



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**DEVELOPMENT OF A MICROBIAL BIOASSAY SYSTEM FOR
DETECTION OF BORIC ACID USING *Paecilomyces variotii***

ANG SWI SEE

IB 2011 16

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OF BORIC ACID USING *Paecilomyces variotii***



**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of
Science**

April 2011

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

**DEVELOPMENT OF A MICROBIAL BIOASSAY SYSTEM FOR DETECTION
OF BORIC ACID USING *Paecilomyces variotii***

By

ANG SWI SEE

April 2011

Chairman: Professor Dato' Abu Bakar Salleh, PhD

Faculty: Institute of Bioscience

Boric acid is a water soluble chemical preservative that has been used as food preservative by some local manufacturers. This chemical is used to preserve food products such as noodle and fish ball in order to inhibit the growth of microorganism, so that the preserved food can stay fresh and longer. However, its usage is prohibited by government of Malaysia as boric acid is considered harmful to human health if consumed in a considerably large quantity. Therefore, the detection method for boric acid is important. To date, no study has been performed to detect boric acid by using microorganism as sensing element. Hence, this study was aimed to develop a simple, fast and environmental friendly bioassay system incorporated with *Paecilomyces variotii* as bioreceptor for detection of boric acid in food. This detection system was based on the measurement of the changes of β -glucosidase produced by the microorganisms in response to the presence of boric acid. The changes of β -

glucosidase concentration were assayed spectrophotometrically and correlated to the concentration of boric acid. In this system, *P. variotii* was grown in cellobiose medium for two days before its mycelia were entrapped in calcium alginate in bead form. In order to optimize the best condition for β -glucosidase production, the important factors such as initial pH, temperature, amount of cell loading, concentration of sodium alginate and calcium chloride were determined. The system was found to show optimum β -glucosidase production when 2% (w/v) sodium alginate and 0.25 Molar calcium chloride were used. Maximum enzyme production was also obtained with initial pH 7 and temperature 45 °C, using 6% (w/v) mycelia after three hours of incubation. By using these optimum operating conditions, a lower detection limit of 0.037% (w/v) was obtained from a linear range of 0% to 0.215% (w/v). The reproducibility of the system was acceptable with an observed relative standard deviation of 4.96% (n=10) and 4.81% (n=10) in the presence of 0.2% (w/v) boric acid and absence of boric acid, respectively. The bioassay system was then applied to determine boric acid in fish ball and the results of recovery ranging from 61% – 86% were recorded for boric acid spiked at different concentrations of boric acid from 0.05% to 0.20% (w/v). The developed microbial bioassay system not only represents a simple, inexpensive and environmental friendly alternative for determination of boric acid, but also offers a new idea and promising approach to detect boric acid.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PEMBINAAN SISTEM BIOASAI MIKROB BAGI PENGESANAN ASID BORIK
DENGAN MENGGUNAKAN *Paecilomyces variotii***

Oleh

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April 2011

Pengerusi: Profesor Dato' Abu Bakar Salleh, PhD

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Asid borik merupakan satu bahan kimia pengawet larut air yang digunakan oleh beberapa pengilang tempatan sebagai bahan pengawet makanan. Bahan kimia ini digunakan untuk mengawet produk makanan seperti mi dan bebola ikan untuk merencatkan pertumbuhan mikroorganisma supaya makanan yang diawet dapat mengekalkan kesegaran dan tahan lama. Namum demikian, penggunaannya adalah dilarang oleh kerajaan Malaysia kerana asid borik memudaratkan kesihatan manusia jika dimakan dengan kuantiti yang banyak. Justeru itu, kaedah pengesanan asid borik adalah penting. Sehingga kini, tiada kajian yang dilakukan untuk mengesan asid borik dengan menggunakan mikroorganisma sebagai unsur pengesan. Oleh demikian, kajian ini bertujuan untuk membangunkan satu sistem bioasai yang ringkas, cepat dan mesra alam merangkumi *Paecilomyces variotii* sebagai bioresseptor untuk mengesan asid borik dalam makanan. Sistem pengesanan ini berdasarkan pengukuran

perubahan β -glukosidase yang dihasilkan oleh mikroorganisma apabila bereaksi dalam kewujudan asid borik. Perubahan kepekatan β -glukosidase diuji dengan menggunakan spektrofotometer dan berkadar dengan kepekatan asid borik. Dalam sistem ini, *P. variotii* ditumbuhkan di dalam medium selobios selama dua hari sebelum miselinya diperangkap dalam kalsium alginat dalam bentuk manik. Dalam menilai keadaan yang optimum untuk penghasilan β -glukosidase, faktor-faktor penting yang mempengaruhi penghasilan enzim seperti pH awal, suhu, kuantiti sel yang digunakan, kepekatan natrium alginat dan kalsium klorida ditentukan. Sistem ini didapati menunjukkan optimum penghasilan β -glukosidase apabila 2% (b/i) natrium alginat dan 0.25 Molar kalsium klorida digunakan. Penghasilan β -glukosidase yang maksimum juga diperolehi dengan pH awal 7 dan suhu 45 °C dengan menggunakan 6% (b/i) miselia selepas 3 jam inkubasi. Dengan menggunakan kesemua keadaan operasi yang optimum ini, had pengesanan terendah 0.037% (b/i) diperolehi daripada lingkungan linear 0% sehingga 0.215% (b/i). Kajian perolehan semula bagi sistem ini adalah diterima dengan sisihan piawai relatif (RSD) yang diperhatikan ialah 4.96% (n=10) dan 4.81% (n=10) dalam kewujudan asid borik pada 0.2% (b/i) dan tanpa asid borik masing-masing. Sistem bioasai ini kemudian diaplikasikan untuk menentu asid borik dalam bebola ikan dan keputusan bagi perolehan semula asid borik berada dalam lingkungan 61% – 86% (b/i) telah dicatatkan bagi pelbagai kepekatan asid borik bermula dari 0.05% sehingga 0.20% (b/i) yang ditambahkan. Bioasai mikrob yang diperbangunkan ini bukan sahaja merupakan satu alternatif yang ringkas, murah dan mesra alam untuk menentukan asid

borik, malah menawarkan satu idea baru dan pendekatan yang memberi kebaikan untuk mengesan asid borik.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dato' Dr. Abu Bakar Salleh for his assistance, patience, suggestion, word of wisdom and his sense of humor throughout this whole project. I wish to thank him for his invaluable advices and intensive guidance in supervising me to complete my project successfully. Not forgotten was his effort to obtain financial support.

I would like to acknowledge Prof. Dr. Fatimah Abu Bakar for her kindness, suggestion and her continuous support during my study here. Thank you for the trust and offering me the opportunity to become one of the postgraduate students in biosensor and food safety group.

My deepest gratitude goes to Prof. Dr. Lee Yook Heng for being a great instructor who has always given me the most effective source of idea and helpful discussions.

Special recognition and appreciation go to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nor Azah Yusof, for listening patiently to my problems and in turns providing me with suggestion and encouragement.

I would also like to thank all postgraduate students of Food safety and Quality Lab 2 especially Muhammad Zukhrufuz Zaman for their friendship, sharing, tolerance and helping hands during my project here. A special thanks to Dedi Futra from UKM for sharing some ideas and discussion in this project.

Besides this, I would like to express my warmest appreciation to my housemate and friends Wendy Yeo, Hui Yin, Sau Yee, Chau Ling, Choi Yi, and late Yee Wen for always been there for me. Thank you for support, care, as well as discussion to solve the problems. Luckily I have you all to accompany me and make my time wonderful. Thank you for your advices, encouragement, support, guidance and friendship.

I am really grateful to my beloved family for their moral support, encouragement and unceasing love throughout the period of endeavor.

I would like to extend my acknowledgement to MOSTI for the Top Down research grant and also UPM Graduate Research Fellowship (GRF) for the financial support.

My gratitude also goes to the staffs of Food Science Department especially Mr. Zulkifli and Ms Fatihah from Microbiology Teaching Laboratory who always gave me a hand whenever I needed help. Not forgotten, I would like to thank the staffs from Institute of Bioscience for their help and support as well as School of Graduate Study (SGS) for giving me a chance to become one of the postgraduate students in UPM.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere thanks to anyone else whose name is not mentioned here for their invaluable help and encouragement making this piece of work possible.

Thank you very much.

I certify that an Examination Committee has met on **11 April 2011** to conduct the final examination of Ang Swi See on her Master of Science thesis entitled “Development of A Microbial Bioassay System for Detection of Boric Acid Using *Paecilomyces variotii*” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulation 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the Master of Science.

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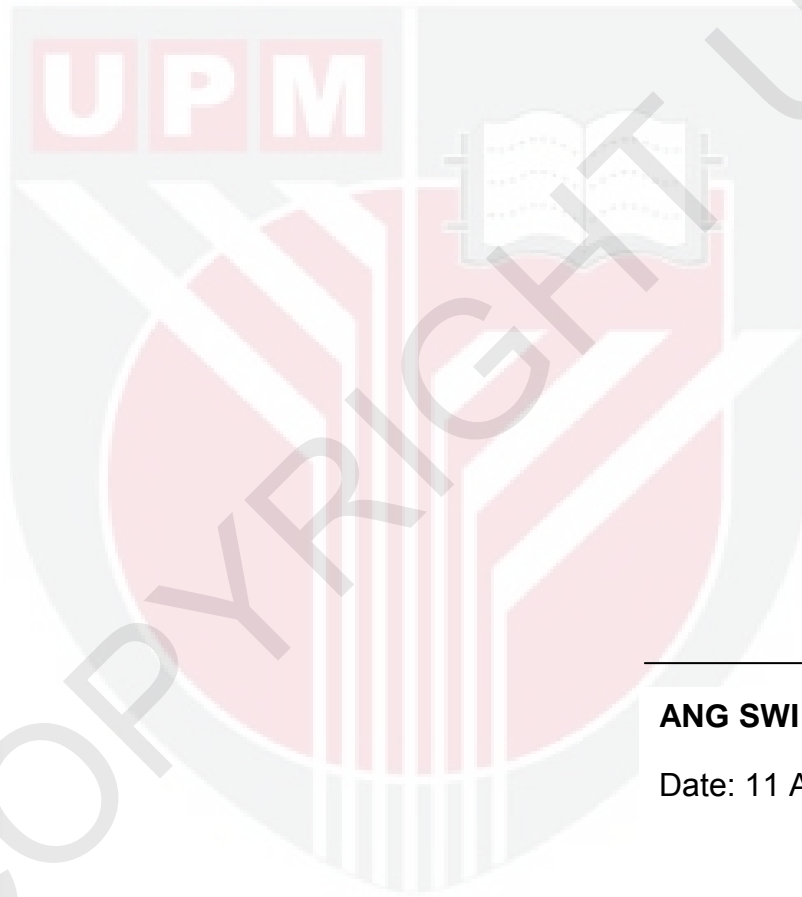
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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institutions.



ANG SWI SEE

Date: 11 April 2011

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