

High Nutritional Value of non-conventional Balsam Apple (*Momordica dioica* Roxb.): A Indian Wild Fruit Vegetable

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Abstract

The proximate composition and mineral constituents of *Momordica dioica* Roxb. fruit were evaluated. The fruits contained a ashes: 9.1%, crude protein: 5.44%, crude lipid: 3.25%, crude fiber: 22.9%, and carbohydrates: 59.31%. The fruits also have high energy value (288.25kcal/100g) dry weight. Mineral ranges (mg/100g dry weight, DW) were: K (4.63), Na (1.62), Ca (7.37), Fe (5.04), and Zn (3.83). Comparing the fruit mineral contents with recommended dietary allowances (RDA), the results indicated that *Momordica dioica* Roxb. fruits could be a good supplement for some nutrients such as Fibre, Potassium, Zinc, lipid, Protein and Carbohydrates. The wild fruit could be promoted as a protein supplement for cereal-based diets in poor rural communities, while its high potassium content could be utilized for the management of hypertension and other cardiovascular conditions.

Keywords: Iran; *Momordica dioica* Roxb. micronutrients; proximate and mineral composition; wild fruits.

Introduction

In developing nations, numerous types of wild edible plants are exploited as sources of food hence provide an adequate level of nutrition to the inhabitants. Recent studies on agro pastoral societies in Africa indicate that these, plant resources play a significant role in nutrition; food security and income generation (Edmonds and Chweya 1995).

Furthermore, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) report, at least one billion people are thought to use wild foods in their diet (Burlingame, 2000). In Ghana along, the leaves of over 300 species of wild plants and fruits are consumed. In Swaziland, wild plants provide a greater share of the diet than domesticated cultivars. In India, Malaysia and Thailand, about 150 wild plants species have been identified as sources of emergency food (Burlingame, 2000). Similarly, in South Africa about 1400 edible plant species are used (Nesamvuni, et al. 2001). In Sahel region of Africa, over 200 wild foods were identified to be used by the rural communities (Sena et al. 1998). In most of these reports, it was emphasised that nutritionally, these unconventional plants foods could be comparable to or even sometimes superior to the introduced cultivars (Edmonds and Chweya 1995). It is, therefore, worthwhile to note that the incorporation of edible wild and semi-cultivated plant resources could be beneficial to nutritionally marginal populations or to certain vulnerable groups within populations, especially in developing countries where poverty and climatic changes are causing havoc to the rural populace. In this context, analyses were carried out to evaluate the nutritional content of *Momordica dioica* Roxb. fruit with hope that it would be incorporated into the food basket of the country (Vadivel and Janardhanan 1999; Funtua and Trace 1999; Ifon and Bassir, 1980; Funtua, 2004).

Materials and Methods

Plant material

Momordica dioica. fruits used as experimental material were collected from farm lands in around Pune, South India, in October 2007. The collected plant material was placed in a polyethylene bag to prevent loss of moisture during transportation to the laboratory.

Preparation of the plant material for chemical analyses

Momordica dioica. fruits were washed with distilled water and dried at room temperature to remove residual moisture, then placed in paper envelope and oven-dried at 55°C for 24 hours (Abuye et al., 2003). The dried fruits were ground into powder using pestle and mortar, and sieved through 20-mesh sieve. The fruits powder was used for the nutrients analyzes.

Proximate analysis

The methods recommended by the Association of Official Analytical Chemists (AOAC) were used to determine ash (#942.05), crude lipid (#920.39), crude fibre (#962.09) and nitrogen content (#984.13) (AOAC.1990).

Determination of crude lipid and crude fibre Content

Two grams of dried fruits were weighed in a porous thimble of a Soxhlet apparatus, with its mouthed cotton wool plugged. The thimble was placed in an extraction chamber which was suspended above a pre-weighed receiving flask containing petroleum ether (b.p. 40-60°C). The flask was heated on a heating mantle for eight hours to extract the crude lipid. After the extraction, the thimble was removed from

the Soxhlet apparatus and the solvent distilled off. The flask containing the crude lipid was heated in the oven at 100°C for 30 minutes to evaporate the solvent, then cooled in a dessicator, and reweighed. The difference in weight was expressed as percentage crude lipid content. Crude fibre was estimated by acid-base digestion with 1.25% H₂SO₄ (prepared by diluting 7.2 ml of 94% conc. acid of specific gravity 1.835g ml⁻¹ per 1000 mL distilled water) and 1.25% NaOH (12.5 g per 1000 ml distilled water) solutions. The residue after crude lipid extraction was put into a 600 ml beaker and 200 ml of boiling 1.25% H₂SO₄ added. The contents were boiled for 30 minutes, cooled, filtered through a filter paper and the

residue washed three times with 50 ml aliquots of boiling water. The washed residue was returned to the original beaker and further digested by boiling in 200 ml of 1.25% NaOH for 30 minutes. The digest was filtered to obtain the residue. This was washed three times with 50 ml aliquots of boiling water and finally with 25 ml ethanol. The washed residue was dried in an oven at 130°C to constant weight and cooled in a dessicator. The residue was scraped into a pre-weighed porcelain crucible, weighed, ashed at 550°C for two hours, cooled in a dessicator and reweighed. Crude fibre content was expressed as percentage loss in weight on ignition.

Determination of nitrogen content and estimation of crude protein

Macro-Kjeldahl method was used to determine the nitrogen content of the fruits. 2g of dried fruits were digested in a 100 ml Kjeldahl digestion flask by boiling with 10 ml of concentrated tetraoxosulphate (VI) acid and a Kjeldahl digestion tablet (a catalyst) until the mixture was clear. The digest was filtered into a 100 ml volumetric flask and the solution made up to 100 ml with distilled water. Ammonia in the digest was steam distilled from 10 ml of the digest to which had been added 20 mL of 45% sodium hydroxide solution. The ammonia liberated was collected in 50 ml of 20% boric acid solution containing a mixed indicator. Ammonia was estimated by titrating with standard 0.01 mol L⁻¹ HCl solution. Blank determination was carried out in a similar manner. Crude protein was estimated by multiplying the value obtained for percentage nitrogen content by a factor of 6.25.

Estimation of carbohydrates and energy values

Available carbohydrate was estimated by difference, by subtracting the total sum of percent crude protein, crude lipid, crude fibre and ash from 100% DW of the fruit (AOAC.1990). The plant calorific value (in kJ) was estimated by multiplying the percentages of crude protein, crude lipid and carbohydrate by the factors 16.7, 37.7 and 16.7 respectively (AOAC.1990).

Mineral analysis

The mineral elements Na, K, Ca, Fe, and Zn were determined on 0.3g fruits powder by the methods of Funtua [8,9]. using Energy Dispersive X-ray Fluorescence (EDXRF) transmission emission spectrometer carrying an annular 25 mCi ¹⁰⁹Cd isotopic excitation source that emits Ag-K X-ray (22.1 keV) and a Mo X-ray tube (50KV, 5mA) with thick foil of pure Mo used as target material for absorption correction. The system had a Canberra Si (Li) detector with a resolution of 170eV at

5.9keV line and was coupled to a computer controlled ADCCard (Trump 8K). Measurements were carried out in duplicate. Na was analysed after wet digestion of one gramme of the fruits powder with nitric/perchloric/sulphuric acid (9:2:1 v/v/v) mixture. Sodium was analysed with a Corning 400 flame photometer (AOAC.1990).

Results and Discussion

Proximate analysis

The results of proximate composition of *Momordica dioica* fruits are shown in Table 1. The ash content, which is an index of mineral contents, for *Momordica dioica* fruits the value of 9.1% DW was less than to the values reported for other edible leaves such as *Momordica balsamina* 1 (18.00 ± 1.27% DW)(Faruq et al.2002; Asibey-Berko, and Tayie, 1999; Aletor, and Adeogun, 1995). It is apparent that *Momordica dioica* fruits are a good source of Potassium, and Zinc. The crude protein content (19.38%) was higher than what is reported for some lesser known wild leafy vegetables such as *Momordica balsamina* (11.29 ± 0.07%), *Moringa oleifera*(20.72%), *Lesianthera africana* (13.10 –14.90%) and *Leptadenia hastate* (19.10%) (Pearson, 1999; Sena, et al.1998; Plessi et al. 1999). plant food that provide more than 12% of their calorific value from protein are a good source of protein. In that context, *Momordica dioica* fruits (19.38%) are a good source of protein. The crude lipid content (4.7%) of the fruits was less than the range (8.3 – 27.0% DW) reported for some vegetables consumed in Nigeria and Republic of Niger (Isong and Idiong 1997).

Table 1: Proximate composition of *Momordica dioica* fruit.

Parameters	Contents
Ash	6.7±5.17
Crude protein	19.38± 0.27
Crude lipid	4.7± 0.50
Crude fibre	21.3± 0.35
Carbohydrates	47.92±0.68
Calorific value(kcal/100g)	311.5±5.31

*The data are mean values± deviation(SD) of three replicates.

*Values expressed as % wet weight.

The estimated carbohydrate content (47.92%) in *Momordica dioica* fruits was stand to be higher than that for *Senna obtusifolia* (20%) and *Amaranthus incurvatus* leaves (23.7%). On the other hand, *Eulophia ochreatea* tubers contain comparable amount of carbohydrate for *Momordica balsamina* (39.05 ± 2.01%). The crude fibre content in *Momordica dioica* fruits (21.3 %) was higher than the reported values (8.50 – 20.90%) for some Nigeria vegetables(Isong and Idiong 1997). One discussed drawback to the use of vegetables in human nutrition is their high fibre content, which may cause intestinal irritation and a decrease of nutrient bioavailability (Faruq, Sani.

and Hassan, 2002). The fibre RDA values for children, adults, pregnant and breast-feeding mothers are 19 –25%, 21 – 38%, 28% and 29% respectively. Thus, *Momordica dioica* fruits could be a valuable source of dietary fibre in human nutrition. The calorific value of *Momordica dioica* fruits was estimated to be 311.5 kcal/100g (DW), which is an indication that it could be an important source of dietary calorie. High calorific content of the fruit could be attributed to high lipid content (Locke et al. 200).

Mineral content

Table 2 shows the results of the mineral concentrations of *Momordica dioica* fruits. Nutritional significant of elements is compared with the standard recommended dietary allowance. When compared with standard values as showed in Table 2, *Momordica dioica* fruits less than adequate level of K, Fe, Zn, Ca, and Na, but the plant fruit could be good source of K and Zinc. Nutritional significant of mineral element is usually compared with the standard recommended dietary allowance. In this study, mineral content of *Momordica dioica* fruits was compared with standard values of US recommended dietary allowances (Table 2). Figure 1. is showed that the plant fruits is good sources of potassium and zinc for all categories of people, while sodium is adequate enough for adult female and children assuming total assimilation of these minerals.

Table 2: Comparison of mineral composition of *Momordica dioica* fruit with Recommended Dietary Allowances (mg/day).

Minerals	Recommended Dietary Allowances(mg/day)**				
	Available quantity in mg/100gDW*	Children 7-10years	Adult Male	Adult female	Pregnant & lactating Mothers
Calcium	0.46±0.02	800	800	800	1200
Potassium	8.25±0.15	1600	2000	2000	2000
Sodium	1.51±0.08	400	500	400	500
Iron	0.14±0.01	10	10	15	13
Zinc	1.34±0.07	10	15	12	19

* The data are mean values± deviation(SD) of three replicates. ** Sources: Thangadari et al.(2001)

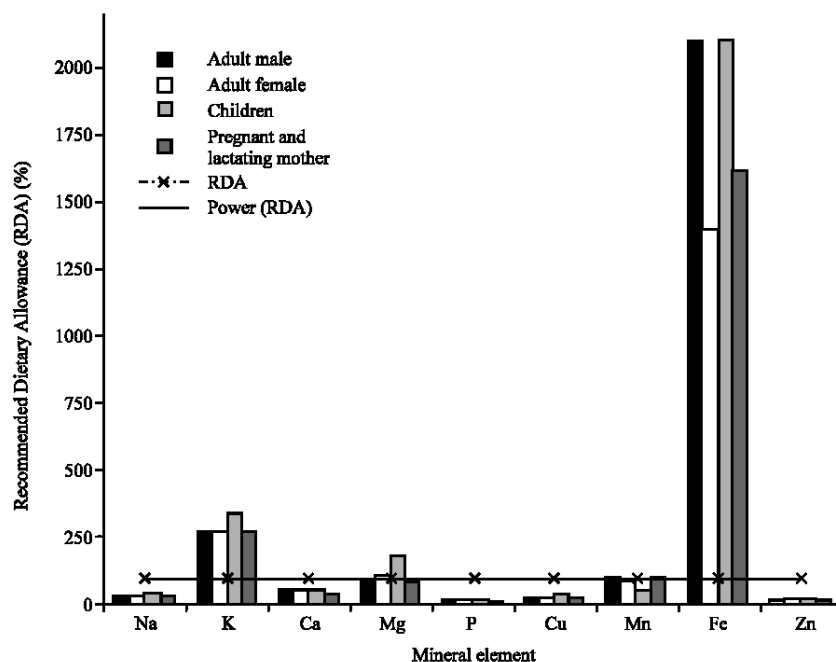


Figure 1: Comparison of mineral content of *Momordica dioica* fruit recommended dietary allowances.

Concluding Remarks

The results of the nutritional analysis shown that *Momordica dioica* fruit is good sources of plant fibre, potassium, zinc, lipid, protein and carbohydrates. The results suggests that the plant fruits if consumed in sufficient amount could contribute greatly towards meeting human nutritional requirement for normal growth and adequate protection against diseases arising from malnutrition. From the result, *Momordica dioica* fruits are recommend for continues used for nutritional purposes, considering to the amount and diversity of nutrients it contains. Chemical analysis alone however, should not be the exclusive criteria for judging the nutritional significance of a plant parts. Thus, it becomes necessary to consider order aspects such as presence antinutritional / toxicological factors and biological evaluation of nutrient content Aberoumand and Deokule 2008).

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