

Enzymes' role as a catalyst in plant physiology and metabolism is indispensable. Enzymes remain active throughout the life cycle of a crop including at postharvest stages. This is useful in species where the ripening occurs during postharvest storage, but sometimes it leads to deterioration of quality traits including color, taste, texture, and nutritional content. The combination of endogenous deteriorative enzymes and growth of microorganisms can significantly impact the quality of produce, shorten the shelf life, and affect the consumer acceptance of the produce. Despite their influence on quality traits, enzymes are used as biocatalysts in several food-processing applications to hydrolyze large molecules into simpler molecules. Additionally, enzymes are being used to produce and change molecules to improve the organoleptic quality of food products (Terefe et al. 2014). The enzymes responsible for quality losses vary among the different products like PPOs in cereals and fruits (Bhattacharya et al. 1999; Holderbaum 2010), lipoxygenase in certain vegetables, and polygalacturonase in apricots (Luh et al. 1978; Whitaker 1991). According to estimates, PPO is the single most damaging of enzymes in color deterioration of crop products with losses of up to 50% for tropical fruits and vegetables (Whitaker and Lee 1995).

The oxidative enzymes like polyphenol oxidases (PPOs) are responsible for changes in color and flavor in addition to loss of nutritional value (Whitaker 1991; Terefe et al. 2014). These undesirable changes in quality are a major limiting factor in handling and processing of crops since the products undergo rapid browning upon slicing, peeling, and damage due to mechanical reasons or herbivory. Some of the economically important edible products susceptible to undesirable browning include wheat-based products (Bhattacharya et al. 1999); fruits like apple (Holderbaum 2010), banana (Gooding et al. 2001), grape (Rathjen and Robinson 1992), pineapple (Das et al. 1997), and mango (Robinson et al. 1993); and vegetables such as eggplant (Perez-Gilabert and Carmona 2000; Shetty et al. 2011) and potato (Sanchez-Ferrer et al. 1993; Cho and Ahn 1999). Interestingly, the browning reaction enhances the quality of certain products like black tea (Eskin 1990; Ullah

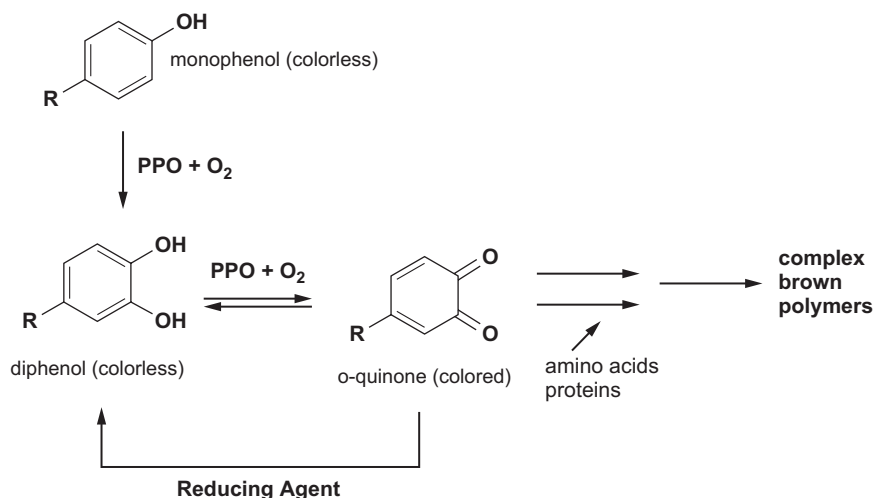


Fig. 6.1 The reaction catalyzed by polyphenol oxidase (Mayer and Harel 1979)

1991), coffee (Amorim and Silva 1968; Amorim and Melo 1991), and cocoa (Lee et al. 1991; Lopez and Dimick 1991).

As mentioned earlier, PPOs catalyze two important reactions: hydroxylation of monophenols to *o*-diphenols and oxidation of *o*-diphenols to *o*-quinones (Tomas Barberan and Espin 2001; Fig. 6.1). The *o*-quinones responsible for enzymatic discoloration of plant products are yellow compounds that are highly unstable and form complexes with amino acids or proteins (Ramaswamy and Riahi 2003). The polymerization of these intermediates and condensation of *o*-quinones produce the characteristic reddish-brown colored polymers called melanins that are responsible for the undesirable browning of food products (Tomas-Barberan and Espin 2001; Ramaswamy and Riahi 2003).

Phenols are the major substrates of PPOs. In food, phenolic compounds contribute to the bitterness, color, flavor, astringency, and oxidative stability of products (Tomas-Barberan and Espin 2001). Interaction between food proteins and oxidized products of phenols leads to covalent condensation resulting in changes in different characteristics of food proteins (Matheis and Whitaker 1984; Yoruk and Marshall 2003). The *o*-quinones interact with the side chains of amino acids, thereby causing a reduction in the nutritive value of food products (Matheis and Whitaker 1984; Felton et al. 1989, 1992). The amino acid side chain groups like -SH and -NH₂ are generally susceptible to binding by quinones. A reduction in lysine content was reported in casein and tomato protein in the presence of phenolic compounds and PPOs (Matheis and Whitaker 1984; Felton et al. 1989, 1992). Further, food proteins that have tyrosine or are linked to phenolic groups are modified by PPOs (Matheis and Whitaker 1984). Interestingly, redox cycling of quinones formed during PPO reactions generates free radicals that can damage DNA, amino acid, and proteins (Felton et al. 1992; Hill 1992).

More than 8000 polyphenolic compounds have been identified in various cereals, fruits, and vegetables (Pandey and Rizvi 2009). Cereals, fruits, and vegetables both in their raw and processed forms contain significant amounts of polyphenols. Polyphenols are secondary metabolites that are mostly implicated in plant defense against pathogens. The long-term consumption of polyphenol-rich foods has shown beneficial effects on human health owing to the high antioxidant activity of polyphenols (Heim et al. 2002). Further, several epidemiological studies demonstrated some protection by polyphenols against cancers, diabetes, and neurodegenerative and cardiovascular diseases (Arts and Hollman 2005; Graf et al. 2005). It is interesting that high polyphenol content is helpful for human health, whereas low enzymatic browning is relevant for food processing as to maintain original color, flavor, and nutritional value (Murata et al. 1995; Podsedek et al. 2000). Owing to their economic and nutritional importance, polyphenols and PPOs are a subject of scientific interest for plant breeders, pathologists, food technologists, and medical researchers.

Globally, wheat is the second most important staple food crop with an estimated annual production of 729 million tonnes in 2014 (<http://www.fao.org/faostat>). Wheat flour is used in preparation of several products including bread, crackers, cookies, biscuits, cakes, noodles, macaroni, and spaghetti. Wheat is mostly consumed in the form of flatbread (Middle East and Asia) and noodles (South and East Asia). Wheat noodles form an important part of the daily diet in several Asian countries, and about ~40 to 50% of wheat flour consumed is used to manufacture different kinds of noodles (Hou and Kruk 1998; Anderson and Morris 2001). The USA, Australia, and Canada are the key suppliers of wheat used in noodle manufacturing in Asia as their wheat is considered to possess desirable quality attributes. Brightness and color (cream/white or yellow) are two very important quality parameters of Asian noodles (Fig. 6.2). Therefore, tailor-made wheat varieties that meet the needs of discriminating buyers, particularly the Asian markets which imports significant quantities of wheat from the USA, Australia, and Canada, need to be developed.

The time-dependent darkening of wheat noodles due to PPOs is critical (Kruger et al. 1994; Baik et al. 1995; Crosbie et al. 1998; Hou and Kruk 1998), more importantly in raw noodles that are stored for several days before cooking (Mares and Campbell 2001). So far, the wheat improvement efforts have focused on developing cultivars with low or reduced PPO content. But even these varieties that contained low or reduced PPO levels possessed certain levels of PPO that caused browning reaction in the wheat products (Fig. 6.2). But collaborative efforts between breeders at Montana State University, Bozeman, USA, and University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA, have been successful in identifying wheat lines (07OR1074) with negligible or zero PPO activity comparable to durum wheat (Hystad et al. 2015). Breeding efforts are now underway to incorporate these genotypes into wheat breeding programs. The major objective would be to develop varieties with zero/negligible PPO activity in addition to good milling and baking qualities that would be acceptable to the consumers.

The importance of PPOs in plant defense and their involvement in postharvest losses of horticultural crop produce due to enzymatic browning explains why PPOs

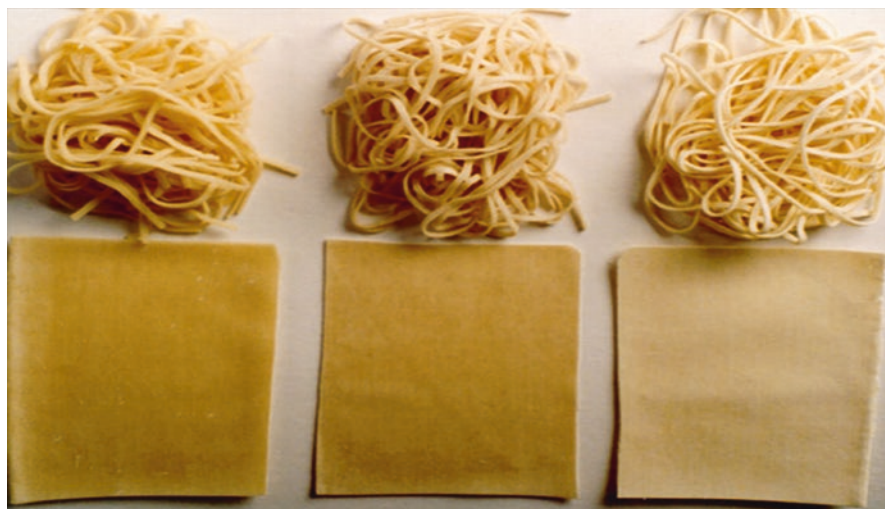


Fig. 6.2 Variation in end-product quality traits in different types of wheat varieties with different PPO levels (Source: Dr. J Martin, Montana State University, Bozeman, USA, with permission)



Fig. 6.3 Tissue prints showing enzymatic browning from eggplant fruits due to mechanical injury (sections a–c) and shoot/fruit borer infestation (d–f). Sections a and d, immunolocalization using immune serum (rabbit anti-GST–SmePPO1); sections b and e, pre-immune serum; sections c and f, secondary antibody conjugate (Adapted from Shetty et al. 2011)

have been studied and characterized in several diversified vegetable species (Mayer 2006). Among the crops of Solanaceae family, potato, eggplant (also called brinjal or aubergine), and peppers are the major vegetable crops of substantial economic value (Daunay 2008). Eggplant is an important vegetable crop of Asia; India and China are the leading producers with an annual production of 13.6 and 29.5 m tonnes, respectively, in 2014 (<http://www.fao.org/faostat>). It is an important ingredient of the Indian cuisine especially for the vegetarians. The PPOs of eggplant (rich in phenols) have been studied extensively due to their role in enzymatic browning of the fruit. Chlorogenic acid is the dominant phenol accounting for ~70 to 95% of total phenols in the flesh of the eggplant fruit (Whitaker and Stommel 2003; Singh et al. 2009). Shetty et al. (2011) have studied and characterized the multigene family of eggplant PPOs. They have demonstrated the browning reaction of eggplant fruit upon mechanical damage and herbivory (Figs. 6.3 and 6.4).

Apple is one of the major fruit crops of the world with an annual global production of ~84.6 million tonnes in 2014 (<http://www.fao.org/faostat>). The major

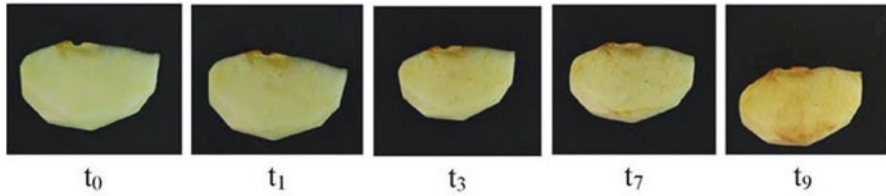


Fig. 6.4 The panel shows a fresh-cut apple slice at zero time (t_0), after 1 (t_1), 3 (t_3), 7 (t_7), and 9 (t_9) days of storage ($T = 7.5^\circ\text{C}$; Adapted from Lunadei et al. 2011)

producers of apples during 2014 are China, USA, Poland, India, and Turkey. The industry consumes about ~40 to 60% of the apples produced, and the rest is sold as fresh produce in the market (Nicolas et al. 1994). Juice, sauce, and slices are the major processed products developed from apples. The spoilage of vegetables/fruits during postharvest manipulations or processing is up to ~25% of the harvested produce (Nicolas et al. 1994). The postharvest losses are estimated to be 30–40% of total production in developing countries (Singh et al. 2014). Postharvest deterioration in apples causes 5–25% losses of total production (Jijakli and Lepoivre 2004). The losses incurred are mostly due to physical injuries, disorders, or diseases and unsuitable conditions for processing. Brown flesh with flattened area on the fruit is a very common defect of apples (Nicolas et al. 1994). Further, browning of the skin or internal tissue is caused due to different conditions including bitter pit, scalds, water core, core flush, and internal breakdown. Improper processing of products (juice, sauce, or slices) could result in discoloration and ultimately reduces the consumer acceptance.

6.1 Control of Browning Reaction

6.1.1 Chemical Control

Browning or discoloration due to PPOs drastically reduces the nutritional and sensory qualities. The PPO-mediated undesirable brown discoloration in cereal products, fruits, and vegetables causes enormous economic impact necessitating its control to reduce the economic losses, maintain product quality, and extend the shelf life of the produce. Therefore, several mechanisms or approaches have been developed to control the undesirable browning. Broadly the available inhibitors could be divided into six classes (McEvily et al. 1992):

1. Reducing agents – ascorbic acid and analogs, sulfites;
2. Chelating agents – ethylenediaminetetraacetate, sodium diethyldithiocarbamate, and sodium azide;
3. Complexing agent – cyclodextrins, chitosan;
4. Acidulants – ascorbic acid, citric acid, malic acid, phosphoric acid;

5. Enzyme inhibitors – substrate analogs, halides; (vi) Enzyme treatments – proteases, and *o*-methyltransferase.

The chemical antibrowning agents eliminate or target different components necessary for the PPO reaction like phenolic substrates and intermediate products like quinones, oxygen, enzyme, or copper molecule (Nicolas et al. 1994; Ahvenainen 1996; Ferrar and Walker 1996; Queiroz et al. 2008). Though different PPOs may have an identical reaction against inhibitors, the inhibitors' effectiveness against different PPOs could vary significantly, thereby necessitating a specific control mechanism for individual PPO systems (Ferrar and Walker 1996).

Reducing agents like sulfites and ascorbic acid are most widespread compounds used in browning control. They control the browning either by preventing the accumulation of *o*-quinones or by forming stable colorless products (Eskin et al. 1971; Nicolas et al. 1994; Osuga et al. 1994; Ashie et al. 1996; Kim et al. 2000). Among the reducing agents, sulfur dioxide and sulfites (sodium sulfite, sodium bisulfite, or sodium metabisulfite) are the most potent inhibitors of browning reaction (Eskin et al. 1971; Sapers 1993; Kim et al. 2000). Sulfites have been used in the vegetable and fruit industry owing to their effectiveness and low price. It is assumed that sulfites directly inhibit PPOs and interact with quinones preventing them from further polymerization (Ashie et al. 1996). But due to adverse health effects of sulfites, the World Health Organization has recommended a limited use or nonuse of sulfites in treatment of fresh fruit and vegetables (Queiroz et al. 2008). Cysteine is another effective sulfur-containing compound used as antibrowning agent. Cysteine reacts with *o*-quinones to produce stable and colorless compounds (İyidoğan and Bayiindirli 2004). Though cysteine is effective in preventing browning at very low concentrations of 1–4 mM (Özoğlu and Bayiindirli 2002; İyidoğan and Bayiindirli 2004), its use in food processing is limited because it produces undesirable odor even at these low levels.

Ascorbic acid (vitamin C) is the best available alternative to sulfites and is often used as antibrowning agent in sliced fruits, canned fruits and vegetables, purees, and fruit juices (Yoruk and Marshall 2003). Ascorbic acid reduces the quinone prior to it undergoing secondary reactions that are responsible for browning and also decreases the pH (Guerrero-Beltrán et al. 2005). The pH optima for PPO reactions are usually in the range of 5–7.5; therefore, lowering of pH inhibits the enzyme activity. The inhibitory effect of ascorbic acid is temporary because it is oxidized irreversibly by reacting with the intermediates like *o*-quinones, endogenous enzymes, metals (e.g., copper), and pigments (Queiroz et al. 2008). But a combination of ascorbic and citric acid was shown to be more effective than ascorbic acid alone (Eskin et al. 1971; Sapers 1993). The acidic environment coupled with the stability of ascorbic acid in an acidic environment could be responsible for increased effectiveness of ascorbic acid. The PPO is inhibited by citric acid through its chelating action and by ascorbic acid via site-directed specificity toward histidine residues of the PPO (Golan-Goldhirsh et al. 1992; Osuga et al. 1994).

The most commonly found acids (like ascorbic, citric, malic, and phosphoric) have been used in food processing to control browning. These acids decrease the pH

to 3 or lower drastically reducing the enzyme activity (Eskin et al. 1971; Park and Luh 1985; Eskin 1990; Osuga et al. 1994). Kojic acid is found in fermented foods as a natural product and has shown antibrowning effect (Queiroz et al. 2008; İyidoğan and Bayiindirli 2004). Koji acid inhibits PPO and also bleaches melanin to colorless compounds. Limited usage of kojic acid in food industry is due to difficulty in large-scale production and higher cost. Aromatic carboxylic acids like benzoic and cinnamic acids inhibit PPO activity owing to their structural similarities with phenolic substrates and by forming a complex with copper (Marshall et al. 2000). β -cyclodextrins inhibit the enzyme activity by probably forming inclusion complexes with PPO substrates (Irwin et al. 1994), and they bind to the substrate's hydrophobic core. The inhibition of enzyme activity is dependent upon the substrate (Casado-Vela et al. 2006) and type of cyclodextrin used (López-Nicolás et al. 2007). Therefore, for effective PPO inhibition, suitable cyclodextrin should be used considering the dominant phenols present in the food product.

A limited number of inhibitors are available that can be used in the food-processing industry due to effective inhibition, undesirable odor/flavor, food safety concerns, and economic feasibility (Eskin et al. 1971; McEvily et al. 1992; Sapers 1993). Honey (Chen et al. 2000), procyanidins (Le Bourvellec et al. 2004), Maillard reaction products (Lee and Park 2005), pineapple juice (Lozano-De-Gonzalez et al. 1993), rhubarb juice (Son et al. 2000a), pectin preparations (Tong et al. 1995), and amino acids with glucose (Tan and Harris 1995) are some of the natural products that have been shown to exhibit a certain inhibitory effect on PPO activity. Honey obtained from different sources decreased the PPO activity by ~2 to 45% in fruit and vegetable products, and enhanced inhibition was observed in combination with ascorbic acid (Chen et al. 2000). Native procyanidins, natural flavanol polymers occurring in plants, inhibited PPO activity probably by forming enzyme–polyphenol–substrate complex (Le Bourvellec et al. 2004). The inhibitory effect of Maillard reaction products produced from amino acids and various sugars depended upon the amino acid [arginine > cysteine > histidine > lysine] and type of sugar [monosaccharides > disaccharides] (Lee and Park 2005).

Proteins, amino acids, and peptides can react with *o*-quinones and chelate the copper at the active site of PPO, thereby affecting PPO activity levels (Queiroz et al. 2008). Girelli et al. (2004) observed that certain glycyI dipeptides like glycyIaspartic acid, glycyIphenylalanine, glycyIglycine, glycyIlysine, glycyItyrosine, and glycyIhistidine had impacted quinone formation at concentrations ranging from 1 to 50 mM. Different types of inhibition were exhibited by cinnamic acid and its derivatives: cinnamic acid [noncompetitive] > 4-hydroxycinnamic acid [competitive] > 4-methoxycinnamic acid [noncompetitive] (Shi et al. 2005). Cinnamic acid and its derivatives attach to a nonactive site region, thereby either changing the enzyme conformation or hindering the binding of substrate to the enzyme through steric hindrance. Concentration-dependent PPO inhibition was exhibited by several *p*-alkoxybenzoic acids, *p*-methoxybenzoic acid being the most potent inhibitor (Chen et al. 2005). Rhubarb juice and pectin contain oxalic acid, a natural PPO inhibitor that inhibits PPO activity through copper chelation (Son et al. 2000b; Yoruk and

Marshall 2003). Though several natural PPO inhibitors have been identified, they are not yet commercially utilized in the food-processing industry.

6.1.2 Physical Control

The above-described methods of PPO inhibition mostly involve the use of chemical compounds, but several other physical methods like heating, dehydration, irradiation, high pressure, and freezing/refrigeration (Ashie et al. 1996; Kim et al. 2000) have also been used for the control of adverse browning. But some of these methods may have certain disadvantages such as enzyme–substrate contact due to subcellular breakdown and texture deterioration (Macheix et al. 1990). Heat treatment is an effective method to stabilize foods due to its ability to destroy microorganisms and deactivate enzymes. Blanching is most commonly used in vegetables (Marshall et al. 2000), but it is rarely used for treating soft textured fruits or vegetables as it destroys thermosensitive nutrients like vitamins, proteins, and carbohydrates (Lado and Yousef 2002). Large quantities of water and energy requirement coupled with waste disposal problems make blanching technically unattractive. Generally, the catalytic activity of PPO is destroyed in the range of 70–90 °C, but the time needed for deactivation is very variable depending upon the product source (Chutintrasri and Noomhorm 2006). Pineapple PPO activity decreased by ~60% after exposure to 40–60 °C for 30 min, deactivation increased drastically >75 °C, and the residual was 7% and 1.2% at 85 °C and 90 °C for 5 min, respectively (Chutintrasri and Noomhorm 2006).

Good quality and increased shelf life of fruit and vegetable products can be achieved through high hydrostatic pressure (HHP) treatment (Kim et al. 2001). Compared to heat treatment, HHP causes less damage to nutrients like vitamins, pigments, and flavoring agents since HHP has limited or no impact on the covalent bondings in the compounds (Butz et al. 2003). Depending upon applied pressure and its duration, temperature, and protein system (e.g., type of protein, pH, ionic strength), HHP can affect the protein structure and cause protein denaturation or aggregation (Messens et al. 1997). New or analog products can be developed by HHP treatment of foods with no effect on flavor, color, or nutritional content and without any thermal degradation (Vardag and Körner 1995). Further, HHP can modify the functionality of an enzyme, affect the biological activity of the enzyme, and also change its substrate specificity (Hendrickx et al. 1998). The effectiveness of HHP treatment for several PPOs is greater at lower pH and is also influenced by the addition of antibrowning agents, salts, or sugars (Rapeanu et al. 2005). Since PPOs were found to be more resistant to HHP than heat treatment, a combination treatment of high pressure (>400 MPa) and mild heat treatment (~50 °C) was found to be best to inactivate the enzyme in banana puree (*Musa* sp.; Palou et al. 1999), lychee (*Litchi chinensis*; Phunchaisri and Apichartsrangkoon 2005), and strawberry (*Fragaria × ananassa*; Dalmadi et al. 2006). Interestingly, low pressure (≤400 MPa) also induced PPO activation in red raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*; Garcia-Palazon et al. 2004) and pear (Asaka and Hayashi 1991) and in apple juice (Anese et al. 1995).

Therefore, the level of pressure applied for inactivation of PPO activity is very critical.

Irradiation with gamma (γ) rays is a physical treatment involving direct exposure of fruit and vegetable products for food preservation, extending their shelf life, and improving their safety and quality (Lacroix and Ouattara 2000). Additionally, radiation treatment destroys the bacteria and fungi, guaranteeing total disinfection, and also delays the ripening process (Iemma et al. 1999). PPO activity in irradiated (1.0 kGy) fresh-cut lettuce was $\sim 31\%$ lower compared to untreated sample, but after 9 days PPO activity of the irradiated samples was $\sim 54\%$ higher than in the control sample (Zhang et al. 2006). Similarly, in fresh-cut celery at 1 kGy (0.5 kGy/h) treatment, the PPO activity was reduced by 73% in the treated sample, and after 9 days the PPO activity was only $\sim 25\%$ lower than in the control sample (Lu et al. 2005).

Pulsed electric field (PEF) is a nonthermal food preservation technology that is mostly focused to inactivate microorganisms and is used in processing of liquid foods (García et al. 2003, 2005; Evrendilek et al. 2004; Li and Zhang 2004). Electric field strength, time of PEF treatment (Zhong et al. 2007), electrical conductivity, and pH affect the inactivation of PPO. The average electric field strength of ~ 25 kV/min given for 744–6000 μs decreased the PPO activity by 70–97% in different fruit products (Zhong et al. 2007; Giner et al. 2001, 2002). The sensitivity of different enzymes to PEF treatment varied as pepsin > PPO > peroxidase > chymotrypsin and lysozyme (Yang et al. 2004). PEF treatment of PPO results in the loss of α -helix fractions and induces changes in its secondary structure (Zhong et al. 2007). Other technologies used for reducing PPO activity include supercritical carbon dioxide and ohmic and microwave heating (Queiroz et al. 2008). Supercritical carbon dioxide is a nonthermal treatment that physically destroys the microbial cells (Corwin and Shellhammer 2002) and induces enzyme inactivation by causing changes in the secondary and tertiary structure of the enzyme (Gui et al. 2007). Reduced PPO activity was observed when food products were treated with supercritical carbon dioxide (Gui et al. 2007) or in combination with HHP (Corwin and Shellhammer 2002).

PPO is an important enzyme in the food-processing industry, and its activity, in general, causes undesirable discoloration (browning reaction) of food products. The browning of food products decreases their nutritional quality, lowers consumer acceptance levels, and causes economic losses. Therefore, identification of safe antibrowning agents or developing improved technologies to control browning is very critical to enhance product value and minimize the economic losses. Though several technologies have been demonstrated, only a few like HHP have been adopted in food-processing industries. The knowledge about these technologies and the combination of technologies to be used to obtain a high-quality product is very essential.

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