

Utilization of Local Vegetables to Develop an Instant Soup Mixture

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Tomato, Onion and Mushroom were dehydrated and value added by developing an instant mushroom soup mix. The work was initiated to utilize tomato and onion in the processing industry as these crops are highly seasonal. Large scale utilization of these crops will help to maintain fair prices to producers during the peak production seasons. Mushrooms were added to make the product more attractive to local consumers.

Fresh vegetables were washed, blanched at 100°C (except onion), sliced, and dehydrated at 60°C to about 5% moisture level. The dehydrated vegetables were ground to a coarse powder and mixed with cereal starches, milk powder, salt and other flavour enhancers. Five prototypes of soup mixes were developed using different formulations. The best soup mix was selected by conducting preliminary physical and sensory evaluations, and subsequently analyzed for its chemical, physical and storage properties. The selected soup mix was compared with two similar commercially available imported soup mixes for overall sensory quality using the ranking test. The sensory evaluation team consisted of twelve panel members.

The moisture content of dried vegetables was about 5%. The final moisture content of the product was 5-6% and showed a stable shelf life for more than six months. The product contained approximately 45% dried vegetables, 30% cereal starch and 10% salt. Sensory evaluation results indicated that the developed soup mix was significantly ($P>0.05$) better than one of the commercial samples (Thai) in overall quality.

One of the large scale food processors in Sri Lanka has made arrangements to produce this soup mix on a commercial scale. At present, they are conducting a market study to find out the consumer response to this product.