INTRODUCTION

Arcobacter spp. considered as emerging food- and waterborne zoonotic pathogens (Hänel et al., 2016), aero-tolerant campylobacters' (Levican and Figueras, 2013). It’s ability to grow between 15 to 30 °C temperature aerobically and need of microaerophilic condition for primary isolation (Ferreira et al., 2016), are nearly similar to Campylobacter spp. in biochemical reaction which complicates their phenotypic differentiation. Hence, polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based methods are more commonly used for specific detection and identification purposes (Doudidah et al., 2010) and currently Arcobacter spp. includes 21 species (Giacometti et al., 2015). Among these species, A. butzleri, A. cryaerophilus (with two subgroups) and A. sibiricus which classified as serious hazards to human health by the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods (ICMSF) (ICMSF, 2002) as it associated with various illnesses such as gastroenteritis, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, bacteremia and sepsis in humans, mastitis, diarreah, abortion, and other reproductive disorders in animals (Yanderberg et al., 2004; D’Sa and Harrison, 2005 and Girbue et al., 2015).

In the Mediterranean countries, A. butzleri is a widespread in raw milk cheese production, including, particularly soft cheese (Serraino and Giacometti, 2014) and the organism also survived during processing and storage of water buffalo mozzarella cheese, fresh village cheese and sheep ricotta cheese (Serraino et al., 2013). The ability of this microorganism to survive in food products and water strengthened by its resistance to stress created during food storage and processing (Ferreira et al., 2019), biofilms formation (Assanta et al., 2002) and can survive in pipe and food-processing surfaces (Doudidah et al., 2010). So, dairy researchers have found that selected plant Essential Oils (EO) can act as inhibitors of spoilage microorganisms in food products (Smith et al., 2001 and Conte et al., 2007) Especially with increasing the reports of resistance to current antibiotic employed in treatment of Arcobacter related infections there is need to develop new or alternative antimicrobial agents effective against it (Smith et al., 2003).

The thyme plants belongs to the family of Labiatae (Selmi and Sado, 2008) and EO or plant extracts originating from common or garden thyme (Thymus vulgaris) (Wiese et al., 2018) is utilized as a flavor enhancer in a wide variety of foods, beverages and confectionery products (Boskovic et al., 2013). It possesses some antiseptic, antispasmodic and antimicrobial properties that make it popular as a medicinal herb and as a preservative for foods (Cosentino et al., 1999).

So, in this study focused on isolation of A. butzleri from different types of cheeses retailed in Assiut city markets, Egypt, with studying the effect of Thymus vulgaris and its EO at different concentrations on isolated A. butzleri.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample collection

A total of 90 samples including random samples of different types of cheese soft cheese (Talaga cheese), semisoft (Mozzarella cheese) and hard one (Roumy cheese) 30 each, were collected from different markets and dairy shops in Assiut City, Egypt. The samples were collected in package as marketed to the consumer and sent to the laboratory in an insulated box with a minimum of delay to be examined.

Isolation of A. butzleri

The samples were homogenized by stomacher and prepared for Arcobacter isolation by taking 25 g of these samples and aseptically inoculated in a 1:10 ratio in Arcobacter enrichment broth (oxoid, UK) supplemented with Cefoperazone, Ampthotericin B and Teicoplanin (CAT) selective supplement (SR0174, Oxoid, UK), then incubated at 30°C under microaerophilic condition for 48 h. (Mottola et al., 2016). Then streaked onto Arcobacter selective media supplemented with 5% sheep blood and with CAT (Oxoid, Uk), the agar plates were incubated for 48 h at 30°C and samples of no growth were incubated for another 48h. (Aydin et al., 2007 and Ramees et al., 2014). Subsequently, presumptive Arcobacter colonies (small colourless, translucent, convex with an entire edge) were picked, sub-cultured onto blood agar and incubated at 30°C for 48h. Purified isolates were further confirmed morphologically by Gram staining and biochemical analysis (catalase, oxidase, urea tests and motility, indoxyl acetate hydrolysis, salt tolerance and growth on McConkey agar). The isolates referable at Arcobacter genus (Gram negative, spiral shaped, motile, oxidase and catalase positive, urease negative), were stored in 20% (v/v) nutrient broth glycerol at −80°C, after molecular identification (Ferreira et al., 2016 and Salas-Masso et al., 2016).

PCR confirmation

This part was done in molecular biology department (authorized by EGAC, ISO17025:2017) at Animal Health Research Institute, Dokki, Giza, Egypt. The isolates were performed using the QAamp DNA Mini kit (Catalogue no.51304, Qiagen, Germany, GmbH) with modifications from the manufacturer’s recommendations. The spin-column procedure does not require mechanical homogenization, so total hands-on preparation time is only 20 minutes. Primers used were supplied from Metabion (Germany) are listed in table (I).
Analysis of the PCR Products.

The products of PCR were separated by electrophoresis on 1.5% agarose gel (Applichem, Germany, GmbH) in 1x TBE buffer at room temperature using gradients of 5V/cm. For gel analysis, 20 µl of the products was loaded in each gel slot. Gelpilot 100 bp ladder (cat. no. SM0243) was used to determine the fragment sizes. The gel was photographed by a gel documentation system (Alpha Innotech, Biometra) and the data was analyzed through computer software.

Determination of anti-A. butzleri activity of the Thymus vulgaris plants and its extraction

Thymus vulgaris used in this research was obtained from Plant Department, Faculty of Agriculture, Al Azhar University, Assuit branch, Egypt. The plant was washed, dried, and ground in a mortar to be used in Talaga cheese preparation. The alcohol extraction was done by maceration in 70% alcohol for 24 hours. This washed, dried, and ground in a mortar to be used in Talaga cheese preparation. The resulting bacterial suspension was then standardized by McFarland nephelometry to 10⁷ CFU/ml. (Adesiji et al., 2012)

Preparation of A. butzleri standard inoculum.

A. butzleri subcultures were first prepared from the stock cultures on Brain Heart Infusion (BHI) agar supplemented with 5% yeasts and 7% sheep blood. BHI agar plates were incubated at 37°C in microaerophilic atmosphere (Vandamme et al., 1991). Arcobacter inoculum was prepared by collecting bacterial colonies from BHI agar plates at the exponential growth phase and diluting in 0.85% saline. The resulting bacterial suspension was then standardized by McFarland nephelometry to 10⁷ CFU/ml. (Adesiji et al., 2012)

Manufacture and treatment of Talaga cheese.

Talaga cheese was prepared from whole raw milk that was pasteurized at 63°C for 30 minutes. The inoculated milk was salted to a concentration of 5%. Rennet was added, the milk was divided into five equal portions, and each was subjected to the following treatments: two portions for addition of 2% and 4% Thymus vulgaris and another two portions for its EO and 5th portion as a control block (free from A. butzleri). The treated milk and the control one were incubated at 30°C for overnight until coagulation and cheese was obtained. Treated cheese as well as control samples were stored at refrigeration temperature (4±2°C). Counts were calculated from the finished cheese after curdling, first, second day and every 3 days for A. butzleri count and pH measurement.

Sensory evaluation of Talaga cheese manufactured.

Talaga cheese was prepared as previously mentioned and divided into 5 equal portions; each was subjected to the previous treatments (without adding A. butzleri). Samples were stored at refrigeration temperature (4±2°C) and twenty-three consumers were selected in teams of different ages, sex and education to taste the samples. The perception of consumers toward cheese with various treatments was studied with respect to three different attributes (flavor, appearance and palatability). The level of agreement was scored as strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) (Nelson and Torut, 1981).

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was performed using programs GraphPadPrism 5.04 (GraphPad, Inc., San Diego, USA) and Statistical 12.0 (Dell, Inc., Tulsa, USA). Least significant differences were used at p < 0.05. The data represented by using the Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. butzleri is considered as one of the most important food borne pathogen causing severe gastrointestinal disease, with persistent diarrhea in human (Collado and Figueras, 2011) and in dairy chain could be isolated from fecal samples of dairy animals (Shah et al., 2013), in-line milk filters (Serraino et al., 2013), cow and water buffalo milk (Yesilmen et al., 2014) and from different localities in dairy industry (Serraino and Giaconetti, 2014).

In this study soft (Talaga), semisoft (Mozzarella) and hard (Roumy) cheeses examined for existence of A. butzleri and could be isolated in percentages of 16.67, 10 and 6.67%, respectively (Figure 1). From a previous study, in the same city, A. butzleri could be isolated in different percentages from food samples collected from Assiut city, Egypt (6.67%) by Elsherif and Amin (2012) and (5%) by Ammar and Al-Habaty (2015). Also, confirmed the ability to contaminate the cheese processing plants (Ferreira et al., 2019) through, its ability to survival for long time and good growth in milk (Giacometti et al., 2014), food surfaces, instruments (Ferreira et al., 2019), resistant to several substrates (D’Sa and Harrison, 2005) and able to tolerate sodium hypochlorite concentrations close to working solutions used for sanitizing in food processing plants (Rasmussen et al., 2013).

Figure 1 Percentages of isolation of A. butzleri from different types of cheese samples (n=30 for each)
highly limited in specificity that because its relatively biochemically inert and morphologically similar to campylobacters, factors that may contribute to incorrect detection and identification of these organisms when relying on agar plating or phenotypic tests (Prouzet-Mauleon et al., 2006). In view of culture failure and misidentification, nucleic acid approaches, particularly PCR-based methods, are increasingly being considered for detection, identification, and monitoring of arcobacters in foods (Prouzet-Mauleon et al., 2006 and González et al., 2007). So, as shown in Figure (2) A. butzleri isolates could be confirmed by using 16S rRNA in Talaga (2 isolates) and Mozzarella (1 isolate) cheese samples. A study included detection using culturing and molecular method in parallel reported that 1.4% of the samples positive by culturing, and 0.7% by molecular detection (Collado and Figueras, 2011).

Figure 2 The amplified 16S rRNA gene of A. butzleri recovered from different types of cheese samples.

Lane L: Molecular marker; Lane pos.: Positive control; Lane Neg.: Negative control; Lanes 1, 4, 7-10: negative isolates; Lane 2, 3, 5: positive isolates (Talaga and Mozzarella cheese samples).

The use of herbal and its extracts as alternative medicine, natural therapies (Adesiji et al., 2012), food additives and as food preservatives has been documented for ages especially with distribution of antibiotic resistant genes (Satyanarayana et al., 2004 and Gutierrez et al., 2008). Thyme oil and Thymus vulgaris are widely used as food relish in Egypt nowadays and in an ancient age in embalming (Beth, 2013). In this study, the antibacterial effect of Thymus vulgaris and its EO against A. butzleri was evaluated as showed Figure (3, 4), the plant can decrease the count of it throughout the storage time until became couldn’t be detected at 10th day specially at concentration 4%, showing significance difference when use the thyme EO at 4% A. butzleri undetectable at 8th day. Subsequently, the count stabilized over the remaining period of storage in untreated cheese (positive control samples), a slight decrease in the count of A. butzleri was noted toward the end of the 12th day of storage. Thyme belongs to the family of Labiatae and as an aromatic agent is widely used in many cooked dishes, the antimicrobial mechanism of thyme and thyme extract is based on their ability to disintegrate the outer membrane of bacteria, releasing lipopolysaccharides, increasing the permeability of the cytoplasmic membrane to ATP (Lacroix et al., 1997; Lampert et al., 2001 and Justesen and Knuthsen, 2001), antioxidants effect based essentially on polyphenolic compounds as flavonoids (Selmi and Sado, 2008). It is also well known that essential oil of this plant is a rich source of thymol and carvacrol which has been reported to possess a high antioxidant activity. Such, essential oils degrade the cell wall, interact with the composition, disrupt cytoplasmic membrane (Lampert et al., 2001), damage membrane protein, interfere with membrane-integrated enzymes, cause leakage of cellular components, coagulate cytoplasm, and influence the synthesis of DNA and RNA (Tannuguchi et al., 1988 and Rauha et al., 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate further to understand the relationship between antibacterial activity and chemical structure of plants.

Figure 3 Effect of Thymus vulgaris at different concentrations on inoculated A. butzleri in manufactured Talaga cheese during refrigeration storage

*Significance (P<0.05) Sig. difference between 4% EO and control P<0.003

Although the acceptability of consumer to cheese with 0, 2, 4% of thyme plant and its extract investigated based on inner and outer appearance, flavor, palatability and texture also, define the additives (Figure 5). 80% were strongly agree to cheese with 2% Thymus vulgaris, 60% accept the palatability at 4% and 77, 65% for 2, 4% extract, respectively with no significant different between trials. These acceptance returned to that thyme plant considered as one of main spices in Egyptian kitchen so, its taste, flavor and palatability considered familiar but the difference in percentages depend on appearance and individual variations.

Figure 4 Effect of Thyme EO at different concentrations on inoculated A. butzleri in manufactured Talaga cheese during refrigeration storage

A- Flavor

![A- Flavor](image)
The present study concluded that Thymus vulgaris and its extract have antibacterial activity against *Arcobacter butzleri*, which isolated from different types of cheese, in contrast that 4% of plant added to cheese have strongly effect on isolated strains with no really difference with 4% EO and achieved significant antimicrobial effect. Moreover 2% of Thymus vulgaris or its EO were mostly isolated strains with no really difference with 4% EO and achieved significant antimicrobial effect. Moreover 2% of Thymus vulgaris or its EO were mostly accepted to the consumers and so, it is recommended to add Thymus vulgaris in cheese, to improve the quality of product and increase the benefits from it.

**CONCLUSION**

The present study concluded that Thymus vulgaris and its extract have antibacterial activity against *Arcobacter butzleri*, which isolated from different types of cheese, in contrast that 4% of plant added to cheese have strongly effect on isolated strains with no really difference with 4% EO and achieved significant antimicrobial effect. Moreover 2% of Thymus vulgaris or its EO were mostly accepted to the consumers and so, it is recommended to add Thymus vulgaris in cheese, to improve the quality of product and increase the benefits from it.

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