes occurring in microorganisms as changes in morphology, biochemical reactions, genetic mechanisms, and cell membrane and cell wall. Morphological changes are observed at increasing pressures e.g. compression of gas vacuoles, cell lengthening, separation of cell membrane from cell wall, contraction of cell wall with formation of pores, release of intracellular constituents out of the cell. High pressure interrupts cellular functions responsible for reproduction and survival i.e. DNA replication and transcription, and protein synthesis are inhibited due to inactivation of enzymes involving in these processes and a reduction in the number of ribosomes (Lado and Yousef, 2002), however, the DNA structure is not affected because its structure is primarily hydrogen bonding.

The most important inhibitory effect of high pressure comes from cytoplasmic membrane damage. High pressure damages bacterial membranes and thus affects transport phenomena involved in nutrient uptake and disposal of cell waste material. High pressure also alters the permeability of cell membranes and makes cell membranes permeable as indicated by an increase in extracellular ATP concentration and intracellular DNA staining with propidium iodide. This damage reduces the proton gradient across the cell membrane, preventing cells from synthesizing ATP. Without energy normally supplied by ATP hydrolysis, active transport of protons out of the cell cannot take place and the cell dies due to acidification. Also, membrane-bound enzyme ( $F_0F_1$  ATPase) is denatured or displaced with pressure, ATP synthesis and hydrolysis does not occur to support cell activities.

Membrane fluidity is believed to be involved in membrane damage as membrane lipid (lipid bilayers) undergoes phase transition under pressure from a liquid crystalline phase (conformationally disordered) to a gel phase (relatively ordered) accompanied by a change in thickness. The decrease in biomembrane fluidity as a result of phase transition may result in

breakage of the membrane and in denaturation of the membrane-bound proteins causing a functional disorder of these proteins (San Martin et al., 2002).

Lado and Yousef (2002) described structural and functional changes in microorganisms at different pressures. They stated that microbial growth is retarded at pressures in the range of 20-180 MPa, protein synthesis is also inhibited at these pressures range as a result of a reduction in the number of ribosomes. Cell viability begins to decrease at pressures about 180 MPa and the rate of inactivation increases exponentially as the pressure increases. Lethal pressure (above threshold of lethality) damages membrane integrity and denatures proteins. Above 300 MPa, proteins are denatured irreversibly and results in a leakage of cell content, at this pressure most vegetative cells and bacteriophages are inactivated.

### **2.2.5 Effects of high hydrostatic pressure on bacterial spores**

Bacterial spores are very resistant to heat, radiation, chemical, and pressure. Bacterial spores of some species survive pressures above 1,000 MPa when the temperature does not exceed 45-75° C, whereas spores from yeasts and molds are easily inactivated at a pressure of 300 (*Aspergillus oryzae*) or 400 MPa (*Rhizopus javanicus*) at ambient temperature. The use of hydrostatic pressures above 800 MPa or heat in conjunction with pressure is required to effectively eliminate bacterial endospores (Farkas and Hoover, 2001). Cheftel (1995) also stated that significant bacterial spore inactivation cannot be obtained by pressure alone even with pressure cycling or at a temperature as low as -20° C. Although heated pressure and pressure cycling treatments have been reported to increase the effectiveness of high pressure for spore inactivation, the efficacy depends on initial temperature, adiabatic heating, pH, pressure level and processing time (Torres and Velazquez, 2005). However, it has been known that the resistance of bacterial spores is reduced when germination is induced to terminate spore dormancy. Therefore, recent studies have been primarily focused on inactivation of bacterial spores by either prior germination of spores with subsequent inactivation of all vegetative cells or with combined processes such as pressure with temperature and the use of additives (Cheftel 1995).

Spore germination is generally defined as the period beginning with the addition of a compound that can cause initiation of germination and continuing through a number of irreversible reactions e.g. cation release, dipicolinic acid (DPA) release, partial core hydration, small acid-soluble proteins (SASPs) degradation, cortex hydrolysis, further core hydration, core expansion, RNA, protein, and DNA synthesis (Paidhungat and Setlow, 2002). In the laboratory, germination is followed by; 1) analysis of a decrease in optical density at 600 nm of a spore population; 2) conversion of a dormant spore that appears white or bright in phase-contrast microscope to a phase gray or phase dark germinated spore; 3) excretion of dipicolinic acid (DPA); 4) release of spore cortex peptidoglycan fragments; 5) loss of spore resistance properties such as heat resistance; and 6) resumption of spore metabolism by monitoring the reduction of some redox dye (Paidhungat and Setlow, 2002).

Generally, spores are triggered to germinate by nutrients, a variety of small molecules will trigger spore germination, including amino acids, sugars, purine ribosides, and in some species, simple salts. The requirements for spore germination are generally species specific, but L-alanine and D-glucose are relatively general germinants. With *B. subtilis* spores, L-alanine is a good germinant, as is a mixture of L-asparagine, D-glucose, D-fructose, and potassium ions (defined as AGFK). For *B. cereus* spores, germination has an absolute requirement for glycine or a neutral L-amino acid and purine ribosides. Besides a variety of chemical stimuli such as nutrient initiators (L-alanine, purine ribosides, sugars), non-nutrient initiators (Ca-DPA), enzymatic initiators (lysozymes), pressure is also can be used as a germinant after a discovery of using high pressure to germinate *Bacillus* spores done by Clouston and Wills (1969).

Initiation of germination of spores by hydrostatic pressure was first demonstrated by Clouston and Wills (1969). When *Bacillus pumilus* spores were treated with pressure up to 170 MPa at 25° C, spores began to initiate germination when the pressure exceeded 50 MPa which was a prerequisite for inactivation by compression. The germination rate of *Bacillus spp.* spores increased with addition of some additives such as salts, amino acids primarily L-alanine, and glucose. Gould and Sale (1970) also used L-alanine in combination with pressure to study the initiation of spore germination. They stated that the germination rate of *B. cereus* and *B.*

*coagulans* was markedly increased from 50-64% to 95-99% when the spores were treated at a pressure of 25 MPa for 30 min at 50° C in the presence of L-alanine. From these early studies, high pressure has been shown to initiate germination of bacterial endospores at ambient temperature, thus allowing germinated spores to be inactivated by pressure, pressure in combination with heat, the presence of nisin, low pH, and oscillatory compression procedures. This concept has become widely acceptable and applied to high pressure treatments to eliminate spores of interest.

### **2.2.6 Mechanism of bacterial spore inactivation by high hydrostatic pressure**

*B. subtilis* has been chosen as a surrogate for pathogenic strains of *Bacillus* to study on its resistance properties due to genetic and molecular genetic information and the genetic techniques on this bacterium. General features and factors identified as important in spore resistance are well conserved among spores of *Bacillus* species. Therefore, research is primarily performed on *B. subtilis* rather than a pathogen. The mechanisms of spores killed by heat, irradiation and chemical have been well studied and described. However, research on the mechanisms of spore killing by high pressure is still poorly understood (Setlow et al., 1997; Cabrera-Martinez et al., 2002; Melly et al., 2002; Setlow et al., 2002; and Young and Setlow, 2004). The mechanisms of spore germination induction by high pressure have been studied by several investigators (Wuytack et al., 1998; Wuytack et al., 2000; Paidunghat and Setlow, 2002; and Margosch et al., 2004). Wuytack et al. (1998) studied the germination of *B. subtilis* spores at low (100 MPa) and high pressure (600 MPa) and compared resistance properties of these pressure-germinated spores to spores germinated by nutrients in the nutrient-induced germination pathways (Ala or AGFK).

For *B. subtilis*, the two best-known germination pathways are those induced by the chemical effectors alanine (Ala) and the combination of asparagine (Asn), glucose (Glu), fructose (Fru), and potassium ions (AGFK). In both pathways, ungerminated spores have to undergo physicochemical changes i.e. hydration of spore core, release of dipicolinic acid (DPA) and  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ , loss of optical density (OD), degradation of small acid-soluble spore protein (SASPs) and ATP synthesis corresponding to spore resistance properties i.e. an increase in temperature sensitivity,

a decrease in UV sensitivity and an increase in UV and hydrogen peroxide sensitivity respectively (Wuytack et al., 1998, and Wuytack et al., 2000).

Wuytack et al. (1998) found that germination of *B. subtilis* spores induced at low pressure (100 MPa) resulted in the loss of spore DPA, degradation of SASPs, and rapid generation of ATP. Spores germinated at high pressure (600 MPa) also caused a DPA release, however, the degradation of SASPs and ATP generation were not observed. They concluded that germinated spores induced at low pressure are more sensitive to pressure, UV light, and hydrogen peroxide than those germinated at high pressure (600 MPa) because high pressure causes an incomplete germination process. This incomplete germination process explains why inactivation of *Bacillus spp.* spores is more efficient at moderate pressures (200 to 500 MPa) than at higher (>500 MPa) pressures.

Wuytack et al. (2000) and Paidunghat and Setlow (2002) investigated the pathways of pressure-induced germination at low (100 MPa) and high pressures (500 and 600 MPa) of *B. subtilis* and their relationship to the pathways of nutrient-induced germination. They concluded that a pressure of 100 MPa induces spore germination by activating the germinant receptors. Germination at high pressures involves activation of a true physiological germination pathway by opening channels for release of dipicolinic acid from the spore core, which leads to the later steps in spore germination. Margosch et al. (2004) experimented on spores of *B. subtilis*, *B. amyloliquefaciens* and *B. licheniformis* with pressures and temperatures (200 to 800 MPa and 60 to 80° C) in mashed carrots. Their results suggested that at a pressure between 600 and 800 MPa and a temperature greater than 60° C, DPA is released predominantly by a physicochemical rather than a physiological process from spores and resulted in DPA-free, phase-bright spores. These DPA-free spores are inactivated by moderate heat independent of the pressure level.

### **2.3 High hydrostatic pressure and *Bacillus cereus* spores**

It is well known that dormant spores have no metabolic activities and exhibit considerable resistance to heat, chemical and radiation due to many intrinsic factors with the importance of any particular factor varying depending on the specific inactivating treatment. Setlow (1994)

described mechanisms which contribute to the long-term survival and resistance to chemical, radiation, and heat of spores of *Bacillus* species. In general, parameters contributing to spore resistance are as follows: 1) genetic makeup of the sporulating species; 2) sporulation conditions; 3) the thick spore coat structure; 4) the low permeability of the spore core; 5) the spore core's low water content; 6) high levels of spore mineral content; 7) DNA binding proteins, the  $\alpha/\beta$ -type small, acid soluble protein (SASP); and 8) repair of DNA damage (Nicholson et al., 2000).

Spore killing by various physical and chemical treatments has been studied and the following mechanisms have been identified: 1) DNA damage; 2) alteration in the spore's inner membrane; 3) disruption of the spore's inner membrane and release of the spore's core contents damage; and 4) abolishing of germination step, however, the mechanisms vary largely depending on the treatment (Setlow and Setlow, 1993; Popham et al., 1995; Setlow and Setlow, 1995; Xue and Nicholson, 1996; and Riesenman and Nicholson, 2000).

The destruction of spores by high pressure is achieved through stimulation of spore germination, followed by the destruction of germinated spores as described earlier. Since the important step is the germination step, factors affecting spore germination by pressure as well as nutrients,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ -dipicolinic acid and cationic surfactants are focuses of current researches. Factors included are: 1) the level of receptors for nutrient germinant in the dormant spore's inner membrane; 2) individual nutrient germinant receptors; 3) covalent lipid addition to nutrient germinant receptors 4) the absence of lytic enzymes; 5) the absence of DPA; 6) the sporulation temperatures; 7) levels of unsaturated fatty acids in the spore's inner membrane; 8) pretreatment of spores with oxidizing agents; and 9) inhibitors of spore germination with nutrients (Setlow, 2005).

Few studies have been performed specifically upon *B. cereus* in investigating factors affecting spore inactivation with high hydrostatic pressure (Raso et al., 1998a and 1998b; Shearer et al., 2000; Prestamo et al., 2001; McClements et al., 2001; Fujii et al., 2002; Oh and Moon, 2003; and Opstal et al., 2004). Raso et al. (1998a and 1998b) studied environmental factors (sporulation temperatures, pH,  $a_w$ , l-alanine, fat concentration) affecting initiation of germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* ATCC 14579 spores by high hydrostatic pressure. Raso et al. (1998a) investigated the influence of pressure, time and temperature on the initiation of germination and

inactivation of *B. cereus* spores in phosphate buffer sporulated at different sporulation temperatures (20, 30, and 37° C). They also examined the relationship between sporulation temperatures and heat resistance and found that spores sporulated at 37° C were the most heat-resistant than spores sporulated at 20 or 30° C. To determine the relationship between sporulation temperatures and pressure resistance, spores sporulated at different temperatures were treated with high pressure at different levels (85 to 690 MPa) at different processing temperatures (25, 40, and 60° C) for 15 min.

Spore resistance to pressure did not correlate with resistance to heat, in fact, it was found that spores produced at 20° C were more resistant to germination and inactivation by high pressure than spores produced at 30 and 37° C. Spores were more sensitive to pressure at higher treatment temperatures. At 25° C, there was an optimum pressure for the initiation of germination, which was about 250 MPa for all three suspensions. However, at higher temperatures, an increase of pressure up to 690 MPa caused progressively more germination. A treatment of 690 MPa of 15 min at 60° C allowed the germination of 6 log cycles of *B. cereus* spores sporulated at 20° C and more than 8 log cycles of *B. cereus* spores sporulated at 30 and 37° C. The same treatment inactivated 4, 6, and 7 log cycles of the population of *B. cereus* sporulated at 20, 30, and 37° C, respectively.

Raso et al. (1998b) further studied other environmental factors (pH,  $a_w$ , L-alanine and fat concentration) on the initiation of germination and inactivation by high hydrostatic pressure of *B. cereus* sporulated at 20, 30 and 37° C. Based on the first study, the results showed the optimum pressure, temperature and time for initiation of germination and germination for *B. cereus* were 250 MPa at 25° C for 15 min and 690 MPa at 40° C for 2 min, therefore, in this study these conditions were used throughout. It was found that high pressure initiated the germination of *B. cereus* even at low pH. The optimum pH for germination depended on the sporulation and treatment temperatures. The optimum pH for germinating *B. cereus* sporulated at 30 and 37° C was similar to the optimum pH for germination at ambient pressure which is around neutral pH. The pH barely affected the germination of *B. cereus* sporulated at 20° C. That is, at 250 MPa

and 25° C, the extent of germination and inactivation increased with higher pH for spores sporulated at three different temperatures. At 690 MPa and 40° C, the pH affected the germination of spores sporulated at 20° C (3 log cycles), but the inactivation increased as the pH of the medium was lowered. At this treatment (690 MPa), spores sporulated at 30 and 37° C were germinated by 6-7 log cycles around neutral pH and were optimally inactivated at pH 6.

Water activity was also found to influence the initiation of germination and inactivation. At lower water activities, spores were more resistant to the initiation and germination and inactivation by high pressure, and the differences in sensitivities of the three suspensions became smaller. At  $a_w$  0.92, no germination was detected at 250 MPa, only 1, 1, and 2 log cycles of spores sporulated at 20, 30, and 37° C were germinated respectively at 690 MPa. No inactivation at any of the treatments was observed. The presence of L-alanine in the pressurization medium increased germination at 250 MPa, but not at 690 MPa. A combination of 250 MPa at 25° C with L-alanine provided an additive response. The fat concentration of milk did not affect the initiation of germination and inactivation by high pressure i.e. *B. cereus* was not protected from high pressure by milk at any fat concentration, the extent of germination and inactivation was approximately the same as in a buffer of the same pH.

Shearer et al. (2000) evaluated the inhibitory effects of chemical preservatives (sucrose esters of fatty acids i.e. sucrose laurates, sucrose palmitate, sucrose stearates, and monoglycerides i.e. monolaurin or lauricidin) in combination with high hydrostatic pressure and mild heat on *Bacillus* spores in food model systems. The model systems under investigation were *B. subtilis* 168 in milk, *B. cereus* 14579 in beef in gravy food, *B. coagulans* 7050 in tomato juice, *Alicyclobacillus* sp. N1089 in tomato juice and *Alicyclobacillus* sp. N1098 in apple juice. It was found that *B. cereus* 14579 was less resistant to sucrose laurate than *B. subtilis* 168 and 6051. The contribution of pressure to the inhibition and inactivation of *B. cereus* was greater than that provided by sucrose laurate alone or sucrose laurate with mild heat, neither of which had an effect on spore counts. When sucrose laurate was used in conjunction with pressure and mild heat, an additional 1 log reduction was observed as compared to the use of pressure and mild heat alone. The combined treatment of sucrose laurate (< 1.0%), 392 MPa at 45° C for 10 to 15

min provided 3 to 5.5 log reductions from an initial population of  $10^6$  cfu/ml for *B. subtilis* 168 in milk, *B. cereus* 14579 in beef in gravy food, *B. coagulans* 7050 in tomato juice, *Alicyclobacillus* sp. N1089 in tomato juice and *Alicyclobacillus* sp. N1098 in apple juice.

Prestamo et al. (2001) studied the effect of high pressure on *B. cereus* vegetative cells and peroxidase in apples and pressures > 400 MPa, without any other combined treatment. The results showed the tailing effect of pressure when pressures of 200, 300 350 and 400 MPa were applied for 30 min at 20° C, the microbial population decreased as the pressure increased, but a pressure of 400 MPa for 30 min was insufficient to completely inactivate all *B. cereus*. When pressures of 600, 800 and 1,000 MPa were applied for 15 min, the population continued to decrease; however, the pressure of 1,000 MPa for 15 min was unable to inactivate *B. cereus*. The behavior of *B. cereus* with regard to pressure and time (400 MPa for 25, 30, and 60 min) was also analyzed. It was observed the microbial population decreased and significant differences were found on the control in comparison with the sample treated at 400 MPa for 15, 30, and 60 min. However, no significant differences were found between treated samples.

McClements et al. (2001) determined the effect of growth temperatures (8 and 30° C), growth stage (exponential and stationary phase) on pressure resistance, variation in pressure resistance between different strains of the same organism, and survival and recovery of three psychrotrophic organisms *L. monocytogenes*, *B. cereus* NCFB 578 and 1031 (BC1 and BC2) and *P. fluorescens* in UHT skimmed milk. The results indicated growth temperature had a significant effect at the two growth stages studied. Exponential cells grown at 8° C were more resistant than those grown at 30° C, but for stationary-phase cells the reverse was true. *B. cereus* stationary-phase cells grown at 30° C were found to be the most pressure-resistant vegetative cells studied with 3.44 and 2.90 log reductions observed for BC1 and BC2 respectively at 400 MPa at 30° C for 18 min. *L. monocytogenes* showed the most sublethal damage compared to *B. cereus* and *P. fluorescens* (*B. cereus* and *P. fluorescens* showed a lower degree of pressure injury with a 0.5 and 1.0 log difference observed between the counts on the nonselective and selective agars). *B. cereus* spores were more resistant to pressure than its vegetative cells. A pressure treatment at 8° C did not inactivate the spores of either BC1 or BC2. The greatest

reduction observed at a pressure treatment of 400 MPa for 25 min at 30° C was a 0.45-log inactivation. Pressure at 8° C induced significantly less spore germination than at 30° C. A process of 400 MPa for 30 min at 8° C induced 13.4 and 8.3% germination for BC1 and BC2, respectively, compared to 75.8 and 18.7% observed at 30° C for 30 min.

Fujii et al. (2002) investigated the high-pressure inactivation of *B. cereus* IAM 12605 spores in water with the presence of argon. The spore suspension containing dissolved argon was treated under high pressure of 500 and 600 MPa at 20, 30, and 40° C for 30 min. No inactivation was observed at 20° C after pressurization at 600 MPa for 30 min, but there was a 2 log reduction of spore numbers at 40° C. At the pressure of 600 MPa, addition of argon accelerated the inactivation of spores at 20° C, but had no effect on the inactivation at 40° C. That is, the argon-containing sample showed a 1 log reduction after pressurization for 30 min at 20° C, whereas both the argon-free and argon-containing samples showed the same a 2 log reduction after pressurization for 30 min at 40° C.

Oh and Moon (2003) and Moon and Oh (2001) investigated the effects of pH in sporulation medium (6, 7 and 8) and pH of suspension medium (4.5, 6, 7, and 8) on the initiation of germination and on the inactivation of *B. cereus* KCTC 1012 spores with high pressures (0.1, 150, 300, 450 and 600 MPa) at different temperatures (20, 40 and 60° C) for 15 min. They found that inactivation of *B. cereus* spores with high pressure was affected more by sporulation medium pH than by suspension medium pH. Spores of *B. cereus* obtained through sporulation at pH 6.0 appeared to be more resistant to inactivation by high pressure ( $\geq 300$  MPa) at 20, 40, and 60° C than did those obtained through sporulation at pH 7.0 and 8.0. For *B. cereus* spores obtained through sporulation at pH of 6 and 7, reduction greater than 1.5 logs were observed at pressures greater than 300 MPa at 40 and 60 °C processing temperatures. When the processing temperature increased from 20 to 40° C, the effect of pH on the inactivation was significantly increased, apparently greatest when pressure treatment was constant at 40° C. Regardless of sporulation pH, the initiation of *B. cereus* spore germination appeared to be more sensitive to pressures around 300 MPa at 20° C. However, increasing processing temperatures (40 and 60° C) enhanced the effect of sporulation medium on the inactivation of the spores.

Opstal et al. (2004) studied the germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores by mild high hydrostatic pressure and heat treatments. They reported the germination of *B. cereus* LMG6910 spores treated at 0, 100, 300, and 600 MPa at 40° C for 30 min were 1.5 to 3 logs higher in milk than potassium phosphate buffer. Almost the entire spore population (6 logs) germinated irrespective of the pressure level, while in buffer; germination was incomplete but increased with pressure from 2.5 logs at 100 MPa to 4 logs at 600 MPa. Spore inactivation also occurred as a result of pressure treatment. The level of inactivation increased with the pressure applied, but were always lower than the levels of germination, indicating that not all of the germinated spores could be inactivated by pressure even at 600 MPa.

Opstal et al. (2004) also investigated germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores at different pressures (100, 200, 300, 400, 500 and 600 MPa) and temperatures (30, 40, 45, 50 and 60° C) for 30 min. Lower treatment pressures or temperatures resulted in considerably less germination, and higher pressures and temperatures further increased germination, but a small fraction of spores always remained ungerminated. For all pressures, the levels of germination increased from 100 to 200 MPa, but remained relatively constant at pressures >200 MPa. The germination levels increased strongly from 30 to 40° C, but much less or not at all at >40° C. All treatments at  $\geq 200$  MPa and  $\geq 40^\circ$  C induced 6 to 8 logs germination, while pressure treatments at 30° C induced only 3 to 5 logs germination. The inactivation levels increased with temperatures at all pressures. The inactivation level also increased with pressure with some exceptions. However, a  $\geq 6$  log inactivation was achieved by a treatment at 60° C and  $\geq 400$  MPa. Treatments that allow a 6 log inactivation of *B. cereus* spores in milk were identified. It was found that the mildest treatment (200 MPa at 40° C for 30 min) resulting in a 6-log germination could be achieved by inducing a 6 log germination by high pressure first, and applying a mild heat treatment to kill the germinated spores subsequently.

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## **CHAPTER III**

### **MICROBIOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL AND SENSORY QUALITY OF VACUUM-PACKAGED FRESH BLUE CRAB MEAT (*Callinectes sapidus*) TREATED WITH HIGH HYDROSTATIC PRESSURE**

## Abstract

Vacuum-packaged fresh lump blue crab meat (*Callinectes sapidus*) was pressurized at 300 and 550 MPa for 5 min at 25° C and evaluated for changes in microbiological, physical, and sensory qualities after pressure treatments and during storage (4° C for 31 days). A pressure of 300 MPa caused a 1 log reduction in total aerobic plate count and a 3 day lag period, whereas 550 MPa inactivated 2 logs in total aerobic plate count with no evident lag phase. Physical and sensory qualities of pressurized crab meat were not statistically different from the untreated crab meat ( $P>0.05$ ). High hydrostatic pressure treatments killed or inactivated pressure-sensitive microflora in the fresh crab meat resulting in the following surviving microorganisms: *Aerococcus viridans*, *Brevibacillus agri*, *Brevibacterium iodinum*, *Brevibacterium linens*, *Brevibacterium casei*, *Brevibacterium epidermidis*, *Enterococcus mundtii*, *Enterococcus avium*, *Enterococcus solitarius*, and *Macrococcus (Staphylococcus) caseolyticus*. Under reduced oxygen and low temperature storage condition, sensory evaluations along with the identification of predominant organisms in fresh and pressurized crab meat (550 MPa) were conducted to determine shelf-life as well as to identify dominant spoilage microorganisms. A pressure of 300 MPa extended shelf-life of fresh crab meat from 17 to over 24 days with the prevalence of *Carnobacterium piscicola*. Crab meat treated with 550 MPa was not rejected by sensory panels at day 31; *Enterococcus spp.* was identified as the predominant microorganism suggesting that this organism could have an inhibitory effect to the other microflora.

Keywords: blue crab meat, *Callinectes sapidus*, high hydrostatic pressure, microflora

## 1. Introduction

Blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*) is processed and marketed in a variety of forms including frozen, canned, pasteurized, and fresh. Fresh lump crab meat, distributed under refrigerated conditions, is highly perishable with a short shelf-life of 10-14 days or sooner depending on the microbiological quality during processing and subsequent storage (Ward et al., 1977). The blue crab industry has used several post-processing procedures, for example, pasteurization, sterilization or freezing in order to extend the shelf life of fresh meat. However, it is reported these processes cause undesirable changes in flavor, color and texture during processing and storage (Henry et al., 1995a and 1995b).

Fresh and minimally processed food products have recently been in demand and are the preference of consumers who have continually driven the food industry to generate new processing and preservation techniques that would not dramatically change the sensory and nutrition attributes of the products. Among novel approaches, high hydrostatic pressure processing has gained considerable interest with its advantages over conventional thermal treatments due to its inactivation of spoilage and pathogenic microorganisms as well as a shelf-life extension while maintaining the nutritional values.

Quality and safety of several species of seafood processed with high pressure (i.e. bluefish, carp, cod, octopus, oysters, pacific mackerel, prawn, and salmon) have been investigated (Murchie et al., 2005); however, a pressure-treated fresh blue crab meat has not been sufficiently studied. With the exception pressurization processes, the microflora and microbiological safety and quality of blue crab meat derived from current commercial processes have been studied (Ward et al., 1977; Rawles et al., 1995a; Rawles et al., 1995b; Harrison et al., 1996; and Reinhard et al., 1996; and Gates et al., 1996). In general, blue crab meat does not contain significant quantities of pathogenic microorganisms if good manufacturing practices are employed. However, changes in the microflora content of hydrostatic pressure treated product have not been adequately studied to determine how safety may be affected. There is a concern that inactivation of certain normal microflora may facilitate the growth of pathogenic microorganisms thereby creating a potential health hazard.

Since minimal information is available on the microflora and quality of pressure-treated crab meat, the objectives of this study were 1) to investigate the effect of pressure treatments on the physical, and sensory properties of fresh hand-picked blue crab meat; 2) to investigate microbiological changes including identification of surviving microorganisms after pressure treatments and subsequent storage; and 3) to determine if shelf-life could be extended after the application of pressurization processes.

## **2. Materials and methods**

### **2.1 Crab meat**

Fresh hand-picked blue crab lump meat (*Callinectes sapidus*) in 454 g containers was obtained from a commercial facility (Graham and Rollins Inc.) in Hampton, Virginia. Within 24 hours post-processing, the meat was transferred to the Virginia Tech campus, Blacksburg, VA in insulated containers with ice packs and stored in ice in a refrigerator at 0-4° C after arrival. All samples were used within 48 hr and the meat was mixed thoroughly prior to the high pressure treatments.

### **2.2 High hydrostatic pressure treatment**

High hydrostatic pressure treatments were performed in a commercial scale high pressure apparatus (The Quintus Food Press QFP 35L-600, Avure Technologies., Kent, WA). Pressure and temperature were controlled by a pressure transducer and a thermocouple interfaced with the pressure unit. Water was used as the pressure transmitting medium. Samples of 15 g of lump blue crab meat were double-bagged and vacuum-packaged in 3-mm nylon/polyethylene vacuum pouches (Koch, North Kansas, MO) and then subjected to 300 and 550 MPa with an end temperature of 25° C for 5 min. Decompression occurred within 2-3 s.

### 2.3 Product storage and sampling

After application of the pressure treatments, all samples were stored under refrigeration temperature (4° C) for 31 days and sampled on days 0, 3, 7, 12, 17, 24, and 31 for aerobic and anaerobic microorganism enumeration, isolation, and identification; sensory analyses; physical analyses; pH and color measurements.

### 2.4 Aerobic microorganism enumeration and isolation

A 10 g sample of crab meat was transferred to a 90 ml 0.1% peptone dilution blank and homogenized with a Stomacher (Stomacher Lab Blender 400, Tekmar Co., Cincinnati, OH). From this dilution, subsequent dilutions were made using 9 ml peptone dilution blanks. Aliquots of 0.1 ml were spread on the surface of previously prepared Trypticase Soy Agar (TSA; Becton Dickinson and Company, Sparks, MD) plates. The plates were incubated at 30° C and enumerated after 48 hr of incubation.

Predominant well-isolated colonies were picked, quadrant streaked on TSA plates, and incubated at 28° C for 24 hr. After 24 hr of incubation, the cultures on TSA plates were examined for purity under a dissecting microscope. To obtain pure cultures, a 4 mm loop was used to harvest bacterial cells from the third quadrant of the quadrant streaked plate and transformed to a clean screw-capped tube. The tube was closed with Teflon-lined screw caps, and kept frozen until identification. For mixed cultures, the microorganisms were restreaked until pure cultures were obtained.

### 2.5 Anaerobic microorganism enumeration and isolation

All anaerobic culture and identification methods were in accordance with procedures outlined by Holdeman et al. (1977). A 10 g sample of crab meat was transferred to a 90 ml 0.1% peptone dilution blank and homogenized using a Stomacher. From this dilution, subsequent dilutions were made using pre-reduced 9.9 ml peptone dilution blanks. Inoculations from the appropriate blanks were placed into pre-reduced Brain Heart Infusion Agar (BHIA; Becton Dickinson and

Company, Sparks, MD) tubes. All serial dilutions and inoculations were performed under a stream of oxygen-free CO<sub>2</sub>. The BHIA tubes were then placed on horizontal spinners until the medium was solidified. The tubes were then removed and incubated at 30° C for 5 days. After incubation, the tubes were spirally marked with pen on the streaker unit of the VPI Anaerobic Culture System. Colonies were counted with the use of a dissecting microscope.

Predominant well-isolated colonies were picked from countable tubes and transferred to pre-reduced Cooked Meat (CM; Becton Dickinson and Company, Sparks, MD) Medium, which served as the maintenance medium, and grown at 30° C for 24 hr. The isolates were then anaerobically streaked onto spun out BHIA roll tubes for purity examination after 24 hr of incubation at 30° C. A preliminary study showed no strict anaerobic microorganisms were present and as a result, all cultures in anaerobic Cooked Meat Medium were grown on Trypticase Soy Agar (TSA) plates for identification purposes. Tubes with one morphological type were streaked onto TSA plates and harvested after 24 hr at 28° C into tubes and capped with Teflon-lined screw caps for subsequent identification. Tubes with more than one morphological type were restreaked until a pure culture was obtained.

## 2.6 Aerobic and anaerobic microorganism identification: cellular fatty acid analyses

All aerobic and anaerobic identification was performed using the Sherlock Microbial Identification System (MIS, Microbial ID Inc., Newark, DE) in which cellular fatty acid profile is used for identification. The procedure used for sample preparation was adapted from the MIS protocol. Cells that have been frozen were thawed prior to cellular fatty acid analysis. The cells were lysed and saponified with 1.0 ml of basic methanol (45 g of NaOH, 150 ml of methanol, 150 ml of deionized water), heated in a boiling water bath for 5 min, mixed with a vortex mixer, and heated in the boiling water bath for an additional 25 min. To methylate cell constituents, 1 ml of HCl-methanol (325 ml of 6.0 N HCl, 275 ml of methanol) and 1 ml of sulfuric acid-methanol (162.5 ml of H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> added to 162.5 ml of deionized water, 275 ml of methanol) were added, and the solution was heated at 80° C for 10 min. After rapid cooling, the methylated components were extracted by adding 1.25 ml of hexane-ether (200 ml of hexane, 200 ml of methyl-tert-butyl ether) and turning the tube end over end for 10 min. Each extract was washed

once with 3 ml of a solution containing 5.4 g of NaOH in 450 ml of deionized distilled water saturated with NaCl.

A 2  $\mu$ l portion of the washed extract was chromatographed on an Ultra 2 column—a 25 m $\times$ 0.2 mm ID $\times$ 0.33  $\mu$ m film thickness phenyl methyl silicone fused silica capillary column (Agilent, Newark, DE) with a model HP-5890A gas chromatograph (Hewlett-Packard Co., Palo Alto, CA) equipped with a model HP 6763 autosampler (Hewlett-Packard), a flame ionization detector and a model HP-3392A integrator (Hewlett-Packard). The gas flow rates were 400 ml/min for air, 30 ml/min for hydrogen, and 30 ml/min for nitrogen. The temperatures used were 250° C for the injection port and 300° C for the detector. After injection, the oven temperature was ramped from 170 to 270° C at a rate of 5 C°/min and then from 270 to 310° C at a rate of 30 C°/min, held at 310° C for 2 min, and then returned to 170° C before the next sample was injected. A standard mixture containing known fatty acids was chromatographed at the beginning of each day and after each set of 10 samples.

The MIS software package was used to identify the peaks and to determine the area, the ratio of area to height, the equivalent chain length, the total area, and the total area for named or listed compounds. The MIS software package also was used to calculate the percentage of area for each named or listed compound compared with the total area of the compound detected. Compounds were identified by using the TSBA Version 4.0 Library.

## 2.7 Objective measurements/ physical analyses

The objective measurements of texture was obtained by analysis of resistance to shear force conducted on an Inston Universal Testing Machine Model 3365 (Instron Corp., Canton, MA) device equipped with a Kramer shear cell. The Kramer shear cell is a multi-bladed fixture, the upper part or blade holder contains ten 3.0 mm thick and 70 mm wide blades and the lower part is a sample compartment which has guides to align the blades to slots in the bottom. The shear cell was mounted to the Instron load frame with an adapter. The cell traveled at the crosshead speed of 100 mm/min for the 44 mm distance. The constant distance of 44 mm was

predetermined as the point the blades reached the bottom slots and the sample was sheared. This fixed value of distance was set as end of test and referred to as break for all samples measured.

Weighed portions (15-20 g or 4-5 lumps) of blue crab meat were mounted in the holding compartment of the cell with muscle fibers aligned perpendicular to the plane of shear plates. As the blades of the Kramer shear cell moved down, the sample was compressed, deformed and sheared. The force-deformation curve (Fig 1) between compressive load (force, N) and compressive extension (distance, mm) was generated by the Bluehill<sup>®</sup> software (Instron Corp., Canton, MA). Also, the compressive load at maximum compression load (the maximum peak force, N), compressive load at break (force at break, N), and energy at break (total energy which is area under the curve, J) was recorded. The peak force (N), force at break (N), and energy at break (J) were normalized by dividing these values by the corresponding weight, which were resulted in units of peak force per gram ( $\text{N g}^{-1}$ ), force at break per gram ( $\text{N g}^{-1}$ ), and energy at break per gram ( $\text{J g}^{-1}$ ). Results are reported as a mean of 10 samples per replication and triplicate analyses.

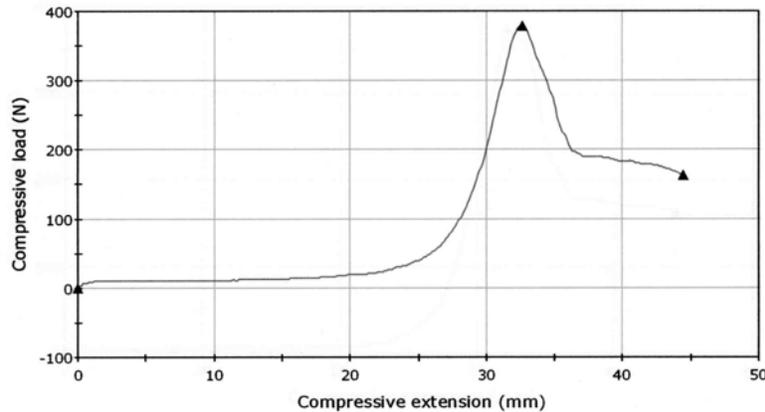


Fig 1: Force-deformation curve between compressive load and compressive extension

## 2.8 Subjective measurement /sensory analyses

A triangle test was selected to determine whether an overall difference existed resulted from using high hydrostatic pressure to process the crab meat. Crab meat pressure processed at 300 and 500 MPa was compared with non high pressure processed crab meat. Three sets of triangle tests were performed by each panelist, the three triangle tests were 300 MPa and control, 500 MPa and control, and 300 MPa and 500 MPa. The subjective measurements were performed by 23 experienced panel members consisting of faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students from the Department of Food Science and Technology at Virginia Tech.

Samples were prepared by placing 1-2 lumps (about 10 g) of crab meat into 1 oz plastic soufflé cups (Solo Cup Company, Urbana, IL) coded with randomly selected three-digit numbers. All samples were kept under refrigeration temperature (4° C) until served. Each panelist was presented with 3 sets of triangle test simultaneously; each test consisted of 3 coded samples in random order such that each panelist evaluated samples in a different order. Panelists were asked to evaluate samples in a specified order and requested to identify the odd sample.

## 2.9 Colorimetric measurements

Colorimetric measurements on the absolute CIE  $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ ,  $b^*$  values were obtained with a Minolta Chroma Meter Model CR-200 (Minolta, Ramsey, NJ) using CIE illuminant C and D65 as a light source. A 15 g crab meat sample packaged in polyethylene bags was measured with the chroma meter calibrated with a standard white plate CR-A43 (Minolta).  $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ , and  $b^*$  values ( $L^*$  = lightness,  $a^*$  = redness, and  $b^*$  = yellowness) were recorded. All analyses were performed in triplicate.

## 2.10 Statistical analyses

Data were analyzed using the General Linear Model (GLM) procedure of SAS (V. 8.02, Statistical Analysis Systems Institute, Inc. 2002). The complete randomized factorial design was

utilized to test the effects of two variables (pressure treatments and storage days) and their interactions on color characteristics (CIE  $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ ,  $b^*$ ) and pH. The same experimental design was also used to test the effect of pressure treatments on textural parameters (compressive load at break, compressive load at maximum compression load, and energy at break). All the tests used 10 samples for each treatment except for pH (4 samples). If significant differences were found, means were separated by a Least Significant Difference test.

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1 Microbiological changes**

Crab meat used throughout this study was processed with a scheduled thermal process which consisted of cooking live crabs under pressure (10 min at 250° F) to facilitate the removal of meat from the bodies and claws, cooling to ambient temperature, and subsequent storing under refrigeration temperature overnight prior to hand picking. Hand-picked crab meat was then packaged into containers for retail and institutional sale and then stored packed in ice. This hand-picked meat with no subsequent processing is referred to as fresh crab meat.

Preliminary studies were performed to study the effects of different pressure levels, processing temperatures, and processing times on Aerobic Plate Counts (APC) and Anaerobic Counts. Pressures of 100 and 300 MPa were chosen for the starting temperatures of 25 and 50 ° C for 15 min with a storage temperature of 4° C for 31 days (Appendix 1 and 2). The results showed that a low pressure of 100 MPa had an insignificant effect on reducing the total aerobic and anaerobic plate counts when compared to the control at both temperatures. A pressure of 300 MPa had more pronounced effect than the 100 MPa pressure of at both processing temperatures.

The 50° C process temperature was later found to be unacceptable due to potential metal fatigue of the pressure chamber and was eliminated from the study. The processing temperature was then decreased from 50 to 40° C and the starting temperatures at different pressures was calculated to account for the adiabatic temperature rises during compression in order to achieve the same end temperatures for all treatments. Fresh crab meat was processed with two end processing temperatures (25 and 40° C) at six different pressure levels for 15 min (Appendix 3). The end temperatures did not have a significant difference in a reduction of the aerobic plate counts. Again, a low pressure of 100 MPa showed a relatively minimal effect on aerobic plate counts, whereas medium pressures (200 and 300 MPa) and high pressures (400 to 550 MPa) resulted in an approximate 1 and 2 log reduction in aerobic microorganisms respectively. These results influenced the last study on the effects of processing or holding times which is considered to be one of the important factors in high pressure processing. The processing time was varied

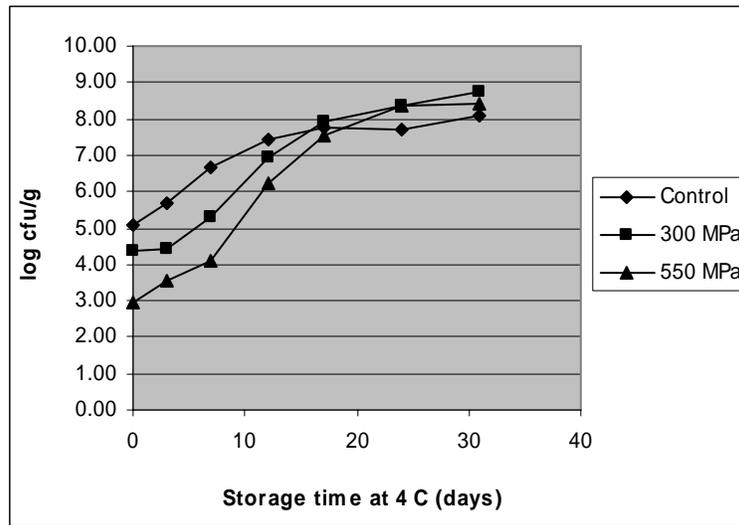
from 5 to 10 and 15 min at medium and high pressures (300 and 550 MPa) at 25° C (Appendix 4). The results showed a 5 min pressurization process was as effective as a 10 or 15 min in the reduction of aerobic organisms. From these preliminary results, pressures of 300 and 550 MPa, a processing time of 5 min with an end temperature of 25° C was used throughout the study.

Microbiological quality of fresh blue crab meat after the cooking process should approach sterility, however, bacteria are often reintroduced into the meat by subsequent processes resulting in high initial levels of aerobic organisms, in this case,  $1.3 \times 10^5$  cfu/g as shown in Fig 2a. When fresh crab meat was treated with high hydrostatic pressures at 300 and 550 MPa for 15 min at 25° C, the aerobic and anaerobic plate counts on day 0 (the day of pressure treatment) decreased as shown in Figures 2a and 2b. A pressure of 300 MPa decreased the aerobic plate counts from  $1.3 \times 10^5$  to  $2.3 \times 10^4$  cfu/g which is approximately a 1 log reduction. A treatment of 550 MPa resulted in a reduction on aerobic plate counts from  $1.3 \times 10^5$  cfu/g to  $9.4 \times 10^2$  cfu/g, an approximate 2 log reduction. It was observed that at the same processing temperature, higher pressure inactivated more aerobic organisms than the lower pressure treatment.

Anaerobic counts on pressurized samples were enumerated in order to identify surviving organisms (which are to be discussed in the next session) and to determine whether the crab meat possessed anaerobic pathogens. In general, crab meat contained more aerobic organisms than anaerobic organisms as anaerobic plate counts are always lower than the aerobic plate counts. For example, in the control sample on day 0, the aerobic plate counts were  $1.3 \times 10^5$  cfu/g, whereas an anaerobic plate count of  $2.9 \times 10^3$  cfu/g was observed. The effect of hydrostatic pressures on anaerobic plate counts are shown in Fig 2b. Crab meat treated with 300 MPa did not show any reduction in anaerobic organisms, whereas at 550 MPa a reduction of 2 logs was observed.

After pressure treatments all samples as well as the controls were stored at 4° C for the 31 day shelf life extension study. During storage, microbiological changes in aerobic and anaerobic organisms were observed. For the control or unpressurized crab meat, the aerobic count increased from  $1.3 \times 10^5$  to  $8.6 \times 10^6$  cfu/g at the first 7 days of storage. From day 7 to day 17, the

a.



b.

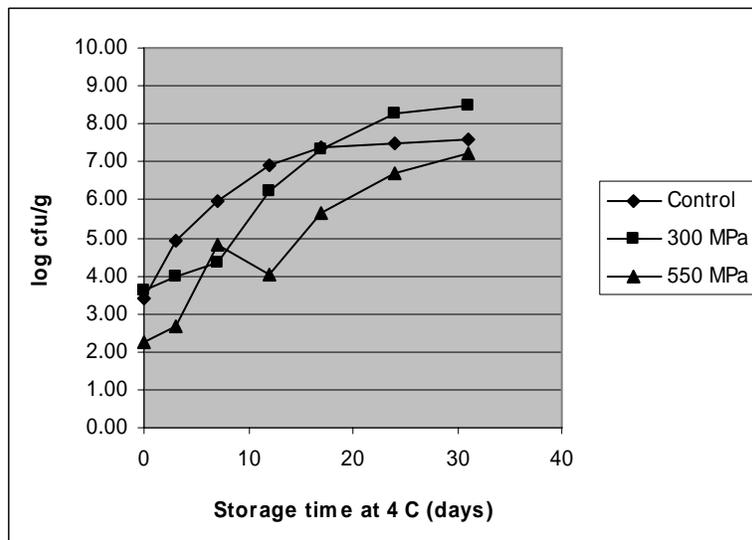


Fig 2: Aerobic plate counts (a) and anaerobic counts (b) of control and pressurized crab meat at 300 and 550 MPa at 25° C for 5 min

APC gradually increased from  $8.6 \times 10^6$  to  $6.4 \times 10^7$  cfu/g and remained relatively constant through the last day of storage period (day 31). At day 31, the APC was reported as  $1.2 \times 10^8$  cfu/g.

In addition to a reduction in aerobic counts, high pressures caused a lag period in which the growth or a multiplication of organisms was inhibited for a certain period of time due to cell injuries or adaptation of cells to a new environment resulting in a small increase in organisms. A pressure of 300 MPa caused a 3-day lag period, after which, the growth resumed and increased dramatically from  $3.1 \times 10^4$  cfu/g at day 3 to  $1.4 \times 10^8$  cfu/g at day 17 and gradually increased to the final APC of  $5.6 \times 10^8$  cfu/g at day 31. A lag phase was not observed in the treatment of 550 MPa as in the 300 MPa treatment. Surviving organisms could have resumed growth immediately after pressure treatments with a decrease at day 7 to the final level of  $2.9 \times 10^8$  cfu/g at day 31.

With an exception to a major difference in the initial number of organisms, the behavior of anaerobic organisms in unpressurized and pressurized crab meat is similar to those of aerobic organisms. Anaerobic organisms in the control sharply increased from  $2.9 \times 10^3$  to  $2.6 \times 10^7$  cfu/g during the first 17 days of storage. After day 17, the organisms population remained constant until day 31. Crab meat treated with 300 MPa exhibited no reduction in anaerobic counts on day 0, however, the pressure caused a 7 day lag period. During these 7 days, the anaerobic counts slightly increased from  $2.9 \times 10^3$  to  $1.5 \times 10^4$  cfu/g and continually increased with a higher growth rate to  $3.0 \times 10^8$  cfu/g at day 31.

In the 550 MPa samples, a reduction of 2 log cycles was observed with no evident lag period. A starting level of  $4.2 \times 10^1$  cfu/g in 550 MPa-treated samples increased to  $1.6 \times 10^7$  by the end of storage period. From these results, high hydrostatic pressures did not appreciably reduce the number of aerobic and anaerobic bacteria, the 300 MPa process reduced or inactivated aerobic organisms approximately 1 log and the 550 MPa treatment inactivated about 2 logs of aerobic and anaerobic organisms.

### 3.2 Microflora of fresh crab meat and surviving microorganisms after pressure treatments

To determine the effects of high pressure treatments on the microflora of fresh crab meat, all pressure-resistant organisms surviving the highest pressure applied in this study (550 MPa) were identified, and compared to microflora in the fresh crab meat. Observations on colony morphologies of predominant organisms under both aerobic and anaerobic conditions were performed prior to isolation.

All microorganisms isolated from fresh and 550 MPa pressurized meat were stored at 4° C for 0, 3, 7, 12, 17, 24 and 31 days as shown in Table 1. The aerobic and anaerobic predominant organisms isolated from the meat samples withdrawn from the same day (0, 3, 7, 12, 17, 24 and 31) are contained in Table 2 and 3. In this section, only surviving microorganisms after pressure treatments (day 0) will be discussed. Surviving microorganisms during storage (day 3, 7, 12, 17, 24 and 31) are discussed in section 3.3.

The microflora of fresh meat isolated from aerobic plates were *Acinetobacter johnsonii*, *Acinetobacter lwoffii*, *Arthrobacter aurescens*, *Brevibacillus agri*, *Brevibacterium iodinum*, *Exiguobacterium acetylicum* (*Brevibacterium acetylicum*), and *Staphylococcus kloosii*. The most prominent isolates were identified as *Exiguobacterium acetylicum*, and *Acinetobacter* (Table 2). Pressure treatment of 550 MPa inactivated many of the microorganisms in the fresh meat. The composition of 550 MPa pressure-tolerant organisms recovered immediately after pressurization (Day 0) of crab meat were *Aerococcus viridans*, *Brevibacillus agri*, *Brevibacterium iodinum*, *Brevibacterium linens*, *Brevibacterium casei*, *Brevibacterium epidermidis*, and *Macrocooccus* (*Staphylococcus*) *caseolyticus* (Table 1). The predominant aerobic organism, which tolerated 550 MPa pressure, was identified as *Brevibacterium*.

Under anaerobic incubation conditions, the types of organisms isolated were different from the aerobic incubation condition as expected. *Carnobacterium piscicola* was the only organism isolated from fresh crab meat on day 0, therefore this species was the predominant anaerobic organism. On the same day, only the genus of *Enterococcus* genus with species of *mundtii* and *solitarius* was isolated from pressurized meat. It can be generally concluded that the

Table 1: Microorganisms isolated from vacuum-packaged unpressurized (control) and pressurized (550 MPa at 25° C for 5 min) crab meat stored at refrigeration temperature for 31 days

Microorganisms	Days of storage and treatment													
	Control							550 MPa						
	0	3	7	12	17	24	31	0	3	7	12	17	24	31
<i>Acinetobacter johnsonii</i>	•													
<i>Acinetobacter lwoffii</i>	•													
<i>Aerococcus viridans</i>								•						
<i>Aeromonas salmonicida</i>														
<i>Arthrobacter aurescens</i>	•													
<i>Arthrobacter agilis</i>			•											
<i>Bacillus megaterium</i>		•												
<i>Brevibacillus agri</i>	•							•						
<i>Brevibacterium iodinum</i>	•							•	•					
<i>Brevibacterium linens</i>								•						
<i>Brevibacterium casei</i>								•	•					
<i>Brevibacterium epidermidis</i>								•						
<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>		•	•	•	•	•	•						•	
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*				*		*	
<i>Chryseobacterium balustinum</i>			•											
<i>Corynebacterium auris</i>										•	•			
<i>Enterococcus mundtii</i>									•	•	•	•		
<i>Enterococcus avium</i>								*	*	*		*	*	*
<i>Enterococcus solitarius</i>								*			*	*	*	*
<i>Exiguobacterium acetylicum</i>	•	•		•										
<i>Macrocooccus caseolyticus</i>		•						•	•					
										*				
<i>Moraxella catarrhalis</i>											•			
<i>Providencia rustigianii</i>							•							
<i>Pseudomonas putida</i>		•	•			•								
<i>Pseudomonas aureofaciens</i>		•		•										
<i>Psychrobacter immobilis</i>										•	•	•		
<i>Staphylococcus kloosii</i>	•													

• = isolated from aerobic plates \* = isolated from anaerobic roll tubes

Table 2: Predominant microorganisms isolated from aerobic plates

<b>Day</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>550 MPa</b>
0	<i>Exiguobacterium acetylicum</i> <i>Acinetobacter</i>	<i>Brevibacterium</i>
3	<i>Pseudomonas putida</i>	<i>Brevibacterium</i>
7	<i>Pseudomonas putida</i>	<i>Psychrobacter immobilis</i>
12	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i> <i>Pseudomonas putida</i>	<i>Psychrobacter immobilis</i>
17	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
24	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
31	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>

Table 3: Predominant microorganisms isolated from anaerobic roll tubes

<b>Day</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>550 MPa</b>
0	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
3	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
7	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
12	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
17	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
24	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>
31	<i>Carnobacterium piscicola</i>	<i>Enterococcus</i>

predominant genera of anaerobic organisms in pressurized crab meat is *Enterococcus spp.* Although *Carnobacterium piscicola* and *Enterococcus spp.* were isolated from anaerobic roll tubes, these two organisms are not strict anaerobes; they are in fact facultative anaerobic organisms. No obligate anaerobes were isolated in this study.

### 3.3 Dominant microflora during storage

The predominant microflora in fresh and 550 MPa-treated crab meat during storage (day 0 to day 31) under aerobic and anaerobic conditions were isolated and identified in a similar manner to the procedure described in section 3.2. The microflora in fresh and 550 MPa-treated samples during storage changed due to competition with other surviving organisms. Under aerobic conditions, *Acinetobacter johnsii*, *Acinetobacter lwoffii*, *Arthrobacter aurescens*, *Arthrobacter agilis*, *Bacillus megaterium*, *Carnobacterium piscicola*, *Chryseobacterium balustinum*, *Exiguobacterium acetylicum*, *Pseudomonas putida*, *Pseudomonas aureofaciens* and *Staphylococcus kloosii* were isolated from the control samples within the first 12 days of storage (Table 2). During storage, the prevalence of organisms changed from one species to another. On day 0, *Exiguobacterium acetylicum* and *Acinetobacter* were identified as the primary isolates which then changed to *Pseudomonas* on Day 3 and 7. On day 12, *Carnobacterium piscicola* was the predominant organisms observed along with the minor presence of *Pseudomonas spp.* After day 12, *Carnobacterium piscicola* outgrew the other organisms and became the dominant aerobic organism until day 31.

A treatment of 550 MPa resulted in a different group of aerobic surviving organisms as mentioned previously in section 3.2. For the first three days of storage, *Aerococcus viridans*, *Brevibacillus agri*, *Brevibacterium iodinum*, *Brevibacterium linens*, *Brevibacterium casei*, *Brevibacterium epidermidis*, *Enterococcus mundtii*, *Macrocooccus caseolyticus* were isolated, with *Brevibacterium* as the predominant organism. Between day 7 and day 12, *Corynebacterium auris*, *Enterococcus mundtii*, *Moraxella catarrhalis* and *Psychrobacter immobilis* were observed with *Psychrobacter immobilis* identified as the predominant organism. After day 17 until day 31, *Carnobacterium piscicola*, *Enterococcus mundtii*, *Enterococcus avium*, *Enterococcus*

*solitarius*, and *Psychrobacter immobilis* were isolated with *Enterococcus spp.* as the predominant organism.

During the 31-day storage period, residual oxygen in the vacuum-packaged was reduced through the growth of aerobic organisms until the environment became microaerophilic or anaerobic. The diminished oxygen had an adverse effect on aerobes but on the contrary favored the growth of anaerobic or facultative anaerobic organisms which was observed. Under anaerobic conditions that occurred during storage, there were not as many species of organisms identified as under the aerobic condition. Only *Carnobacterium piscicola* was isolated from fresh crab meat from day 0 to day 31, whereas *Carnobacterium piscicola*, *Enterococcus mundtii*, *Enterococcus avium*, and *Enterococcus solitarius* were isolated with the predominance of *Enterococcus spp.* (Table 3). However, it should be noted that *Carnobacterium piscicola* and *Enterococcus spp.* are not obligate anaerobic organisms; they are both in fact facultative anaerobic organisms. No strict anaerobe such as *Clostridium botulinum* was isolated during this study.

### **3.4 Sensory analyses**

Sensory analyses were conducted to evaluate overall differences between the control and meat treated with pressures of 300 and 550 MPa. Overall differences between the control and pressurized samples at 300 MPa were performed with triangle tests by sensory panels were not statistically different ( $P>0.05$ ). Pressure-treated samples at 550 MPa were also not statistically different from the control ( $P>0.05$ ). Pressurized samples at two different pressure levels (300 and 550 MPa) did not show a statistically difference in overall difference ( $P>0.05$ ).

When the sensory panelists were requested to judge and describe the meat characteristics, especially odor of the stored meat, a very pungent and strong odor in the control samples when the APC reached about  $10^7$  cfu/g (Fig 1) was observed resulting in rejection by panel members on day 17 (Table 4). On the contrary, sensory evaluations based upon the smell or odor of the pressurized samples differed from that of the fresh meat. The higher plate count level did not result in a rejection from sensory panelists, in fact, the meat was still considered acceptable. If

tested microbiologically, the meat may have been considered as spoiled. If the meat was unacceptable, the aerobic plate counts could not serve as a criterion of quality.

Panelists accepted and described the 300 MPa-treated products as fresh (Table 4) even at the time the aerobic counts reached  $10^7$ cfu/g at day 12 (Fig 1). The 300 MPa-treated samples eventually became spoiled and unacceptable to sensory judges at day 31 when the APC reached  $5.6 \times 10^8$  cfu/g. For the 550 MPa samples, the APC of pressurized crab meat reached  $10^7$  cfu/g at day 15 (Fig 1) and the meat was still considered acceptable. At the last day of storage day 31, when the APC was  $2.9 \times 10^8$  cfu/g (Fig 1), the meat was still acceptable, however, a slight stale odor was detected.

Table 4: Sensory characteristics of unpressurized (control) and pressurized crab meat stored at 4 °C for 31 days

Day	Control	300 MPa	550 MPa
0	Fresh	Fresh	Fresh
3	Fresh	Fresh	Fresh
7	Pungent, strong odor	Fresh	Fresh
12	Pungent, strong odor	Fresh	Fresh
17	Pungent, strong odor, spoiled	Fresh	Fresh
24	Strong odor, spoiled	Stale	Fresh, acceptable
31	Strong odor, spoiled	Pungent, sweet flavor, cabbage flavor, smoky flavor, unacceptable	Little stale, acceptable

### 3.5 Physical analyses

#### 3.5.1 Color measurement

$L^*$ ,  $a^*$ , and  $b^*$  color values representing lightness, redness, and yellowness of unpressurized and pressurized crab meat sampled on day 0, 3, 7, 12, 17, 24, and 31 are described in Tables 5, 6, and 7. After pressurization (day 0), the crab meat became slightly darker as indicated by lower values of lightness. There was more green ( $-a^*$ ) color in the 550 MPa-treated meat, but less

green color in the 300 MPa pressure-treated meat when compared to the control. The  $b^*$  value indicating the yellowness was lower in the 550 MPa samples but higher in the 300 MPa samples when compared to the control.

When  $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ , and  $b^*$  values were statistically analyzed considering day of storage and treatment as variables, effects of storage day and the interaction between treatment and day of storage were not statistically significant ( $P>0.05$ ), the treatment was the only variable that was statistically significant ( $P\leq 0.05$ ) i.e. treatment of 300 and 550 MPa had significant effects on the  $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ , and  $b^*$  values of meat sampled on each day.

Meat sampled immediately after pressurization (day 0), the pressure level of 300 MPa had a statistically significant effect on lightness and yellowness when compared to the control i.e., meat was darker and more yellow. Statistically, a pressure of 550 MPa had no significant effect on lightness and yellowness but redness i.e., the color was more green ( $-a^*$ ) than the control. During the storage period, the color of unpressurized and pressurized crab meat changed over time.

Table 5:  $L^*$  (lightness) values of unpressurized (control) and pressurized (300 and 550 MPa, 25 °C for 5 min) crab meat stored at 4 °C for 31 days

Day	Control <sup>1</sup>	300 MPa <sup>2</sup>	550 MPa <sup>3</sup>
0	80.0 ± 0.97 <sup>a</sup>	78.1 ± 0.75 <sup>b</sup>	79.2 ± 0.86 <sup>a</sup>
3	79.4 ± 1.40 <sup>a</sup>	78.6 ± 1.04 <sup>ab</sup>	78.3 ± 1.05 <sup>b</sup>
7	78.4 ± 1.50 <sup>a</sup>	77.4 ± 1.24 <sup>a</sup>	78.1 ± 1.10 <sup>a</sup>
12	78.6 ± 0.77 <sup>a</sup>	78.4 ± 0.68 <sup>ab</sup>	77.6 ± 1.43 <sup>b</sup>
17	78.4 ± 1.28 <sup>a</sup>	78.3 ± 1.43 <sup>a</sup>	78.7 ± 1.23 <sup>a</sup>
24	79.3 ± 0.68 <sup>a</sup>	79.0 ± 1.33 <sup>a</sup>	78.1 ± 0.63 <sup>b</sup>
31	79.0 ± 1.26 <sup>a</sup>	78.2 ± 1.50 <sup>a</sup>	78.4 ± 1.15 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Each value under the same treatment represents a mean of 10 measurements with standard deviations.

<sup>a,b</sup> Means in same row with same letter are not significantly different ( $P>0.05$ ).

Table 6: a\* (redness) values of unpressurized (control) and pressurized (300 and 550 MPa, 25 °C for 5 min) crab meat stored at 4 °C for 31 days

Day	Control <sup>1</sup>	300 MPa <sup>2</sup>	550 MPa <sup>3</sup>
0	-2.1 ± 0.17 <sup>a</sup>	-1.9 ± 0.26 <sup>a</sup>	-2.4 ± 0.23 <sup>b</sup>
3	-1.9 ± 0.40 <sup>a</sup>	-2.4 ± 0.33 <sup>b</sup>	-2.3 ± 0.40 <sup>b</sup>
7	-1.3 ± 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	-2.1 ± 0.24 <sup>b</sup>	-2.2 ± 0.29 <sup>b</sup>
12	-1.0 ± 0.25 <sup>a</sup>	-2.3 ± 0.41 <sup>c</sup>	-1.8 ± 0.28 <sup>b</sup>
17	-1.0 ± 0.30 <sup>a</sup>	-2.4 ± 0.40 <sup>b</sup>	-2.1 ± 0.52 <sup>b</sup>
24	-1.0 ± 0.28 <sup>a</sup>	-1.9 ± 0.26 <sup>b</sup>	-2.0 ± 0.30 <sup>b</sup>
31	-1.1 ± 0.32 <sup>a</sup>	-1.9 ± 0.32 <sup>b</sup>	-1.9 ± 0.29 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Each value under the same treatment represents a mean of 10 measurements with standard deviations.

<sup>a,b,c</sup> Means in same row with same letter are not significantly different (P>0.05).

Table 7: b\* (yellowness) values of unpressurized (control) and pressurized (300 and 550 MPa, 25 °C for 5 min) crab meat stored at 4 °C for 31 days

Day	Control <sup>1</sup>	300 MPa <sup>2</sup>	550 MPa <sup>3</sup>
0	8.6 ± 0.83 <sup>b</sup>	9.9 ± 0.89 <sup>a</sup>	8.3 ± 0.77 <sup>b</sup>
3	7.4 ± 0.93 <sup>c</sup>	9.2 ± 0.58 <sup>a</sup>	8.4 ± 0.73 <sup>b</sup>
7	6.7 ± 1.03 <sup>b</sup>	9.0 ± 1.10 <sup>a</sup>	8.2 ± 0.88 <sup>a</sup>
12	7.6 ± 0.84 <sup>b</sup>	8.2 ± 0.83 <sup>b</sup>	9.1 ± 0.88 <sup>a</sup>
17	7.4 ± 0.75 <sup>a</sup>	8.0 ± 1.11 <sup>a</sup>	8.1 ± 0.95 <sup>a</sup>
24	7.4 ± 1.15 <sup>a</sup>	7.6 ± 1.02 <sup>a</sup>	8.2 ± 0.79 <sup>a</sup>
31	7.3 ± 0.89 <sup>a</sup>	7.0 ± 1.18 <sup>a</sup>	7.6 ± 0.80 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Each value under the same treatment represents a mean of 10 measurements with standard deviations.

<sup>a,b,c</sup> Means in same row with same letter are not significantly different (P>0.05).

### 3.5.2 Texture measurement

All three parameters; compressive load at break, compressive load at maximum compression load, and energy at break of the untreated and pressure-treated crab meat at 300 and 550 MPa measured immediately after pressure treatment (day 0) showed no statistically significant differences (P>0.05) as shown in Table 8. The compressive load at break varied from 8.1

(control) to 8.7 N/g (550 MPa). The compressive load at maximum compression load ranged from 18.7 (550 MPa) to 19.7 N/g (control). Energy at break for both untreated and treated samples occurred at the same value of 0.2 J/g. These results demonstrated that high-pressure treatments did not affect the meat texture.

Table 8: Compressive load at break, compressive load at maximum compression load, and energy at break of unpressurized (control) and pressurized (300 and 550 MPa, 25° C for 5 min) crab meat

	Control <sup>1</sup>	300 MPa <sup>2</sup>	550 MPa <sup>3</sup>
Compressive load at break (N/g)	8.1 ± 1.08 <sup>a</sup>	8.6 ± 1.83 <sup>a</sup>	8.7 ± 1.57 <sup>a</sup>
Compressive load at maximum compression load (N/g)	19.7 ± 1.61 <sup>a</sup>	18.9 ± 1.21 <sup>a</sup>	18.7 ± 0.26 <sup>a</sup>
Energy at break (J/g)	0.2 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	0.2 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	0.2 ± 0.01 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Each value under the same treatment represents a mean of 30 measurements from 3 replications with standard deviations.

<sup>a</sup> Means in same row with same letter are not significant different (P>0.05).

### 3.6 *pH measurement*

High-pressure processing had no effect on the pH of crab meat, the pH of pressurized crab meat on day 0 was constant at a pH about 7.7 which is identical to the control. On the contrary, the pH of untreated (control) and pressurized crab meat during storage at the refrigeration temperature for 31 days changed. pH of the control decreased gradually from 7.7 on day 0 to 7.2 on day 31. Crab meat treated with 300 MPa showed a decrease in pH from day 0 at 7.7 to the lowest pH of 7.4 on day 12 and then increased to pH of 7.8 at the end of the storage period. The treatment of 550 MPa showed similar results as those of the control in which pH decreased over the storage time from 7.7 on the first day to 7.4 on the last day of storage.

Table 9: pH changes of unpressurized and pressurized crab meat (300 and 550 MPa for 5 min at 25 °C) stored at 4 °C for 31 days

Day	Control <sup>1</sup>	300 MPa <sup>2</sup>	550 MPa <sup>3</sup>
0	7.7 ± 0.01 <sup>a</sup>	7.7 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	7.7 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>
3	7.5 ± 0.07 <sup>b</sup>	7.7 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	7.7 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>
7	7.4 ± 0.10 <sup>b</sup>	7.7 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>	7.7 ± 0.02 <sup>a</sup>
12	7.3 ± 0.06 <sup>b</sup>	7.3 ± 0.21 <sup>b</sup>	7.6 ± 0.07 <sup>a</sup>
17	7.3 ± 0.04 <sup>b</sup>	7.4 ± 0.11 <sup>ab</sup>	7.5 ± 0.06 <sup>a</sup>
24	7.2 ± 0.04 <sup>b</sup>	7.5 ± 0.18 <sup>a</sup>	7.5 ± 0.07 <sup>a</sup>
31	7.2 ± 0.10 <sup>c</sup>	7.8 ± 0.08 <sup>a</sup>	7.4 ± 0.02 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Each value under the same treatment represents a mean of 4 measurements with standard deviations.

<sup>a,b,c</sup> Means in same row with same letter are not significant different (P>0.05).

#### 4. Discussion

An extension of seafood shelf life, including fresh crab meat is always of significant financial importance since it is highly perishable with a shelf life 10-14 days under proper refrigeration conditions depending on the microbiological quality during processing. Post-processing methods such as pasteurization, sterilization and freezing has been applied to fresh crab meat, however, these processes always impair the sensory quality characteristics of the meat (Henry et al., 1995a; and Henry et al., 1995b). Recently, an alternative process using high hydrostatic pressure treatments has been widely used to improve the safety of various foods, including seafood, by inactivating pathogenic and spoilage microorganisms as well as maintaining quality through minimum changes in sensory characteristics (Paarup et al., 2002; Linton et al., 2003; and Murchie et al., 2005). In this study, the overall differences in sensory attributes of the untreated and pressure-treated crab meat were not statistically significant (P>0.05). Pressure treatments extended the shelf life of crab meat processed at 300 and 550 MPa from 17 to over 24 days and over 31 days respectively based on organoleptic evaluations from sensory panels.

The untreated and pressure-treated crab meat was no longer acceptable to the sensory panelists when spoilage occurred as a result of a microbial deterioration and food degradation. Banwart (1989) stated that the microbial deterioration of a food is usually manifested by alterations in appearance, texture, odor or flavor or by slime formation. The degradation of food results in formation of compounds that have odors and flavors different from those of the fresh product. In this study, an alteration in odor and a development of off-odor was observed and was a primary criterion applied in determining acceptance and unacceptance of crab meat, the other factor, texture will be subsequently discussed. Pressure treatments resulted in a different odor in the pressurized meat when compared to the fresh product (Table 4). This difference was due to changes in the types and numbers of microorganisms associated with the crab meat as well as intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing the growth of the surviving microorganisms after high pressure treatments.

The microorganism content in fresh crab meat changed as a result of high hydrostatic pressure inactivation of certain pressure-sensitive microorganisms. The microflora of fresh crab meat consisted of 5 genera of Gram-positive bacteria (*Exiguobacterium acetylicum*, *Arthrobacter*, *Brevibacillus*, *Staphylococcus* and *Brevibacterium*) and 1 Gram-negative bacterium (*Acinetobacter*) was changed to a group of solely Gram-positive bacteria of *Brevibacterium*, *Brevibacillus*, *Aerococcus*, *Enterococcus* and *Macrococcus* in pressurized crab meat. This changes in microflora demonstrated that Gram-negative bacteria present in fresh crab meat were more sensitive to pressurization treatment than Gram-positive bacteria, which is in agreement with the general statement about pressure sensitivities of bacteria (Hoover et al., 1989; and Smelt, 1998). However, the sensitivity of each organism among groups of Gram-positive bacteria varies i.e., *Brevibacterium* and *Brevibacillus* tolerated a pressure of 550 MPa, whereas *Exiguobacterium acetylicum*, *Arthrobacter*, *Acinetobacter* were inactivated. The presence of *Aerococcus*, *Enterococcus*, and *Macrococcus* after pressurization despite not being identified in fresh crab meat might occur because of suppression by the presence and growth of the other organisms.

Previously mentioned, intrinsic and extrinsic factors (temperature and packaging) also influence the growth of surviving microorganisms during storage. Under an aerobic refrigeration

condition, spoilage in fish and other seafood typically occurs predominantly from the psychrotrophic bacteria such as *Pseudomonas* spp. Cockey and Chai (1991) stated that *Pseudomonas* is one of the predominant organisms in refrigerated storage of dungeness as well as blue crabs. In blue crab meat, *Pseudomonas* and *Achromobacter* were reported as the most active spoilage organisms at refrigeration temperatures, *Pseudomonas* and *Achromobacter* (which later was identified as *Moraxella* and *Acinetobacter*) accounted for 23.4% of the total microflora in fresh meat and increased to 96.3% by day 11-15 of storage. However, in this study spoilage organisms isolated from rejected fresh crab meat at day 17 were not *Pseudomonas*, it was predominantly *Carnobacterium piscicola*. This change in microflora could result from vacuum-packaging that inhibited the growth of aerobic organisms (e.g. *Pseudomonas*) and promoted the growth of anaerobic or facultative anaerobic organisms (e.g. *Carnobacterium piscicola*). Residual oxygen in the vacuum-packaged during storage was depleted by the growth of aerobic organisms until microaerophilic or anaerobic conditions were achieved which favored the growth of anaerobic or facultative anaerobic organisms.

Under anaerobic or reduced oxygen conditions and low storage temperatures, psychrotrophic lactic acid bacteria (LAB) can successfully compete with other psychrotrophic bacteria. Lactic acid bacteria consist of genera of *Carnobacterium*, *Enterococcus*, *Lactobacillus*, *Lactococcus*, *Leuconostoc*, *Pediococcus*, *Streptococcus* and *Weissella* (Schillinger and Holzapfel, 1992). Although lactic acid bacteria are not indigenous to marine environments, they have been isolated from aquatic environments and various seafoods. Mauguin and Novel (1994) isolated 86 strains of lactic acid bacteria from fresh pollock, brine shrimp, gravid fish, vacuum-packed seafood (surimi, smoked tuna, salted cod), and fish stored under 100% CO<sub>2</sub> at 5° C (smoked tuna, fresh and salted cod, salmon). Eighty-six isolates were characterized and identified as the genus *Lactococcus* (54 isolates), *Lactobacillus plantarum* (4 isolates), the genus *Leuconostoc* (8 isolates), the genus *Carnobacterium* (16 isolates), facultative heterofermentative *Lactobacillus* (1 isolate), and unidentified (3 isolates).

Lactic acid bacteria are predominant spoilage organisms in packaged and processed meat products (Schillinger and Lucke, 1987), fish and fish products, and vacuum-packed seafood products e.g. vacuum-packaged cold-smoked salmon (Lyhs, 2002). The lactic acid bacteria

isolated from vacuum-packed cold-smoked salmon were dominated by *Carnobacterium piscicola* which accounted for 87% of the lactic acid bacteria isolates (Paludan-Muller et al., 1998). Similarly, in this study two genera of lactic acid bacteria, *Carnobacterium piscicola* and *Enterococcus*, were identified as dominant organisms in vacuum-packaged untreated and 550 MPa-treated crab meat respectively at the time of spoilage.

Interestingly, it has been reported that despite that high numbers of lactic acid bacteria in vacuum- and modified-atmosphere-packed products, sensory rejection does not always occur. For example, sensory rejection of vacuum- and modified-atmosphere-packed cold-smoked salmon was caused by autolytic changes rather than high levels ( $>10^7$  cfu/g) of *Carnobacterium piscicola*. The role of lactic acid bacteria on sensory changes in vacuum- or modified packaged foods is also shown in this study when pressurized crab meat (550 MPa) dominated with *Enterococcus* spp. did not spoil and retained “freshness” despite of a large number of this organism. However, in the control samples sensory panels described “strong odor” even though *Carnobacterium piscicola* were predominantly found at the time of sensory spoilage (day 17), possibly due to the reminiscences of *Pseudomonas* spp. growth prior to day 17 (Table 2).

The inhibitory effect of *Carnobacterium piscicola* and *Enterococcus* spp. in vacuum-packaged crab meat to other microflora and spoilage bacteria is probably due to a production of lactic and acetic acids as these two organisms are lactic acid-producing bacteria as mentioned previously. Lactic acid bacteria produce either homo- or heterolactic acid from metabolism of carbohydrates resulting in a pH decrease. Our results as shown in Table 9 are in agreement with this statement, the pH of crab meat measured during storage period decreased from that of the first day (7.7) to 7.2 in control samples and 7.3 in treated samples by the end of storage (day 31). Besides acid production, several lactic acid bacteria are also capable of producing antimicrobial proteins or peptides known as bacteriocins e.g. nisin (*Lactococcus lactis*), pediocins (*Pediococcus acidilactici* and *Pediococcus cerevisiae*).

Among the bacteriocin-producing lactic acid bacteria, *Carnobacterium* is a relatively newly recognized genus; most strains have been isolated from vacuum-packaged meat or fish (Schobitz et al., 1999). Schillinger and Holzapfel (1990) were the first to report on the production of

bacteriocin by the genus *Carnobacterium*, which has antibacterial activity against other microorganisms, including enterotoxigenic and pathogenic bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*. Using of bacteriocins from the genus *Carnobacterium piscicola* has been of a primary interest among all *Carnobacterium* as its bacteriocins are heat-resistant and stable over a wide range of pH (Schobitz et al., 1999). *Carnobacterium piscicola* is used as a starter culture and its purified bacteriocins have been used in the biopreservation of refrigerated meat and fish products mainly to control the growth of *Listeria monocytogenes* (Schobitz et al., 1999; Buchanan and Klawitter, 1992a; Buchanan and Klawitter, 1992b; Nilsson et al., 2004 and Duffes et al., 1999). These studies showed an antagonistic activity of bacteriocins against *Listeria monocytogenes* and other closely related Gram-positive bacteria, which might resemble results obtained in this study in which some pressure-resistant Gram-positive bacteria were inhibited. *Enterococcus spp.* isolated from pressurized crab meat (550 MPa) is capable of producing bacteriocins inhibiting the growth of other pressure-resistant Gram-positive bacteria surviving pressure treatments. *Enterococcus faecium* has been reported as capable of producing bacteriocins called enterocin (Aymerich et al., 1996).

Application of pressure treatments to fresh crab meat not only resulted in a shelf-life extension by inactivating spoilage microorganisms as previously discussed, but also maintained product quality (color and texture). Of all three color values ( $L^*$ ,  $a^*$ , and  $b^*$ ),  $L^*$  (lightness) is likely to be the most important factor determining consumer acceptance as loss of the natural glistening white to off-whitish color in fresh meat could lower acceptance and generate economic loss (Requena et al., 1999). The color measurements of treated crab meat showed no significant difference ( $P>0.05$ ) from untreated crab meat after pressurization and during the storage period except minimal changes in  $L^*$  (lightness) values after high pressure treatments. However, these discolorations are so minimal they were not visually detected by sensory panelists. The texture of pressurized crab meat was also not affected by high pressures and was identical to the fresh crab meat.

In summary, high hydrostatic pressure treatment on microbiological, textural, and sensory properties of vacuum-packaged fresh crab meat has been proven to increase shelf-life while not impairing the original texture and sensory properties.

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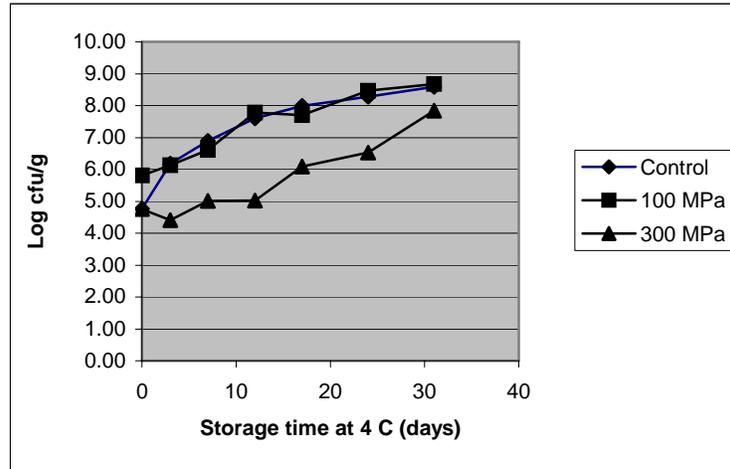
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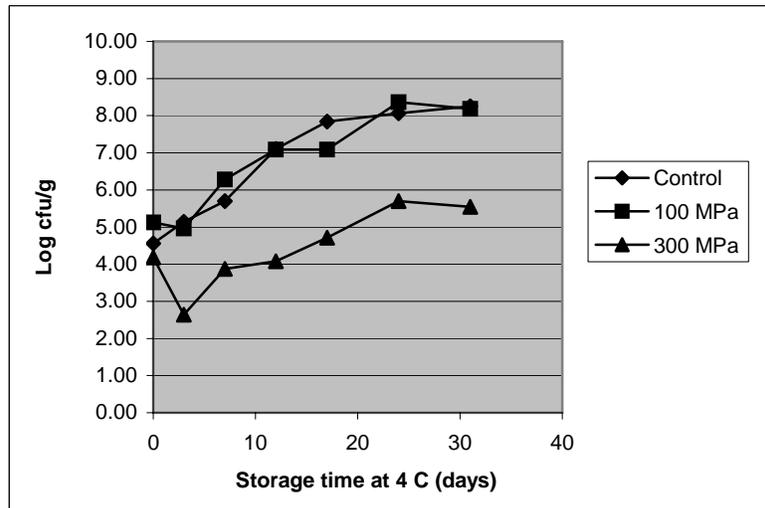
## Appendices

### Appendix 1:

a.



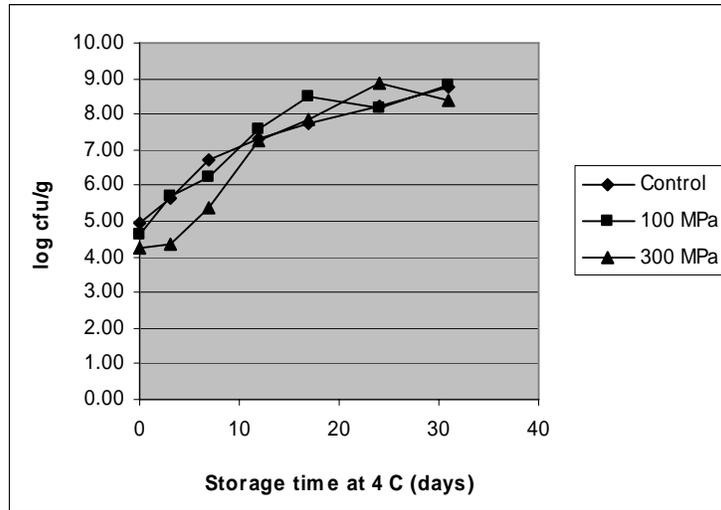
b.



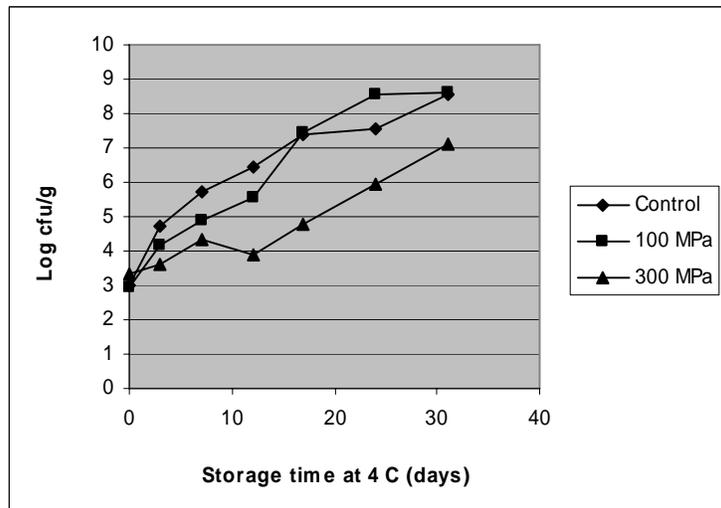
Effect of pressure levels of 100 and 300 MPa for 15 min at the starting temperature of 25 °C on total aerobic plate counts (a) and anaerobic counts (b) of crab meat stored at 4 °C for 31 days

Appendix 2:

a.



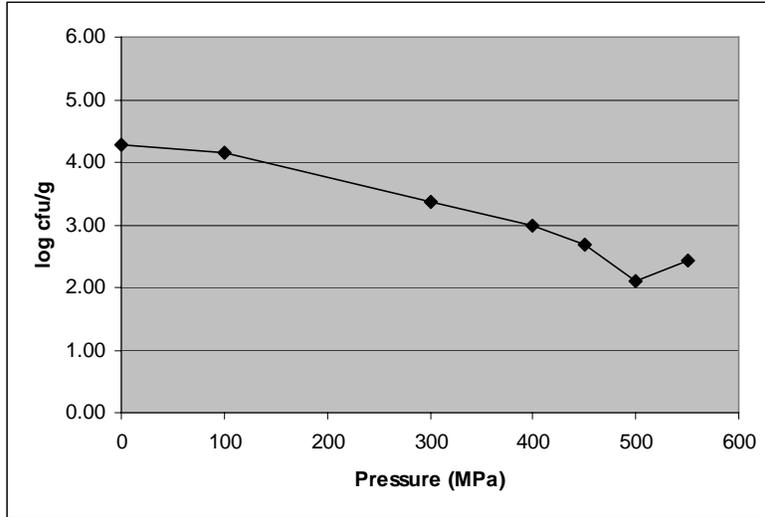
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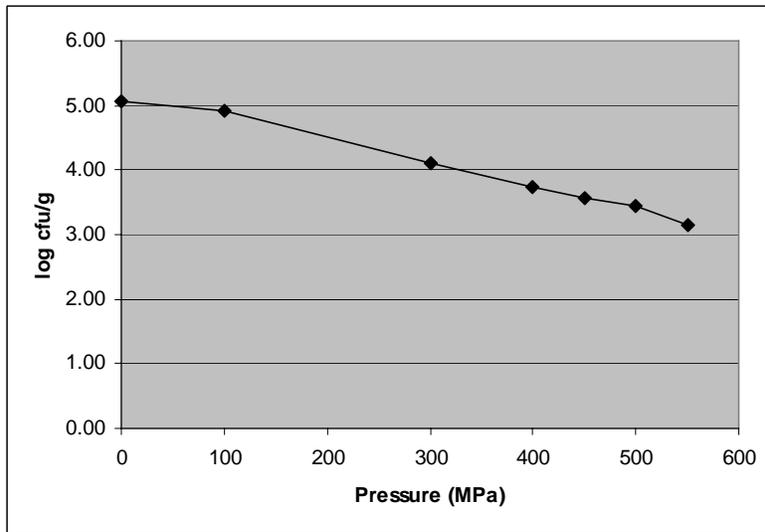
Effect of pressure levels of 100 and 300 MPa for 15 min at the starting temperature of 50 °C on total aerobic (a) and anaerobic plate counts (b) of crab meat stored at 4 °C for 31 days

Appendix 3:

a.



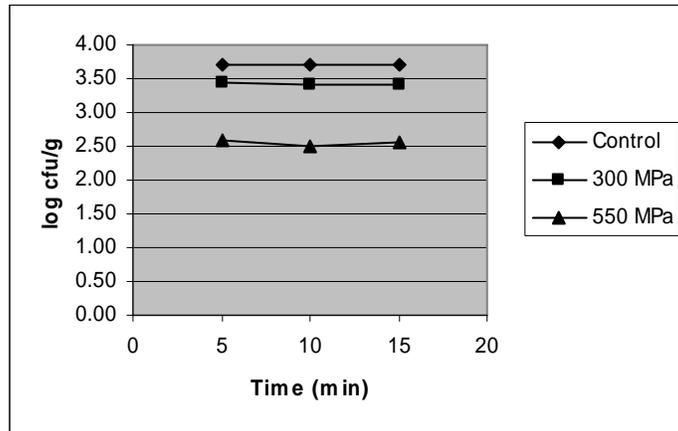
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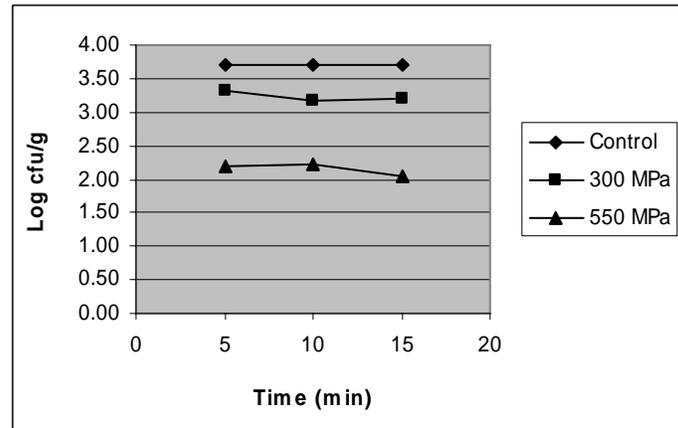
Effects of end processing temperatures of 25 °C (a) and 40 °C (b) at different pressure levels for 15 min treatment on total aerobic plate counts

Appendix 4:

a.



b.



Effects of processing times of 5, 10, and 15 min at 25 °C (a) and 40 °C (b) at 300 and 550 MPa for 15 min treatment on total aerobic plate counts

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PRESSURE-INDUCED GERMINATION AND INACTIVATION OF BACILLUS CEREUS SPORES AND ITS SURVIVAL IN FRESH BLUE CRAB MEAT (*Callinectes sapidus*) DURING STORAGE**

## Abstract

Pressure-induced germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* (ATCC 14579, ATCC 49064, a crab meat isolate) spores by high hydrostatic pressures (100, 200, 300, 400, 500, and 550 MPa) at 40° C for 15 min were studied. In sterile distilled water, spore germination increased with increased pressures; whereas inactivation decreased with pressure up to 200-300 MPa and increased with medium to high pressures (300-550 MPa). A pressure of 550 MPa resulted in the maximum germination and inactivation (3.5-5.5 logs germination and 3-4.5 logs inactivation) among strains studied. Among 3 strains, spores of the crab meat isolate was found to be the most resistant to germinate and inactivate by pressure. In fresh crab meat, inoculated *B. cereus* spores were protected from inactivation by pressure; but its germination was enhanced to a higher degree compared to spores suspended in distilled water probably due to the presence of some germinants required in the germination process in addition to pressure. Inoculated fresh crab meat with *B. cereus* spores treated with high pressure (550 MPa, 40° C, 15 min) and stored at 4 and 12° C for 31 days showed that *B. cereus* was not a competitive organism with the presence of the other meat microflora. However, treated crab meat in which some of the pressure-sensitive microflora were inactivated, *B. cereus* survived through the end of the 4° C storage period but was not able to produce diarrheal toxin at a detectable level performed with Tecra<sup>®</sup> Bacillus Diarrhoeal Enterotoxin Visual Immunoassay.

Keywords: *Bacillus cereus*, spores, germination, inactivation, high hydrostatic pressure, fresh crab meat, diarrheal toxin

## 1. Introduction

Bacterial spores are extremely dormant having no detectable metabolism and exhibit significant resistance to environmental stress including physical (heat, radiation, drying) and chemical agents (such as hydrogen peroxide). They have a long-term survival under unfavorable conditions especially in the absence of nutrients and can be found in virtually every type of environment. Although they are metabolically dormant, they can resume growth through a germination process when the nutrients become available for growth which is one of the potential problems for the food industry (Setlow, 1994; and Nicholson et al. 2000).

A complete spore destruction or inactivation of dormant bacterial spores required for sterilization of foods normally involves a thermal treatment. With the advent of new non-thermal technologies such as high hydrostatic pressure processing, the detrimental effects of high heat is eliminated. The biological effects of pressure on microorganisms resulting in their destruction have been previously described (Hoover et al., 1989). Bacterial spores are reportedly resistant to high pressure; at ambient temperatures, they can survive a pressure greater than 1000 MPa (Timson and Short, 1965); however, pressure inactivation of spores could be achieved by an initiation of spore germination, followed by destruction of the germinated spores (Setlow, 2005).

High hydrostatic pressure has been shown to cause initiation of spore germination of *Bacillus* species (Clouston and Wills, 1969; and Gould and Sale, 1970). Pressure induces germination of *Bacillus* species spores through different mechanisms depending upon pressure and temperature conditions. Nonetheless, germination either through a physiological or physicochemical process produces germinated spores having a reduction in resistance to subsequent processes or treatments (Wuytack et al., 1998; Wuytack et al., 2000; Paidunghat et al., 2002; Moir et al., 2002; Margosch et al., 2004; and Black et al., 2005). Pressure-induced germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores have also been studied (Raso et al., 1998a; Raso et al., 1998b; Oh and Moon, 2003; and Opstal et al., 2004); however, some studies were performed with a laboratory-scale high hydrostatic pressure machine, which does not always represent the actual application in the food industry.

In this study, *B. cereus* spores in both a suspension and in fresh crab meat were pressurized with a commercial-sized pressure device to determine the extent of the spore germination induced by high pressure treatments. Since it was expected that high pressure would not completely inactivate *B. cereus* spores in crab meat, a storage study was performed to identify the competition between *B. cereus* and other microflora and to determine if diarrheal toxin was produced.

## **2. Materials and methods**

### 2.1 Crab meat

Fresh hand-picked blue crab lump meat (*Callinectes sapidus*) in 454 g containers was obtained from a commercial facility (Graham and Rollins Inc.) in Hampton, Virginia. Within 24 hours post-processing, the meat was transferred to the Virginia Tech campus, Blacksburg, VA in insulated containers with ice packs and stored in ice in a refrigerator at 0-4° C after arrival. All meat samples were used within 48 hr and the meat was mixed thoroughly prior to the high-pressure treatments.

### 2.2 Preparation of spore suspensions

Two serovars of *B. cereus* (ATCC 14579 and 49064) from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC; Manassas, VA) and one isolate from crab meat (Food Science and Technology Department, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA) were used throughout the study. A young culture (24 hr, 30° C) of *B. cereus* in Nutrient Broth (NB; Becton Dickinson and Company, Sparks, MD) was spread plated on Nutrient Agar (NA; Becton Dickinson and Company) and incubated at 37° C. The spores were harvested after 5 days or 80-90% sporulation as determined by phase contrast microscopy.

Spores were collected by flooding the surface of the culture with sterile distilled water, and by scraping with a bent glass rod. The spore purification with the water washing procedure involved sonication, centrifugation, and resuspension the procedure includes 30 min of

sonication to break clumps and to evenly distribute spores in the suspension medium followed by 5-10 min of settlement to separate free spores from cell debris (free spores in the bottom layer was retained while cell debris suspended in the top layer of the supernatant was discarded), centrifugation (7000×g for 10 min), and resuspension in sterile distilled water. The purification process was repeated three times and the cleaned spore suspension was stored at 4° C until used. The viable counts of spore suspension before and after a heat treatment (60° C, 30 min) was determined the completion of sporulation to ensure that the suspension was free of vegetative cells. Prior to high pressure treatments, the spore suspension was sonicated, centrifuged, and resuspended in sterile distilled water to exclude dipicolinic acid that may be released during storage.

### 2.3 High hydrostatic pressure treatments

High hydrostatic pressure treatments were performed in a commercial scale high pressure apparatus (The Quintus Food Press QFP 35L-600, Avure Technologies, Kent, WA). Pressure and temperature were controlled by a pressure transducer and a thermocouple interfaced with the pressure unit. Water was used as the pressure transmitting medium. A spore suspension was diluted to  $10^8$  spores/ml with sterile distilled water. The diluted spore suspension (section 3.1 and 3.2) was transferred aseptically into 3 mm nylon/polyethylene vacuum pouches (Koch, North Kansas, MO), double-bagged, and then heat-sealed. The bags were loaded into the pressure vessel and pressurized at 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, or 550 MPa for 5, 10, or 15 min to an end temperature of 40° C. The pressurized sample pouches were immediately immersed in cold water to ambient temperature (25° C) after treatment. Decompression occurred within 2-3 s.

A spore suspension was inoculated into the fresh crab meat to a final concentration of  $10^3$ - $10^5$  spores/g ( $10^3$  for section 3.5;  $10^5$  for section 3.4). The inoculated fresh crab meat was transferred aseptically into 3 mm nylon/polyethylene vacuum pouches (Koch), double-bagged, and the bags were vacuum-packaged. The bags were loaded into the pressure vessel and pressurized at 550 MPa at an end temperature of 40° C for 15 min. The pressurized sample pouches were immediately immersed in cold water to ambient temperature as previously stated. Decompression occurred within 2-3 s.

#### 2.4 Measurement of inactivation

After the pressure treatments, 1 ml of the spore suspension was serially diluted in 9 ml McIlvaine phosphate buffer, spread plated on Nutrient Agar and incubated at 30° C for 24-48 hr to enumerate number of survivors (N). The unpressurized spore suspension was also enumerated for survivors (No). Inactivation was calculated as  $\log (No/N)$ .

After the pressure treatments, 10 g of inoculated crab meat was transferred into 90 ml McIlvaine phosphate buffer. From this dilution, serial dilutions were performed by transferring 1 ml into 9 ml McIlvaine phosphate buffer and spread plated on Nutrient Agar and incubated at 30° C for 24-48 hr to enumerate number of survivors (N). The unpressurized spore suspension was also enumerated for survivors (No). Inactivation was calculated as  $\log (No/N)$ .

#### 2.5 Measurement of germination

After the pressure treatments, 1 ml of spore suspension was immersed in a water bath equilibrated at 80° C for 10 min to inactivate germinated spores. Surviving heat resistant spores (ungerminated spores; N) were serially diluted in McIlvaine phosphate buffer, spread plated on Nutrient Agar, and incubated at 30° C for 24-36 hr for enumeration. The unpressurized spore suspension was also enumerated for survivors (No). Germination was calculated as  $\log (No/N)$ .

After the pressure treatments, 10 g of inoculated crab meat was immersed in a water bath equilibrated at 80° C for 10 min to inactivate germinated spores. Surviving heat resistant spores (ungerminated spores; N) were serially diluted in McIlvaine phosphate buffer, spread plated on Nutrient Agar, and incubated at 30° C for 24-36 hr for enumeration. The unpressurized spore suspension was also enumerated for survivors (No). Germination was calculated as  $\log (No/N)$ .

## 2.6 Measurement of released dipicolinic acid (DPA)

The dipicolinic acid assay performed was adapted from the assay used for germination for *B. subtilis* (Nicholson et al., 1990; and Rotman and Fields, 1967). A spore suspension (1 ml) was centrifuged at 13000×g for 2 min for supernatant and pellet separation. The spore supernatant was then assayed for DPA. In order to determine the amount of DPA in the spore pellet, the spore pellet was resuspended in 1 ml of sterile distilled water before boiling. After 20 min of boiling, it was placed on ice for 15 min, centrifuged at 13000×g for 2 min to separate the supernatant and spore pellet. The pellet was discarded while the supernatant was then assayed for DPA.

For the DPA assay, 800 µl of the supernatant of each sample (the spore supernatant and the boiled spore supernatant) was transferred to a micro centrifuge tube. Freshly prepared 200 µl assay reagent [(25 mg L-cysteine, 170 mg FeSO<sub>4</sub>, 80 mg (NH<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> in 25 ml of 50 mM sodium acetate (pH 4.6 with glacial acetic acid)] was added into every tube; the tubes were mixed, centrifuged at 13000×g for 2 min, and the absorbance of the supernatant at 440 nm was determined. The amount of DPA was calculated by comparison to a standard series containing 0-100 µg of purified DPA.

## 2.7 Inoculated pack study

After application of the pressure treatments, all samples were stored under refrigeration temperatures (4° C ± 0.01° C or 12° C ± 0.01° C) for 31 days and sampled on days 0, 3, 7, 12, 17, 24, and 31 for microbiological analyses (*B. cereus* enumeration and confirmation); *B. cereus* toxin detection and sensory evaluation.

## 2.8 *B. cereus* enumeration and confirmation

*B. cereus* enumeration and confirmation tests were performed according to the Bacteriological Analytical Manual (FDA, 2001). Ten grams of inoculated crab meat were weighed aseptically and added into 90 ml Butterfield's phosphate-buffered dilution water and homogenized with a

Stomacher (Stomacher Lab Blender 400, Tekmar Co., Cincinnati, OH). From this dilution, subsequent dilutions were made using 9 ml Butterfield's phosphate-buffered dilution blanks. Aliquots of 0.1 ml were spread on the surface of previously prepared Mannitol Egg Yolk Polymyxin (MYP; Becton Dickinson and Company, Sparks, MD) plates. The plates were incubated at  $30^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0.01^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 24 hr and observed for pink colonies surrounded by a precipitate zone, which indicates that lecithinase was produced.

The plates containing 15-150 eosin-pink, lecithinase-producing colonies were counted for a presumptive plate count. Five or more presumptive colonies from the MYP agar plates were transferred to Nutrient Agar slants for confirmation as *B. cereus*. Slants were incubated 24 hr at  $30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and 3 mm loopfuls of culture from each slant were transferred to tubes containing 0.5 ml of sterile phosphate-buffered dilution water and mixed with a vortex mixer. Aliquots of the suspended cultures were inoculated into the following confirmatory media: Phenol Red Glucose Broth; Nitrate Broth; modified VP Medium; Tyrosine Agar; Lysozyme Broth, and MYP Agar.

## 2.9 Detection of *B. cereus* toxin

*B. cereus* toxin detection in the crab meat and enrichment cultures was performed with Tecra<sup>®</sup> Bacillus Diarrhoeal Enterotoxin Visual Immunoassay (BDE VIA; Tecra International Pty Ltd., New South Wales, Australia). The procedure used for sample preparation was adapted from the Tecra protocol. For toxin detection in crab meat, 10 g of crab meat sample were added to 20 ml Tris buffer, mixed thoroughly for 3 min, and centrifuged for 10 min at 1000-3000×g. The supernatant was filtered through a prepared syringe; an eluate was retained (pH 7-8; adjustment if necessary). Five ml of the eluate was added with 50 µl sample additive, mixed thoroughly, and the ELISA was performed.

To detect the presence of toxin in culture, a loopful of culture was added into 10 ml Brain Heart Infusion (BHI) with 0.1% glucose, mixed thoroughly, and incubated 16-18 hr at  $35\text{-}37^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The mixture was then centrifuged for 10 min at 1000-3000×g. The pellet was discarded and the supernatant was retained (pH 7-8; adjustment if necessary). The supernatant (5 ml) was added with 50 µl sample additive and the ELISA was performed.

To perform the immunoassay, sample wells pre-coated with antibodies specific for BDE were soaked with a wash solution at room temperature. After 10 min, the wells were emptied and any residual liquid removed. Aliquots of the controls (positive and negative controls) and samples (200  $\mu$ l) were transferred into individual wells, covered with wrap film, and incubated at 35-37° C. After 2 hr of incubation, the first washing step was performed by emptying the wells to remove its contents and any residual liquids, and filling the wells with the wash solution. The first washing step was repeated 4 times. Then, 200  $\mu$ l conjugate was added to each well; which were covered with wrap film, and incubated at room temperature for 1 hr. After adding the conjugate, the second washing step was performed by emptying the wells and washing them thoroughly 5 times with the wash solution. Then, substrate (200  $\mu$ l) was added to each well, incubated at room temperature for a minimum of 30 min. The intensity of color development in each well was compared to the color-coded card provided with the detection kit to determine whether it was positive or negative.

#### 2.10 Sensory evaluation

Sensory panelists who had experience on crab meat quality from the Department of Food Science and Technology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, VA) were requested to smell and describe the crab meat odor after pressure treatments and subsequent storage. Samples were not consumed during the evaluation as it contained *B. cereus* spores that could potentially result in food poisoning.

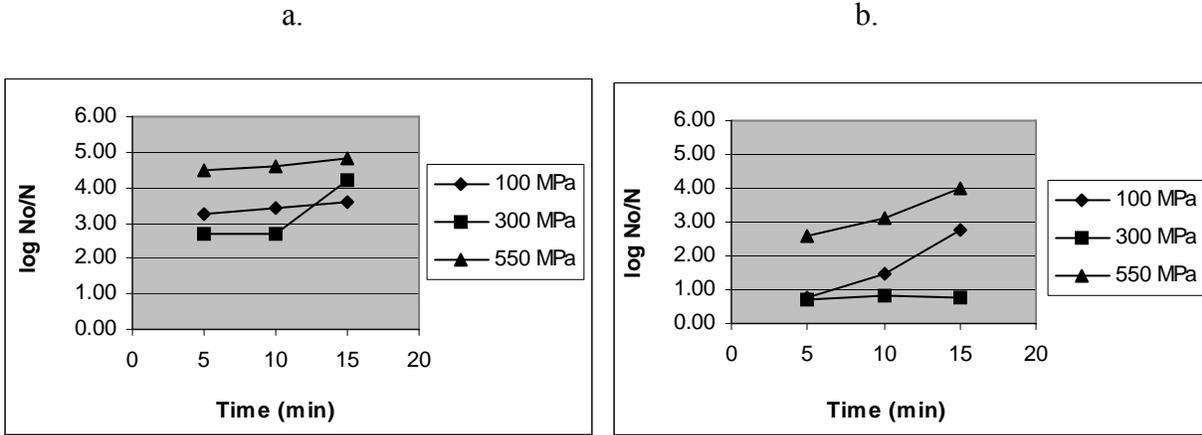
### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Effect of processing time on germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores in distilled water

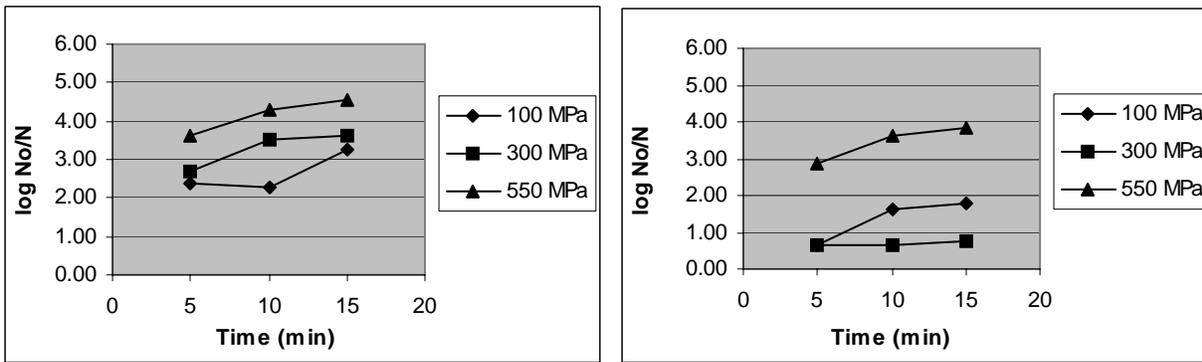
*B. cereus* (14579, 49064 and a crab isolate) spore suspension in distilled water were subjected to different pressures (100, 200, 300, 400, 500, and 550 MPa) at 40° C for 5, 10, and 15 min to study the effects of pressurization time on germination and inactivation. In general, an increase in processing time increased germination level of *B. cereus* spores with some exceptions to certain pressures and certain strains. The three strains reacted differently at different pressures and times.

A low pressure of 100 MPa with increased treatment time from 5 to 15 min resulted in an increase in germination level for *B. cereus* spores 49064 (from 2.37 to 3.25 logs) and the spores isolated from crab meat (from 1.52 to 3.39 logs) as shown in Fig 1-2a and 1-3a but not *B. cereus* spores 14579 (Fig 1-1a). A medium pressure of 300 MPa with time increased caused more germination of *B. cereus* 14579 and 49064, not *B. cereus* isolated from crab. With an application of high pressure (550 MPa), increased processing time had a minimal effect on *B. cereus* 14579; whereas it had more effect on *B. cereus* 49064 and the isolate from crab.

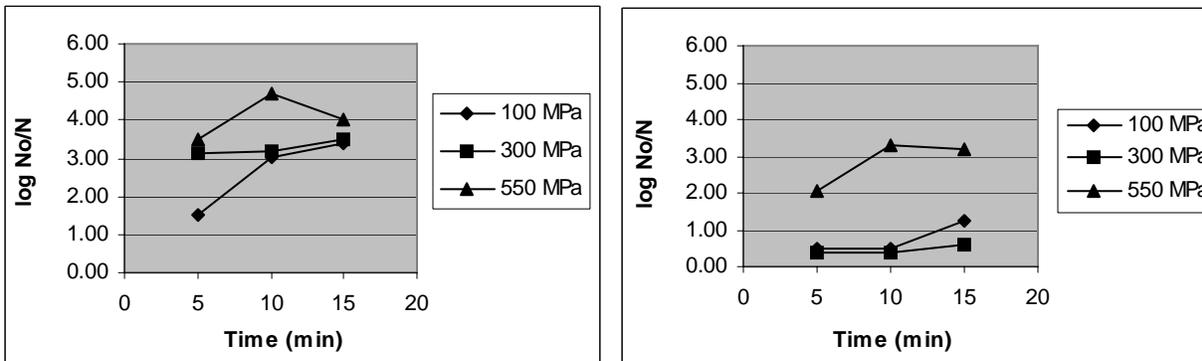
Inactivation level of all 3 strains with a low pressure of 100 MPa for 5 min was less than a 1 log reduction i.e. 0.77 (*B. cereus* 14579), 0.66 (*B. cereus* 49064), and 0.51 (*B. cereus* from crab), however, inactivation increased with increased processing time to 15 min: 0.77 to 2.77 (*B. cereus* 14579), 0.66 to 1.80 (*B. cereus* 49064) and 0.51 to 1.24 (*B. cereus* from crab) as shown in Fig 1-1b, 1-2b, and 1-3b. A treatment of 550 MPa dramatically inactivated *B. cereus* spores of all 3 strains when compared to 100 and 300 MPa. A 550 MPa process for 5 min inactivated approximately 2-3 logs, while 100 and 300 MPa killed less than 1 log. When processing time was taken into a consideration, the effect of high pressure (550 MPa) on spore inactivation was similar to the use of low pressure (100 MPa), in which inactivation increased with time from 5 to 15 min. That is, inactivation of *B. cereus* 14579 spores was increased from 2.59 to 4.01 logs, *B.*



1-1



1-2



1-3

Fig 1: Effects of processing times (5, 10, and 15 min) at 100, 300, and 550 MPa and 40° C on germination (a) and inactivation (b) of *B. cereus* spores 14579 (1-1), *B. cereus* spores 49064 (1-2), and *B. cereus* spores isolated from crab meat (1-3)

*cereus* 49064 spores were increased from 2.88 to 3.82 logs, and *B. cereus* spores from crab were increased from 2.07 to 3.22 logs (Fig 1-1b, 1-2b, and 1-3b).

Interestingly, the use of medium pressure 300 MPa with time varied from 5 to 15 min showed different results than that of low and high pressure (100 and 550 MPa). Increased time did not have a pronounced inactivation effect on all 3 strains; the inactivation was relatively constant with time and less than 1 log reduction: 0.71-0.81 (*B. cereus* 14579), 0.65-0.75 (*B. cereus* 49064) and 0.37-0.61 (*B. cereus* isolated from crab) was observed. The inactivation by 300 MPa was even lower than inactivation obtained through 100 MPa treatments (Fig 1-1b, 1-2b, and 1-3b).

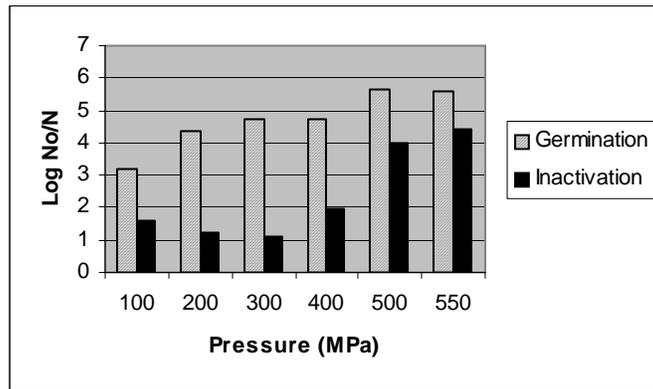
In summary, a pressure of 550 MPa with processing time (15 min) resulted in the highest germination and inactivation level of all 3 *B. cereus* strains; therefore, these processing parameters were used in the processing study.

### 3.2 Effect of pressures on germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores in distilled water at 40° C for 15 min

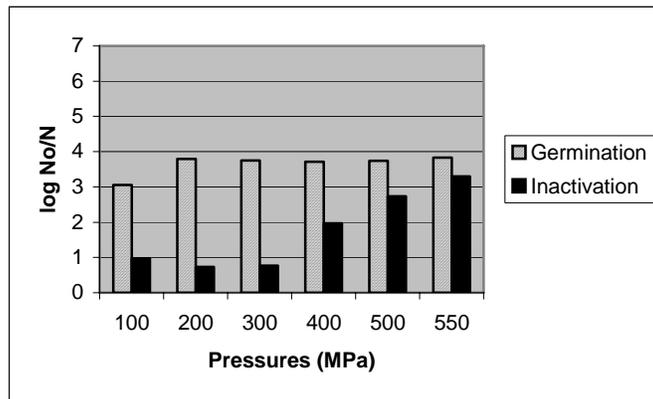
Germination and inactivation of 3 *B. cereus* spores in distilled water were studied at pressures ranging from 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, and 550 MPa at 40° C for 15 min (from previous section 3.1). In general, germination level of *B. cereus* spores increased with pressures except for *B. cereus* 49064 which was relatively constant at pressures between 200 to 550 MPa (Fig 2). Of all 3 strains, *B. cereus* 14579 was germinated by pressures with the highest germination levels (3-5.5 logs), followed by *B. cereus* 49064 (3-4 logs) and *B. cereus* isolated from crab meat (2-3.5 logs).

Germinated spores were then inactivated by pressure to a different level depending on strain and pressure studied. When the pressure was increased from medium (200-300 MPa) to high (550 MPa), the inactivation level increased for all 3 strains. However, at lower pressures (100-300 MPa), spore inactivation did not increase with increased pressure, in fact, the inactivation decreased i.e. a low pressure of 100 MPa inactivated more *B. cereus* spores than a pressure of

a.



b.



c.

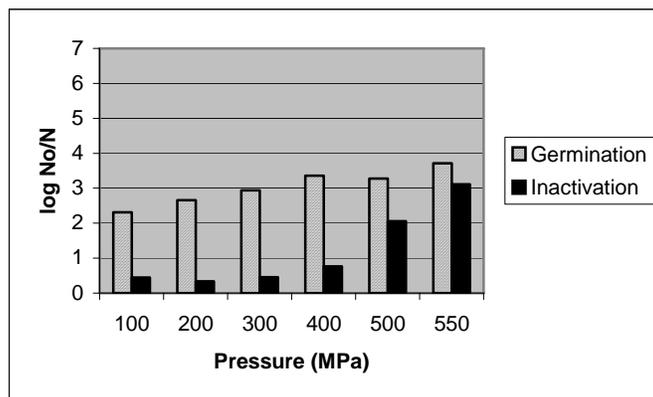


Fig 2: Effects of pressures (100, 200, 300, 400, 500, and 550 MPa) on inactivation and germination of *B. cereus* spores 14579 (a), 49064 (b), and isolated from crab (c) at 40° C for 15 min

200 and 300 MPa. For example, a 100 MPa process inactivated 1.59 logs, whereas 300 MPa inactivated only 1.12 logs of *B. cereus* 14579 (Fig 2a). *Bacillus cereus* 49064, inactivation decreased from 0.98 to 0.73 logs when the pressure increased from 100 to 200 MPa. For *B. cereus* isolated from crab spores, inactivation decreased from 0.45 to 0.34 when the pressure was increased from 100 to 200 MPa.

*B. cereus* 14579 spores were inactivated 1.59, 1.24, and 1.12 logs with pressures of 100, 200, and 300 MPa respectively as shown in Fig 2a. When the pressure was increased from 300 to 400 MPa, the inactivation increased to a small degree from 1.12 to 1.98 logs. A 2 log increase in inactivation occurred when the pressure was increased from 400 to 500 MPa (1.98 to 4.01 logs). Between 500 and 550 MPa, the inactivation was increased from 4.01 to 4.44 logs.

Inactivation of *B. cereus* 49064 spores by varying pressures (Fig 2b) was lower than that of *B. cereus* 14579 (Fig 2a). Again, at the lower range of pressures (100 to 200 MPa), the inactivation decreased with increased pressure i.e. 0.98 (100 MPa) to 0.73 (200 MPa) logs. When pressure was increased from 200 to 300 MPa, spore inactivation was about at the same level (0.73 and 0.77 logs). However, when pressure was increased from 300 to 400, 500, and 550 MPa, the inactivation was substantially increased from 0.77 to 1.97, 2.73, and 3.30 logs respectively.

The spores of *B. cereus* isolated from crab meat exhibited the lowest pressure inactivation of all 3 strains. At the lower range of pressure (100-200 MPa), the spores were inactivated by only 0.45 and 0.34 logs. When the pressure was increased from low (200 MPa) to medium (300-400 MPa) and high (500 and 550 MPa), the inactivation increased from 0.34 to 0.45, 0.76, 2.05, and 3.11 logs respectively.

After pressure treatments, a heat treatment (80° C, 10 min) was applied to inactivate germinated spores. The remaining viable spores cultured on microbiological media are a fraction of spores that have not been germinated by pressure (ungerminated spores). The differences between the original numbers of spores and the number of ungerminated spores represent the number of germinated spores induced by high pressure which is referred to as “germination”. Since heat sensitivity was used as a criterion in a measurement of germination, it can be generally said that

germination level is in fact a result of the combined effect between high hydrostatic pressure and heat treatment (80° C, 10 min). Therefore, the heat treatment (80° C, 10 min) can be considered as an inactivation step after the pressure treatment. The heat treatment together with pressure also can be considered as an alternative to the use of high pressure by itself to directly inactivate spores. The results in this section could also be interpreted as follows.

When pressure-treated spores were exposed to the subsequent heat treatment (80° C, 10 min), the inactivation level increased dramatically at every pressure for all 3 strains. The same results were also similar to the results obtained in section 3.1; however in this study it specifically showed that for all 3 strains a substantial increase in inactivation occurred especially at the low to medium range of pressure (200 to 400 MPa). The inactivation increased approximately 2 to 3 logs at pressures of 200 to 400 MPa for *B. cereus* 14579 i.e. at 200 MPa, an increase from 1.24 to 4.33 logs was observed, at 300 MPa, inactivation was increased from 1.12 to 4.76 logs, and at 400 MPa, 1.98 logs was increased to 4.74 (Fig 2a). At low and high pressure (100 and 500-550 MPa), inactivation increased about 1.5 logs. However, with this 1.5 log increase, the inactivation level was higher than a 5 log reduction i.e. 5.62 (500 MPa) and 5.61 (550 MPa).

A 3 log increase in inactivation was also observed at the low and medium pressure (200 and 300 MPa) for *B. cereus* 49064 (Fig 2b). After heat treatment, the inactivation increased from 0.73 to 3.80 (200 MPa) and 0.77 to 3.74 (300 MPa). A 0.5 to 1.5 log increase was observed at pressures between 400 to 500 MPa; at 400 MPa the inactivation increased from 1.97 to 3.71 logs; at 500 MPa, the inactivation increased from 2.73 to 3.74 logs; and at 550 MPa, the inactivation was increased from 3.30 to 3.83 logs. At a low pressure of 100 MPa, a 2 log increase in inactivation was observed (0.98 to 3.05 logs). The highest inactivation as a result of heat application in addition to pressure treatments was 3.83 logs at 550 MPa.

At the low to medium pressure, a 2-3 log increase in inactivation was observed when pressure-treated *B. cereus* spores isolated from crab were heated at 80° C for 10 min (Fig 2c). At 200 MPa, the inactivation increased from 0.34 to 2.66 logs; at 300 MPa, the inactivation increased from 0.45 to 2.94 logs; and at 400 MPa, the inactivation increased from 0.76 to 3.36 logs. At high pressure of 500 and 550 MPa, 0.5 to 1.5 logs increase was observed i.e. 2.05 to 3.28 (500

MPa) and 3.11 to 3.71 (550 MPa). At the lowest pressure (100 MPa), the inactivation increased from 0.45 to 2.32 logs. The maximum inactivation obtained from pressure and heat treatments for *B. cereus* isolated from crab was 3.71 logs at 550 MPa indicating that this *B. cereus* is the most pressure resistant strain in this study.

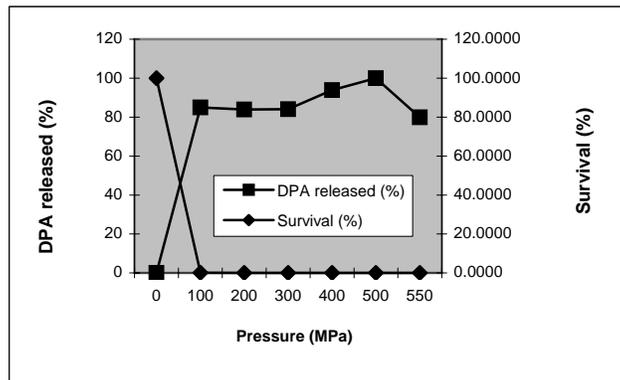
### 3.3 Release of dipicolinic acid

Dipicolinic acid has been implicated in spore resistance, dormancy and germination. After spores are triggered to germinate, spores undergo a series of events during germination and one of these events is a release of dipicolinic acid from the spore core. The amount of DPA released by high pressures due to germination was used as a measurement to determine the possible correlation between the extent of germination and the release of DPA.

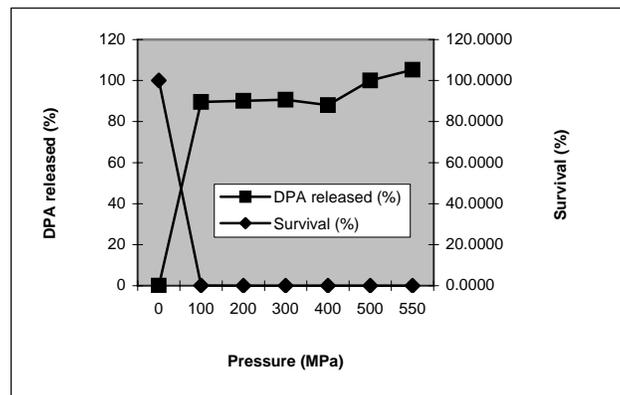
The data clearly shows that the majority of DPA (>80%) was released by the lowest pressure (100 MPa) for all 3 strains of *B. cereus* (Fig 3). An increase in pressure resulting in a higher amount of DPA released was observed in some cases; however the difference in the amount of DPA released is indistinguishable from one another according to the high standard deviation obtained i.e. for all treatments DPA released was essentially the same. Pressurization with heat (germination) had a massive killing effect on *B. cereus* spores i.e. more than 99% (> 2 log reduction) of the viable spores were killed leaving less than 1% survival.

When the release of DPA was correlated to germination, referred to as the survival (%) after pressurization and a heat treatment, it showed that spores had the majority of their DPA released by pressure or DPA-less spores were easily inactivated by heat. A correlation between the extent of germination and DPA released (%) could not be identified with the range of pressures included in this study. A lower range of pressure (0-100 MPa) with varying germination levels would provide greater insight into the extent of germination. However, these results support and explain a huge increase in inactivation of pressure-treated spores with the heat treatment described in section 3.2. Pressure-treated spores or germinated spores had a reduced resistance to a subsequent treatment, which is heat in this case, due to a loss of DPA.

a.



b.



c.

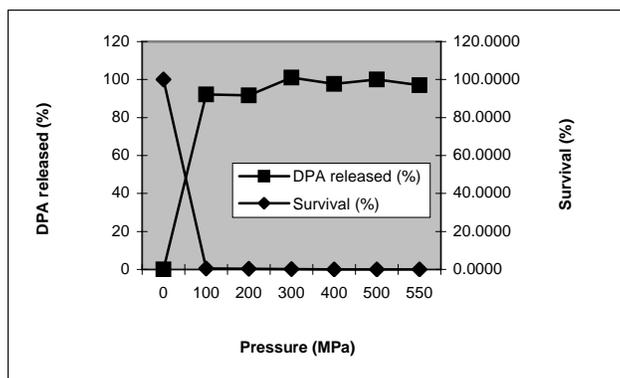


Fig 3: Effect of pressures (100, 200, 300, 400, 500 and 550 MPa) at 40° C for 15 min on the release of DPA and on the survival of the *B. cereus* spores after heat treatment (80° C, 10 min): (a) *B. cereus* 14579 (b) *B. cereus* 49064 and (c) *B. cereus* isolated from crab meat

### 3.4 Effect of processing time on inactivation and germination of *B. cereus* spores inoculated in fresh crab meat

Spores of the most pressure-resistant strain (*B. cereus* isolated from crab meat from previous section 3.2) were inoculated into fresh crab meat and treated with the highest pressure (550 MPa) at 40° C for 5, 10, and 15 min to evaluate the effect of processing time on spore inactivation (as a result of pressure) and spore germination (as a result of pressure and heat).

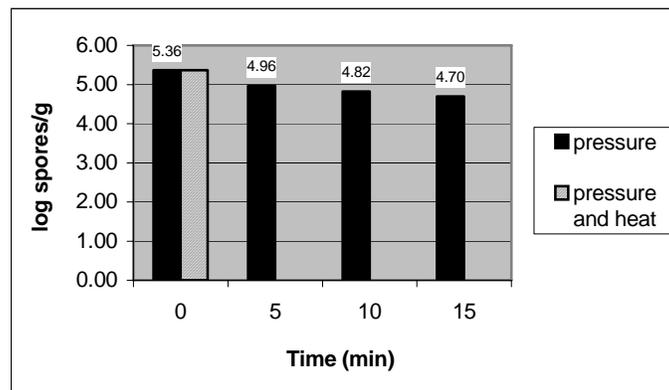


Fig 4: Effects of processing times (5, 10, and 15 min) on viable counts of *B. cereus* (a crab isolate) spores after a pressure treatment (550 MPa) and a pressure and a heat treatment (550 MPa and 80° C, 10 min)

The processing time of 15 min resulted in the highest inactivation of spores ( $5.36 - 4.70 = 0.66$  logs) followed by 10 and 5 min which had a lower inactivation effect i.e. 0.54 and 0.40 logs reduction respectively. At all 3 holding times, the inactivation was lower than a 1 log reduction. In section 3.1, the inactivation of spores in distilled water at 5, 10, and 15 min were reported at 2.07, 3.28, and 3.22 logs reduction; whereas spores inoculated in crab meat showed in Fig 4 were inactivated at 0.40, 0.54, and 0.66 logs. Comparing these results (spores in crab meat) to the results obtained in section 3.1 (spores in distilled water) demonstrated that crab meat protected the spores from pressure inactivation. On the other hand, spores inoculated in crab meat ( $10^5$  spores/g) did not survive pressure and heat treatments applied in the germination measurement i.e. there was no survivor after pressure and heat treatments; whereas spores in the water

survived (section 3.1). This indicated that while crab meat has a protective effect on spores, it contains some substances that somehow facilitates spores destruction by pressure and heat.

### 3.5 Survival of *B. cereus* spores inoculated in fresh crab meat after a pressure treatment and during storage

All 3 strains of *B. cereus* were tested for *B. cereus* toxin production with the Tecra<sup>®</sup> Bacillus Diarrhoeal Enterotoxin (BDE) Visual Immunoassay and all were toxin-producing strains. However, spores of *B. cereus* isolated from crab meat which was the most pressure-resistant (from section 3.2) were chosen for an inoculated pack study to determine its competition to the other surviving organisms after a pressure treatment and storage. A second objective was to determine whether pressure-treated *B. cereus* could grow and produce toxic substances in absence or presence of other microflora. Fresh crab meat was inoculated with  $\sim 10^3$  *B. cereus* spores/g, pressurized at 550 MPa for 15 min at 40° C, and stored at 4 and 12° C for 31 days.

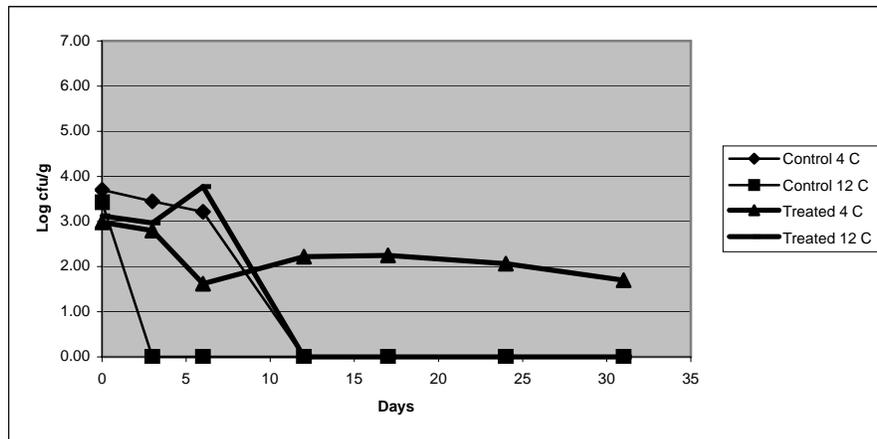


Fig 5: Growth of *B. cereus* in fresh crab meat after a pressure treatment (550 MPa, 40° C for 15 min) and during storage (0, 3, 7, 12, 17, 24, and 31) at 4 and 12° C

A pressure of 550 MPa for 15 min inactivated 0.56 logs of *B. cereus* in crab meat (from 3.60-3.62 to 2.99-3.12) which is in agreement with results in section 3.4. In control samples which were not pressurized, *B. cereus* could not compete with other microflora in crab meat and as a result it was not detected at day 3 (for the control samples stored at 12° C) and at day 12 (for the control samples stored at 4° C). In pressure-treated samples, *B. cereus* probably was injured by the pressure treatments as there was a decrease in *B. cereus* counts on day 3 of samples stored at 4 and 12° C. However, the microorganism recovered and started to multiply after day 3 as shown by a sharp increase in *B. cereus* counts in the treated sample stored at 12° C between day 3 and day 7. *Bacillus cereus* in pressure-treated samples stored at 4° C required a longer time to recover and increased in numbers after day 7 and remained viable until the last day of storage; however, its growth was decreasing with storage time (Fig 5).

On the same day that samples were withdrawn for microbiological analyses, samples were also analyzed for toxin production. In pressure-treated samples with a 4° C storage temperature which was the only condition that *B. cereus* could grow after the pressure treatment and compete with the other surviving organisms (Fig 5), no toxin was detected as shown in Table 1. The other samples were also analyzed for toxin production and none was detected.

Table 1: Toxin production of unpressurized (control) and pressurized fresh crab meat (550 MPa, 15 min at 40° C) inoculated with *B. cereus* ( $10^3$  spores/g) and stored at 4 and 12° C for 31 days

<b>Treatment/Day</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>
Positive control	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Negative control	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Control 4° C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Control 12° C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Treated 4° C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Treated 12° C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

+ is positive for toxin detection

- is negative for toxin detection

Toxin detection was performed in triplicate with 3 samples under the same conditions.

In addition to microbiological analyses and toxin detection, sensory analyses were also performed on samples withdrawn for microbiological and toxin analyses. Experienced sensory panel members were asked to smell and describe crab meat odor after the pressure treatments and storage (Table 2).

Control samples stored at 4 and 12° C both spoiled on day 12; while the pressure-treated samples shelf-life was extended for 5 additional days. The treated samples were considered spoiled at day 17 at both storage temperatures (4 and 12° C). At the time of spoilage, it was noted there were two types of distinct odors described by the sensory panels. A rotten smell, which is a very strong putrid smell, was characterized in the control samples; whereas a stale and old smell was described by the panels in the treated samples. Although a stale and old smell was not as strong as a putrid or rotten smell detected in the control samples, it was sufficiently different from the fresh smell of crab meat and resulted in sample rejection.

Table 2: Odor of unpressurized and pressure-treated crab meat (550 MPa for 15 min at 40° C) inoculated with *B. cereus* stored at the temperature of 4 and 12° C for 31 days

Day	Treatment / Storage temperature			
	Control 4° C <sup>1</sup>	Control 12° C <sup>2</sup>	Treated 4° C <sup>3</sup>	Treated 12° C <sup>4</sup>
0	Fresh	Fresh	Fresh	Fresh
3	Fresh	Fresh	Fresh	Fresh
7	Crab smell, sweet, buttery, not putrid, at early stage of spoilage but still acceptable	Same type of smell as control 4° C but stronger	Stale, old, acceptable	Same type of smell as treated 4° C, acceptable
12	Spoiled, rotten <sup>**</sup>	Spoiled, rotten <sup>**</sup>	Stale, old, acceptable	Stale, old, acceptable
17	Spoiled, rotten	Spoiled, rotten	Stale, old, not rotten, unacceptable <sup>**</sup>	Stale, old, unacceptable <sup>**</sup>
24	Spoiled, rotten	Spoiled, rotten	Strong stale, unacceptable	Strong stale, unacceptable
31	Spoiled, rotten	Spoiled, rotten	Spoiled	Spoiled

<sup>1</sup> Control 4° C: Fresh crab meat inoculated with ~10<sup>3</sup> cfu/g *B. cereus* and stored at 4° C for 31 days

<sup>2</sup> Control 12° C: Fresh crab meat inoculated with ~10<sup>3</sup> cfu/g *B. cereus* and stored at 12° C for 31 days

<sup>3</sup> Treated 4° C: Fresh crab meat inoculated with ~10<sup>3</sup> cfu/g *B. cereus* treated with 550 MPa at 40° C for 15 min and stored at 4° C for 31 days

<sup>4</sup> Treated 12° C: Fresh crab meat inoculated with ~10<sup>3</sup> cfu/g *B. cereus* treated with 550 MPa at 40° C for 15 min and stored at 12° C for 31 days

<sup>\*\*</sup> indicates spoilage evaluated by sensory panel members

#### 4. Discussion

Dormant bacterial spores are well known for their high resistance to environmental stresses including heat, radiation, and chemicals and are difficult to be destroyed under mild conditions, however, when the environment become favorable for growth, spores respond to the external changes and return to life through a germination process (Nicholson et al., 2000). Whereas dormant endospores are difficult to be inactivated, germinated spores or vegetative cells are in a form that are vulnerable to be inactivated as spore resistances are lost upon germination (Setlow, 1994).

Based on the literature, pressure inactivation of spores is generally considered to be involved with a 2-step process: germination of spores by pressure and inactivation of germinated spores. As a result, research on pressure inactivation of spores has been primarily focused on using high pressures to germinate and inactivate spores as well as factors affecting pressure-induced germination of spores. High hydrostatic pressure has been reported to cause initiation of germination and inactivation of *Bacillus* spores such as *B. subtilis* and *B. cereus* spores (Wuytack et al., 1998; Raso et al., 1998a; Raso et al., 1998b; Wuytack et al., 2000; Paidunghat et al., 2002; Moir et al., 2002; Margosch et al., 2004; and Black et al., 2005). In this study, *B. cereus* spores were germinated and inactivated by pressures with a demonstration of a variability of pressure resistance among strains.

At ambient temperature, pressures have been shown to initiate or induce germination of bacterial spores; however, a higher temperature was reported inducing more germination of *B. cereus* spores than a lower temperature (Raso et al., 1998a; McClements et al., 2001; Oh and Moon, 2003; and Opstal et al., 2004). Raso et al. (1998a) studied germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores (14579) with high pressures at 25, 40, and 60° C for 15 min. Their results showed that a high temperature of 40 and 60° C, an increase of pressure caused progressively more germination than at 25° C. Temperature higher than an ambient temperature not only caused more spore germination, but it also inactivated more spores. Margosch et al. (2004) stated that a combination of pressure and a moderate heat is always required to effectively inactivate spores. The temperature of 40° C acquired through heating the pressure transmitting medium (water)

was applied along with the pressure treatments (15 min) in this experiment to study germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores.

Pressure-induced germination and inactivation of *B. cereus* spores of all 3 strains (14579, 49064, crab isolate suspended in distilled water) at 40° C for 15 min was compared. In general, the germination level of *B. cereus* spores of all 3 strains (14579, 49064, a crab meat isolate) increased with pressure except for *B. cereus* spore 49064 which relatively constant at pressures between 200 and 550 MPa (Fig 2). Of all 3 strains, spores of *B. cereus* isolated from crab meat showed the highest resistance to germination by pressure (2-3.5 logs germination) whereas *B. cereus* 14579 was the most pressure-sensitive to germinate (3-5.5 logs germination) as shown in Fig 2. The maximum germination level achieved for *B. cereus* 14579, 49064, and a crab isolate was 5.5, 3.7, and 3.5 logs respectively.

The levels of germination obtained from this study differed from other studies performed on *B. cereus* spore germination with pressure and a mild heat treatment. For example, Oh and Moon (2003) reported 4-6 logs at 600 MPa at 40° C for 15 min treatment for *B. cereus* spores in phosphate buffer. Raso et al. (1998a) demonstrated up to 6.9 logs germination at 690 MPa at 40° C for 15 min for *B. cereus* spores in phosphate buffer. The differences in the organisms, the processing conditions (pressure, temperature, and time) and the physicochemical environment (pH of suspension medium, pH of sporulation medium) could be accounted for the variability among studies (Opstal et al., 2004).

Although these results showed some differences to other studies performed with *B. cereus*, there were some similarities in that pressure caused an incomplete germination of spores i.e. there was always a fraction of ungerminated spores remaining in the spore suspension. In other words, there is always a fraction of superdormant spores that resists germination with high pressure. For example, at the highest pressure (550 MPa), not all ( $\sim 10^8$  spore/ml) spores prepared from the same single spore preparation were germinated by pressure, only  $\sim 10^5$  spores were germinated by pressure demonstrating that spore resistance to pressure is not homogeneous. This observation is in agreement with several observations observed previously in *Bacillus* spore works.

As mentioned previously that the mechanism of pressure killing spores is presumably through germination of spores and inactivation of germinated spores, germination of spores has been discussed earlier now the inactivation will be discussed. The inactivation of *B. cereus* increased with medium to high pressure (300-550 MPa); whereas it decreased with low to medium pressure (100-300 MPa) i.e. the medium pressure (200-300 MPa) resulted in the minimum pressure inactivation. The inactivation of *B. cereus* in this experiment showed differences from other studies performed on *Bacillus* spores (Raso et al., 1998a; Wuytack et al. 1998; and Opstal et al., 2004). Raso et al. (1998a) and Opstal et al. (2004) reported an increase inactivation of *B. cereus* spores with increasing pressure at the temperature of 40° C. Wuytack et al. (1998) reported a maximum inactivation or minimum survivors of *B. subtilis* spores treated with pressures at 40° C for 15 min at 200 MPa.

As mentioned earlier, the mechanism of pressure spore destruction is presumably through germination of spores and inactivation of germinated spores. It was assumed that if spores were induced to germinate, that pressure would inactivate all the germinated spores. However, there are evidences showing that not all germinated spores would be killed by a single pressure treatment. Our results also confirmed and supported that observation. When germination and inactivation was compared, it was found that the inactivation was always lower than the germination at the same pressure applied. This indicated that not all germinated spores were inactivated by pressure in a single pressure treatment which is in agreement with several studies (Opstal et al., 2004).

In addition, it was observed that *B. cereus* spores germinated with high pressures (500-550 MPa) were less resistant to be inactivated compared to spores germinated with medium pressure (200-300 MPa), which contradicts results reported by Wuytack et al. (1998). Wuytack et al. (1998) studied induction of germination of *B. subtilis* spores by low (100 MPa) and high pressure (600 MPa) and reported that *B. subtilis* spores germinated with low pressure were more sensitive to pressure than those germinated with high pressure. The reason is that *B. subtilis* spores germinated at low pressure had a complete germination process; therefore germinated spores were sensitive to inactivation by pressure. Whereas *B. subtilis* spores induced to germinate with high pressure did not have a complete germination process or had an aborted germination; as a

result spores did not lose their resistance to pressure. Although these results explain the different pressure sensitivities of spores induced to germinate at low and high pressure, the fact that spores germinated with the medium pressure (200-300 MPa) were the most resistant to inactivation in this study could not be explained.

By subjecting spores to pressure, not only did pressure kill certain amounts of spores (represented by inactivation level) but pressure also caused damages to spores to a level that they were not able to survive a subsequent heat or inactivated by heat (represented by germination level). The fact that inactivation was a result of direct inactivation effect of pressure i.e. pressure killing effect to viable spores; whereas germination was a result of a combination between pressure and heat (80° C, 10 min) used in the procedure to kill all germinated spores induced by pressure, the results could be viewed or interpreted in a differently. That is to consider the heat treatment (80° C, 10 min) as an inactivation of germinated spores induced with pressure.

In general, it can be seen that after pressure treatments, spores became sensitive to heat depending on the pressure level. At every pressure, pressure-treated spores became more sensitive to heat. These results were supported by the release of dipicolinic acid from the spore core mentioned in section 3.3. The majority of dipicolinic acid (>80%) was shown to be released by the application of pressure irrespective of pressure level. As a result, DPA-less or DPA-free spores respectively were sensitive to a subsequent heat treatment showing a low number of the survival (Fig 3). A similar result was reported by Margosch et al. (2004) that pressure-induced DPA-free *Bacillus* spores were accompanied by the loss of their heat resistance. After 2 min of pressurization, *B. subtilis* and *B. licheniformis* released 96 and 90% DPA and could be inactivated at 70° C and 0.1 MPa. In contrast to DPA-free spores, *B. amyloliquefaciens* spores that lost only their partial DPA (58%) were not heat sensitive.

Studies by Wuytack et al. (2000); and Paidunghat et al. (2002) on pressure-induced germination of *B. subtilis* at low and high pressure at ambient temperature demonstrated different mechanisms of pressure-induced germination at low and high pressure. At moderate pressures up to 250 MPa, the mechanism of pressure-induced germination is similar to nutrient-induced germination and the DPA was released from the spores by a true physiological germination

process. High pressure (>500 MPa) also caused a release of the DPA but did not involve a triggering of the nutrient-receptors, high pressure caused a channel opening for DPA to be released from the spore core. Even though no research has been performed on the mechanism of pressure-induced germination of *B. cereus*, a postulation that spore germination at different pressures with different mechanisms which would ultimately influence their sensitivities to lethal agents such as heat seems to be appropriate explanation otherwise an enhanced inactivation as a result of heat in addition to pressure should be the same.

Provided that a combined use of heat (80° C, 10 min) and pressure could be used as an alternative to a simple use of pressure, the expected inactivation level could be achieved through either of these two approaches. For example, an approximate 4.5 log of *B. cereus* 14579 was inactivated by pressure but with a combination of pressure and heat the same 4.5 log reduction could be achieved by using a pressure only at 200 MPa plus heat (Fig 2a). A maximum 3.2 log reduction of *B. cereus* 49064 spores could be accomplished through a use of pressure at 550 MPa or use of a lower range of pressure (200-500 MPa) with heat (Fig 2b). However, the reason for a marked difference in heat sensitivities between spores pressurized at low to medium pressure (200-300 MPa) to spores treated at the other pressures still need a further research.

When *B. cereus* spores were inoculated into fresh crab meat, the germination level of inoculated spores was higher than spores suspended in distilled water as previously discussed. Opstal et al. (2004) also observed a higher germination level of *B. cereus* spores in a food system i.e. milk; at 40° C for 30 min, the germination level was 1.5 to 3 logs higher in milk than in phosphate buffer. This is probably due to the presence of some substances, most likely L-alanine, which is one of the general germinants for *Bacillus* spores. It has been reported that germination can be triggered by a variety of factors including nutrients (amino acids, sugars) and non-nutrient germinants, and physical factors (hydrostatic pressure and abrasion) (Barlass et al., 2002). *B. cereus* has been shown to germinate in response to L-alanine and to ribosides (Clements and Moir, 1998). Therefore, an application of pressure treatment with a possible presence of germinant or germination-inducing components in crab meat could be the reason for the increasing germination of spores in the meat. Whereas inoculated spores were germinated to a

higher level, inactivation was very low (Fig 4). It can be generally concluded that the meat had a protective effect on spore inactivation by pressure.

As mentioned previously high hydrostatic pressure had little effect on inactivation of *B. cereus* spore inoculated in crab meat, therefore, there is still a possibility that growth of surviving *B. cereus* and germinated *B. cereus* spores after pressure treatment can lead to food spoilage and food poisoning during storage. Inoculated crab meat after high pressure treatment (550 MPa) was stored at two different temperatures (4 and 12° C) representing a normal and an abused temperature during storage and distribution. Obviously, *B. cereus* was not a competitive organism with a presence of other microflora in crab meat at both temperatures. With some of the microflora inactivated by pressure, after recovery from injury, *B. cereus* could compete with other flora and remained present at 4° C but not at 12° C through the end of storage (Fig 4). However, growth of *B. cereus* in treated crab meat at 4° C did not produce diarrheal toxin at a detectable level (1 ng/ml). Moreover, the pressure-treated crab meat at 4° C was also rejected at day 17 when toxin was not formed. The use of high hydrostatic pressure to treated crab meat inoculated with *B. cereus* showed that the meat remained safe to consume even when the shelf-life was extended for 5 additional days (from day 12 to day 17).

In conclusion, *B. cereus* spores in fresh crab meat could be inactivated at 550 MPa at 40° C for 15 min to achieve the highest inactivation level (0.5 logs) within a limit of existing technology. At the present, this temperature/pressure combination is the most effective attainable; however, new technology will soon allow higher pressures and higher temperatures to be used. Although a complete inactivation of *B. cereus* spores is not achieved through pressurization and *B. cereus* could compete with other surviving organisms, *B. cereus* does not grow to the pathogenic level that would produce enough diarrheal toxin to cause food poisoning. Therefore, pressure-treated crab meat with an extended shelf life presents no risk to consumers for *B. cereus* foodborne disease unless good manufacturing practices are not employed.

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