

**Evaluation of chemical treatments and ozone on the viability
of *Cryptosporidium parvum* oocysts in fruit juices**

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(ABSTRACT)

Cryptosporidium parvum is a protozoan parasite historically associated with waterborne and more recently foodborne outbreaks of diarrheal illness. Contamination of certain foods, such as unpasteurized apple cider, with infective oocysts may occur as oocysts are shed in the feces of common ruminants like cattle and deer that graze in and around orchards. Cryptosporidiosis can result in a severe illness for previously healthy individuals and a life-threatening illness in immunocompromised individuals. Disease occurs after the ingestion of small infective oocysts (4 to 5 μ m in size). The relatively thick membrane of the oocysts allows them to be resistant to chlorine and many other environmental pressures, making oocysts difficult to inactivate.

In this study, alternative treatments to pasteurization were evaluated for their ability to inhibit *C. parvum* oocyst viability in fruit juices. Oocyst viability was analyzed with a cell culture infectivity assay, using a human ileocecal cell line (HCT-8) that is most similar to human infection. The percent inhibition of infection by each treatment was determined along with the corresponding log reduction for the treatments found to be most effective. Infection by treated oocysts was compared to that of control untreated oocysts. Cell monolayers were infected with 10^6 treated oocysts or a series of 10-fold dilutions. Parasitic life stages were visualized using an immunohistochemistry system and 100 microscope fields counted per monolayer. Organic acids and H₂O₂ were added on a wt/vol basis to apple cider, orange juice, and grape juices. Malic, citric, and tartaric

acids at concentrations from 1%-5% inhibited *C. parvum* infectivity of HCT-8 cells by up to 88%. Concentrations ranging from 0.025%-3% H₂O₂ were evaluated where addition of 0.025% H₂O₂ to each juice resulted in a >5 log reduction of *C. parvum* infectivity as determined with an MPN-based cell culture infectivity assay. Treating apple cider, orange juice, and grape juice with ozone for a time period of 30 seconds up to 15 minutes at 6°C and 22°C (0.9 g/L flow rate) inhibited *C. parvum* viability to > 90% as monitored in the cell culture assay. It is hypothesized that oocyst wall proteins that are necessary for infection are oxidized by the reactive oxygen species generated from the decomposition of the ozone and hydrogen peroxide treatments. These treatments or combinations thereof may offer potential alternatives to traditional pasteurization for fruit juices to successfully inhibit *C. parvum* viability.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my beloved and missed father, Karl Kniel, who passed away on March 3, 1993. A special thanks to my Dad who instilled in me a love for science along with the ability to question science and myself. I only wish that he could be here to read this and to continue to question science himself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	5
A. <i>CRYPTOSPORIDIUM PARVUM</i>	5
1. Waterborne outbreaks	5
2. Foodborne outbreaks.....	9
3. Life cycle	11
4. Infection.....	13
5. Illness.	17
6. Detection methods	19
6. The <i>Cryptosporidium</i> oocyst.....	21
7. Importance of protease activity for infectivity by protozoa.....	24
8. Evidence for protease activity in <i>Cryptosporidium</i>	27
B. JUICE HACCP.....	29
1. History of juice associated outbreaks	29
2. Overview of Regulation.....	30
C. ANTIMICROBIALS AS ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL JUICE PASTEURIZATION.....	32
1. Organic acids.....	32
a. Citric acid	33
b. Malic acid	33
c. Tartaric acid.....	34
2. Hydrogen peroxide.....	34
3. Ozone	37
D. LITERATURE CITED	39

III. IMMUNOHISTOCHEMISTRY BASED ASSAY TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTS OF TREATMENTS ON CRYPTOSPORIDIUM PARVUM VIABILITY (Formatted for publication in Journal of Eukaryotic Microbiology)

A. Title page	59
B. Abstract	60
C. Introduction.....	61
D. Materials and Methods	62
E. Results and Discussion.....	64
F. Acknowledgment	66
G. Literature Cited	67
H. Figures.....	69
I. Appendix I: Determination of the Infectivity Threshold and Observed Fields for a Cell Culture Immunoperoxidase Assay.....	70
J. Appendix II: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Drugs on <i>Cryptosporidium parvum</i> using a Cell Culture Assay.....	74

IV. EFFECT OF ORGANIC ACIDS AND HYDROGEN PEROXIDE ON *CRYPTOSPORIDIUM PARVUM* VIABILITY IN FRUIT JUICES (Formatted for publication in Journal of Food Protection)

A. Title page	77
B. Abstract	78
C. Introduction.....	79
D. Materials and Methods	82
E. Results and Discussion.....	88
F. Acknowledgment	94
G. Literature Cited	95
H. Figures and Tables	102
I. Appendix I: Sensory Evaluation of Amended Fruit Juices	112

V. EFFECT OF OZONE TREATMENT ON *CRYPTOSPORIDIUM PARVUM* VIABILITY IN FRUIT JUICES (Formatted for publication in Journal of Food Protection)

A. Title page	114
B. Abstract	115
C. Introduction.....	116
D. Materials and Methods	118
E. Results and Discussion.....	124
F. Acknowledgment	129
G. Literature Cited	130
H. Figures and Tables	136

VI. EFFECT OF OXIDATION ON *CRYPTOSPORIDIUM PARVUM* PROTEASE ACTIVITY (Formatted for publication in Journal of Eukaryotic Microbiology)

A. Title page	141
B. Abstract	142
C. Introduction.....	143
D. Materials and Methods	146
E. Results and Discussion.....	151
F. Acknowledgment	154
G. Literature Cited	155
H. Figures and Tables	160

VII. VITA.....163