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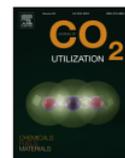
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Investigation on supercritical CO₂ extraction of phenolic-phytochemicals from an epiphytic plant tuber (*Myrmecodia pendans*)



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ABSTRACT

Myrmecodia pendans (ant-nest) is an epiphytic plant with rich content of phytochemicals. In this work, the application of supercritical carbon dioxide (SC-CO₂) for extracting several polyphenol and flavonoid compounds from ant-nest tuber include gallic acid, catechin, ferulic acid, caffeic acid, *p*-coumaric acid, quercetin, luteolin and kaempferol was investigated. Static-analytical extraction experiments were performed at pressures ranged between 9–22.5 MPa and temperatures of 313.15–343.15 K for 6–7 h. Solubility data of total polyphenols (gram gallic acid equivalent (GAE)/L CO₂) and total flavonoids (gram quercetin equivalent (QE)/L CO₂) were modeled using Chrastil and Del Valle–Aguilera density-based equations. Both equations were able to represent actual solubilities satisfactorily in terms of correlation coefficient and parameter consistency. DPPH-scavenging test showed high antioxidant capacity of supercritical extract with an IC₅₀ level of 3.62 ± 0.12 mg/mL. It was observed a positive linear correlation between bioactive contents of antioxidant extract and the potency of scavenger activity against DPPH free radical.

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Introduction

Myrmecodia pendans (genus of Myrmecophytes), also locally known by indigenous Papuans as ant-nest is native to Southeast Asia and it has now widely distributed to Australasian regions. Ant-nest has proven to be rich in bioactive constituents such as flavonoids, tocopherols, tannins and a variety of essential minerals, which are an important part of our diet. This tropical plant is highly valued as an alternative choice for cancer/tumor treatments and an efficacious herbal drug to prevent and cure various illnesses include hemorrhoid, ulcer, nosebleed, backache, skin rashes, allergy, gout, uric acid disorder, stroke, prostate, coronary heart, lung tuberculosis, rheumatism and diarrhea [1]. Many pharmacologists and botanists strongly believe that the nutritional values as well as powerful in vitro anti-cancer and antioxidant properties of

ant-nest are sourced from flavonoid compounds. The isolation technique of these compounds is therefore the primary interest to fully exploit this natural remedy for modern therapeutics and also for advances in the phytochemistry science.

The isolation of flavonoid compounds from *M. pendans* employing various organic solvents has been conducted [2–4]. Soeksmanto et al. extracted ant-nest with *n*-butanol, ethyl acetate and water and the anti-cancer activity of organic extracts was tested for inhibiting cancer cells derived from human cervix (HeLa cells) and canine breast (MCM-B2 cells) [2]. Hertiani et al. studied bioactivity of ant-nest extracts in vitro as an immunomodulatory agent against Balb/c mice lymphocytes proliferation and macrophage phagocytosis [3]. Engida and colleagues had successfully identified five flavonoids of ant-nest extract by HPLC technique, which includes kaempferol, luteolin, rutin, quercetin and apigenin [4]. They also studied antioxidant potential (IC₅₀) of the extract and obtained comparable DPPH-scavenging performance with commercial ascorbic acid.

The conventional extraction operation of flavonoid compounds using organic solvents, although simple, possesses limitations such as cost-prohibitive, unenvironmentally benign and non-selective,

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which requires post-treatment stages for purification of the product. The disposal of unrecyclable organic solvent may also pose a risk to health and the environment. On the other hand, the extraction of flavonoid compounds using supercritical fluids is an alternative viable for effective and greener extraction technology on laboratory- and pilot-scale. The working procedure is relatively simple and high purity extract can be easily obtained. The practical advantages of carbon dioxide as a supercritical fluid include cheap, inert, readily available in high purity, non-toxic, non-flammable and non-explosive have made it highly desired for isolating various heat-labile compounds from various plant and animal materials such as antioxidants [5], pigments [6], flavors [7], fragrances [8], lipids [9] and essential oils [10] at near-ambient temperature. Also, the recovery process of product is accomplished by simple pressure reduction and leaving no solvent residue thus does not affect the aroma or taste of the final product.

Considering SC-CO₂ extraction of polyphenolic compounds from plant materials, a nearly complete recovery can be achieved without adding a modifier (co-solvent). Gelmez et al. extracted phenolics and tocopherols from roasted wheat germ where 91% of phenolics and tocopherols in wheat germ oil were recovered using pure SC-CO₂ at 442 bar and 313.15 K [11]. In the study conducted by Piantino et al. [12], four phenolic compounds in *Baccharis dracunculifolia* leaves were extracted by SC-CO₂ without a co-solvent and they obtained higher yields of individual phenolics in the supercritical extract than that from conventional ethanolic extraction. It has been shown that some phenolic acids and their esters are readily soluble in SC-CO₂ [13–15] while the addition of co-solvents would be required to increase solubilities of high molecular weight phenolics. Since there is no single study dealing with SC-CO₂ utilization for extraction of phenolic-phytochemical compounds from ant-nest tuber, this study aims to evaluate the co-solvent free SC-CO₂ extraction performance and determine total contents of polyphenols and flavonoids in the antioxidant extracts. The effects of extraction parameters (pressure and temperature) on the extraction yields and compositions are studied. Mathematical modeling of solubility data of total polyphenol content and total flavonoid content by Chrastil and Del Valle–Aguilera density-based models was conducted. The scavenging activity of antioxidant extract against stable 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) free radical was assayed and the scavenging performance was compared with commercial gallic acid.

Experimental

Materials

Dried ant-nest tuber was purchased from a local medicine store in Wamena city, Papua, Indonesia. This plant material was collected by indigenous Papuans from forest areas of Central Mountains in Jayawijaya district (138°30'–139°40' east longitude and 3°45'–4°20' south latitude). The chemical compositions of ant-nest tuber were determined as per standard methods: moisture of 4.36% (vacuum oven-drying method, AOAC 934.01), crude protein of 2.75% (Kjeldahl method, AOAC 984.13), crude fat of 2.68% (acid hydrolysis method, AOAC 954.02), crude fiber of 4.84% (soxhlet method, AOAC 962.09), ash of 3.22% (ash oven method, AOAC 920.153) and total carbohydrates of 82.15% (by difference). Prior to extraction, dried ant-nest tuber was pulverized by a laboratory-scale grinder and sieved through 30/40 mesh screens. The product was then stored in a cold storage at 4–5 °C. Food grade liquid CO₂ with a minimum purity of 99.9% was supplied by a local gas company. Folin-Ciocalteu's phenol reagent, 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH), gallic acid (99%), caffeic acid (HPLC grade, 98%), *p*-coumaric acid (HPLC grade, 98%), ferulic acid (99%), (–)-epicatechin (HPLC grade, 90%), (+)-catechin hydrate (HPLC grade,

98%), rutin (HPLC grade, 94%), kaempferol (HPLC grade, 97%), apigenin (HPLC grade, 95%), luteolin (TLC grade, 98%) and quercetin (HPLC grade, 95%) were obtained from Sigma Aldrich Co., Singapore. Other chemicals such as ethanol, potassium acetate, anhydrous sodium carbonate, acetonitrile, aluminum chloride and acetic acid glacial were obtained from Merck, Germany. Distilled water was used throughout the experiments.

Supercritical extraction apparatus

Bench-scale supercritical extractor in this work was custom-manufactured, consisting of a 150 mL high-pressure double-ended extraction vessel, horizontal reciprocating pump with dual inlet ports (Eldex AA-100-S-2), a pressure transducer (Druck PTX 611) connected to digital pressure indicator (Druck DPI 280), a temperature-controlled oven as the heating chamber (Memmert UNB500), a vacuum pump (GAST DOA-P504-BN) and a calibrated wet gas flow meter (ZEAL DM3B). All tube fittings and micro-metering valves were made of 316SS-grade stainless steel (Swagelok, USA). The maximum working pressure and working temperature of supercritical extraction unit are 40 MPa and 473.15 K, respectively.

Extraction procedures

Soxhlet extraction experiments were conducted at atmospheric pressure and 343.15 K. Ten grams of dried powdered plant were wrapped with a filter paper and placed in the glass extraction thimble. Then, 250 mL 96% ethanol was transferred into a three-neck round bottom flask and heated by an electrothermal heating mantle (Barnstead EMA500/CEB). Both the flask and thimble were sealed tightly with Al foil to prevent light interference. A seven-bulb condenser filled with flowing water at 20–25 °C was used as a cooling media to condense solvent vapor and a thermometer for sensing temperature. The extraction process was carried out for 4–5 h until clear liquid was obtained in the glass capillary column. Afterward, the system was cooled and the extract was removed from the flask. The product was stored in an amber bottle under cold condition prior to analysis.

Supercritical CO₂ extraction experiments were performed in a static-analytical mode because it is simpler and allowed to conduct extraction with less fluid than with dynamic extraction. Briefly, a known amount of ant-nest powder (±10 g) was introduced into high-pressure equilibration vessel packed with clean glass beads. At both ends of the vessel, sintered stainless steel filters (50 μm) were installed to prevent any carryover of the solid particles. Prior to extraction, the vessel was evacuated using a vacuum pump. Then, the vessel was heated from room temperature to operating temperatures (313.15 K, 323.15 K, 333.15 K and 343.15 K). Once the operating temperature was reached, liquid CO₂ was charged to the system by a reciprocating pump at constant flow rate of 10 mL/min and compressed to desired pressures in the range of 9–22.5 MPa. The extraction process was performed for 6–7 h to attain equilibrium. Determination of equilibrium time was based on the condition when the amounts of extracted analytes in SC-CO₂ no longer change with time. During this period, temperature was controlled with a precision of ±1 K and pressure was monitored electronically by a digital transducer system to establish isobar and isothermal conditions. After a given extraction period was accomplished, the outlet micrometering valve was opened to depressurize saturated CO₂-rich phase while pressure was maintained constant inside the vessel. A precipitated fraction was collected in a trapping flask containing some volume of 96% ethanol. To prevent freezing and possible solute precipitation during depressurization, the discharge channel was pre-heated with an electrical heating mantle. The expanded gas was escaped through a vent needle mounted on the trapping flask and

5 total volume of analytes-free ambient gas was measured by a calibrated wet gas flow meter at a known pressure and temperature (± 0.05 L). The collected samples were stored in an amber bottle at 4 °C for further use. Tubings and valves throughout the extraction apparatus were cleaned with ethanol at the end of each run to ensure good quantification. The equilibrium loading (solubility) at a given pressure and temperature was determined by quantifying the mass of analytes collected in the trapping solvent for a given volume of CO₂. Extraction yield was determined gravimetrically and expressed as percentage of weight of the extract collected to the original sample.

Determination of total polyphenol content (TPC)

Total polyphenol content was determined by Folin-Ciocalteu spectrophotometric assay [16]. Briefly, 1 mL aliquot (ethanol solution of extract) was mixed with 5 mL 1:10 dilution of Folin-Ciocalteu's phenol reagent and vortexed for 5 min. Then, 4 mL saturated Na₂CO₃ solution (75 g/L) was added and the mixture was incubated in dark for 2 h at room 6 temperature. Blank was concomitantly prepared, containing 0.5 mL ethanol, 2.5 mL 10% (v/v) Folin-Ciocalteu's phenol reagent and 2.5 mL 7.5% Na₂CO₃ solution by the same procedure. Dilutions were made when needed. The absorbance was read at 764.6 nm on a Shimadzu 1700 UV/vis spectrophotometer. The standard solutions of gallic acid at five different concentrations (0.4–2 mM) were used to prepare the calibration curve. Three replications were performed for each run. The results were expressed as milligram gallic acid equivalent (mg GAE) per gram dry plant. Here, the justification for expressing a mixture of polyphenols as a single number (GAE) is because gallic acid is the significant phenolic unit in most macromolecular complexes; also this hydroxybenzoic acid is inexpensive, water soluble, readily dried, recrystallized easily from water and stable in dry form [16].

Determination of total flavonoid content (TFC)

Total flavonoid content was assayed by modified aluminum chloride colorimetric assay [17]. The procedure was described as follows: 1 mL of aliquot was separately mixed with 3 mL 95% ethanol, 0.2 mL 10% aluminum chloride, 0.2 mL 1 M potassium acetate and 5.6 mL distilled water in a series of test tubes. The mixtures were allowed to stand for 30 min at room temperature prior to spectrophotometric determination. The absorbance was read at 415.2 nm. Blank was prepared in similar way without adding aluminum chloride (the volume of 10% AlCl₃ solution was replaced by the same volume of distilled water). The calibration curve was prepared from standard solutions of quercetin at varying concentrations of 12.5 µg/mL, 25 µg/mL, 50 µg/mL, 75 µg/mL and 100 µg/mL in ethanol. The results were expressed as milligram quercetin equivalent (mg QE)/g dry plant. Here, quercetin was selected as a standard for calibration and to represent total flavonoids as a single number (QE) because the complex formed between quercetin and aluminum chloride gave a more sensitive absorbance reading at 415 nm among other flavonoid standards such as rutin, apigenin, morin or luteolin [17]. Additionally, quercetin belongs to flavonols which are widely found in plant materials.

Determination of total antioxidant capacity

Total antioxidant capacity was estimated by DPPH scavenging activity using the modified method of Blois [18]. A known amount of aliquot (0.1 mL) was mixed with 0.5 mL of 0.5 mM DPPH solution in ethanol and 0.4 mL of 0.1 M Tris–ClH buffer (pH 7.4). The mixture was aged for 30 min in a dark chamber. The absorbance of the mixture was measured at 517.3 nm. The

following equation was applied to determine the deterioration rate of stable free radical DPPH species at a characteristic wavelength in presence of the sample:

$$\text{Scavenging percentage(\%)} = \left(1 - \frac{A_s}{A_0}\right) \times 100 \quad (1)$$

where A_s and A_0 are the absorbance of extract and DPPH solution as control, respectively. Gallic acid solutions of different concentrations ranging from 0.1 mg/mL to 10 mg/mL were employed as positive control.

Quantification of polyphenol compounds

High performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) is one of versatile instrumental techniques in analytical chemistry and biochemistry with the purposes of separating, identifying and quantifying individual components contained in a sample that can be dissolved in HPLC compatible liquid [19]. The chromatographic instrument consists of a quaternary low pressure gradient pump (Jasco PU-2089 Plus), a dual/multi-wavelength intelligent UV/vis detector (Jasco UV-2077 Plus) and a LC-NetII/ADC hardware interface system for data acquisition. The analysis was performed following a method described by Weiss et al. [20] with some modifications. All samples were filtered through a 0.22 µm PVDF syringe filter prior to injection. The chromatogram was acquired in a SGE Enduro C18-5 µm-120 Å reversed-phase HPLC column (250 mm × 4.6 mm ID). The samples were eluted with a linear gradient elution of mobile phases A and B. Solvent A was consisted of 3% (v/v) acetic acid in distilled water and solvent B was consisted of a mixture of acetonitrile and 3% acetic acid in water (97:3, v/v). Acetic acid was added to increase the peak resolution. Flow rate was set at 1.0 mL/min and 30 °C. The gradient elution was programmed as follows: isocratic at 10% phase B (10 min), linear increase of phase B from 10% to 20% (5 min), isocratic at 20% phase B (10 min), 20% B–32% B (13 min), 32% B–46% B (12 min), 46% B–55% B (5 min), 55% B–100% B (5 min), 100% B isocratic (8 min), 100% B–10% B (2 min) and 10% B isocratic (5 min). Total run time was 75 min. The injection volume was 20 µL. Polyphenol compounds were separately monitored at 280 nm (hydroxybenzoic acids), 320 nm (hydroxycinnamic acids) and 360 nm (flavones and flavonols) for maximizing detection sensitivity. Identification of peaks was conducted by matching retention time and UV/vis spectra with those previously obtained from the injection of authentic standards of known identity and purity. Calibration curves were used to quantify the concentrations of each compound. Data were recorded and processed using a Jasco ChromNav software system (Version 1.18.04, build 6) available within the instrument.

Statistical analysis

All measurements were reported as mean \pm standard deviation (SD) for three replications. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using Minitab 16 software was conducted to examine statistical significance and post hoc comparisons between means were obtained by means of Duncan's multiple range tests. Significant difference between groups was statistically considered at 95% confidence level (p -values <5%).

Results and discussion

2 Densities of SC-CO₂ at various pressures and temperatures

The liquid-like solvent power and gas-like diffusion ability are two main attracting features of supercritical fluids which allow

such fluids to have an exceptional extraction capability. The cubic equation of state proposed by Peng and Robinson [21] was applied to compute density of SC-CO₂ in dependence on pressure and temperature with the aid of ChemCAD software (Version 6.4, Chemstations™). Details about calculation procedure can be found elsewhere [22]. The values of T_c , P_c and ω for CO₂ are 304.25 K, 7.39 MPa and 0.225, respectively.

It is well-reported that the density of SC-CO₂ increased with increasing pressures at a given temperature. At higher pressure, the available volume occupied by the molecules becomes lesser due to compression action, causing the intermolecular spaces to be closer and consequently greater density of the fluid. The density of SC-CO₂ ranged between 549.98 g/L and 879.26 g/L at pressures of 9–22.5 MPa and 313.15 K. As comparison, the density of liquid ethanol at ambient pressure and temperature is 789.0 g/L. Therefore, higher densities of SC-CO₂ at nearly ambient temperature (313.15 K) were noted in the range of pressures from 1.65 MPa to 2.25 MPa. An opposite behavior was observed between density and temperature in which higher temperature causes the fluid density to decrease. This phenomenon may be ascribed to greater molar volume at higher temperature. Since molar volume and density are inversely proportional hence the higher the molar volume, the lower is the density and vice versa.

Chemical compositions and extraction yields of antioxidant extracts

Fig. 1A–E shows the chromatography patterns of antioxidant extracts obtained from soxhlet extraction and SC-CO₂ extraction. The antioxidant extract obtained from soxhlet extraction (SE extract) contains polyphenols of five subclasses include hydroxybenzoic acids, hydroxycinnamic acids, flavan-3-ols, flavones and flavonols with the following retention time: gallic acid (4.41 min), (+)-catechin (17.83 min), caffeic acid (21.18 min), *p*-coumaric acid (23.55 min), ferulic acid (24.48 min), rutin (62.78 min), quercetin (64.63 min), luteolin (66.97 min) and kaempferol (69.91 min). The identified flavonoids (i.e., rutin, quercetin, luteolin and kaempferol) are in good conformance with previous results [4]. We found that apigenin was undetectable, likely due to trace concentration of this compound. On the other hand, the chromatograms of four supercritical extracts (denoted as SFE-1, SFE-2, SFE-3 and SFE-4) showed fewer peak signals with lower intensities. The extraction yields of each phenolic compound are graphically presented in Fig. 2.

It can be seen that soxhlet extraction is capable to leach more polyphenol and flavonoid compounds from the plant matrix. The extraction yield was 122.36 mg crude extract/g dry plant. In the soxhlet extraction, the condensed solvent vapor penetrates internal structure of the solid and separates out solutes that have similar polarity to that of liquid solvent. Meanwhile, the dissolution phenomenon in SC-CO₂ extraction not solely depends on the solute solubility in supercritical solvent, but also on several factors such as effective solute diffusivity, external mass transfer and solute–matrix interaction. In the native state, SC-CO₂ behaves as a lipophilic solvent whose extraction performance toward phenolic antioxidants is not impressive. Thus, it is not surprisingly to obtain antioxidant extracts with lower bioactive content from SC-CO₂ extraction. Total content of polyphenols and flavonoids in SE extract are 28.07 ± 1.28 mg GAE/g dry plant and 16.44 ± 0.58 mg QE/g dry plant, respectively. These concentrations are higher than those of SFE extracts, even for SFE-4 obtained at 22.5 MPa and 343.15 K. However, the purity of phenolic antioxidants in SFE extracts was higher than in SE extract, indicating that SC-CO₂ was a more selective solvent in comparison to liquid ethanol. The purity of phenolic antioxidants ranged between 34.3 wt% and 48.7 wt% for SFE extracts compared to 18.3 wt% of SE extract.

The concentrations of gallic acid, caffeic acid, *p*-coumaric acid, quercetin and kaempferol in SFE extracts were increased by

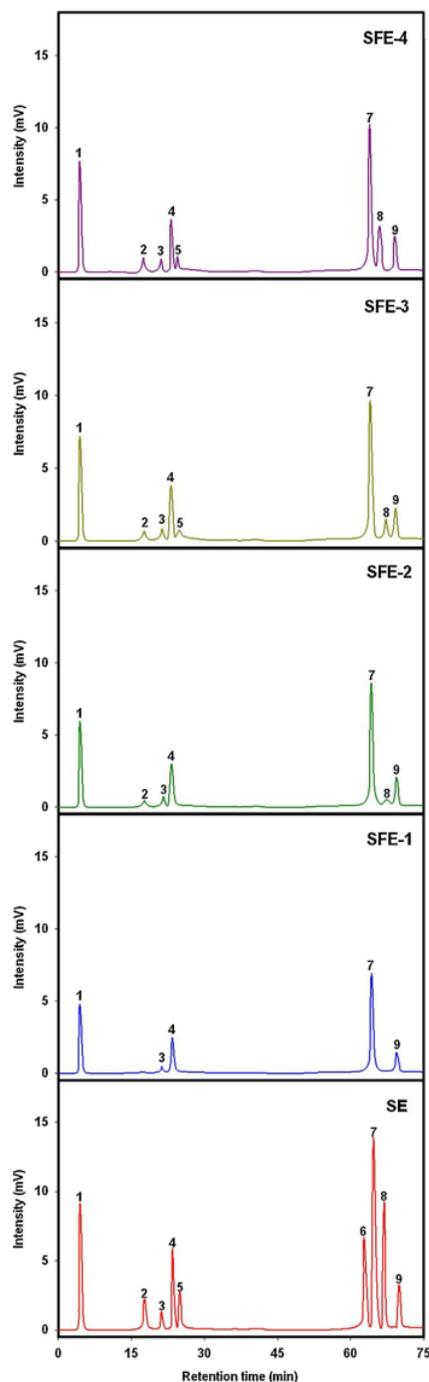


Fig. 1. HPLC chromatograms of antioxidant extracts obtained from soxhlet extraction and SC-CO₂ extraction. The identified compounds are designated by numbers as follows: gallic acid (1); (+)-catechin (2); caffeic acid (3); *p*-coumaric acid (4); ferulic acid (5); rutin (6); quercetin (7); luteolin (8) and kaempferol (9).

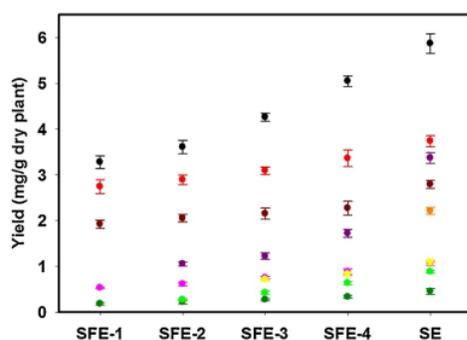


Fig. 2. Extraction yields of several phenolic compounds (● quercetin; ● gallic acid; ● p-coumaric acid; ● rutin; ● luteolin; ● kaempferol; ● ferulic acid; ● (+)-catechin; and ● caffeic acid) obtained from soxhlet extraction and SC-CO₂ extraction at a pressure of 22.5 MPa and various temperatures (SFE-1/313.15 K; SFE-2/323.15 K; SFE-3/333.15 K; and SFE-4/343.15 K).

increasing extraction temperature. Interestingly, two or more phenolic compounds such as (+)-catechin, ferulic acid and luteolin were detected in SFE-2, SFE-3 and SFE-4 chromatograms, which might be attributed to improved extraction performance of SC-CO₂ toward more polar and high molecular weight compounds as a result of synergistic action between pressure and temperature. In this work, the use of co-solvent to improve extractability of phenolic antioxidants is not considered because it would complicate further downstream processing and also several co-solvents (e.g., methanol, propylene glycol, chloroform or ethyl acetate) may not be environmentally acceptable. Another explanation is that several phenolic acids include gallic acid, ferulic acid, kaempferol and p-coumaric acid is readily soluble in SC-CO₂ according to previous studies [13–15].

Analysis of TPC and TFC of antioxidant extracts

Fig. 3 shows the error-bar plots of TPC and TFC of supercritical extracts at various conditions. The uncertainty of the measurement ranged between 4.84% and 9.12%. As can be seen, both TPC and TFC increased by increasing pressure for constant temperature, which might be ascribed to enhanced density and solvent capacity of SC-CO₂. Total flavonoid content in the supercritical extracts ranged between 0.061 ± 0.006 and 0.392 ± 0.035 g QE/L CO₂ while total phenolic content ranged between 0.368 ± 0.021 and 2.182 ± 0.180 g GAE/L CO₂. The extraction yields of polyphenols and flavonoids also rose from 2.78 ± 0.21 to 16.41 ± 1.08 mg GAE/g dry plant and from 0.48 ± 0.03 to 2.96 ± 0.15 mg QE/g dry plant with increasing extraction pressure and temperature.

Considering the retrograde solubility behavior existed in the solid-supercritical fluid systems, the effect of temperature may be of importance toward the extraction yield. Generally speaking, the increase of temperature lowers the extraction yield due to reduced density of the fluid. As shown in Fig. 2A and B, an increase in temperature from 313.15 K to 343.15 K at 9.5 MPa and 10.5 MPa does not give a clear influence on the solubilities of polyphenols and flavonoids in SC-CO₂. The increasing solubilities of solutes below crossover point were mainly attributed to dominate effects of solvent density. Johnston et al. defined crossover pressure as the point where the slope of plot of solubility versus temperature changes sign [21]. The crossover phenomenon was obviously observed at 12–22.5 MPa. In this pressure range, the role of temperature seems to be more influential than pressure in increasing solubilities of solutes. Beyond the crossover pressure, the solubilities of both polyphenols and flavonoids in SC-CO₂

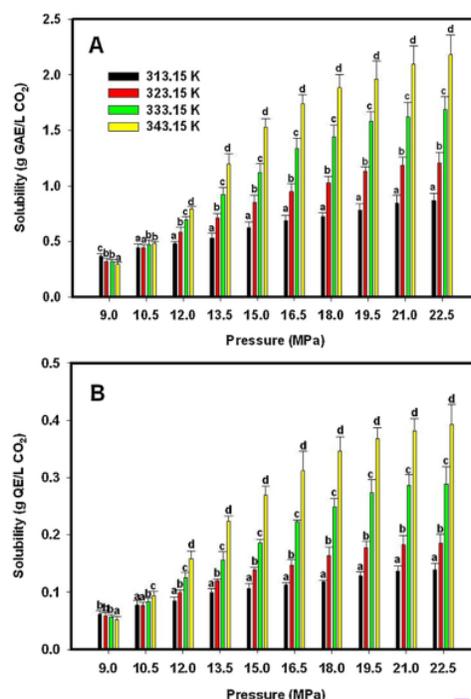


Fig. 3. Solubilities of total polyphenols (A) and total flavonoids (B) in SC-CO₂ at various pressures and temperatures (error bars represent standard deviation), values not sharing same letters are significantly different ($p < 0.05$) based on one-way analysis of variance and Duncan's multiple range tests.

doubled for a thirty degrees-increase in temperature at constant pressure. Increasing temperature would enhance volatility of solutes thus more solutes were readily dissolved in the supercritical solvent. The significance of solute vapor pressure has been investigated by Hojjati et al. [24] and Foster et al. [25]. Hojjati et al. reported the increasing solubilities of five statin drugs in SC-CO₂ with temperature increase beyond the crossover point. Similarly, Foster et al. found that crossover pressure is a phenomenological observation in the solid-supercritical fluid systems and may also be of fundamental significance to indicate reliability and consistency of actual solubility data.

Density-based modeling of solubility data

Modeling solubility data of a solute in SC-CO₂ is highly important for scale-up, design and optimization of supercritical processes. For this purpose, Chrastil and Del Valle-Aguilera density-based models were employed to correlate solubilities of various phenolic antioxidants in SC-CO₂. Here, SFE-1, SFE-2, SFE-3 and SFE-4 extracts were applied as the models to be analyzed. Because the concentrations of phenolic antioxidants in the supercritical extracts were determined at equilibrium condition for a given quantity of CO₂, the values could be regarded as solubility data. The correlation of solubility data by empirical or semi-empirical density-based models is preferred than cubic equations of state due to it is simpler and does not require any thermophysical data that normally cannot be experimentally determined. Moreover, most of density-based models give high level of consistency between predicted and actual solubilities over a wide range of pressures and temperatures [26–29].

Chrastil was the first who developed a density-based model from the conception of chemical association laws and/or entropies of the components for correlating solubility of solids and liquids in dense gases [30]. He suggested that solute and solvent molecules are interacted each other to form a solvato complex, which is in equilibrium with supercritical solvent, according to the following reaction:



From reaction above, one molecule of solute *A* associates with *k* molecules of solvent *B* to form a solvato complex of (*AB*)_{*k*} at equilibrium. The values of constant *k* are not an integer and often defined as an average association number for a given solute-supercritical solvent pair. This model expressed a linear relationship between logarithmic solubility of solute in pure supercritical solvent and that of solvent density and temperature as follows:

$$c = \rho^k \exp\left(\frac{a}{T+b}\right) \quad (3)$$

where *c* is the solubility of solute (kg/m³), ρ is solvent density (kg/m³), *T* is temperature (K), *a* is a function of enthalpy of solvation (ΔH_{solv}) and enthalpy of vaporization (ΔH_{vap}) and *b* is a function of average association number that depends on molecular weight of solute and solvent. The values of adjustable constants *a*, *b* and *k* are specific for each solute-solvent pair and independent on temperature and pressure.

The second semi-empirical density-based model used was Del Valle and Aguilera. They proposed a modification to Chrastil model to compensate for variation of vaporizing enthalpy with temperature [31]. The model has a mathematical expression as

follows:

$$c = \rho^k \exp\left(\frac{a}{T} + b + \frac{c}{T^2}\right) \quad (4)$$

where c/T^2 is an adjustable term added to account for variation of solute's vaporizing heat with temperature. This four-parameter model has proven to adequately predict solubility data under 100 g/L within 293–353 K and 150–880 atm [31]. The agreement between the model predictions and experimental solubility data is evaluated based on the absolute average relative deviation (AARD) as an objective function:

$$\text{AARD}(\%) = \frac{100}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \left| \frac{y_i^{\text{calc}} - y_i^{\text{exp}}}{y_i^{\text{exp}}} \right| \quad (5)$$

where *N* is the number of experimental data, y_i^{calc} and y_i^{exp} are the calculated and actual solubility values, respectively.

The fitness of Chrastil and Del Valle–Aguilera models toward solubility data is depicted in Fig. 4. In this figure, the symbols represent solubility data and wire-mesh plots indicate simulation results. Solubility of polyphenols and flavonoids was represented as based on analysis. Nonlinear regression fitting using SigmaPlot software (Version 12.3, Systat Software Inc.) was conducted to determine parameter values of the model and the results are shown in Table 1. The initial values of fitted parameters were determined with the following constraints: $a < 0$, $b > 0$, $c > 0$ and $k > 0$. Visually, both Chrastil and Del Valle–Aguilera models can represent actual solubilities of phenolics and flavonoids in SC-CO₂ very well. The value of average association number is always positive because it describes the number of CO₂ molecules in solute-solvent complexes. The fitted values of *k* for Chrastil model

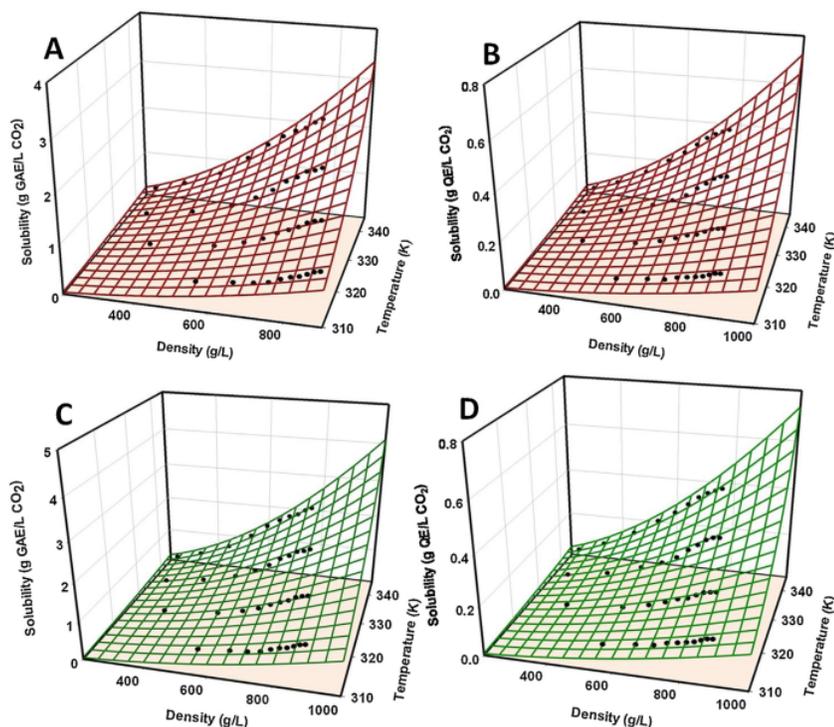


Fig. 4. 3D-fitting of Chrastil (A–B) and Del Valle–Aguilera (C–D) models on the experimental solubilities of polyphenols (g GAE/L CO₂) and flavonoids (g QE/L CO₂).

Table 1
The fitted parameters of Chrastil and Del Valle–Aguilera models for solubility correlations of total polyphenols and total flavonoids in SC-CO₂.

Mathematical models	Parameters	Polyphenols	Flavonoids
Chrastil	<i>a</i>	−4621.05	−5089.02
	<i>b</i>	1.46	1.74
	<i>k</i>	1.93	1.84
	AARD (%)	5.96	1.22
Del Valle–Aguilera	<i>a</i>	−3149.41	−18,543.43
	<i>b</i>	−0.77	22.09
	<i>c</i>	-2.43×10^5	2.22×10^6
	<i>k</i>	1.93	1.83
	AARD (%)	5.84	0.98

are 1.93 for polyphenols/SC-CO₂ and 1.84 for flavonoids/SC-CO₂, which is comparable to that of Del Valle–Aguilera model. The values of adjustable constant *a* are −4621.05 for polyphenols and −5089.02 for flavonoids from Chrastil fitting. As aforesaid, the adjustable constant *a* is the function of total reaction heat, which equals to the sum of vaporization heat of solute and heat of solvation. For Chrastil model, the constant *a* is expressed as $\Delta H_{\text{soln}}/R$ while for Del Valle and Aguilera is $\Delta H_{\text{soln}}/R - 2d/T$. Total reaction heat for the dissolution of polyphenols and flavonoids in SC-CO₂ was −38.42 kJ/mol and −42.31 kJ/mol for Chrastil model and −44.23 kJ/mol and −51.07 kJ/mol for Del Valle and Aguilera model, respectively. The negative sign indicates the exothermicity of the associating process between solute and supercritical solvent, in which the magnitude of solvation heat is much greater than heat of vaporization. By judging the AARD values (%), both Chrastil and Del Valle and Aguilera model give satisfactory agreement for solubility

correlations at studied pressures and temperatures. The adjustable constant *q* in both models can be calculated using following expression:

$$q = b + k \ln M_B - \ln(M_A + kM_B) \quad (6)$$

In Eq. (6), *M_A* and *M_B* refer to the molecular weight of solute and carbon dioxide, respectively. The values of *M_A* are taken as the molecular weight of gallic acid (170.12 g/mol) to represent polyphenols and quercetin (302.23 g/mol) to represent flavonoids. The calculated values of constant *q* for polyphenols/SC-CO₂ and flavonoids/SC-CO₂ systems are 5.45 and 5.73 (Chrastil model) and 3.22 and 26.08 (Del Valle–Aguilera model).

DPPH free radical scavenging potential of antioxidant extracts

The in vitro antioxidant potential of antioxidant extracts was tested for scavenging stable DPPH free radical. Five antioxidant extracts namely SE, SFE-1, SFE-2, SFE-3 and SFE-4 were assayed. The dosage of antioxidant extracts used in the experimental tests was 10 mg/mL. Fig. 5I illustrates the DPPH free radical scavenging percentage of each sample (data were given as mean ± SD for three replicate assays). The DPPH scavenging percentages of antioxidant extracts ranged between 37% and 76%. For the same dosage, SFE-4 extract showed the highest scavenging percentage of ca. $76.17 \pm 0.27\%$ while SE was the lowest ($36.64 \pm 0.15\%$). The DPPH scavenging capacity ranks from highest to lowest as follows: SFE-4 > SFE-3 > SFE-2 > SFE-1 > SE, which is in good agreement with the purity of antioxidant extracts. Therefore, it can be concluded that SC-CO₂ extraction is a more viable option than conventional soxhlet extraction to yield extracts containing high concentrations of antioxidative compounds for effective inhibition against free radicals.

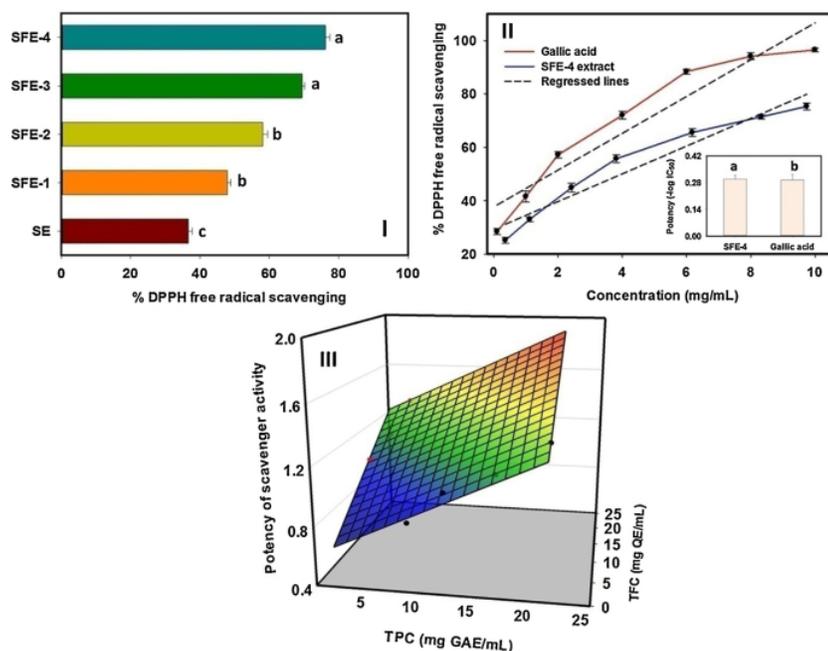


Fig. 5. Scavenging percentage of various antioxidant extracts, different letters indicate significant differences between means (I), DPPH-scavenging activity between SFE-4 extract and gallic acid (inset is the potency values (*P*), determined as $-\log (IC_{50})$) (II), and 3D-linear correlation between scavenging potency and bioactive contents (● TPC and ● TFC) of SFE extracts (III).

Table 2
The half maximal inhibitory concentrations of various plant-derived antioxidant extracts obtained by static SC-CO₂ extraction without a co-solvent.

Plants	Extraction parameters			IC ₅₀ (μg/mL)	References
	P (MPa)	T (K)	CO ₂ flow rate (g/min)		
<i>N. sativa</i>	35	323.15	15	2590 ± 10	[32]
<i>P. nigrum</i>	30	313.15	0.04	103.28	[33]
<i>T. articulata</i>	9	313.15	5	243.0 ± 10	[34]
<i>A. saturoioides</i>	12	313.15	8.33	20.40	[35]
Clove buds	<10	313.15	10.33	20.64 ± 0.15	[36]
Ant-nest	22.5	343.15	0.02	3620 ± 120	This study

The IC₅₀ values (i.e., the inhibition percentage corresponding to the half reduction of absorbance of DPPH free radical) were determined graphically by plotting concentrations versus DPPH scavenging percentages (Fig. 5I). The results are also presented in terms of potency (−log IC₅₀) as an inset figure. By regressing plot of C versus percent scavenging, the IC₅₀ value of SFE-4 extract was found to be 3.62 ± 0.12 mg/mL ($r^2 = 0.94$). This value is about twofold higher compared to that of gallic acid with an IC₅₀ level of 1.73 ± 0.08 mg/mL ($r^2 = 0.91$). The potency of scavenger activity corresponds to the reduction of absorbance of DPPH free radical by 50.12% for SFE-4 extract and 50.22% for gallic acid. For comparison study, the half maximal inhibitory concentrations (IC₅₀) of various plant-derived antioxidant extracts are summarized in Table 2.

It is also important to interpret the relevancy between the potency of scavenger activity and bioactive contents of the extract. For this purpose, linear regression method using SigmaPlot software with Pearson's correlation analysis was employed. Fig. 5I and II shows the 3D-view of regressed plot of TPC (x-axis, mg GAE/mL) and TFC (y-axis, mg QE/mL) of SFE extracts versus the scavenging potential. A positive linear correlation (r^2 of 0.97) is obtained, suggesting the linear increase of DPPH scavenging potential with increasing TPC and TFC of antioxidant extracts. The following mathematical equation describes a linear relation between the potency of DPPH free radical scavenging and bioactive contents of SFE extracts:

$$P = 0.55 + 0.0327 \times (m + n) \quad (7)$$

where P is the potency value, m and n are total polyphenol content (mg GAE/mL) and total flavonoid content (mg QE/mL) of the extract, respectively.

Conclusions

An eco-friendly extraction process of active phenolic-phytochemicals from ant-nest tuber by SC-CO₂ has been demonstrated in this work. The extraction yields and solubilities of phenolic-phytochemicals in SC-CO₂ are strongly affected by the changes of pressure and temperature. The solubilities of phenolic antioxidants were increased significantly with increasing pressure and temperature beyond the crossover point ($P \geq 12$ MPa). The maximum yields of flavonoids and polyphenols are 2.96 ± 0.15 mg QE/g dry plant and 16.41 ± 1.08 mg GAE/g dry plant, respectively. The solubility data are well-correlated by Chrastil and Del Valle–Aguilera density-based models over studied pressures and temperatures. Free radical scavenging test proved the inhibitory potency of SFE extract obtained at 22.5 MPa and 343.15 K against DPPH free radical with an IC₅₀ concentration of 3.62 ± 0.12 mg/mL.

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