



Application Note AN-U-080

Nitrite and nitrate in meat products

Robust routine analysis with ion chromatography

Nitrite and nitrate salts are used as preservatives for meat and meat products. They are labeled on foods as E 249–E 252. These so-called curing salts prevent bacteria growth, stabilize the color of the meat, and enhance its flavor. Nitrate salts (E 251, E 252) have a low toxicity. However, long-term exposure is of concern, as the lower gut reduces nitrate to nitrite, which is a precursor of nitrosamines (classified as carcinogenic) [1]. Nitrite itself is classified as probably carcinogenic to humans. The MPL (maximum permitted levels) after the manufacturing process vary for nitrite (E 249, E 250) between 50–180 mg/kg [2], and for nitrate between 150–300 mg/kg [3], depending on the product. The European

Commission limits nitrate and nitrite salts in processed meat to less than 150 mg/kg [4].

Classical HPLC-UV methods often suffer from asymmetric peaks, low reproducibility on retention times, and poor sensitivity. Other analytical methods such as spectrophotometric or automated discrete analysis methods show interferences depending on different meat matrices, making this kind of analysis difficult for laboratories where a wide variety of food and beverage products need to be analyzed.

Ion chromatography with UV detection offers a robust and universal method for quality control of nitrite and nitrate in different meat matrices.

SAMPLE PREPARATION

Various meat products like pork knuckle, pork shoulder, black blood sausage, and Chistorra sausage were investigated. The same sample preparation worked for all tested meat products.

Samples were treated with Carrez precipitation to remove fats and proteins. The amount of Carrez reagent is adjusted to the fat and protein content of the sample type. For example, a freshly chopped meat

sample (5 g) was treated with Carrez solutions (2.5 mL Carrez I + 2.5 mL Carrez II) and diluted to 100 mL with ultrapure water (UPW). After centrifugation (5000 rpm) and filtration (0.45 µm), 10 mL of the solution was further diluted with UPW to 50 mL (5-fold dilution). For consistent results, standard solutions were also prepared with Carrez reagents.

EXPERIMENTAL

Samples (50 µL) were injected into the IC system after Inline Ultrafiltration. Two columns with different properties (Metrosep A Supp 7 - 250/4.0 and Metrosep A Supp 5 - 50/4.0) were used in series to avoid co-elution of nitrite with organic components. Analytes were separated by isocratic anion exchange chromatography with a carbonate/methanol eluent (3.6 mmol/L Na₂CO₃ + 15% methanol) and a flow

rate of 0.7 mL/min (**Table 1**, **Figures 1–4**). A column temperature of 52 °C further improved the resolution of the nitrite peak. Sequential suppression reduced the background noise to enable sensitive UV/VIS detection (205 nm). Quantification was performed over a range of 0.02–2.00 mg/L for nitrite, and 0.05–5 mg/L for nitrate.

Table 1. Summary of IC method parameters.

| Columns | Metrosep A Supp 7 - 250/4.0 + Metrosep A Supp 5 - 50/4.0 |
|-----------|---|
| Eluent | 3.6 mmol/L Na ₂ CO ₃ + 15% methanol |
| Flow | 0.7 mL/min |
| Temp | 52 °C |
| Injection | 50 µL |
| Detection | UV 205 nm |

Sample concentrations were calculated for sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite. In order to keep the system clean from any organic contaminations, the sample flow path was rinsed with methanol/UPW (1:1 v/v)

after each analysis and the suppressor was regenerated with a mixture of sulfuric acid (500 mmol/L), oxalic acid (100 mmol/L), and acetone (20% v/v).

RESULTS

Figures 1–4 show exemplary chromatograms for different tested meat samples. The nitrite concentration varied from not detectable to 54 mg/kg and the nitrate concentration was between 10–50 mg/kg. During these tests, nitrite exceeded the critical limit of 50 mg/kg in only one sample (pork shoulder), whereas nitrate was always measured well within the allowed concentration limit [4]. Long-term studies in quality control laboratories of meat manufacturers have proven that this IC method is a

robust and precise enough for routine analysis of nitrite and nitrate.

This universal analytical method is also suitable for beverage and vegetable samples. A wide variety of food and beverage samples were evaluated, showing symmetric peaks, high reproducibility of the concentration values, and negligible interferences from matrix compounds. Limits of quantification were well below 5 mg/kg for sodium nitrite and sodium nitrate in all tested samples.

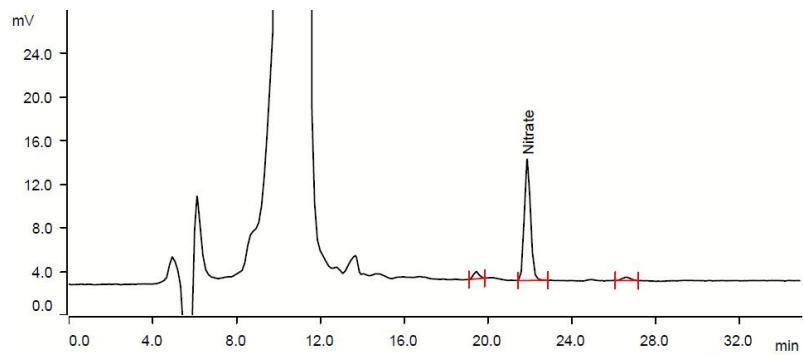


Figure 1. Chromatogram of a black blood sausage sample. Results: sodium nitrite <1.0 mg/kg, and sodium nitrate 22.5 mg/kg.

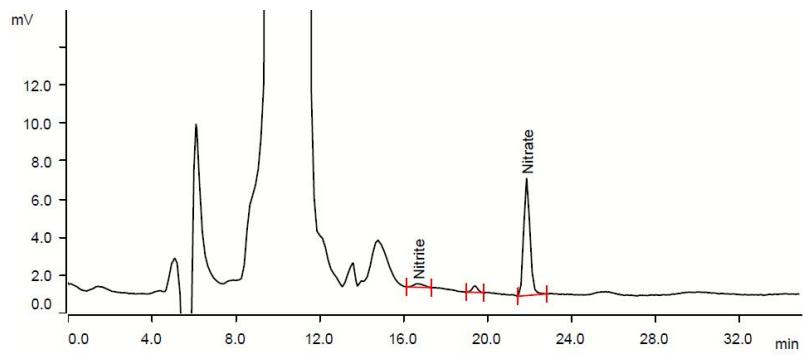


Figure 2. Chromatogram of a pork knuckle sample. Results: sodium nitrite 1.5 mg/kg, and sodium nitrate 9.6 mg/kg.

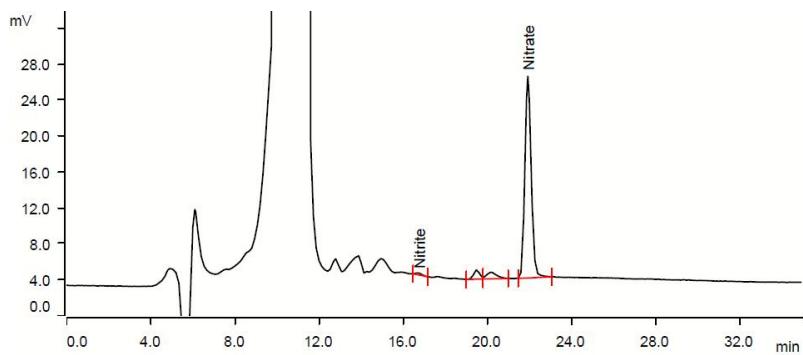


Figure 3. Chromatogram of a Chistorra sausage sample. Results: sodium nitrite <1.3 mg/kg, and sodium nitrate 49.4 mg/kg.

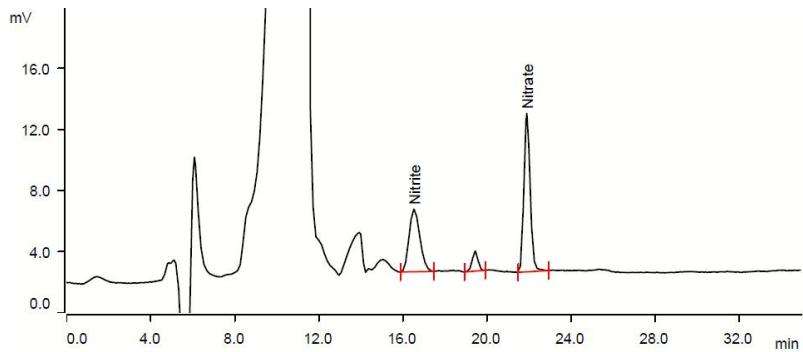


Figure 4. Chromatogram of a pork shoulder sample. Results: sodium nitrite 53.7 mg/kg, and sodium nitrate 20.0 mg/kg.

CONCLUSION

The described sample preparation and the chromatographic method worked for all tested meat products. The presented IC method with two separation columns guarantees optimal resolution of nitrate and nitrite from interfering matrix peaks and thus sensitive analysis for quality control even in complex matrices (LOQ <5 mg/kg for meat products). This method is already established in certain food laboratories as a standard method for quality control, exhibiting high accuracy and reproducibility independent from the food matrix. Inline Ultrafiltration makes this method even more suitable for fast and time-saving routine analysis

because sample preparation is straightforward and does not require costly sample preparation cartridges as in some traditional methods. As any interfering matrix is either removed by Inline Ultrafiltration or is well resolved on the analytical column, this method shows superior analytical performance for determining nitrite and nitrate in meat samples when compared to classical HPLC-UV. Nitrite and nitrate are directly quantified, which is an advantage over traditional methods where the sum parameter of total nitrogen is determined (e.g., AOAC Official Method 935.48 or 993.03).

REFERENCES

1. Wang, P. et al. (2002), Nitric Oxide Donors: Chemical Activities and Biological Applications, *Chemical Reviews* 102 (4): 1091–1134.
2. EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) (2017), Re-evaluation of potassium nitrite (E 249) and sodium nitrite (E 250) as food additives, *EFSA Journal* 15(6):4786.
3. EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) (2017), Re-evaluation of sodium nitrate (E 251) and potassium nitrate (E 252) as food additives, *EFSA Journal* 15(6):4787.
4. European Commission (2011) Decision No 1129/2011/EC of 11 November 2011, amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council by establishing a Union list of food additives. *Off J Eur Union* L295 1-177.

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CONFIGURATION

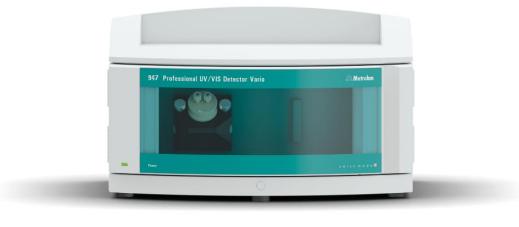


930 Compact IC Flex Oven/SeS/Deg

Der 930 Compact IC Flex Oven/SeS/Deg ist das intelligente Compact-IC-Gerät mit **Säulenofen**, **sequenzieller Suppression** und eingebautem **Degasser**. Zur Regeneration des Suppressors kann ein 800 Dosino eingesetzt werden. Das Gerät kann mit beliebigen Trenn- und Detektionsmethoden eingesetzt werden.

Typische Anwendungsgebiete:

- Anionen- oder Kationenbestimmungen mit sequenzieller Suppression und Leitfähigkeitsdetektion



947 Professional UV/VIS Detector Vario SW

Der intelligente Ein-Wellenlängen-Detektor, 947 Professional UV/VIS Detector Vario SW, ermöglicht die sichere und zuverlässige Quantifizierung von Substanzen, die im ultravioletten oder sichtbaren Bereich aktiv sind. Es kann eine Wellenlänge ausgewählt werden.



Metrosep A Supp 5 - 50/4.0

In weniger als 6 Minuten trennt die Metrosep A Supp 5 - 50/4.0 die sieben Standardanionen. Selbst Fluorid ist noch vom Injektionspeak getrennt und kann einwandfrei integriert werden. Die auf einem Polyvinylalkohol-Polymer basierende Säule zeichnet sich wie alle Säulen der A-Supp-5-Familie durch hohe Bodenzahlen und damit ausgezeichneter Trennleistung aus. Die Metrosep A Supp 5 - 50/4.0 ist die Säule der Wahl, wenn einfache Trennaufgaben in kurzer Zeit gelöst werden müssen – und zwar ohne Verzicht auf sehr niedrige Nachweisgrenzen.

Metrosep A Supp 7 - 250/4.0

Nebenprodukte aus der Wasseraufbereitung (disinfection by-products) stehen im Verdacht, nicht nur gesundheitsschädlich sondern sogar krebserregend zu sein. Deshalb sind die Oxohalogenide Gegenstand vieler Untersuchungen und Standards geworden (z. B. EPA 300.1 Part B, EPA 317.0, EPA 326.0). In erster Linie geht es dabei um Bromat, welches bei der Ozonisierung von Trinkwasser aus Bromid entsteht. Die Metrosep A Supp 7 - 250/4.0 stellt eine Hochleistungstrennsäule für die parallele Bestimmung der Standardanionen, der Oxohalogenide und der Dichloressigsäure dar. Mit dieser Säule werden diese Ionen bis in den unteren µg/L-Bereich hinein sicher und präzise bestimmt. Die hohe Nachweisempfindlichkeit wird durch den Einsatz des 5-µm-Polyvinylalkohol-Polymers erreicht, mit dem extrem hohe Bodenzahlen und damit ausgezeichnete Trenn- und Nachweiseigenschaften erzielt werden. Zusätzlich kann die Trennung durch Veränderung der Temperatur an die spezifischen Erfordernisse der Applikation angepasst werden.



919 IC Autosampler plus

Der 919 IC Autosampler plus erfüllt die Anforderungen von Laboren mit mittlerem Probenaufkommen. Mit ihm lassen sich die verschiedensten Ionenchromatographen des Metrohm-Sortiments automatisieren.



800 Dosino

Antrieb mit Schreib-/Lesehardware für intelligente Dosiereinheiten. Mit fest montiertem Kabel (Länge 150 cm).



807 Dosing Unit 2 mL

807 Dosing Unit mit integriertem Datenchip mit 2 mL Glaszyylinder und Lichtschutz, montierbar auf Reagenzflasche mit ISO/DIN-Glasgewinde GL 45. FEP-Schlauchverbindung, Antidiffusionsspitze.



MagIC Net 4.0 Professional: 1 Lizenz

Professionelles PC-Programm für die Steuerung aller intelligenten Professional IC Systeme, Compact IC Geräte und ihrer Peripherie, aller Detektoren und den verschiedenen Autosamplern, 800 Dosino, 771 Compact Interface, etc. Die Software erlaubt die Kontrolle, Datenaufnahme, -auswertung und -überwachung sowie Report-Erstellung von ionenchromatographischen Analysen.

Grafische Benutzeroberfläche für Routineoperationen, umfangreiche Datenbankprogramme, Methodenentwicklung, Konfiguration und manuelle Systemsteuerung; sehr flexible Benutzerverwaltung, leistungsfähige Datenbankoperationen, umfangreiche Datenexportfunktionen, individuell konfigurierbarer Reportgenerator, Steuerung und Überwachung sämtlicher Systemkomponenten und der Chromatographie-Resultate.

MagIC Net Professional erfüllt vollumfänglich die FDA-Vorschrift 21 CFR Part 11 wie auch GLP.

MagIC Net steht in 16 Dialogsprachen zur Verfügung: Deutsch, Englisch, Chinesisch, Traditionelles Chinesisch, Französisch, Italienisch, Spanisch, Portugiesisch, Bulgarisch, Tschechisch, Ungarisch, Japanisch, Koreanisch, Russisch, Slovakisch

1 Lizenz

Die Installation und Dokumente werden auf einem USB Stick geliefert.