Research Article

Bioactive Compounds and Antioxidant Activity of Fresh and Processed White Cauliflower

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Brassica species are very rich in health-promoting phytochemicals, including phenolic compounds, vitamin C, and minerals. The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of different blanching (i.e., water and steam) and cooking (i.e., water boiling, steam boiling, microwaving, and stir-frying) methods on the nutrient components, phytochemical contents (i.e., polyphenols, carotenoids, flavonoid, and ascorbic acid), antioxidant activity measured by DPPH assay, and phenolic profiles of white cauliflower.

Results showed that water boiling and water blanching processes had a great effect on the nutrient components and caused significant losses of dry matter, protein, and mineral and phytochemical contents. However, steam treatments (blanching and cooking), stir-frying, and microwaving presented the lowest reductions. Methanolic extract of fresh cauliflower had significantly the highest antioxidant activity (68.91%) followed by the extracts of steam-blanched, steam-boiled, stir-fried, and microwaved cauliflower 61.83%, 59.15%, 58.93%, and 58.24%, respectively. HPLC analysis revealed that the predominant phenolics of raw cauliflower were protocatechuic acid (192.45), quercetin (202.4), pyrogallol (18.9), vanillic acid (11.90), coumaric acid (6.94), and kaempferol (25.91) mg/100 g DW, respectively.

1. Introduction

Plant-based foods such as fruit, vegetables, and whole grains, which contain significant amounts of bioactive phytochemicals, may provide desirable health benefits beyond basic nutrition to reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Epidemiological evidence suggests that consumption of a diet rich in vegetables and fruits has positive implications for human health [1]. In the last decades, special attention has been paid towards edible plants, especially those that are rich in secondary metabolites (frequently called phytochemicals), and nowadays, there is an increasing interest in the antioxidant activity of such phytochemicals present in diet. Recent reports suggest that cruciferous vegetables act as a good source of natural antioxidants due to the high levels of carotenoids, tocopherols, and ascorbic acid, and strong epidemiological evidence shows that these compounds may help to protect the human body against damage by reactive oxygen species. In addition to carotenoids, tocopherols, and ascorbic acid, most of the antioxidative effect related to plant food intake is mainly due to the presence of phenolic compounds, which have been associated with flavour and colour characteristics of fruits and vegetables. In this aspect, the popularity and consumption of vegetable Brassica species is increasing because of their nutritional value. Brassica crops have been related to the reduction of the risk of chronic diseases including cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Brassica foods are very nutritive, providing nutrients and health-promoting phytochemicals such as vitamins, carotenoids, fiber, soluble sugars, minerals, glucosinolates, and phenolic compounds [2]. Vegetables of Brassicaceae family are the essential sources of phenolic compounds in the human diet. They also contain derivatives of hydroxycinnamic, caffeic, chlorogenic, ferulic, and synapic acids as well as flavonols (kaempferol derivatives, and quercetin derivatives) and anthocyanins (red cabbage) [3, 4]. Brassica vegetables have been reported as good sources of antimutagens. Several epidemiological studies showed that they were associated with reduction of cancer [5]. Further studies of experimental animals also demonstrated that feeding some of these vegetables could inhibit the development of some chemically induced carcinogenesis [6] and resulted in the induction of phase 2 detoxifying enzymes.
such as glutathione S-transferase. It has been reported that natural compounds in these vegetables were effective in protection against chemical carcinogenesis by modulating carcinogen metabolism [7]. Cauliflower, like broccoli and cabbage, belongs to the cruciferous (Brassicaceae) family of vegetables, which has been shown to be effective in fighting certain forms of cancer. Cauliflower is so closely related to broccoli that both are designated as the same variety of the cruciferous family, which not only share the wonderful phytochemicals, but also contain nutritive value of vitamin A, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin C, calcium, iron, phosphorous, and fat to help fight diseases [8]. Cauliflower is an important vegetable grown all over the world and has a wide variety of uses directly as a vegetable or as an ingredient in salads, soups, and so forth. Cauliflower occupies an area of 8.88 million ha, having a production of 16.40 million tons in the world [9]. The aim of the current investigation was to determine the effect of different blanching and cooking methods on the nutritional quality of white cauliflower by assessing the proximate composition, the count of total polyphenols, total flavonoids, total carotenoids and vitamin C, and fractionation of phenolic compounds using HPLC as well as antioxidant activity by DPPH of raw and processed cauliflower.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Cauliflower. Freshly harvested cauliflowers (Brassica oleracea var. botrytis L.) were purchased from the local market on the day of processing (Giza Governorate, Egypt) during the winter season (December 2012). Cauliflower heads were selected at marketable stage, free from insect or mechanical damage. Cauliflower heads were transported to the laboratory of biochemistry department, Faculty of Agriculture, Cairo University, Egypt, where the inedible parts were removed using a sharp knife. The cauliflower was cut into almost equal small bite-sized pieces (edible florets, about 5 cm), mixed well, and divided into portions (200 g).

2.2. Pretreatments

2.2.1. Water Blanching. Approximately 1000 mL of water was poured into a stainless steel vessel, which was then covered with a lid and heated to boiling. Cauliflower florets (200 g) were added to the boiling water and cooked for 6 min. The samples were drained on a stainless sieve until cold and then weighed.

2.2.2. Steam Blanching. Steam blanching was conducted by suspending 200 g of cauliflower florets above 1000 mL of boiling water for 6 min 15 s. The samples were drained on a stainless sieve until cold and then weighed.

2.2.3. Stir-Frying. Cauliflower florets (200 g) were placed in a glass beaker (Type Birex, England), and 10 mL water was added to prevent cauliflower from being burned during cooking and then cooked in a microwave oven for 3 min 30 s. The samples were drained on a stainless sieve until cold and then weighed.

2.2.4. Water Boiling. Approximately 1000 mL of water was poured into a stainless steel vessel, which was then covered with a lid and heated to boiling. Cauliflower florets (200 g) were added to the boiling water and cooked for 6 min. The samples were drained on a stainless sieve until cold and then weighed.

2.2.5. Steam Boiling. Steam boiling was conducted by suspending 200 g of cauliflower florets above 1000 mL of boiling water for 6 min 15 s in a stainless steel steamer with a lid. The samples were drained on a stainless sieve until cold and then weighed.

2.2.6. Microwave Cooking. A microwave oven (Olympic Electric, Model Kor-1AOA, 2450 MHz, Korea) at full power (1000 W) was used for microwaving. Cauliflower florets (200 g) were placed in a glass beaker (Type Birex, England), and 10 mL water was added to prevent cauliflower from being burned during cooking and then cooked in a microwave oven for 3 min 30 s. The samples were drained on a stainless sieve until cold and then weighed.

2.3. Analytical Methods

2.3.1. Chemical Composition. Moisture, crude oil, crude protein (N × 6.25), and total ash of samples were determined as described in [10]. The minerals, that is, Ca, Fe, Zn, K, Cu, Me, Mg, and Na, were determined in a dilute solution of the ashed samples by atomic absorption spectrophotometer (3300 PerkinElmer) on described in [10]. The results are expressed as dry weight (DW) basis.

2.3.2. Ascorbic Acid Determination. Ascorbic acid content was determined according to [11]. Official Method 985.33 (2, 6-dichloroindophenol titrimetric method). Ascorbic acid content is expressed as mg/100 g DW.

2.3.3. Total Carotenoids Determination. Total carotenoids were determined according to the procedure given by [12] as follows: 5 g of cauliflower florets were grinded and extracted with a mixture of acetone and petroleum ether (1:1, v/v) repeatedly using the mortar and pestle until a colorless residue was obtained. The upper phase was collected and combined with crude extracts after being washed for several times with water. The extracts were made up to a known volume with petroleum ether. Total carotenoids content was determined by recording the absorbance at 451 nm with a spectrophotometer. Total carotenoids were estimated by mg/100 g DW.

2.3.4. Determination of Total Polyphenols. Total phenolics were determined using the Folin-Ciocalteu reagent [13].
### Table 1: Effect of different blanching and cooking methods on the chemical composition of cauliflower florets (g/100 g dry weight basis).

| Component          | Raw Steam | Water | Blanching Steam | Water | Boiling Steam | Water | Microwave cooking | Stir-frying | LSD at 0.05 |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|-----------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Moisture           | 88.64 ± 1.14 | 90.04 ± 0.52 | 2.07 | 92.62 ± 1.10 | 91.14 ± 2.04 | 1.56 | 92.97 ± 1.65 | 91.13 ± 1.20 | 1.624 ± 1.64 | 1.621 |
| Crude protein (N × 6.25) | 27.77 ± 0.34 | 26.59 ± 0.85 | 0.85 | 25.75 ± 0.94 | 26.15 ± 1.06 | 0.94 | 25.34 ± 0.89 | 26.89 ± 0.17 | 25.44 ± 0.30 | 1.282 |
| Ether extract      | 2.20 ± 0.14 | 2.09 ± 0.09 | 0.99 | 1.93 ± 0.10 | 2.04 ± 0.09 | 0.10 | 1.92 ± 0.07 | 2.03 ± 0.07 | 9.72 ± 0.10 | 0.169 |
| Crude fiber        | 11.57 ± 0.41 | 11.56 ± 0.36 | 0.36 | 11.52 ± 0.54 | 11.54 ± 0.35 | 0.35 | 12.74 ± 0.38 | 11.54 ± 0.62 | 11.55 ± 0.21 | 0.746 |
| Ash                | 11.03 ± 0.08 | 9.72 ± 0.68 | 0.68 | 9.18 ± 0.57 | 9.60 ± 0.25 | 0.25 | 7.12 ± 0.30 | 9.65 ± 0.94 | 9.64 ± 1.07 | 1.185 |
| Total carbohydrate*| 47.43 ± 1.39 | 50.64 ± 1.99 | 1.99 | 53.72 ± 2.15 | 51.77 ± 1.76 | 1.76 | 52.88 ± 1.65 | 50.85 ± 1.85 | 43.65 ± 3.29 | 3.879 |

Data are expressed as mean ± SD. Values given represent means of three determinations. Means in the same row with different letters are significantly (P ≤ 0.05) different. LSD: least different significantly at P ≤ 0.05 according to Duncan’s multiple range test.

* By difference.

### 2.3.5. Determination of Total Flavonoids

The total flavonoids content was determined using the Dowd method [14]. 5 mL of 2% aluminium trichloride (AlCl₃) in methanol was mixed with the same volume of the methanolic extract solution (0.4 mg/mL). After ten minutes the absorbance was measured at 415 nm using PerkinElmer UV-VIS Lambda. Blank sample consisting of a 5 mL extract solution with 5 mL methanol without AlCl₃. The total flavonoid content was determined using a standard curve with catechin (0–100 mg/L) as the standard. Total flavonoids content is expressed as mg of catechin equivalent per 100 g DW.

### 2.3.6. Measurement of Antioxidant Activity by DPPH

**Extraction.** Ten g (10 g) of raw and processed cauliflower was homogenized with 100 mL methanol for 1 min and centrifuged at 10 000 rpm for 15 min at 4°C. The clear supernatant was transferred to a glass bottle and measured immediately for total antioxidant activity using DPPH assay. 100 µL of sample was added to 5 mL DPPH solution, and the absorbance of DPPH reagent was determined at 515 nm after 30 min of incubation [15]. The inhibition percentage of the absorbance was calculated as follows:

\[
\text{Inhibition\%} = \left( \frac{\text{Abs} t_{0} - \text{Abs} t_{30} \text{ min}}{\text{Abs} t_{0} \times 100} \right).
\]

Abs<sub>t</sub><sub>0</sub> min was the absorbance of DPPH at time 0. Abs<sub>t</sub><sub>30</sub> min was the absorbance of DPPH after 30 min of incubation.

### 2.3.7. Analysis of Phenolic Compounds Using HPLC

Phenolic compounds of methanolic extract of raw and processed cauliflower were identified using a method introduced by [16]. Briefly, HPLC analyses were performed using an HPI100 system with a thermostatically controlled column oven and a UV detector was set at 280 nm (Hewlett-Packard, Palo Alto, CA, USA). Samples and mobile phases were filtrated through a 0.45 mm Millipore filter, type GV (Millipore, Bedford, MA, USA), prior to HPLC injection. Each sample was analyzed in triplicate. The identified phenolic compounds were quantified on the basis of their peak area and compared with calibration curves obtained with the corresponding standards and then expressed as mg/100 g of extract.

### 2.3.8. Statistical Analysis

Data were statistically analyzed in completely randomized design in factorial arrangement, according to the procedures outlined by [17], and the treatments means were compared by least significant differences (LSD) and Duncan’ multiple range using SPSS program package.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Chemical Composition

Chemical compositions of raw, blanched, and cooked cauliflower are presented in Table 1. Blanching and boiling processes caused significant increases in moisture content; percent increments ranged from 1.4% to 4.33%. This increase in moisture content might be due to leaching of water-soluble nutrients during blanching and boiling processes [18]. The highest (P < 0.05) loss of dry matter was observed for water-boiled cauliflower. During boiling, cellulose is little affected, but the middle lamella gets broken down by heat, thus making vegetables to take up water as the starch gelatinizes. The longer the boiling time, therefore, the higher the moisture content [19]. However, stir-fried
Stir-frying process caused significant increase in fat content by 7.52% as dry weight basis. The absorption of fat through frying caused an increase of dry matter from the cauliflower florets into the water at different rates. Some studies have also suggested that heat processing can change the solubility and other physicochemical properties of fiber. However, most studies analyzing crude and dietary fiber solubility and other physicochemical properties of fiber concluded that heat processing can change the content of protein and soluble sugars participated in Maillard reaction and then resulted in the protein denaturation at high temperature during blanching, cooking treatments. Blanching, boiling, microwaving and stir-frying treatments significantly (P ≤ 0.05) decreased the ash contents of cauliflower florets. Steam treatments (blanching and cooking), stir-frying, and microwaving gave the lowest reduction in the ash content. Losses of minerals during cooking are not caused by destruction but only by leaching into the cooking water. However, steam treatments (blanching and cooking), stir-frying, and microwaving treatments of cauliflower. A significant (P ≤ 0.05) decrease in carbohydrate content was observed after stir-frying of cauliflower. This decrease may be attributed to the significant increase of fat content during frying process.

### Table 2: Effect of different blanching and cooking methods on selected mineral contents of cauliflower florets (mg/100 g dry weight basis).

| Treatment    | Na      | K        | Ca       | Mg       | P        | S        | Zn       | Mn       | Fe       |
|--------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Raw          | 392±10  | 2657±11  | 120.2    | 480±8.24 | 450±9.55 | 329±22.5 | 720±9.32 | 25.3±2.01 | 21.5±0.58 | 26.2±1.96 |
| Steam blanching | 387±13  | 3132±7   | 7.42     | 460±6.7  | 432±8.24 | 308±31.2 | 712±5.19 | 24.1±3.18 | 1.95±0.08 | 24.1±2.83 |
| Water blanching | 331±6.34| 2998±8.17| 5.82     | 412±14.27| 304±22.01| 708±7.02 | 23.5±4.01| 1.90±0.41 | 22.4±1.75 |
| Steam boiling | 356±8.02| 3120±5.37| 11.30    | 454±11.30| 430±13.29| 305±20.1 | 710±10.34| 24.6±1.97 | 1.93±0.37 | 23.6±0.85 |
| Water boiling | 309±11.78| 2754±6.59| 6.59     | 426±7.09 | 405±11.07| 298±6.07 | 706±5.48 | 23.1±2.56 | 1.87±0.12 | 20.1±3.12 |
| Microwaving   | 384±9.60| 3241±13.20| 22.14    | 462±13.06| 322±22.16| 720±6.77 | 24.2±3.54 | 2.05±0.64 | 24.4±5.22 |
| Stir-frying   | 385±5.23| 3238±22.36| 458±13.56| 442±10.64| 324±10.14| 718±11.25| 24.4±2.10 | 2.09±0.32 | 25.1±1.45 |

LSD at 0.05

|         | 16.83   | 20.98    | 21.40    | 20.35    | 36.22    | 14.38    | 5.02     | 0.717    | 4.896    |

Data are expressed as mean ± SD. Values given represent means of three determinations.

Means in the same row with different letters are significantly (P ≤ 0.05) different.

LSD: least difference significantly at P ≤ 0.05 according to Duncan's multiple range test.
3.3. Ascorbic Acid. Ascorbic acid is one of the most sensitive vitamins. For this reason, it is often used to evaluate the influences of food processing on vitamin contents [35]. Results in Figure 1 represent the effect of different blanching and cooking methods on ascorbic acid content of cauliflower florets. These results reveal that fresh cauliflower contained the highest level of ascorbic acid 769.23 mg/100 g (on dry weight basis). Blanching and cooking treatments caused significant reductions in ascorbic acid content ranging from 18.86% to 41.99%. The highest loss was observed for water-blanched and water-boiled cauliflower 38.69% and 41.99%, respectively. The loss of ascorbic acid can probably be ascribed to water leaching and its thermal degradation, as already reported by Lee and Kader [36]. However, steam-blanced, steam-boiled, microwaved, and stir-fried cauliflower had significantly the highest retention of ascorbic acid content. Boiling leads to high losses in ascorbic acid content levels while stewing, steaming, microwave cooking, and even pressure steaming cause only small losses [33]. Stir-frying resulted in a better retention of ascorbic acid content than cooking with a lot of water or using a microwave [37].

3.4. Total Carotenoids. Carotenoids are plant pigments that are present in human diet as microcomponents of fruits and vegetables [38]. These are a group of aliphatic-acyclic, fat-soluble, yellow-to-red compounds responsible for red, orange, and yellow color of edible fruits and vegetables and widely distributed in nature [39].

Results in Figure 2 illustrate the effect of different blanching and cooking methods on total carotenoids in cauliflower. These results reveal that fresh cauliflower contained 126.22 mg/100 g carotenoids (on dry weight basis). Blanching and cooking treatments caused significant decreases of total carotenoids, 40.77% and 39.42%, respectively. Yuan et al. [12] and Vallejo et al. [40] reported that boiling and stir-frying of broccoli resulted in significant decrease in carotenoids. In this respect, Miglio et al. [41] reported that frying of broccoli caused a 67% loss of the initial carotenoid concentration. This decrease of carotenoids of fried cauliflower may be due to the fact that carotenoids are fat-soluble compounds and readily solubilized during stir-frying and thus resulted in decrease of its contents [42]. On the other hand, there are no significant differences in the content of carotenoids of raw, steam-blanced, water-blanced, steam-boiled and microwaved cauliflower. In general, carotenoid content of foods is not altered to a great extent by common household cooking methods such as microwave cooking, steaming, and boiling, but extreme heat can result in oxidative destruction of carotenoids [43].

3.5. Total Phenolic Compounds. Phenolic compounds (PCs) may contribute directly to the antioxidant action; therefore, it is necessary to investigate total phenolic content. Figure 3 shows the effect of different blanching and cooking methods on total phenolic contents of cauliflower. The initial level of total phenolic in fresh cauliflower was 782.43 mg/100 g (on dry weight basis). Blanching and cooking treatments caused significant losses (15.6% to 51.9%) of total phenolic compounds. Phenolic compounds in vegetables are present in both soluble forms and combined with cell-wall complexes. Thus, increased surface area of tissues in contact with cooking
water and high cooking temperatures and lengthy cooking times are all likely to have caused disruption of cell walls and breakdown of phenolic compounds [44]. The highest loss was observed for water-boiled and water-blanched cauliflower, 31.90% and 37.69%, respectively. This could be due to the breakdown of phenolics or losses (leached out) during cooking as most of the bioactive compounds are relatively unstable to heat and easily solubilized [45]. Steam-blanched, steam-boiled, stir-fried, and microwaved cauliflower had significantly the lower losses 16.6%, 17.53%, 18.05% and 18.30%, respectively. During steaming, phenolic compounds can remain in the edible part of broccoli, probably owing to the inactivation of oxidative enzymes [40]. Microwaving was better in retention of total phenolics than other cooking methods, while boiling significantly decreased the contents of total phenolics of Boletus mushrooms [46].

### 3.6. Total Flavonoids

Flavonoids have a wide range of biological activities such as cell proliferation-inhibiting, apoptosis-inducing, enzyme-inhibiting, antibacterial, and antioxidant effects [47, 48]. Moreover, some findings indicate that flavonoids possess various clinical properties such as antiatherosclerotic, anti-inflammatory, antitumour, antithrombogenic, antiosteoporotic, and antiviral effects [47, 48]. Figure 4 shows the effect of different blanching and cooking methods on total flavonoids content. Results represent the means of three experiments.

![Figure 4: Effect of different blanching and cooking methods on total flavonoids content. Results represent the means of three experiments.](image)

| Method                  | Total Flavonoids (mg catechin/100 g DW) |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Raw                     | 267.21a                                |
| Steam blanching         | 236.51b                                |
| Water blanching         | 208.48c                                |
| Steam boiling           | 191.51c                                |
| Water boiling           | 186.42d                                |
| Microwaving             | 151.17e                                |
| Stir-frying             | 116.10f                                |

3.7. Total Antioxidant Activity

Antioxidant activities of raw and processed cauliflower, as determined by the DPPH radical scavenging method, are shown in Figure 5. In DPPH scavenging assay, the antioxidant activity was measured by the decrease in absorbance as the DPPH radical received an electron or hydrogen radical from an antioxidant compound to become a stable diamagnetic molecule [52]. DPPH radical-scavenging activity expressed in % inhibition of the raw and processed cauliflower extracts ranged from 35.13% to 68.91%. Methanolic extract of fresh cauliflower had significantly the highest DPPH radical-scavenging activity (68.91%) followed by the extracts of steam-blanched, steam-boiled, stir-fried, and microwaved cauliflower, 61.83%, 61.50%, 58.93% and 58.24%, respectively. Kenny and O’Beirne [53] indicated that the loss of antioxidant activity was relative to the contact area between vegetables and water as well as processing time. It was clear that the contact areas in steaming and stir-frying processes were much smaller than that in boiling, so their antioxidant substances lost relatively very little [54]. Microwave heating retains the active components in the cooked tissue [55]. The activity of vegetables cooked in the microwave oven was generally higher than that of those cooked in boiling water, because microwave heating, griddling, and baking do not stimulate the release of ascorbic acid or other antioxidants from cooked tissue [56]. However, the extracts of water-boiled and water-blanched cauliflower showed the lowest scavenging activity of 35.13% and 48.13%, respectively. After boiling process, a lot of the antioxidant substances were running off into the boiling medium, which resulted in decrease of their antioxidant capacities [44]. During vegetable cooking, qualitative changes, antioxidant breakdown, and their leaching into surrounding water may influence the antioxidant activity of the vegetables [57].
Table 3: HPLC analysis of phenolic compounds (mg/100 g DW) of raw and processed cauliflower.

| Phenolic compounds (mg/100 g) | Raw | Steam blanching | Water blanching | Steam boiling | Water boiling | Microwaving | Stir-frying |
|-----------------------------|-----|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| Gallic                      | 11.9| 7.62           | 4.32           | 3.61         | 0.66          | 4.00        | 3.50       |
| Pyrogallol                  | 18.9| 13.71          | 6.84           | 11.54        | 4.84          | 14.52       | 12.47      |
| Catechin                    | 1.91| 0.85           | ND             | 0.71         | ND            | ND          | ND         |
| Protocatechuic              | 192.4| 78.78         | 37.23          | 66.10        | 23.04         | 67.41       | 52.38      |
| Catechol                    | 4.90| 0.70           | 0.60           | 0.60         | 0.34          | 0.45        | ND         |
| Chlorogenic acid            | 25.83| 11.36          | ND             | 8.14         | ND            | 12.36       | 10.45      |
| Rosmarinic acid             | 1.73| ND             | 0.01           | 0.01         | ND            | 0.12        | ND         |
| Rutin                       | 0.77| 0.44           | 0.21           | ND           | ND            | ND          | 1.64       |
| Vanillic acid               | 11.90| 0.031         | ND             | ND           | ND            | ND          | ND         |
| Quercetin                   | 202.46| 85.20         | 45.13          | 54.19        | 22.35         | 61.78       | 58.74      |
| Naringenin                  | 1.81| ND             | ND             | ND           | ND            | ND          | ND         |
| Syringic acid               | 1.91| ND             | ND             | ND           | ND            | ND          | ND         |
| Coumaric acid               | 6.94| 3.69           | 2.94           | 3.48         | 1.54          | 2.62        | 2.10       |
| Cinnamic acid               | 3.10| 0.35           | ND             | 0.25         | 0.24          | ND          | ND         |
| Kaempferol                  | 25.91| 15.12          | 10.91          | 9.21         | 7.34          | 11.36       | 11.84      |

ND: not detected.

3.8. HPLC Analysis of Phenolic Compounds of Raw, Blanched, and Cooked Cauliflower. HPLC analysis has the advantage over total phenolics content determined by the Folin-Ciocalteu method, as it provides more precise information of individual compounds. Several polyphenolic compounds were identified in fresh, blanched, and cooked cauliflower. These included gallic, pyrogallol, catechin, protocatechuic acid, catechol, chlorogenic acid, rosmarinic acid, rutin, caffeic acid, vanillic acid, quercetin, naringenin, syringic acid, coumaric acid, cinnamic acid, and kaempferol (Table 3). These compounds have been identified according to their retention time and the spectral characteristics of their peaks compared to those of standards as well as by spiking the sample with standards. The quantities of the identified compounds are expressed in mg/100 g DW. The predominant phenolics of raw cauliflower were protocatechuic acid (192.45), quercetin (202.4), pyrogallol (18.9), vanillic acid (11.90), coumaric acid (6.94), and kaempferol (25.91) mg/100 g DW, respectively (Table 3). Water boiling and water blanching showed the most pronounced losses of cauliflower polyphenols (~88.27 and 78.81%, resp.). Phenolic acids are dissolved in vacuoles and apoplast [58]. Cooking of vegetables determines softening and breaking of cellular components with the consequent release of these molecules into the boiling water [59]. The less negative effects on phenolic compounds were observed for steam-blanched, microwaved, steam-boiled, and stir-fried cauliflower (~57.80%, 66.08%, 69.34%, and 70.26%, resp.). Steaming and microwaving were better in retention of phenolic compounds than other cooking methods, while boiling significantly decreased the contents of these compounds of broccoli and mushrooms [40, 46]. During steaming and frying, moreover, the hydrolysis of chlorogenic acid into caffeic and quinic acids may also occur, justifying the significant increases of caffeic acid observed for both cooking methods [41]. It is worthy to mention that polyphenol losses could also be due to the covalent binding between oxidized phenols and proteins or amino acids as well as the polymerization of oxidized phenols [59].

4. Conclusion

As shown in this study, blanching, boiling, microwaving, and stir-frying affect the composition, phytochemical contents, antioxidant activity, and phenolic profiles of white cauliflower. Water boiling and blanching processes caused significant losses of dry matter, protein, mineral, and phytochemical contents as well as scavenging of DPPH• radical. However, steam treatments (blanching and cooking), stir-frying, and microwaving caused slight losses, and they result in the greatest retention of nutrients and phytochemicals.

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