

## **The effect of convective heating and microwave heating on antioxidant enzymes in pooled mature human milk**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this study was to compare of the effects of convective and microwave heating at constant temperature (62.5, 66 and 70 °C) on the activity of antioxidant enzymes (superoxide dismutase SOD, catalase CAT, glutathione peroxidase GPx) in pooled mature human milk. Activity of the enzymes were determined using spectrophotometric kits. Activity of GPx decreased significantly in the first stage of heating when milk samples were warmed to pasteurization temperature. CAT was the most thermolabile enzyme but microwave heating induced a smaller decrease in CAT activity than convective heating. SOD was most resistant to thermal pasteurization, regardless of the heating method. SOD and GPx activity temporary increased during microwaves heating. Considering shorter pasteurization period and lower demand for energy, it can be concluded that microwaves pasteurization enjoys special merits. However, still there is no clear answer whether microwave field itself can affect the antioxidant enzymes of human milk.

## 1 **1. Introduction**

2 According to recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), infants should  
3 be exclusively breastfed in the first six months of life to promote optimal growth,  
4 development and health. Infants that cannot be fed their mother's breast milk should be  
5 administered milk from a human milk bank (HMB). The main beneficiaries of a HMB are  
6 preterm or sick children. Human milk components have confirmed therapeutic properties and  
7 should be incorporated into nutritional treatments for infants and young children (Boyd,  
8 Quigley & Brocklehurst, 2007). Human milk is particularly important for premature infants  
9 with incredibly low (ILBW) and extremely low (ELBW) birth weights. The immune system  
10 of newborns is not fully developed. Premature and sick babies are more susceptible to  
11 infections and the adverse effects of harmful factors, including reactive oxygen species  
12 (ROS).

13 ROS are produced by living organisms during normal cellular metabolism. Under  
14 physiological conditions, low concentrations of ROS play an important role by regulating the  
15 transduction of cell signals, but at high concentrations, they exert harmful effects by  
16 deactivating important cellular molecules (Valko et al., 2007). Overproduction of ROS and a  
17 deficiency of enzymatic and non-enzymatic antioxidants in biological systems contribute to  
18 oxidative stress. Oxidative stress is a disturbance in the prooxidant/antioxidant balance in  
19 favor of the prooxidant. Premature infants are especially susceptible to oxidative stress.  
20 Oxidative stress seems to be a contributing factor to the pathogenesis of many neonatal  
21 diseases, such as respiratory distress syndrome, bronchopulmonary dysplasia, necrotizing  
22 enterocolitis, renal failure and retinopathy (Schaller, 2005; Davis, 2002; Okur et al., 1995;  
23 Saugstad, 2001; Weinberger, Laskin, Heck, & Laskin, 2002).

24 The antioxidant system prevents or inhibits changes caused by ROS. It involves ROS-  
25 degrading enzymes as well as low-molecular-weight compounds that are less specific than

26 enzymes. Low-molecular-weight compounds degrade free radicals which are not neutralized  
27 by enzymes (Valko et al., 2007). The most important antioxidant components of human milk  
28 include enzymes such as superoxide dismutase (SOD), catalase (CAT) and glutathione  
29 peroxidase (GPx), as well as non-enzymatic antioxidants such as vitamins C and E,  
30  $\beta$ -carotene, uric acid, glutathione and coenzymes Q (Silvestre et al., 2008; Yuksel, Yigit,  
31 Cinar, Atmaca, & Onaran, 2015; L'Abbe & Friel, 2000).

32 Milk from HMB is usually subjected to low-temperature long-time pasteurization (LTLT)  
33 at 62.5°C for 30 min which effectively eliminates vegetative microbial pathogens. However,  
34 pasteurization significantly decreases the concentrations of nutrients and bioactive  
35 components in milk, including antioxidant enzymes (Silvestre et al., 2008; Henderson, Fay &  
36 Hamosh 1998; Landers & Updegrave, 2010; Tully, Jones, & Tully, 2001). Therefore, new  
37 preservation methods are being developed to guarantee the microbiological safety of human  
38 milk without compromising its nutritional and biological value. Pasteurization using  
39 microwave radiation is one such alternative treatment.

40 Microwave radiation has insufficient energy to break chemical bonds, and it is a non-ionizing  
41 form of radiation. Microwaves generate heat due to molecular friction of polar compounds  
42 which attempt to align themselves under in the oscillating electrical field (water dipoles and  
43 ions), which produces friction with other food components (Ahmed & Ramaswamy, 2007).  
44 During microwave treatment, the preset temperature is achieved at a much faster rate  
45 throughout the entire sample than during convective heating (Zhu & Chen, 2014). Microwave  
46 heating is an efficient and economical processing method. Many authors have demonstrated  
47 that microwave treatment is highly effective in eliminating various microorganisms.  
48 Microwave heating has numerous applications in the food industry, including blanching,  
49 drying, cooking, pasteurization and sterilization (Sumnu & Sahin, 2005).

50 The objective of this study was to compare the effects of convective and microwave  
51 heating (at parameters that guarantee the microbiological safety of the processed product) on  
52 the activity of antioxidant enzymes in pooled mature human milk.

53 All experimental procedures have been approved by the Local Ethics Committee of  
54 the Medical University of Gdansk. The subjects gave their informed consent before the start  
55 of any procedure.

## 56 **2. Materials and Methods**

### 57 *2.1. Collection of samples*

58 Samples of mature human milk were collected from ten healthy and non-smoking women  
59 who had full-term pregnancies without complications. All newborns were in good health  
60 (Apgar score  $\geq 9$  in the first minute of life), and their body weights were within the norm  
61 (3100 to 3800 g). Milk was pumped by the mothers at home with an electric breast pump  
62 (Symphony, Medela, Poland) with observance of general hygiene standards. The samples  
63 were collected from the mothers within 24 h and stored in a refrigerator (4°C). In a laboratory,  
64 2 mL specimens were collected from each sample to determine the individual levels of the  
65 tested enzymes in every woman. The remaining milk was immediately pooled and divided  
66 into smaller samples of 50 mL. Raw milk samples were frozen and stored at -80°C, for not  
67 longer than one month. Directly before processing, milk was thawed and heated to 22°C in an  
68 incubator (Binder, Warsaw, Poland).

### 69 *2.2. Convective heating*

70 Thawed milk samples (50 mL) were transferred to beakers and heated to the  
71 appropriate temperature in a water bath. The temperature at the central point of the beaker  
72 was controlled with a thermometer. The heating process was carried out with two variants -  
73 with and without stirring. The preset temperature was achieved within  $19 \pm 1$  min in samples  
74 that were not stirred, which is equivalent to the time of LTLT pasteurization in medical



75 pasteurizers at HMB. In stirred samples, the above period was shortened to  $13 \pm 1$  min  
76 (Figure 1). Milk was heated to 62.5, 66 and 70°C, and each temperature was maintained for  
77 up to 30 min. Samples for analysis were collected when the appropriate temperature had been  
78 reached (time 0) and then every 10 min. The processed milk was cooled immediately to 20°C  
79 by immersion in an ice/water bath. Cooling time was approximately 7 minutes in both  
80 variants (Figure 2). All pasteurization treatments were performed in four replicates.

### 81 *2.3. Microwave heating*

82 Milk samples were subjected to microwave heating in a prototype device where their  
83 temperature was kept constant for a preset time (2450 MHz, 800 W, Enbio Technology,  
84 Gdańsk, Poland). Milk samples of 50 mL were transferred to a beaker and placed in the  
85 microwave pasteurizer (Figure 3). Silicon pipes were submerged in the milk. Milk was  
86 pumped through a temperature sensor, and it was simultaneously stirred. The temperature  
87 sensor measured the temperature and controlled a magnetron which was turned on and off in a  
88 sequence of several seconds, depending on the recorded milk temperature.

89 The preset temperature was reached within approximately 3 min (Figure 1). High  
90 temperature generation in a very short time is characteristic of MW application in the food  
91 industry. Milk samples were heated to 62.5, 66 and 70°C. Samples for analysis were collected  
92 at time 0 and after 1, 3, 5, 10 min of heating. After treatment, the samples were immediately  
93 cooled to 20°C in a cooling exchanger with the use of tap water. Cooling time was  
94 approximately 2 minutes (Figure 2). All treatments were performed in four replicates.

### 95 *2.4. Determination of the activity of antioxidant enzymes*

96 Enzyme activity in the human milk samples was determined using spectrophotometric  
97 kits (Cayman Chemical Company, Ann Arbor, MI, USA): superoxide dismutase (SOD) assay  
98 kit No. 706002, catalase (CAT) assay kit No. 707002 and glutathione peroxidase (GPx) assay  
99 kit No. 703102, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Enzyme activity was analyzed

100 in milk samples immediately after processing. All analytical determinations were carried out  
101 in duplicate.

## 102 2.5. Statistical analysis

103 Mean values and standard deviation of the mean were determined. Data were  
104 processed statistically in the GraphPad Prism 7.01 system (GraphPad Company, San Diego,  
105 CA, USA). The differences between control and processed (heated) samples were evaluated  
106 by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's multiple comparison post-hoc test.  
107 The results were regarded as significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## 108 3. Results

### 109 3.1. Enzyme activity in raw human milk

110 The activity of the analyzed antioxidant enzymes in human milk samples differed between  
111 women. The activity of SOD ranged from 0.69 to 1.66 U mL<sup>-1</sup>, CAT from 14.57 to 27.06  
112 nmol min<sup>-1</sup> mL, and GPx from 9.94 to 15.80 nmol min<sup>-1</sup> mL. Enzyme activities in pooled  
113 laboratory samples (raw milk, control) were determined to be SOD –  $1.27 \pm 0.44$  U mL<sup>-1</sup>,  
114 CAT –  $19.15 \pm 1.24$  nmol min<sup>-1</sup> mL, and GPx –  $10.18 \pm 0.86$  nmol min<sup>-1</sup> mL.

### 115 3.2. The influence of convective heating

116 In the present study, human milk samples subjected to LTLT pasteurization with and  
117 without stirring at a temperature of 62.5 and 66°C were not characterized by significant  
118 differences in SOD activity. A significant decrease in SOD activity (around 25% relative to  
119 raw milk) was noted only in the human milk sample processed by convective heating at 70°C  
120 for the longest period of 30 min without stirring (Table 1).

121 During convective heating, CAT activity decreased even in the warming up stage,  
122 before the preset temperature had been reached. The decrease in CAT activity was  
123 exacerbated with an increase in pasteurization temperature. CAT activity decreased by around  
124 66% in the process of heating milk to 70°C without stirring. Under pasteurization conditions

125 identical to those applied in HMB (62.5°C, 30 min, no stirring), CAT activity also decreased  
126 significantly from 19.2 to 8.2 nmol min<sup>-1</sup> mL, i.e. by nearly 60%. Extent of decrease was also  
127 influenced by the pasteurization variant. In samples pasteurized at 66 and 70°C, the decrease  
128 in CAT activity was significantly less in stirred samples compared to non-stirred samples. In  
129 samples exposed to the longest heating time (30 min) at 70°C, the activity of CAT decreased  
130 by 75% in stirred samples and by 87% in non-stirred samples.

131 At temperatures higher than 62.5°C GPx was more stable than CAT in response to  
132 convective heating. The highest significant changes in GPx activity were observed in the first  
133 stage of heating during which the samples were warmed up to the preset temperature. In  
134 stirred samples, the activity of GPx decreased by around 30% by the time the temperature of  
135 milk samples had reached 62.5 and 66°C, and by 40% by the time sample temperature had  
136 reached 70°C. Convective heating without stirring at a temperature of 62.5 and 66°C led to a  
137 significantly greater decrease in GPx activity which was estimated at 42%. In both stirred and  
138 non-stirred samples, pasteurization for 30 min at all temperatures decreased GPx activity by  
139 50 - 55%.

### 140 *3.3. The influence of microwave heating at constant temperature*

141 The microwave pasteurizer device ensured even mixing of the sample and even  
142 temperature distribution in the liquid during microwave heating. Microwave heating at 62.5,  
143 66 and 70°C for 1 min led to a significant increase in SOD activity in breast milk samples,  
144 which was determined to be 10%, 21% and 34%, respectively (Table 2). After the longest  
145 exposure to microwave heating (10 min) at all analyzed temperatures, SOD activity was  
146 equivalent to about 80% compared to unheated milk.

147 Unlike SOD, CAT in human milk is highly sensitive to high temperature during  
148 microwave heating. In milk samples microwaved at a temperature of 62.5, 66 and 70°C for 1

149 minute, CAT activity decreased by 34%, 42% and 38%, respectively. Prolonged heating at  
150 each of the above temperatures did not induce further significant changes in CAT activity.

151 The most significant decrease in GPx activity was observed after 1 minute of microwave  
152 heating. The activity of GPx decreased by around 38% at temperatures of 62.5 and 66°C and  
153 by around 53% at a temperature of 70°C. Interestingly, in the third minute of microwave  
154 heating a temporary increase in GPX activity was observed at all three temperatures. In  
155 samples pasteurized for 10 min, GPx activity decreased by 44%, 40% and 54%, respectively.

#### 156 **4. Discussion**

157 Activity of the enzymes analyzed in this study corresponded to the values reported in the  
158 literature (Gutierrez-Repiso et al. 2014; Yuksel et al. 2015). Significant differences in enzyme  
159 activity in milk samples collected from different women can be attributed to individual  
160 variations and, in case of SOD and CAT, stage of lactation (Yuksel et al., 2015). Activity of  
161 GPx remains stable throughout the entire breastfeeding period (L`Abbe et al., 2000).

162 The pasteurization temperature for pasteurizers use on human donor milk cannot be  
163 programmed. Pasteurization temperature is determined by the pasteurizer's capacity and the  
164 initial temperature of the processed milk sample. In the applied procedure, the time required  
165 to reach the initial temperature was equivalent to that of HMB pasteurization. In HMB, milk  
166 is subjected to LTLT at a temperature of 62.5°C. Milk samples are exposed to convective  
167 heating in a water bath for 30 min without stirring. The influence of LTLT on antioxidant  
168 enzymes has been poorly described in the literature (Marinković et al., 2016; Silvestre et al.,  
169 2008). The effect of convective heating under different conditions (time and temperature)  
170 with and without stirring during pasteurization has not been researched to date. It should also  
171 be noted that the standard conditions of LTLT have been set for cow's milk. The aim of  
172 pasteurization is to eliminate vegetative microbial pathogens, rather than to preserve the  
173 highest biological quality of milk. LTLT can be optimized by shortening heating time at



174 higher temperature or by stirring the sample to ensure uniform distribution of temperature  
175 throughout the heated milk.

176 For all heat treatments using in this study significant differences in the degradation of GPx  
177 were not observed among samples that were pasteurized with and without stirring. The most  
178 significant decrease in GPx activity was observed in the first stage of processing, during  
179 which milk was brought to pasteurization temperature. Further convective heating had a less  
180 detrimental effect on GPx activity. Sample stirring inhibited enzyme inactivation only in the  
181 first stage of pasteurization (less than 10 min) conducted at 62.5°C. Thirty minutes of  
182 pasteurization at 62.5°C decreased GPx activity by approximately 53%. Similar results were  
183 reported by Silvestre et al. (2008) and Marinković et al. (2016). According to the cited  
184 authors, LTLT significantly decreased GPx activity by 63% and 54%, respectively.

185 Applied convection heating variants (with and without stirring) did not influence the  
186 extent of change in the activity of SOD and GPx during treatment. Sample stirring did not  
187 influence CAT degradation at 62.5°C, but it significantly inhibited CAT inactivation when  
188 milk samples were subjected to convective heating at higher temperatures. Degradation of  
189 CAT was decreased by at least 23% in milk samples pasteurized at 66°C with stirring. In  
190 human milk, CAT is highly sensitive to elevated temperature. Conventional pasteurization  
191 conducted under conditions identical to those used in HMB decreased CAT activity by 57%.  
192 In milk samples pasteurized at 70°C with stirring, CAT activity decreased by 60% already in  
193 the first stage of heating. The enzyme can be used as a marker of changes induced by high  
194 temperature in convective heating. The observed changes in CAT activity indicate that human  
195 milk pasteurization by convective heating should not be carried out without stirring at  
196 temperatures higher than 66°C. SOD in human milk is highly resistant to high temperatures.  
197 In the analyzed group of antioxidant enzymes, SOD was characterized by the greatest stability  
198 during convective heating with and without stirring and during microwave heating.

199 Convective heating at a temperature of 62.5°C for 30 min did not induce significant changes  
200 in SOD activity. At higher processing temperature of 66 and 70°C, SOD activity decreased by  
201 around 13% after 30 and 20 min, respectively, but the observed changes were not statistically  
202 significant. A significant decrease in SOD activity was noted only in the human milk sample  
203 processed by convective heating at 70°C for 30 min without stirring (25%) and by controlled  
204 microwave heating at the same temperature after 10 min (20%).

205 Milk can also be processed by High-Temperature Short-Time (HTST, 72°C for 15  
206 seconds) pasteurization. This pasteurization method retains the nutritional and sensory  
207 attributes of milk, but it leads to significant deactivation of milk enzymes (Hammershoj,  
208 Hougaard, Vestergaard, Poulsen & Ipsen 2010) and the loss of approximately half of its SOD  
209 activity (Donnelly, McLellan, Walker & Robinson, 1989). Silvestre et al. (2008b)  
210 demonstrated that HTST pasteurization induces a significantly greater loss of the bactericidal  
211 capacity of human milk than low-temperature processing. In the HTST method, milk is  
212 pasteurized by a continuous system of plate heat exchangers, but this treatment is difficult to  
213 use to pasteurize small portions of milk in HMB. The HTST method also causes  
214 sedimentation on plate surfaces, which decreases heat transfer. Microwave heating is more  
215 effective in retaining heat-sensitive nutrients and decreasing fouling than convective heating  
216 (Dehghan, Jamalian, Farahnaky, Mesbahi & Moosavi-Nasab, 2012). Albert et al. (2009)  
217 observed no significant differences in the amino acid composition, free amino acid content  
218 and biological value of milk processed by MW heating and conventional heat treatment.  
219 Salamon et al. (2007) heated raw milk using MW methods and did not report differences in  
220 the fatty acid content of heated milk and the control sample. Microwave heating at low  
221 temperatures (20°C to 71°C) had no significant effect on the levels of total IgA and specific  
222 IgA to *E. coli* serotypes 01 and 04 (Quan et al., 1992) or the content of fat and carotenoids in  
223 human milk (Tacken, Vogelsang, van Lingen, Slootsta, Dikkeschei & van Zoeren-Grobbe

224 2009). The results of the present study also indicate that MW heating retains heat-sensitive  
225 proteins in milk. Microwave heating had a less detrimental effect on CAT activity. In milk  
226 samples subjected to microwave heating at 70°C for 10 min, CAT activity decreased by  
227 approximately 49%. Microwave heating had an equally unexpected effect on SOD and GPx  
228 activity. A transient increase in SOD and GPx activity was observed in human milk  
229 microwaved at a constant temperature; SOD activity increased after 1 minute, and GPx  
230 activity – after 3 minutes of MW heating.

231 The observed variations in SOD and GPx activity and the stability of CAT can probably  
232 be attributed to the release of enzymes from human milk cells or the specific effects of  
233 microwave heating.

234 Results of studies investigating the influence of microwave heating on enzymes are  
235 inconclusive. Recent research suggests that microwave heating has a more destructive effect  
236 on enzymes than conventional heating. The above can be attributed to the enhanced thermal  
237 effects of microwave heating on enzyme inactivation, which is not only related to  
238 temperature, as measured by ordinary means (Ahmed & Ramaswamy, 2007). However,  
239 electromagnetic field strength had no effect on the tertiary structure of trypsin. Simulations  
240 revealed that the electromagnetic field in a typical laboratory microwave reactor was 3-4  
241 orders of magnitude too low to induce conformational changes in proteins or enzymes  
242 (Damm, Nussold, Cantillo & Kappe, 2012).

243 According to other authors, microwave irradiation could exert specific effects on the  
244 structural and functional properties of enzymes. Direct energy transfer between the  
245 electromagnetic field and polar protein domains could modify enzyme flexibility and,  
246 consequently, change enzymatic properties and increase the reactivity of the functional groups  
247 involved in an enzymatic reaction (Mazumder, Laskar, Prajapati & Roy, 2004). Horikoshi et

248 al. (2016) demonstrated that microwave radiation enhanced CAT activity, but only for a short  
249 time when heating time was less than 3 minutes.

250 The noted results could also be attributed to the release of enzymes from human milk  
251 cells which break down under the influence of thermal shock resulting from the rapid increase  
252 in the temperature of microwave-processed milk. Human milk contains two isoforms of SOD,  
253 copper and zinc superoxide dismutase (CuZnSOD), which is found mainly in the cytoplasm,  
254 and mitochondrial manganese superoxide dismutase (MnSOD) (Kasapović, Pejić,  
255 Mladenović, Radlović, & Pajović, 2005). GPx is a selenium-containing, cytosolic enzyme.  
256 CAT is ubiquitous in almost all mammalian tissues in both soluble and membrane-bound  
257 forms. It is located mainly in peroxisomes, where other enzymes of the oxidoreductase class,  
258 including L-amino acid oxidase and  $\alpha$ -hydroxy acid oxidase, are also found. In mammalian  
259 peroxisomes, CAT may account for up to 16% of all proteins. A small amount of the enzyme  
260 was detected in the mitochondria and the endoplasmic reticulum (Ścibor & Czczot, 2006).

261 Li et al. (2015) demonstrated that viability of somatic cells in human milk decreased by  
262 97% in samples heated at 60°C for 30 min. One milliliter of human milk contains around  
263 14.000 cells, including macrophages, neutrophils with a small percentage of lymphocytes, and  
264 mammary epithelial cells (Cregan et al., 2007). A rapid increase in the temperature of the  
265 entire sample (the final temperature was attained in around 3 min) leads to cell degradation.  
266 Thermal shock destabilizes the cell membrane. The above suggests that the observed  
267 temporary increase in SOD and GPx activity was caused by the release of enzymes from  
268 human milk cells. However, prolonged heating at the above temperatures resulted in  
269 degradation of these proteins.

270 Enzymes are probably also released from human milk cells during LTLT pasteurization.  
271 However, temperature increase is more gradual during convective heating (62.5°C was

272 attained in 12.6 min, process without stirring), therefore, it can be assumed that an increase in  
273 enzyme activity is leveled out by its inactivation under exposure to high temperature.

274 Time of exposure to the temperatures generated during conventional and microwave  
275 heating cannot be directly compared. Convective heat transfer is the transfer of heat from one  
276 place to another by the movement of fluids. Microwave energy is delivered through a  
277 molecular interaction with microwaves, molecular friction resulting from dipole rotation of  
278 polar solvents and conductive migration of dissolved ions (Ahmed & Ramaswamy, 2007).  
279 Microwave heating is more effective in the inactivation of microorganisms than convection  
280 heating using the same temperature and time of its interaction (Atmaca, Akdag, Dasdag &  
281 Celik 1996).

282 Our earlier research shows that application of microwave heating results in total  
283 inactivation of bacteria in the significantly shorter time than achieved during convectional  
284 heating, even in the case of heat-resistant enterococci. The pre-obtained results suggest that  
285 microwave heating at a constant temperature of 62.5°C for 5 min achieves similar bactericidal  
286 effects as LTLT (62.5°C, 30 min) (Malinowska-Pańczyk et al., 2018). In the present study,  
287 the activity of enzymes in milk samples pasteurized by microwave heating at the above  
288 temperature and time was comparable or higher than in samples subjected to LTLT (SOD  
289 90% vs. 95%, CAT 64% vs. 43%, GPx 71% vs. 49% of initial activity).

## 290 **5. Conclusions**

291 The use of human milk in milk banks requires thermal processing to eliminate  
292 microbiological hazards. Human milk banks rely on LTLT which is not an ideal method.  
293 Pasteurization guarantees high microbiological quality of milk, but it considerably inactivates  
294 many biologically active components. The influence of heating parameters and heat  
295 generation methods on these compounds, including antioxidant enzymes, should be taken into  
296 consideration when attempting to optimize the LTLT method. However, the tests performed

297 in this study revealed that convective heating at temperatures higher than 66°C causes  
298 significant changes in the activity of antioxidant enzymes in human milk when applied for  
299 longer than 20 minutes.

300 The results of this study revealed that microwave heating could be an alternative method  
301 of pasteurization. This method supports the achievement of high temperature throughout the  
302 entire heated sample within a short period of time. However, the maintenance of constant  
303 temperature throughout the process poses a problem, and it can be achieved only in advanced  
304 microwave pasteurizers. Microwave heating is significantly affected by frequency, the  
305 sample's dielectric properties, initial temperature, moisture content, mass, geometry and  
306 location. These parameters and the initial temperature of the microwaved food product should  
307 be controlled or known, so that microwave power can be adjusted to obtain uniform final  
308 temperatures.

309 The quality of human milk after heat treatment has to be strictly controlled. The impact of  
310 microwaves on milk composition and the content of bioactive components in milk remains  
311 insufficiently investigated. During controlled microwave heating at constant temperature,  
312 human milk is exposed to high temperature for a significantly shorter period of time than  
313 during convective heating, which considerably inhibits the degradation of antioxidant  
314 enzymes. Microwave heating is an efficient and economical processing method. However, the  
315 reason for the temporary increase in enzyme activity during microwave heating has not been  
316 fully elucidated. It remains unknown whether this effect occurs due to a rapid increase in  
317 temperature within a short time and the release of enzymes from human milk cells or whether  
318 human milk enzymes are directly affected by the microwave field itself. The extent to which  
319 human milk cells are degraded under exposure to microwave heating has to be measured to  
320 clarify the above doubts.

321 To the authors' best knowledge, this is the first study evaluating the effects of  
322 microwave heating at constant temperature on antioxidant enzymes in human milk.

323  
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Table 1. The activity of antioxidant enzymes in raw human milk (control) and human milk pasteurized by conventional heating under different conditions (temperature and time).

Heating time [min]	SOD [U mL <sup>-1</sup> ± SD]		CAT [nmol min <sup>-1</sup> mL ± SD]		GPx [nmol min <sup>-1</sup> mL ± SD]	
	With stirring	Without stirring	With stirring	Without stirring	With stirring	Without stirring
<b>62.5 °C</b>						
Raw milk	1.27 ± 0.44	1.27 ± 0.44	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 1.86 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 1.86 <sup>abcd</sup>
0*	1.29 ± 0.08	1.29 ± 0.23	14.33 ± 2.00 <sup>abcd</sup>	14.78 ± 2.58 <sup>acd</sup>	7.23 ± 0.14 <sup>a</sup>	5.79 ± 0.68 <sup>a</sup>
10	1.20 ± 0.10	1.33 ± 0.20	11.05 ± 1.93 <sup>ab</sup>	11.95 ± 2.24 <sup>bd</sup>	5.62 ± 0.98 <sup>b</sup>	5.19 ± 0.55 <sup>b</sup>
20	1.30 ± 0.05	1.20 ± 0.17	10.43 ± 1.76 <sup>ac</sup>	10.45 ± 1.74 <sup>ac</sup>	5.31 ± 1.08 <sup>c</sup>	5.18 ± 0.99 <sup>c</sup>
30	1.21 ± 0.11	1.20 ± 0.21	9.47 ± 0.74 <sup>ad</sup>	8.20 ± 1.78 <sup>abd</sup>	5.26 ± 0.39 <sup>d</sup>	4.97 ± 0.55 <sup>d</sup>
<b>66 °C</b>						
Raw milk	1.27 ± 0.44	1.27 ± 0.44	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 1.86 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 1.86 <sup>abcd</sup>
0*	1.39 <sup>a</sup> ± 0.11	1.52 ± 0.22	13.78 ± 1.70 <sup>abcd</sup>	7.71 ± 1.35 <sup>acd</sup>	7.22 ± 0.86 <sup>ad</sup>	6.00 ± 0.87 <sup>a</sup>
10	1.09 <sup>a</sup> ± 0.06	1.33 ± 0.25	10.91 ± 1.48 <sup>ab</sup>	6.24 ± 1.55 <sup>bcd</sup>	6.90 ± 0.30 <sup>bd</sup>	5.71 ± 0.64 <sup>b</sup>
20	1.18 ± 0.15	1.32 ± 0.11	9.45 ± 1.77 <sup>ac</sup>	3.82 ± 0.68 <sup>abc</sup>	5.19 ± 0.89 <sup>c</sup>	5.68 ± 1.26 <sup>c</sup>
30	1.11 ± 0.14	1.13 ± 0.07	9.23 ± 1.84 <sup>ad</sup>	3.47 ± 1.44 <sup>acd</sup>	5.09 ± 0.55 <sup>abd</sup>	5.52 ± 0.26 <sup>d</sup>
<b>70 °C</b>						
Raw milk	1.27 ± 0.44	1.27 ± 0.44	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 1.86 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 1.86 <sup>abcd</sup>
0*	1.40 ± 0.11	1.46 <sup>a</sup> ± 0.09	7.97 ± 1.32 <sup>abcd</sup>	6.55 ± 1.48 <sup>abcd</sup>	6.23 ± 1.04 <sup>a</sup>	5.66 ± 0.83 <sup>a</sup>
10	1.25 ± 0.23	1.29 ± 0.18	4.06 ± 0.57 <sup>ab</sup>	3.15 ± 1.20 <sup>ab</sup>	6.27 ± 0.77 <sup>b</sup>	5.81 ± 0.39 <sup>b</sup>
20	1.11 ± 0.24	1.18 ± 0.19	4.95 ± 0.63 <sup>ac</sup>	2.91 ± 1.04 <sup>ac</sup>	6.45 ± 1.53 <sup>c</sup>	6.13 ± 0.12 <sup>cd</sup>
30	1.10 ± 0.11	0.95 <sup>a</sup> ± 0.21	4.90 ± 0.94 <sup>ad</sup>	2.51 ± 0.96 <sup>ad</sup>	4.58 ± 0.61 <sup>d</sup>	4.47 ± 0.48 <sup>cd</sup>

\*time 0 – at the moment of reaching the preset pasteurization temperature

a,b,c,d,e – identical letters in columns indicate significant differences in enzyme activity at different temperatures (P < 0.05)

Table 2. The activity of antioxidant enzymes in raw human milk (control) and human milk pasteurized by microwave heating under different conditions (temperature and time).

Heating time [min]	SOD [U mL <sup>-1</sup> ± SD]	CAT [nmol min <sup>-1</sup> mL ± SD]	GPx [nmol min <sup>-1</sup> mL ± SD]
62.5 °C			
Raw milk	1.27 ± 0.44	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 0.86 <sup>acd</sup>
0*	1.24 ± 0.09	15.05 ± 1.01	8.51 ± 0.56 <sup>a</sup>
1	1.40 ± 0.18 <sup>a</sup>	12.58 ± 1.57 <sup>a</sup>	6.35 ± 0.67 <sup>ad</sup>
3	1.25 ± 0.09	12.77 ± 1.55 <sup>b</sup>	9.01 ± 1.14 <sup>abcd</sup>
5	1.14 ± 0.07	12.31 ± 1.78 <sup>c</sup>	7.26 ± 0.98 <sup>ab</sup>
10	1.00 ± 0.14 <sup>a</sup>	11.76 ± 1.33 <sup>d</sup>	5.65 ± 0.61 <sup>ac</sup>
66 °C			
Raw milk	1.27 ± 0.44	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcd</sup>	10.18 ± 0.86 <sup>abcd</sup>
0*	1.32 ± 0.16	12.95 ± 1.32	8.85 ± 0.69 <sup>a</sup>
1	1.53 ± 0.19 <sup>ab</sup>	11.16 ± 2.26 <sup>a</sup>	6.39 ± 1.01 <sup>ae</sup>
3	1.09 ± 0.06 <sup>a</sup>	11.71 ± 2.01 <sup>b</sup>	7.35 ± 0.49 <sup>b</sup>
5	1.13 ± 0.03	10.37 ± 2.02 <sup>c</sup>	5.86 ± 1.16 <sup>ce</sup>
10	1.01 ± 0.13 <sup>b</sup>	9.88 ± 1.31 <sup>d</sup>	6.07 ± 1.12 <sup>d</sup>
70 °C			
Raw milk	1.27 ± 0.44 <sup>a</sup>	19.15 ± 1.24 <sup>abcde</sup>	10.18 ± 0.86 <sup>abcd</sup>
0*	1.29 ± 0.17 <sup>a</sup>	12.25 ± 0.86 <sup>a</sup>	8.89 ± 0.83 <sup>a</sup>
1	1.71 ± 0.07 <sup>abcd</sup>	11.87 ± 1.73 <sup>b</sup>	4.76 ± 0.74 <sup>ae</sup>
3	1.08 ± 0.18 <sup>b</sup>	9.19 ± 1.51 <sup>c</sup>	7.07 ± 1.88 <sup>b</sup>
5	1.24 ± 0.05 <sup>c</sup>	10.15 ± 2.06 <sup>d</sup>	5.20 ± 1.23 <sup>ce</sup>
10	1.02 ± 0.13 <sup>d</sup>	9.82 ± 0.84 <sup>e</sup>	4.77 ± 0.96 <sup>d</sup>

\*time 0 – at the moment of reaching the preset pasteurization temperature

a,b,c,d,e – identical letters in columns indicate significant differences in enzyme activity at different temperatures (P<0.05)

Figure 1

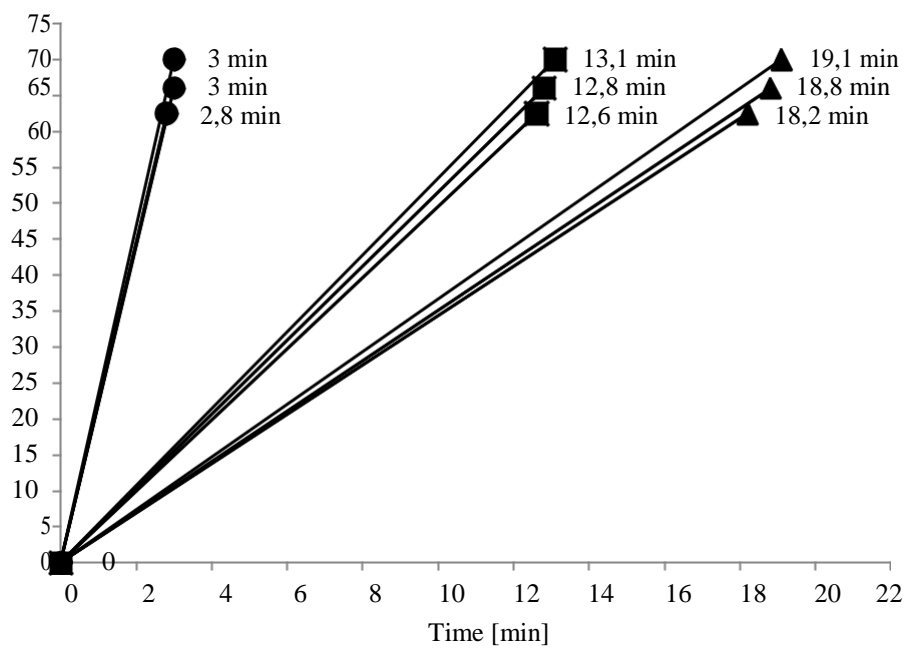


Fig. 1.

Figure 2

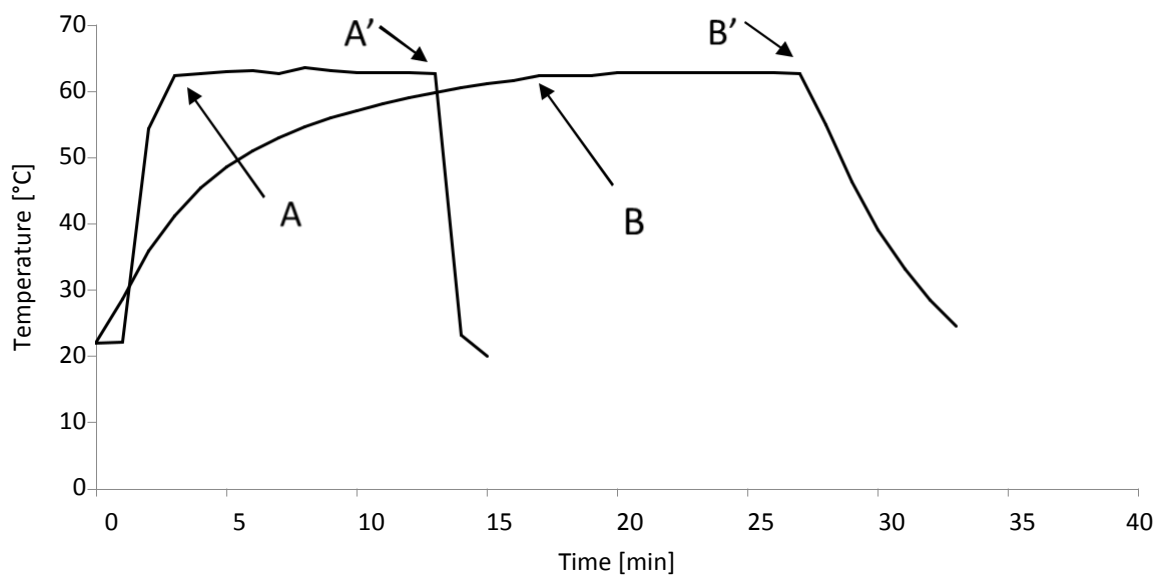


Fig. 2.

Figure 3

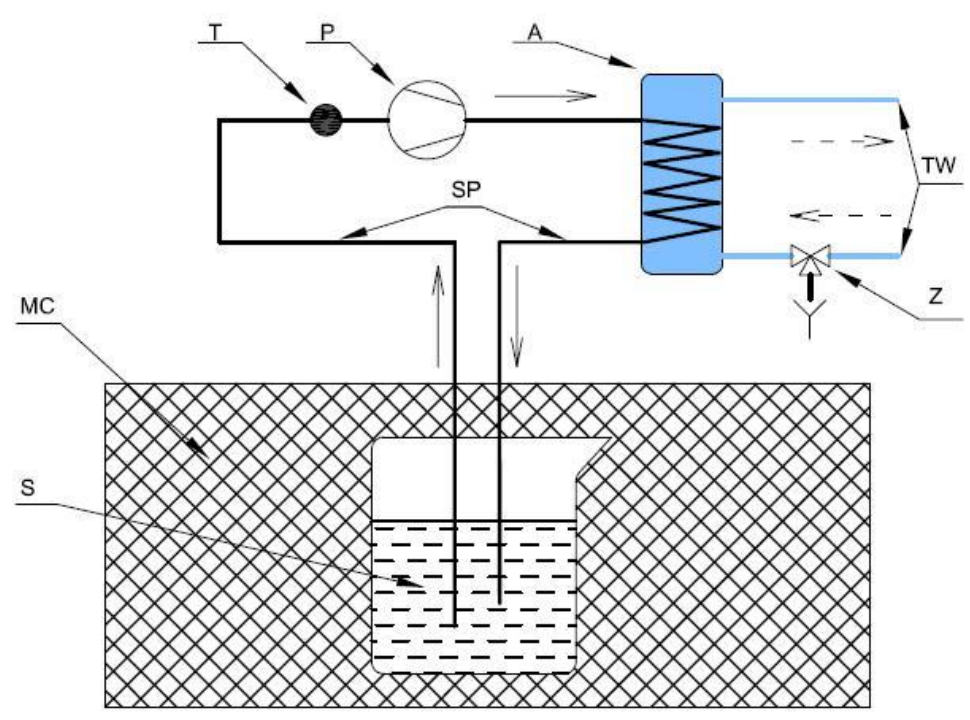


Fig. 3.



**Fig. 1.** The average time to reach the preset temperature (time 0) of human milk samples: microwave heating (●), convective heating with stirring (■) and convective heating without stirring (▲). Target temperatures were: 62.5 °C, 66 °C and 70 °C.

**Fig. 2.** Temperature curve of human milk pasteurization to 62.5°C for 10 minutes: microwave heating ( - - - ) and convective heating (—). A) time of reaching the preset temperature in microwave heating, B) in convective heating. A') the beginning of sample cooling after microwave heating, B') after convective heating.

**Fig. 3.** Diagram of a microwave pasteurizer (Enbio Technology, Gdańsk, Poland).

SP – silicone pipe, T – temperature sensor, P - pump, A - cooling exchanger, Z – three way valve, S – sample, MC – microwave chamber, TW – tap water, — sample flow, ---- tap water flow.