



Effect of Time, Temperature and Size Reduction on Some Physico-chemical Characteristics of *Sorghum bicolor* Leaf Sheath Extracts

**A. K. Agah^a, M. Owureku-Asare^a, D. O. Ofosu^{a*},
J. Agyei-Amponsah^a, J. Apatey^a, E. A. Ayeh^a
and D. Larbi^a**

^a *Radiation Technology Centre, Biotechnology and Nuclear Agriculture Research Institute, Ghana.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Sorghum bicolor leaf sheaths are a common dried ingredient used as a colourant for waakye, a popular Ghanaian dish made from rice and cowpea. The leaf sheaths are also used in traditional medicine due to its impressive bioactive composition. Its potential as a natural food colourant and antioxidant has been established but the effect of different processing conditions on the physicochemical composition and characteristics have not been adequately researched. The present study assessed the effect of size reduction (whole, coarse and fine), temperature (room temperature (28°C) and 98°C) and time (20, 40 and 60 min) on the colour, pH and ascorbic acid content of sorghum leaf sheaths. Samples were steeped in a measured amount of water and

*Corresponding author: E-mail: danofosu@hotmail.com;

analysis conducted on the extracts. Size reduction significantly reduced the lightness (L^*) and colour intensity (chroma and hue) of extracts steeped at both temperatures. The pH of all extracts was relatively neutral, ranging from 6.63 to 7.23 and was not significantly affected by size reduction or time. Extraction of ascorbic acid was more effective at 98°C and did not degrade with constant heating within the experimental time. Average ascorbic acid content of extracts was 3.89 g/L. For effective utilization and value addition of *Sorghum bicolor* leaf sheaths, food producers should consider fine milling and late incorporation into food for optimum colour and phytochemical content preservation.

Keywords: *Sorghum*; ascorbic acid; waakye leaves; colour; extract; size reduction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sorghum bicolor (L) Moench is the second most important cereal on the African continent [1,2] grown primarily for its energy rich grains [3]. In addition to its use as food and feed, other parts of the sorghum plant can be used for the production of bioenergy, syrup, building materials and brooms [4, 5]. Some sorghum varieties (dye sorghum) are specifically grown for the pigments in their leaf sheaths [6].

Sorghum leaf sheaths contain carotenoids, flavonoids, phenolic acids, chlorophyll, lycopene and β -carotene [7]. The rich bioactive composition has been found to induce homopoeitic, anti-anaemic, anti-inflammatory and immune modulating properties [8,9]. They are also abundant in 3-deoxyanthocyanidins which are rare natural pigments the most abundant of which is apigeninidin [10]. The natural pigments have potential for use as a natural indicator for acid base titrations [7] and a stable natural food colourant [11].

Waakye leaves, as the leaf sheaths are commonly called in Ghana, are an ingredient in the preparation of waakye, a combination of cooked rice and cowpea. Dye sorghum leaf sheaths impart a signature reddish brown colour to the meal and are also used for colouring koko (a fermented cereal porridge), wagashi (a soft cheese) [12], leather products [7] and woven artefacts [13]. Sorghum leaf sheaths have shown very high total antioxidant capacity which has been attributed to its anthocyanin content [14].

The use of dye sorghum in food preparation has been found to substantially increase the phytochemical content and antioxidant capacity of waakye [15] and fermented maize dough [16]. Traditional methods of extraction involve the use of kanwu (saltpetre) with or without the application of heat [10]. Akogou [11] proposed the use of leaf sheath powder for modernizing

traditional preparations. Most processors employ the use of sorghum leaf sheath extracts (rather than the whole leaf) in food preparation [12] but there is little information available on how size reduction and time affect colour extraction from the leaf sheaths. The objective of this study, therefore, was to assess the effect of size reduction and cooking time on the extraction of colour and ascorbic acid into water extracts obtained from steeping sorghum leaf sheaths at different temperatures.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Materials

Leaf sheaths of *sorghum bicolor* without visible fungal infection were purchased from a local market in Ghana (Madina market).

2.2 Sample Preparation

The leaf sheaths were cut into different sizes to analyse the effect of size reduction on the colour, pH and ascorbic acid content of extracts. Sorghum leaf sheaths were cut in three different ways: leaf sheaths cut into lengths of 6 cm with an average width of 2 cm was designated as 'whole samples', 'coarsely shredded' (coarse) samples were leaf sheaths cut into sizes of 1 cm² and 'finely milled' (fine) samples were obtained by milling leaf sheaths with a hammer mill (mesh size 16).

15g of sample was placed into a 500 ml beaker containing 300ml of distilled water. Each designated size was steeped at room temperature (28°C) and 98°C for 20, 40 and 60 minutes. A water bath at \approx 98 °C was used to maintain a constant temperature at 98°C. After steeping for the required time the supernatant (extract) was strained, allowed to cool and then bottled prior to analysis.

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Colour

Colour analysis was conducted using a Minolta CR-310 Chroma Meter. The extracts were poured into petri dishes until half-filled to minimize spillage and for uniformity. Readings were done at the centre of the dish for accuracy. The Chroma meter was calibrated using a standard white calibration curve plate before measurements were taken.

The L^* , a^* and b^* values were taken for each sample and the Chroma and Hue were subsequently calculated according formulas below:

$$\text{Chroma} = \sqrt{a^{*2} + b^{*2}}$$

$$\text{Hue} = \tan^{-1}\left(\frac{b^*}{a^*}\right)$$

2.3.2 Ascorbic acid

Ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) content was determined by the Redox titration method using Iodine solution according to AOAC (2000). Iodine solution, 1% starch indicator and vitamin C standard solution were prepared in accordance with the standard. Ten (10) drops of 1% starch indicator was added to 25ml of sample in a 125ml Erlenmeyer flask. The sample was titrated against 0.005 mol/l iodine solution in a burette until the end point. Initial and final volumes of iodine were recorded and used to calculate the ascorbic acid content in mg/100g according to the following relation:

$$= 0.005 \times 176.12 \times \text{average titre}$$

Ascorbic acid content of a standard solution was determined and used to adjust obtained results.

2.3.3 pH

The pH of the extracts was measured using a pH meter according to AOAC (2000)

2.4 Data Analysis

All measurements were taken in triplicate.

Analysis of variance and mean separation were conducted using Statgraphics XVI employing multiple range test and LSD to assess differences between extracts at 95% confidence level. Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated using Microsoft Excel.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Colour Analysis

From experimental observation, the sorghum leaf sheaths produced a rich reddish brown colour when steeped. Table 1 shows the L^* , a^* , b^* , chroma and hue values for the different treatments.

Lightness (L^*), Redness (a^*) and yellowness (b^*) were generally lowest in milled sorghum leaf sheath extracts. No significant differences ($p > 0.05$) were however observed between extracts of coarse and whole sorghum leaf sheaths. Size reduction provides an increased surface area for extraction of components which is likely to have caused the difference in lightness and colour intensity [17,18,19].

Visual observation showed that the colour of extracts became darker with heat application and had a cloudy, dull and almost dirty appearance. This corresponded with the lower lightness (L^*), Chroma and hue values observed for samples steeped at 98°C in comparison to those steeped at room temperature (28°C). The application of heat has been used to aid extraction of components in processes of infusion and decoction due to its ability to increase the rate of extraction [20-23]. The increased extraction is evidenced by the lower L^* value.

The present observation is however, also similar to that of Akogou et al. [12] who observed that total anthocyanin content (the main colour components in sorghum leaf sheaths) reduced after heat treatments at 65, 95 and 121°C for 30 minutes each and percentage losses of 17 – 18%, 59 –66% and 60 –61% respectively. Chroma and hue were higher in sorghum leaf sheath extracts steeped at room temperature (28°C) than in extracts steeped at 98°C. The reduction in anthocyanins as a result of heat treatment is attributed to their breakdown into other compounds such as calchones [20,22] Whereas the a^* value (redness) reduced, the opacity, indicated by a low L^* value, increased.

Table 1. The effect of temperature, and material size on colour parameters of sorghum leaf extracts

Temperature (°C)		Material Size					
		98			28		
Time		20	40	60	20	40	60
l	Whole	39.52 ± 0.11 ^{Aa}	40.75 ± 0.17 ^{Aa}	39.73 ± 0.12 ^{Aa}	59.12 ± 0.11 ^{Aa}	61.83 ± 0.18 ^{Aa}	60.08 ± 0.12 ^{Aa}
	Coarse	38.64 ± 0.12 ^{Ba}	37.85 ± 0.15 ^{Ba}	37.79 ± 0.09 ^{Ba}	53.95 ± 0.05 ^{Ba}	56.68 ± 0.13 ^{Ba}	54.96 ± 0.21 ^{Ba}
	Fine	37.65 ± 0.10 ^{Ca}	37.42 ± 0.11 ^{Ca}	37.43 ± 0.18 ^{Ca}	39.67 ± 0.12 ^{Ca}	41.10 ± 0.12 ^{Ca}	38.04 ± 0.60 ^{Ca}
a	Whole	13.50 ± 0.11 ^{Aa}	15.75 ± 0.13 ^{Aa}	13.23 ± 0.09 ^{Aa}	10.56 ± 0.11 ^{Aa}	10.26 ± 0.19 ^{Aa}	11.31 ± 0.22 ^{Ba}
	Coarse	10.60 ± 0.25 ^{Ba}	7.33 ± 0.10 ^{Ba}	8.47 ± 0.12 ^{Ba}	18.32 ± 0.18 ^{Ba}	15.23 ± 0.29 ^{Ba}	15.88 ± 0.31 ^{Ba}
	Fine	3.92 ± 0.19 ^{Ca}	3.68 ± 0.02 ^{Ca}	3.65 ± 0.15 ^{Ca}	11.40 ± 0.31 ^{Aa}	14.74 ± 0.18 ^{Aa}	6.32 ± 0.09 ^{Ca}
b	Whole	2.27 ± 0.08 ^{Aa}	4.76 ± 0.13 ^{Aa}	2.84 ± 0.21 ^{Aa}	21.66 ± 0.07 ^{Ba}	18.71 ± 0.25 ^{Ba}	21.12 ± 0.31 ^{Ba}
	Coarse	0.88 ± 0.11 ^{Ba}	-0.47 ± 0.17 ^{Ba}	-0.18 ± 0.15 ^{Ba}	23.42 ± 0.12 ^{Ca}	23.28 ± 0.29 ^{Ca}	23.48 ± 0.32 ^{Ca}
	Fine	-1.44 ± 0.41 ^{Ca}	-1.48 ± 0.19 ^{Ca}	-1.46 ± 0.12 ^{Ca}	2.01 ± 0.28 ^{Aa}	5.36 ± 0.07 ^{Aa}	-0.35 ± 0.29 ^{Aa}
Chroma	Whole	13.69 ± 0.11 ^{Aa}	16.46 ± 0.16 ^{Aa}	13.53 ± 0.13 ^{Aa}	24.10 ± 0.07 ^{Aa}	21.34 ± 0.30 ^{Aa}	23.95 ± 0.37 ^{Aa}
	Coarse	10.64 ± 0.25 ^{Ba}	7.34 ± 0.10 ^{Ba}	8.47 ± 0.12 ^{Ba}	29.73 ± 0.17 ^{Ba}	27.82 ± 0.39 ^{Ba}	28.35 ± 0.04 ^{Ba}
	Fine	4.19 ± 0.05 ^{Ca}	3.97 ± 0.06 ^{Ca}	3.94 ± 0.11 ^{Ca}	11.58 ± 0.34 ^{Ca}	15.68 ± 0.15 ^{Ca}	6.33 ± 0.08 ^{Ca}
hue	Whole	9.53 ± 0.31 ^{Aa}	16.81 ± 0.33 ^{Aa}	12.13 ± 0.81 ^{Aa}	64.01 ± 0.25 ^{Aa}	61.25 ± 0.20 ^{Aa}	61.83 ± 0.14 ^{Aa}
	Coarse	4.75 ± 0.59 ^{Ba}	-3.64 ± 1.30 ^{Ba}	-1.22 ± 1.03 ^{Ba}	51.96 ± 0.24 ^{Ba}	56.82 ± 0.28 ^{Ba}	55.93 ± 0.24 ^{Ba}
	Fine	-20.25 ± 6.18 ^{Ca}	-21.82 ± 2.67 ^{Ca}	-21.81 ± 2.33 ^{Ca}	10.00 ± 1.19 ^{Ca}	19.99 ± 0.43 ^{Ca}	-3.21 ± 2.62 ^{Ca}

LSD. For each measured parameter, means in the same column (per treatment time) with the same upper case are not significantly different ($P>0.05$) from each other for each steeping method. Means within the same row (per each material size classification) with the same lower case are not significantly different ($P>0.05$) from each other for each steeping method.

The time of steeping, however played no statistically significant role in the measured lightness, redness and yellowness of brews suggesting that colour is stable within 60 minutes of constant heating. A more opaque brew would be preferred because of the likelihood of such a brew to impart more colour to waakye. A lower I^* value was hence taken as a positive indicator. The reduction in Chroma and hue is however undesirable since it may connote a lower phytochemical content.

3.2 pH

The pH of waakye leaf extracts as depicted in Figs. 1 and 2 ranged from 6.63 to 7.23 implying that all the extracts were near neutral. The lowest pH was recorded by finely milled leaf sheaths infused for 60 minutes at room temperature (Fig. 1) while the highest was recorded by finely milled and coarsely shredded leaf sheaths steeped at 98 °C for 40 minutes (Fig. 2). The pH of brews followed no particular trend in relation to size reduction and temperature, as shown in Fig. 3. The relatively neutral range of pH is likely to have contributed to the stability of colour analysed. Apigeninidin, the main colour component in sorghum leaf sheaths [24,25], has been found to be stable within a pH range of 6 – 10 [12]. The range of pH values measured presupposes that the pH of sorghum leaf brews is relatively stable with respect to changes in material size and temperatures up to 98°C within a time of 60 minutes.

3.3 Ascorbic Acid Content (Vitamin C)

Ascorbic acid also known as vitamin C is a naturally occurring organic compound that is essential in the human diet [26,27]. A lack of vitamin C in the diet can lead to the development of scurvy, a disease that affects the gums of humans [26,28]. Vitamin C may also act as an antioxidant against oxidative stress [26,29]. The change in ascorbic acid contents of the sorghum leaf extracts over time at different temperatures are shown in Figs. 4 and 5.

Ascorbic acid content of the extracts ranged from 0.54 to 8.50g/l. Extracts of whole leaf sheaths steeped at 28°C for 40 minutes recorded the lowest content and finely milled leaf sheaths steeped for 60 minutes recorded the highest ascorbic acid content. The ascorbic acid content of brews increased significantly with a reduction of material size. No significant differences ($p > 0.05$) were however observed between the ascorbic acid content of extracts from coarsely cut and finely milled sorghum leaf sheaths. Comminution increases the surface area of materials through the creation of new previously unexposed surfaces. The increased surface area leads to faster extraction of components [30]. An increase in surface area has however also been found to cause depletion of ascorbic acid content as a result of increased exposure to the atmosphere [31]. Depletion due to comminution was not evident in this study.

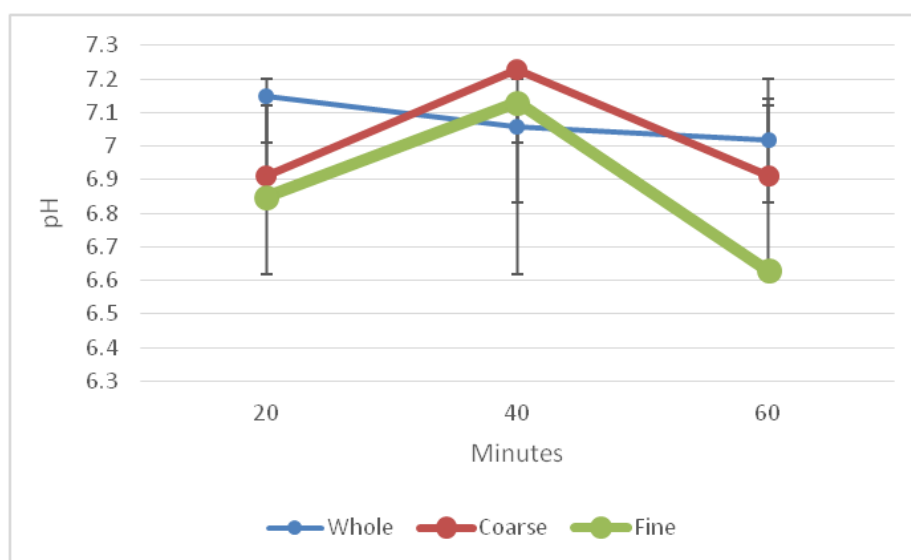


Fig. 1. Effect of time on pH of sorghum leaf sheath extracts steeped at room temperature (28°C)

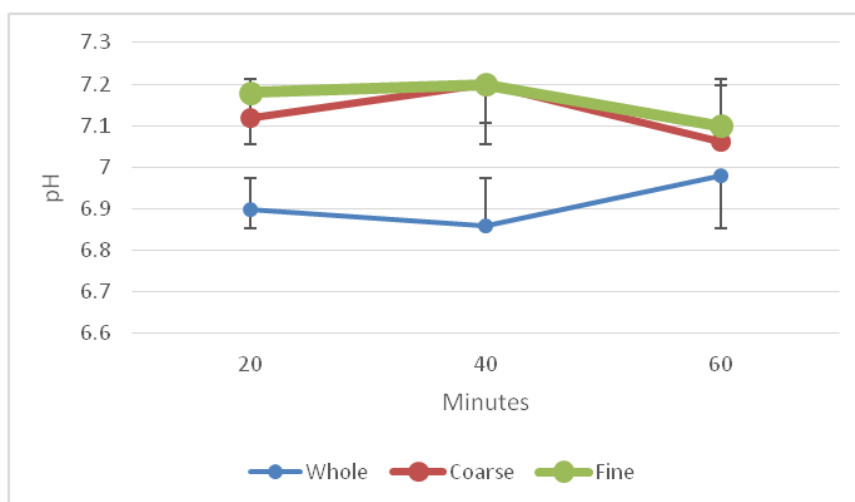


Fig. 2. Effect of time on pH of sorghum leaf sheath extracts steeped at 98°C

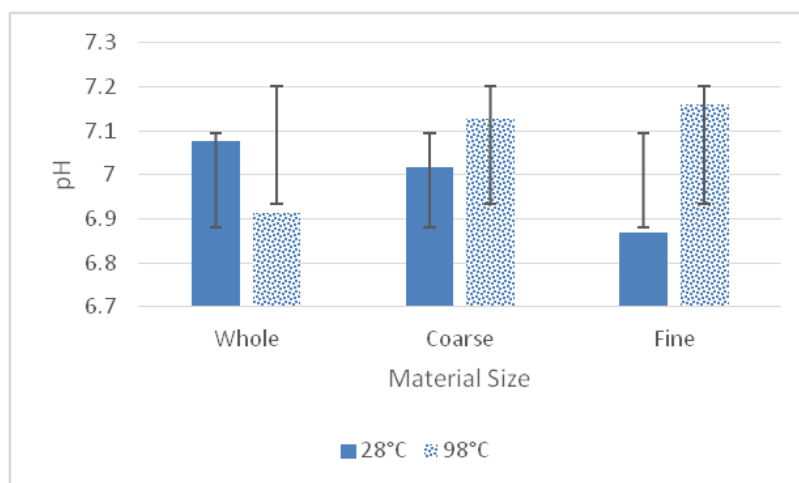


Fig. 3. Effect of material size on the pH of sorghum leaves brews steeped at different temperatures

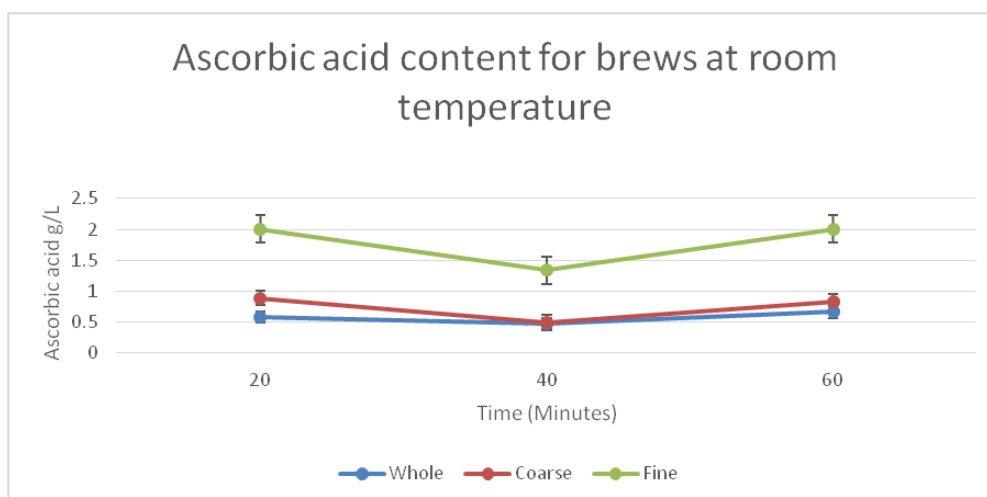


Fig. 4. Effect of time on ascorbic acid content of sorghum leaf sheath extracts steeped at room temperature (28°C)

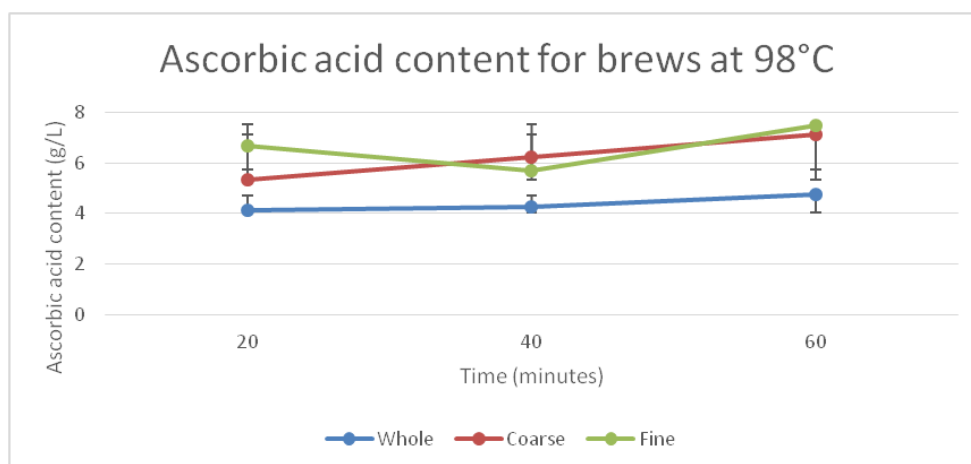


Fig. 5. Effect of time on ascorbic acid content of sorghum leaf sheath extracts steeped at 98°C

The ascorbic acid content of extracts steeped at 98°C contained higher contents of ascorbic acid in comparison to those steeped at 28°C. Heat treatment of sorghum leaf sheaths aided the extraction of vitamin C from the leaves into the water as depicted in Fig. 6. Vitamin C is reported to be susceptible to heat and the extent of depletion is dependent on the holding time [32]. Igwemmar et al. [33] and Njoku et al. [34] recorded reduction in vitamin C contents in fruits and vegetables after temperature treatments for short periods. This was not evidenced in the steeping of sorghum leaf sheaths at 98°C within a period of 60 minutes.

The effect of heating on the ascorbic acid content is highly dependent on the food material it is contained in. While vitamin C in water is quite stable within a time of 1 hour, other materials such as fruit purees and leafy vegetables have their content depleted within a few minutes.

Furthermore, the vitamin C content of the brews remained stable, and instead increased with time, (though not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level) reaching a maximum concentration after a period of 60 minutes. Similar increases in vitamin C content were

observed for rosehips which were extracted at 20 and 100°C [35]. The vitamin C content increased with time and reached its maximum content at 4.5 hours before decreasing. Calyxes of *hibiscus sabdariffa* boiled in water for 5, 10 and 15 minutes also had an increase in the vitamin C content from 5 to 10 minutes but subsequently decreased again at 15 minutes [36]. Şendil [35] suggested that the rosehip extract matrix contributed to the slow degradation of ascorbic acid. Three factors are key in ascorbic acid depletion: temperature, the form in which ascorbic acid occurs and the matrix [37]. The food matrix in which a nutrient is contained has a profound effect on the rate of reaction and its chemical behaviour because of the differences in interaction of the food components with unique chemical and structural features [38,39,40]. While the exact mechanism that supports the stability of ascorbic acid in sorghum bicolor leaf sheaths is yet to be determined, it is evident that its composition has a role to play.

The quantity and stability of ascorbic acid in extracts suggests that sorghum leaf sheaths have the potential to supply a substantial amount of vitamin C to the foods they are used to prepare [41,42,43].

Table 2. Correlation between pH, ascorbic acid, I*, a*, b*, Chroma and hue of sorghum bicolor leaf sheath extracts

	pH	Ascorbic acid	I*	a*	b*	Chroma	hue
pH	1						
Ascorbic acid	0.311703	1					
I	0.045778	-0.80186	1				
a	-0.27323	-0.62594	0.459743	1			
b	-0.01198	-0.82229	0.960419	0.6185	1		
Chroma	-0.10209	-0.82607	0.877803	0.810162	0.961177	1	
hue	-0.09841	-0.86932	0.950018	0.685442	0.959615	0.957387	1

Table 2 shows the correlation between the different variables. A strong negative correlation ($R^2 = -0.83, -0.87$) was observed between the vitamin C content and the Chroma and hue of extracts (also observed between ascorbic acid and the L^* , a^* and b^* values) as shown in Table 2. The negative correlation may be as a result of a depleting effect of ascorbic acid on the anthocyanin contents of the extracts. Previous studies in model solutions have shown a link between ascorbic acid addition and anthocyanin content reduction [44,45]. While such interaction is unexpected in a natural matrix, extraction and steeping times may have influenced these observations.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the study that size reduction of sorghum leaf sheaths aids colour and ascorbic acid extraction in water. Extraction of finely milled leaf sheaths at 98°C produced the darkest water extracts with the highest ascorbic acid contents regardless of the time of steeping within (60 minutes). As such, the authors recommend that future research should look at the use of comminution and extraction to produce an ingredient that can be incorporated closer to the end of cooking rather than the beginning.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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