

Effect of hydrocolloids on storage properties of fermented finger millet *uji*

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Small-scale, rural-based, community-managed, food processing industries using simple biotechnological techniques is one way of promoting economic empowerment and food security in rural African communities. *Uji* is a lactic-fermented product commonly consumed by urban and rural folk in East African countries. It is also an important weaning supplement. In Kenya, the product is marketed solely in flour form. This is however inconvenient as it necessitates further domestic preparation to render the product in consumable form. This study was carried out to determine the effect of xanthan gum and gum arabic on the storage stability of fermented *uji*. Steady shear rheological parameters such as yield stress, power law exponent, and consistency index are discussed vis-à-vis the type of hydrocolloid and storage time. Retrogradation-induced changes in rheological parameters during storage are discussed in terms of the Avrami kinetics model. These findings can be used to develop shelf-stable, ready-to-drink fermented *uji* product. Such a product packaged, for example, in tetra-paks (like yoghurt) would help impart convenience, added value, and increased usage. Ready-to-drink *uji* can be manufactured by organized groups at village level and marketed to urban dwellers to provide an important economic link.