

## BIOETHANOL PRODUCTION THROUGH *Saccharomyces* AND Non-*Saccharomyces* YEAST STRAINS ISOLATED FROM COCOA MUCILAGE JUICE FERMENTED

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### Abstract

*Due to its significant contribution to lowering the use of crude oil and environmental pollution, bioethanol has been selected as the biofuel that is used the most frequently worldwide. The bioethanol was produced by fermentation carried out by microorganisms, particularly yeasts. Thus, yeasts resistance to ethanol remained a criterion important in bioethanol production. In this context, this study, the ability of Saccharomyces strain (Saccharomyces cerevisiae) and non-Saccharomyces strains (Debaryomyces hansenii, Rhodotorula mucilaginosa, and Pichia kudriavzevii) to produce bioethanol by sorghum wort fermentation following distillation was investigated. The results revealed that, globally, all yeast strains studied exhibited a similar fermentation behavior. The difference between yeast strains was observed in the alcoholic degrees of distillates. The alcoholic degree of distillates ranged between 7.01±0.007 and 7.38±0.063% (v/v) where the highest concentration has been observed with Rhodotorula mucilaginosa. More, statistical analysis showed a significant difference (P<0.05) between Rhodotorula mucilaginosa and other species and mixed culture. Among the strains studied, Rhodotorula mucilaginosa specie seemed the suitable strain to produce bioethanol.*

**Key words:** bioethanol, fermentation, non-Saccharomyces strains, Rhodotorula mucilaginosa, Saccharomyces strains

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental disasters (e.g., pollution, global warming) caused by the use of fossil fuels have resulted in the development of new, more environmentally friendly, and less energy-intensive sources (Hoekman, 2009; Demirbas, 2010; Kiran et al., 2014). Thus, bioethanol known as ethyl alcohol or chemically C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH or EtOH remains one of the oldest environmentally friendly resources in use. Although its use and production are essentially non-existent in Africa, this is not the case everywhere else. The first commercial uses of bioethanol were initiated in Brazil in 1925. At the beginning of the 20th century, bioethanol was widely used in European countries and the United States. The growing interest in bioethanol and its adoption as an alternative by

several countries was observed in the early 1980s (Azhar et al., 2017). Depending on the raw materials used, there are three generations of bioethanol. Feedstocks high in sucrose (such as sugar cane, sugar beet, sweet sorghum, and fruits) and starch (corn, wheat, rice, potato, cassava, sweet potato, and barley) were used in the production of first-generation bioethanol. Wood, straw, and grasses were examples of lignocellulosic biomass that is used to produce second-generation bioethanol. Algal biomass, which includes both microalgae and macroalgae, has been used to produce third-generation bioethanol (Nigam et al., 2011). Also food industrial waste has been reported such as fermentation medium to produce high concentration of biotehanol (Gropoșilă-Constantinescu et al., 2019). Whatever the bioethanol generation, it is produced through

the fermentation process by microorganisms. On other hand, some technical regarding microorganisms are required to optimize bioethanol production such as use of powder inoculum and microorganism encapsulation (Safitri et al., 2017).

*S. cerevisiae* has long been known for its fermentation performance and high resistance to ethanol and has been widely used for bioethanol production (Choi et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2010; Mussato et al., 2012; Scordia et al., 2012; Kumari et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2014; Mossi et al., 2018). However, other authors reported the use of non-*Saccharomyces* yeast species in bioethanol production, such as *Debaryomyces hansenii* (Calahorra et al., 2009; Kurian et al., 2014); *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* (Bura et al., 2012), and *Pichia kudriavzevii* (Ndubuisi et al., 2018; Akita et al., 2021; Pongcharoen, 2022). For bioethanol production, the microorganisms involved must require some skills namely resistance to ethanol. Although there are no universal methods for determining the resistance of microorganisms to ethanol, studies have relied on the relative values of cell growth, the specific rate of ethanol production, cell viability, and proton flux across the plasma membrane (Thomas et al., 1979; Beavan et al., 1982; Jiménez et al., 1985; Dombek et al., 1986; Birch et al., 2000). Also, bioethanol production is one most important biotechnological properties of yeasts. Finding yeast strains that can produce bioethanol is always a current concern. Thus, in this study, the ability of *Saccharomyces* and non-*Saccharomyces* yeast strains isolated and identified from cocoa mucilage juice fermented to produce bioethanol by using sorghum wort was investigated.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Yeast strains

One *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* strain (YA5) and 3 three non-*Saccharomyces* strains (AK2; AK3; TIAS6) isolated from the cocoa juice in fermentation where the ethanol rate ranged between 7 and 10% have been taken into account in this study. All strains belonged to culture collection of the Food Technology Department (University Nangui Abrogoua,

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire) and maintained in a 30% glycerol solution, at -20°C.

These yeast strains have been identified by Polymerase Chain Reaction Restriction Fragment Length polymorphism (PCR-RFLP) of the Internal Transcribed Spacer (ITS) region and sequencing of D1/D2 domains of rDNA sequence. The codes of strains are following: *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (YA5), *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* (AK2), *Debaryomyces hansenii* (AK3), *Pichia kudriavzevii* (TIAS6). They were used for carrying out the alcoholic fermentation.

### Fermentation conditions

Triplicate fermentations were performed with agitation in 1-L sterile Erlenmeyer flasks that contained 500 mL of pasteurised sorghum wort (10 min at 100°C) and were sealed with dense cotton plugs. A dense suspension of each specie from a YPD agar containing 10 g/L yeasts extract (Difco); 10 g/L Bacto Peptone (Becton Dickinson); 10 g/L D-glucose (Sordalab), and 10 g/L Agar (Oxford) plate was prepared in sorghum wort using a loop. The flasks containing 500 mL sterile wort were inoculated with each specie in mixed and monoculture [(*S. cerevisiae* (YA5), *R. mucilaginosa* (AK2), *D. hansenii* (AK3), *P. kudriavzevii* (TIAS6)] at O.D. 0.5 ( $10^7$  CFU/mL) and shaken at 120 rpm for 120 h at 25 °C. Over time, samples were collected each 24 h for physicochemical and microbiology analyses. Three independent experiments were carried out.

### Analytical determination

#### *pH, titratable acidity, and total soluble solids (TSS)*

After calibration with phosphate buffer, the pH of the yeast cultures during fermentation was measured using a pH meter (Hanna Instruments; HI 8010). Titration with 0.1 N NaOH was used to evaluate the titratable acidity which is expressed in lactic acid meq%. Using a hand refractometer, the total soluble solids (TSS) concentration, reported as °Brix, was determined in each sample. This latter parameter has been used to determine the sugar consumption rate. Three separate measurements were taken for every parameter.

### Gas (CO<sub>2</sub>) production during alcoholic fermentation

An experimental technique described by Lai (2010) was used in combination with fermentation tests to measure the volume of gas produced during fermentation. The fermentations performed through of were carried out in 500 mL flasks Erlenmeyer. Samples are taken regularly during alcoholic fermentation. The flasks Erlenmeyer are weighed before Weight (t-1) and after Weight (t) each sample to determine the kinetics of CO<sub>2</sub> production.

$$CO_2 = CO_2(t-1) \frac{\text{Weight}(t-1) - \text{Weight}(t)}{\text{Volume}(t)}$$

$$\text{Volume}(t) = V_0 - n \cdot V_p,$$

where:

V<sub>0</sub> - Volume at t = 0

N - Number of sampling

V<sub>p</sub> - Volume of the collected sample

### Microbial growth during fermentation

The method mentioned by Antunovics et al. (2005) was used to cultivate the yeast during fermentation. The increase in cell population was observed using the optical density at 600 nm. The experiments were replicated three times.

### Distillation of fermented sorghum worts

The fermented worts are distilled to extract ethanol using the vigorous column distiller Quickfit/FC3/13, which measures 85 cm in length and 4.45 cm in diameter. Until all of the alcohol in the fermented must be used up in the heating flask, the temperature at the head of the column was kept at 79°C. The ethanol content was determined using an alcohol meter. Three independent experiments were carried out.

### Statistical analysis

The collected data were processed using statistical analysis. XLStat software was used to do an analysis of variance (ANOVA) (version 2016). Duncan and Tukey's tests were used to assess the mean values of the physicochemical parameters of fermenting worts and fermented worts. Values of P < 0.05 were regarded as significant differences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The role of yeast involved in bioethanol and beverage production still one of the most studied biotechnological properties (Novidzro et al., 2013; Alexandre, 2014; Gbohaida et al., 2016) in contrast to their role in biofuel production (Hadiyanto et al., 2013; Tofighi et al., 2014; Mardawati et al., 2022; Saleh et al., 2022). Thus, pH and titratable acidity changes during alcoholic fermentation were shown in Figure 1.

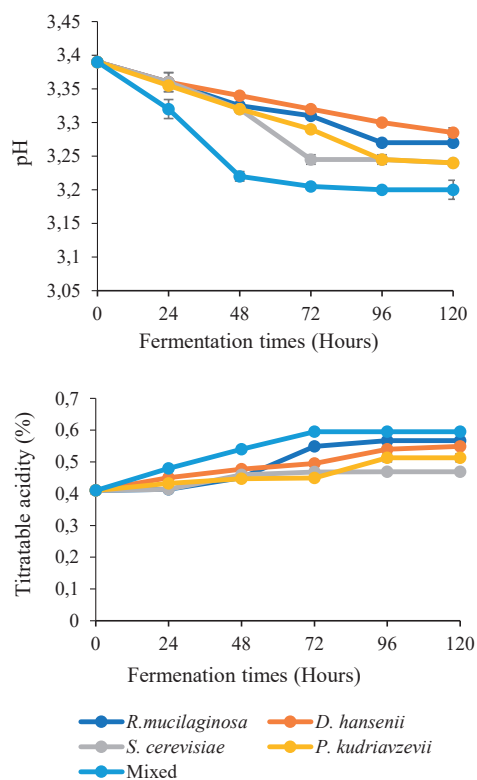


Figure 1. Changes of pH (a) and TA (b) during alcoholic fermentation of sorghum wort

During fermentation, it developed an inverse relationship between the sorghum worts fermenting pH and titratable acidity values (Figure 1). The change of the pH values was characterized by a decrease, while that of the titratable acidity increased. Thus, the mixed culture had more acidified the sorghum wort which expressed by more low value of pH 3.2 and more high value of 0.594% at the end of fermentation.

The growth performance of the yeast strains was assessed through the sugar consumption rate and the release of CO<sub>2</sub> during fermentation.

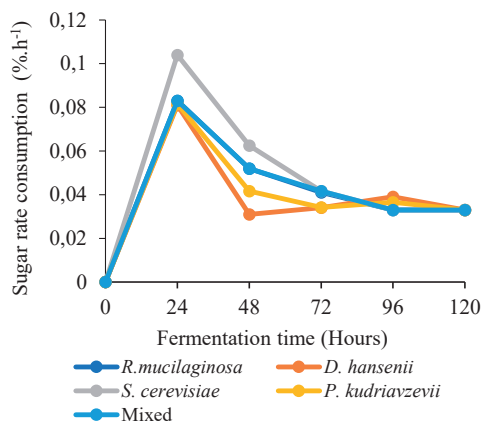


Figure 2. Sugar rate consumption during fermentation

Figure 2 showed the rate of sugar consumption by the yeast species used in this study during alcoholic fermentation. Regardless of the strain, an increase in the consumption rate was observed during the first 24 hours of fermentation, with the highest rate recorded for *S. cerevisiae* (0.104%·h<sup>-1</sup>), while the rates for the other species were almost similar. After more than 24 hours, a decrease in the rate of sugar consumption was observed for the mixed culture and the *S. cerevisiae* and *R. mucilaginosa* species, from 0.083 to 0.033%·h<sup>-1</sup> for the mixed culture and *R. mucilaginosa* species, respectively, after 96 hours, and from 0.104 to 0.033%·h<sup>-1</sup> for the *S. cerevisiae* species after 96 hours of fermentation. From 96 h to the end of fermentation (120 h), the consumption rate remained constant at 0.033%·h<sup>-1</sup>. The species *P. kudriavzevii* was characterized by a decrease in the rate of sugar consumption from 24 h to 72 h, from 0.081 to 0.034%·h<sup>-1</sup>, before a slight increase in the rate of consumption after 96 h, at 0.036%·h<sup>-1</sup>. The *D. hansenii* species showed a decrease in the rate of sugar consumption from 24 to 48 h, with a slight increase in this rate between 48 and 96 h, from 0.031 to 0.039%·h<sup>-1</sup>. However, at the end of fermentation (120 h), all species showed the same sugar consumption rate of 0.033%·h<sup>-1</sup>. At the end of fermentation, no significant

difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) was observed between the other samples.

CO<sub>2</sub> production during alcoholic fermentation by yeast species tested was presented in Figure 3.

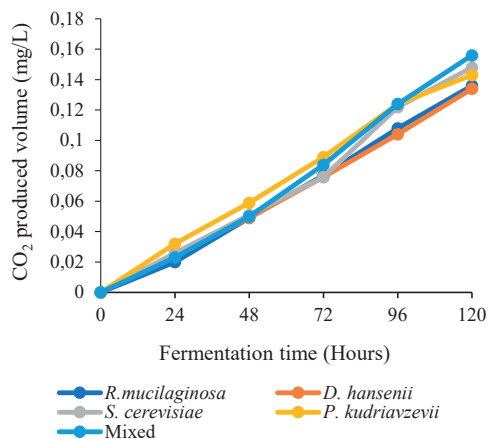


Figure 3. CO<sub>2</sub> produced volume (mg/L) during alcoholic fermentation

In general, a continuous increase in the volume of CO<sub>2</sub> released was recorded for all the yeast species tested, as well as the mixed culture. During the first 72 h of fermentation, the highest volume of CO<sub>2</sub> released was observed in the sorghum wort fermented by the *P. kudriavzevii* species, increasing from 0 to 0.089 g/L. From 72 h to the end of fermentation, a more rapid increase in the volume of CO<sub>2</sub> released was obtained in the sorghum wort inoculated with *S. cerevisiae* species and the mixed culture. At the end of fermentation, the values for the volume of CO<sub>2</sub> released were 0.156 g/L for the mixed culture, 0.148 g/L for the *S. cerevisiae* species, and 0.143 g/L for the *P. kudriavzevii* species. No significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) was observed between the other samples at the end of fermentation.

Yeast growth was determined by measuring its optical density during fermentation. Although this method is not precise enough, it does indicate the growth of the species tested. Thus, for all species tested, a continuous increase in OD values was recorded (Figure 4).

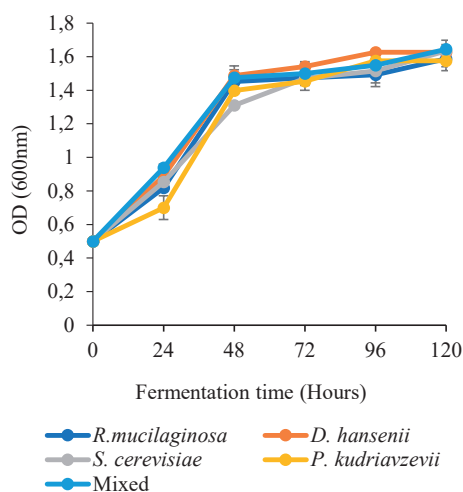


Figure 4. Yeast strains growth during alcoholic fermentation

For all the species tested, two growth phases were observed: a rapid growth phase during the first 48 hours with OD values increasing from 0.5 for all species and the mixed culture at the beginning of fermentation to 1.451; 1.487; 1.310; 1.470; 1.398; and 1.474, respectively, for the species *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa*, *Debaromyces hansenii*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Pichia kudriavzevii*, and the mixed culture. The second phase of yeast growth, which extends from 48 hours to the end of fermentation, was characterized by slower growth. The OD values evolved from 1.451 to 1.578 for *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa*; from 1.487 to 1.626 for *Debaromyces hansenii*; from 1.310 to 1.634 for *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* species; from 1.398 to 1.575 for *Pichia kudriavzevii* cod; and from 1.474 to 1.644 for the mixed culture. Thus, this increase in OD correlated with the decrease in attenuation values and the increase in CO<sub>2</sub> release values. No significant difference ( $P > 0.05$ ) was observed between the other samples.

Overall, every strain exhibited remarkable fermentation performance, as seen by a continuous increase in CO<sub>2</sub> volume and optical density values as well as nearly comparable sugar consumption kinetics. The same characteristics have been reported by Mossi et al. (2018) and Coulibaly et al. (2021). This similarity between the different strains was also reflected in the alcohol content produced, which ranged from  $7.01 \pm 0.007$  to  $7.12 \pm 0.084\%$

(v/v) except *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* where the alcohol content of distillate was  $7.38 \pm 0.063\%$  (v/v) (Figure 5).

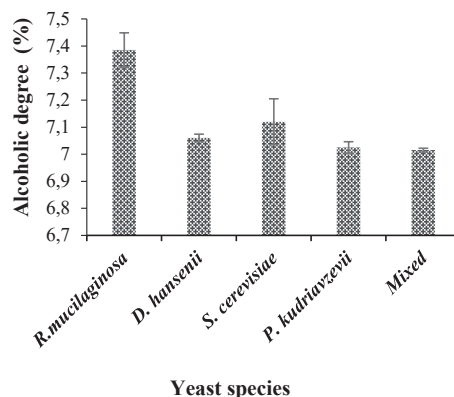


Figure 5. Alcoholic degree of distillates of yeasts isolates

Furthermore, the flasks containing the bioethanol produced are shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Flasks containing the bioethanol

Statistical analysis showed a significant difference between *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* and the others strains. In our investigation, the ability of the yeast species to produce ethanol was used to assess ethanol resistance. Thus, the alcohol content of 7% v/v determined in our study was similar to that found by Yan et al. (2015), which was 7.34% (v/v), but far below the values found by Singh et al. (2013), which was 15.3% (v/v), by Ishola et al. (2015) with 37.1% (v/v), and by Moon et al. (2012) with 86.1% (v/v). This difference in alcohol content could depend on several factors, namely the ecological niche from which the yeast strain was isolated, the nature of the yeast (*Saccharomyces* and non-*Saccharomyces*), the fermentation conditions (temperature, stirring

speed, fermentation time, pH of the fermentation medium), and the raw materials (sorghum, maize, wheat, cassava, etc.) (Azhar et al., 2017). The strains used in this study were *Saccharomyces* species (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) and non-*Saccharomyces* species (*Debaryomyces hansenii*, *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa*, and *Pichia kudriavzevii*), with the fermentation conditions as follows: temperature: 25°C, stirring speed: 120 rpm, duration: 120 h and the raw material was sweet sorghum wort. Furthermore, the non-*Saccharomyces* yeast species showed the same capacity to produce ethanol as the *Saccharomyces* species and even more. Thus, the highest alcohol content was obtained with the non-*Saccharomyces* species, *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa*. For example, according to Mussato et al. (2012), the strains *Pichia stipitis* (NRRL-Y-7124) and *Kluyveromyces fragilis* (Kf1) were reported to be good ethanol producers from different types of sugars on par with the *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* species (RL-11).

Known to be an inhibitor of yeast growth and at the same time, a limiting factor for alcoholic fermentation, the mechanism of resistance to ethanol by yeast is the modification of their lipid composition to counteract these effects and avoid the permeabilization of their membranes (Stanley et al., 2010). According to You et al. (2003), adaptation to polar solvents such as ethanol results in an increase in unsaturated fatty acids and unsaturation levels. It is thought that the rise in unsaturated fatty acid content, especially C18:1 oleic acid, is a response to an adaptation to high ethanol concentrations. This allows for the stability of membrane integrity and the maintenance of metabolic stability and balance. This was also the same finding made by Coulibaly et al. (2018) when studying the resistance of yeast species to ethanol. Furthermore, other fat compounds such as ergosterol and phospholipids have also been cited as means of response to ethanolic stress (Swan et al., 1998; Inoue et al., 2000). Also, face to unable of yeast strains to produce ethanol at high concentrations, some yeast strains have been genetically modified (Alper et al., 2006). Location-specific mutagenesis has been used to create yeast capable of producing high levels of

ethanol (Alper et al., 2006). The process involved changing specific words of the DNA code in a particular gene. However, the use of genetically modified microorganisms remains a controversial subject. Thus, certain non-*Saccharomyces* yeast strains were able to produce ethanol comparatively to *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* specie. *Debaryomyces hansenii* (Calahorra et al., 2009; Kurian et al., 2014); *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* (Bura et al., 2012), and *Pichia kudriavzevii* (Ndubuisi et al., 2018; Akita et al., 2021; Pongcharoen, 2022) were used in bioethanol production.

## CONCLUSIONS

Study of the ability of *Saccharomyces* yeast strain (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*), non-*Saccharomyces* (*Debaryomyces hansenii*, *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa*, and *Pichia kudriavzevii*), and mixed culture (*Saccharomyces* and non-*Saccharomyces*) isolated from cocoa mucilage fermented juice, to produce bioethanol was investigated. All strains studied showed similar fermentation performances, but a difference was observed in alcohol content. Bioethanol content from different distillates ranged between  $7.01 \pm 0.007$  to  $7.38 \pm 0.063\%$  (v/v). The highest alcohol content was obtained with *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* with  $7.38 \pm 0.063\%$  (v/v). The statistical analysis showed a significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) between *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* and other strains and mixed culture. *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* specie appeared as a suitable candidate to produce bioethanol. In further investigations, other raw materials from plants could be tested as substrates of fermentation.

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