

Rapidly Analyzing Fat Content Throughout the Chocolate Manufacturing Process



Introduction

The production of chocolate, from cocoa bean to final product, requires many steps and is subject to strict quality control. The one common feature of each step is the need for accurate fat analysis. The fat profile of chocolate has the greatest influence on its quality, determining texture, stability, spreadability, and mouthfeel. Both cocoa butter and milk fat are the main sources of fat used by manufacturers to achieve ideal properties. With cocoa butter being the highest cost raw material for production, it is imperative to tightly control fat content. Fat content is also an important parameter to measure as a way of ensuring optimal tempering, cooling, and formulation, confirming machinery is working properly, and aiding in avoiding fat bloom.

The ORACLE™ is a rapid time domain NMR (TD-NMR) instrument incorporating proprietary technology that allows for direct determination of fat in any food sample. Unlike other rapid techniques, the ORACLE is able to completely isolate the detection of fat in complex matrices, eliminating the need for calibration. To achieve both rapid moisture/solids and fat testing, the ORACLE can be coupled with a SMART 6™ moisture/solids analyzer.

To demonstrate the ability of the SMART 6™ and ORACLE to accurately and reliably determine the fat and moisture content throughout the chocolate manufacturing process, an assortment of five samples were obtained and analyzed.

Experimental

Each sample was pre-dried on the SMART 6 for approximately 3 min and then prepared for analysis in the ORACLE. Once inserted into the ORACLE magnet, the samples underwent a 35-second scan for NMR analysis. Altogether, the time required to obtain moisture and fat results was between 4 and 5 minutes. Sample sizes ranged from 2–3 grams. Each sample was analyzed in duplicate for the reference analyses (AOAC approved methods) and in triplicate for the SMART 6 and ORACLE analyses.

Note: High-throughput fat analyses can be enabled through the use of batch automation, using an optional robot and high-capacity heater blocks (100 positions each).

Results and Discussion

The accuracy of the SMART 6 and ORACLE results is demonstrated in **Table 1**, where the average reference results are compared with the average of the SMART 6 and ORACLE results. The average difference ranged from 0.04–0.14% for moisture/solids, and from 0.00–0.08% for fat. Repeatability is shown in **Table 2**, where the standard deviations ranged from 0.09–0.14% for moisture/solids, and from 0.03–0.16% for fat.

Table 1: Accuracy of the SMART 6 and ORACLE for Moisture/Solids And Fat in Various Chocolate Process Samples

Sample	Component	Replicates			Avg.	STDEV
		1	2	3		
Cocoa Powder	Moisture	2.67	2.54	2.55	2.59	0.07
	Fat	10.62	10.56	10.56	10.58	0.03
Cocoa Liquor	Moisture	0.18	0.22	0.2	0.20	0.02
	Fat	53.35	53.14	53	53.16	0.18
Dark Chocolate Mini Chips	Moisture	0.38	0.31	0.27	0.32	0.06
	Fat	25.08	25.08	25.15	25.10	0.04
White Chocolate Bar	Moisture	0.78	0.76	0.81	0.78	0.03
	Fat	33.84	33.86	33.61	33.77	0.14

Table 2: Repeatability of the SMART 6 and ORACLE for Moisture/Solids and Fat in Various Chocolate Process Samples

Sample	Moisture/Solids			Fat		
	SMART 6	Oven	Diff.	ORACLE	Ref.	Diff.
Cocoa Powder	2.59	2.55	-0.04	10.58	10.52	-0.06
Cocoa Liquor	0.20	0.20	0.00	53.16	53.03	-0.13
Dark Chocolate Mini Chips	0.32	0.30	-0.02	25.10	25.20	0.10
White Chocolate Bar	0.78	0.79	0.01	33.77	33.51	-0.26

Conclusion

These results demonstrate the ability of the SMART 6 and ORACLE to reliably determine the moisture, solids and fat content in chocolate samples, with an accuracy closely matching that of the reference methods. In addition, there are inherent repeatability advantages over wet chemistry reference methods, which are error prone, due to a strong dependence on a range of experimental factors (e.g. extraction time, solvent composition, temperature, etc.).

United States (Headquarters)

800-726-3331
704-821-7015
info@cem.com

France

33 (01) 69 35 57 80
info.fr@cem.com

Germany, Austria, Switzerland

(49) 2842-9644-0
info@cem.de

Ireland

+353 (0) 1 885 1752
info.ireland@cem.com

Italy

(39) 35-896224
info.srl@cem.com

Japan

+81-3-5793-8542
info@cemjapan.co.jp

United Kingdom

(44) 1280-822873
info.uk@cem.com

www.cem.com

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