Journal of Dairy Science®

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Journal of Dairy Science Vol. 76 No. 7 1882-1894 © 1993 by <u>American Dairy Science Association</u> ®

Role of Protein and Lactose Interactions in the Age Gelation of Ultra-High Temperature Processed Concentrated Skim Milk

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Skim milk was pasteurized, diafiltered, and concentrated three times by UF. Lactose or sucrose was then added at 3 or 6%. The five samples containing <.05% lactose, 3 and 6% lactose, and 3 and 6% sucrose were UHT processed at 140° C for 4 s using indirect heating, collected aseptically in presterilized containers, and stored at 4, 20, and 35° C. All samples stored at 4 and 20° C gelled after 21 wk of storage. Samples stored at 35° C did not gel. Browning occurred only in samples containing lactose stored at 35° C. Proteolysis in gelled samples was shown by SDS-PAGE. Bands were due to proteolysis, protein crosslinking, and a streaking pattern in ungelled samples. Electron

micrographs of gelled samples showed that various casein particles were connected by hairlike protrusions, but the micelles in ungelled

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samples were not connected and had few protrusions. The Maillard reaction neither promoted nor deferred age gelation. Protein modifications prevented gelation in samples stored at 35° C. Age gelation was probably a two-step process in which dissociated proteins from the casein micelles reformed on micelles as hairlike protrusions. This process was followed by aggregation of the protein particles.

Key Words: age gelation • ultra-high • temperature • lactose • native milk proteinase

Submitted on August 31, 1992 Accepted on January 8, 1993

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