



# SAPP XXV

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## Table of Contents

<b>INVITED LECTURES</b>			<b>11</b>
<b>IL-1</b>	Cristina Canal	PLASMA-TREATED HYDROGELS: A THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVE IN PLASMA MEDICINE?	12
<b>IL-2</b>	Nicolas Naudé	DIFFUSE DBD AT ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE: FROM PHYSICS STUDY TO APPLICATIONS	13
<b>IL-3</b>	Jelena Marjanović	BREAKDOWN CHARACTERISTICS IN LOW GWP AND LOW ODP FREONS	16
<b>IL-4</b>	Juraj Fedor	DYNAMICS INDUCED BY ELECTRON COLLISIONS: GASES AND LIQUIDS	21
<b>IL-5</b>	Thierry Belmonte	DISSOCIATING PURE AMMONIA WITH MICROWAVE DISCHARGES	22
<b>IL-6</b>	Oddur Ingolfsson	LOW ENERGY ELECTRONS IN NANO-SCALE PROCESSING	31
<b>IL-7</b>	Inna Orel	SPATIALLY AND TEMPORALLY RESOLVED ELECTRIC FIELD, CURRENT, AND ELECTRON DENSITY IN AN RF ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PLASMA JET BY E-FISH	34
<b>IL-8</b>	Dušan Kováčik	ADVANCED DCSBD-BASED PLASMA TECHNOLOGIES FOR SURFACE MODIFICATIONS AND BIO-APPLICATIONS	37
<b>IL-9</b>	Yuzuru Ikehara	PLASMA-BASED MICROFABRICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR CHARGE CONTROL METHODS IN PATHOLOGICAL SPECIMENS: VISUALIZING PHASE TRANSITION LINKED WITH VIRUS PARTICLE FORMATION USING SEM AND AFM	40
<b>IL-10</b>	Toshiaki Makabe	GENERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DRIFT VELOCITIES IN POSITION AND VELOCITY SPACES OF CHARGED PARTICLES	42
<b>IL-11</b>	Máté Vass	HYBRID FLUID/MC SIMULATIONS OF RADIO-FREQUENCY ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PLASMA JETS	53
<b>IL-12</b>	Paula De Navascués	LOW-PRESSURE PLASMA POLYMERIZATION FOR EMERGING FUNCTIONAL MATERIALS	57
<b>IL-13</b>	Jacopo Profili	INVESTIGATING STABLE SURFACE MODIFICATIONS OF FLUOROPOLYMERS BY ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE NITROGEN DISCHARGE	59
<b>IL-14</b>	Zoltán Juhász	RADIATION CHEMISTRY PROCESSES IN THE SURFACE OF ICY MOONS IN THE PLASMA ENVIRONMENT OF GIANT PLANETS	61
<b>IL-15</b>	Jarosław Puton	SWARMS OF IONS IN VARIABLE ELECTRIC FIELD - POSSIBLE ANALYTICAL APPLICATION	66
<b>IL-16</b>	Masaaki Matsukuma	MULTISCALE SIMULATION OF PLASMA-BASED DEPOSITION PROCESSES	72
<b>HOT TOPICS</b>			<b>73</b>
<b>HT-1</b>	Zdenko Machala	INDOOR AIR CLEANING BY NON-THERMAL PLASMA AND PHOTOCATALYSIS	74
<b>HT-2</b>	Karol Hensel	ELECTRICAL DISCHARGES IN CAPILLARY TUBES AND HONEYCOMB MONOLITHS	77

<b>HT-3</b>	Pavel Veis	TRACE ELEMENTS DETECTION AND CF ELEMENTAL ANALYSIS OF WATER BY LIBS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL—COMPARISON OF SURFACE ASSISTED, ACOUSTIC LEVITATION AND NE METHODS	78
<b>HT-4</b>	Zoltán Donkó	THE EFFECT OF NITROGEN ADDITION TO ARGON ON THE Ar 1s <sub>5</sub> AND 1s <sub>3</sub> METASTABLE ATOM DENSITIES AND Ar SPECTRAL EMISSION IN A CAPACITIVELY COUPLED PLASMA	79
<b>HT-5</b>	Petra Šrámková	PLASMA TECHNOLOGY AS AN EFFICIENT TOOL TO IMPROVE SEED GERMINATION AND PROVIDE ADHESION OF PROTECTIVE POLYMER COATINGS ON SEEDS	84
<b>HT-6</b>	Satoshi Hamaguchi	MOLECULAR DYNAMICS SIMULATIONS OF SILICON NITRIDE ATOMIC-LAYER DEPOSITION OVER A NARROW TRENCH STRUCTURE	85
<b>HT-7</b>	Jan Benedikt	STABILITY OF METAL-ORGANIC FRAMEWORKS IN NON-THERMAL ATMOSPHERIC PLASMA	86
<b>HT-8</b>	Lenka Zajíčková	PLASMA PROCESSING OF POLYMER NANOFIBERS FOR ENHANCED IMMOBILIZATION OF LIGNIN NANO/MICROPARTICLES	87
<b>HT-9</b>	Ladislav Moravský	ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE CHEMICAL IONIZATION STUDY OF SULPHUR-CONTAINING COMPOUNDS BY ION MOBILITY SPECTROMETRY AND MASS-SPECTROMETRY	91
<b>HT-10</b>	Jan Žabka	HANKA – CUBESAT SPACE DUST ANALYSER WITH PLASMA ION SOURCE	95
<b>HT-11</b>	Zlata Kelar Tučková	ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PLASMA TREATMENT AND FUNCTIONALIZATION OF GLASS SURFACE FOR RELIABLE ADHESIVE BONDING	97
<b>HT-12</b>	Mário Janda	IN-SITU DIAGNOSTIC OF ELECTROSPRAY BY RAMAN LIGHT SHEET MICROSCOPY	99
<b>HT-13</b>	Matej Klas	MEMORY EFFECT IN PULSED MICRODISCHARGES	105
<b>HT-14</b>	Ihor Korolov	STREAMER PROPAGATION DYNAMICS IN A NANOSECOND PULSED SURFACE DIELECTRIC BARRIER DISCHARGE IN HELIUM-NITROGEN MIXTURES	107
<b>HT-15</b>	Oleksandr Galmiz	GENERATION OF REACTIVE SPECIES VIA SURFACE DIELECTRIC BARRIER DISCHARGE IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH WATER	110

## YOUNG SCIENTISTS' LECTURES

114

<b>YS-1</b>	Kristína Trebulová	COLD PLASMA AS AN APPROACH TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT OF OTITIS EXTERNA	115
<b>YS-2</b>	Richard Cimermann	PLASMA-CATALYTIC GAS TREATMENT: THE ROLE OF PELLET-SHAPED MATERIAL IN PACKED-BED DBD REACTORS	118
<b>YS-3</b>	Barbora Stachová	ELECTRON INDUCED FLUORESCENCE OF CARBON MONOXIDE	120
<b>YS-4</b>	Joel Jeevan	EFFECT OF DILUTION OF H <sub>2</sub> /CH <sub>4</sub> MICROWAVE MICROPLASMA WITH ARGON FOR IMPROVED GAS PHASE NUCLEATION OF NANODIAMONDS	125
<b>YS-5</b>	Anja Herrmann	MAPPING RADICAL FLUXES WITH THERMOCOUPLE PROBES	131

<b>YS-6</b>	Sandra Ďurčányová	ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PLASMA POLYMERIZATION FOR FUNCTIONAL COATING APPLICATIONS	132
<b>YS-7</b>	Ludmila Čechová	PLASMA TREATMENT OF WASTEWATER: A PROMISING APPROACH TO PLANT FERTILIZATION	134
<b>YS-8</b>	Emanuel Maťaš	THERMAL DEGRADATION OF BIODEGRADABLE POLYMERS STUDIED BY IMS TECHNIQUE	136

## POSTER PRESENTATIONS

140

<b>P-01</b>	Tom Field	THE TEMPERATURES OF HELIUM AND AIR-FED ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PLASMA JETS	141
<b>P-02</b>	Peter Hartmann	IONIZATION-ATTACHMENT INSTABILITY IN AN O <sub>2</sub> CCRF PLASMA	142
<b>P-03</b>	Amy Jennings	DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANTIBACTERIAL ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PLASMA JET	146
<b>P-04</b>	Jana Kšanová	CYCLIC PLASMA-CATALYTIC SYSTEM OF CATALYST DEACTIVATION AND REGENERATION APPLIED FOR VOC REMOVAL	147
<b>P-05</b>	Kinga Kutasi	COMPARISON OF THE MAGNETRON AND THE SOLID-STATE MICROWAVE GENERATOR POWERED SURFACE-WAVE DISCHARGES	149
<b>P-06</b>	Ranna Masheyeva	ON THE IN-SITU DETERMINATION OF THE EFFECTIVE SECONDARY ELECTRON EMISSION COEFFICIENT IN LOW PRESSURE CAPACITIVELY COUPLED RADIO FREQUENCY DISCHARGES BASED ON THE ELECTRICAL ASYMMETRY EFFECT	155
<b>P-07</b>	Mária Maťašová	STATISTICAL CHARACTERIZATION OF VACUUM MICRODISCHARGES GENERATED IN HIGH PULSED ELECTRIC FIELDS	160
<b>P-08</b>	Enmily Garcia	ELECTRON INDUCED DISSOCIATIVE EXCITATION OF FORMAMIDE	163
<b>P-09</b>	Michal Hlína	THERMAL PLASMA GASIFICATION	167
<b>P-10</b>	Mário Janda	ON MECHANISM OF REACTIVE NITROGEN SPECIES FORMATION IN NEGATIVE POLARITY HIGH PRESSURE GLOW DISCHARGE	170
<b>P-11</b>	Gadisa Deme Megersa	LOW ENERGY ELECTRONS INTERACTION WITH ACETONE (CH <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> CO IN THE UV-VIS SPECTRAL REGION	179
<b>P-12</b>	Juraj Országh	WATER EMISSION INDUCED BY LOW-ENERGY ELECTRON IMPACT	181
<b>P-13</b>	Samuel Peter Kovár	POTENTIAL ENERGY CURVES OF SPECTROSCOPICALLY RELEVANT EXCITED STATES OF CARBON MONOXIDE: A COMPUTATIONAL STUDY	185
<b>P-14</b>	Vera Mazankova	KINETICS OF OZONE PRODUCTION BY SURFACE PROCESSES	187
<b>P-15</b>	Naomi Northage	EFFECTS OF PLASMA-BASED DISINFECTION METHODS ON THE SURFACE INTEGRITY OF TEFLON	190
<b>P-16</b>	Sandra Ďurčányová	COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PLASMA TREATMENT OF PEA SEEDS WITH DIFFERENT GERMINATION USING TWO PLASMA SOURCES	192

<b>P-17</b>	Mohamed Khalaf Abdelmajeed Fawwaz	EFFECT OF LOW-TEMPERATURE ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PLASMA ON GERMINATION, GROWTH PARAMETERS AND DECONTAMINATION OF RADISH SEEDS	196
<b>P-18</b>	Sahila Gahramanli	APPLICATION OF DCSBD AS A LOW-TEMPERATURE PLASMA SOURCE FOR POLYMER PROCESSING	199
<b>P-19</b>	Joel Jeevan	FUTURE TO FACILE SEEDING TECHNOLOGY: FROM NANODIAMOND TO NANOCRYSTALLINE DIAMOND FILM	202
<b>P-20</b>	Bernard Gitura Kimani	INVESTIGATING THE COMBINED ANTIYEAST EFFICACY OF PLASMA-ACTIVATED WATER AND NATURAL PHENOLICS ON PLANKTONIC DEBARYOMYCES HANSENII	205
<b>P-21</b>	Lenka Krejsová	STUDY OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT PLASMA APPLICATION ON ONION SEEDING BULBS	209
<b>P-22</b>	Adriana Mišúthová	EFFECT OF PLASMA-ACTIVATED WATER ON PHYSIOLOGICAL PARAMETERS IN BEAN PLANTS (PHASEOLUS VULGARIS)	215
<b>P-23</b>	Joanna Pawlat	INFLUENCE OF APPJ ON PRIMARY TEETH ENAMEL	220
<b>P-24</b>	Petra Šrámková	APPLICATION OF NON-THERMAL PLASMA GENERATED BY PIEZOELECTRIC DIRECT DISCHARGE ON SEEDS AND STUDY OF ITS EFFECT	222
<b>P-25</b>	Tomáš Vozár	INFLUENCE OF PLASMA ACTIVATED WATER ON THE PLANT GROWTH AND VITALITY	225
<b>P-26</b>	Dawid Zarzeczny	QUALITY STUDY OF FRESH PRESSED CARROT JUICE AFTER COLD ATMOSPHERIC PLASMA TREATMENT	229
<b>P-27</b>	Jozef Brcka	MULTISCALE TIME EVOLUTION OF C <sub>2</sub> H <sub>2</sub> +Ar MIXTURE DECOMPOSITION IN LOW-PRESSURE INDUCTIVELY COUPLED PLASMA	231
<b>P-28</b>	Oddur Ingolfsson	DISSOCIATIVE IONISATION OF PENTAFLUOROPHENYL TRIFLATE, A POTENTIAL PHOTO ACID GENERATOR FOR CHEMICALLY AMPLIFIED EXTREME ULTRAVIOLET LITHOGRAPHY RESISTS	233
<b>P-29</b>	Oddur Ingolfsson	DISSOCIATIVE ELECTRON ATTACHMENT TO PENTAFLUOROPHENYL TRIFLATE, A POTENTIAL PHOTO ACID GENERATOR FOR CHEMICALLY AMPLIFIED EXTREME ULTRAVIOLET LITHOGRAPHY RESISTS	235
<b>P-30</b>	Peter Čermák	ACCURATE REFERENCE DATA FOR MONITORING OF AMMONIA	237
<b>P-31</b>	Martin Kuřka	MEASUREMENT OF ION CURRENT FROM MULTI-HOLLOW SURFACE DIELECTRIC BARRIER DISCHARGE	239
<b>P-32</b>	Filip Pastierovič	DUAL-CHANNEL ABSORPTION SPECTROSCOPY	244
<b>P-33</b>	Peter Tóth	EMISSION SPECTRA OF TRANSIENT SPARK WITH ELECTROSPRAY	246
<b>P-34</b>	Neda Babučić	MASS SPECTROMETRY OF DIELECTRIC BARRIER DISCHARGE WITH WATER ELECTRODE	251
<b>P-35</b>	Vahideh Ilbeigi	RAPID DETECTION OF VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS EMITTED FROM PLANTS BY MULTICAPILLARY COLUMN-ION MOBILITY SPECTROMETRY	257
<b>P-36</b>	Priyanka Kumari	STUDY OF PLASMA-ASSISTED REACTION OF PENTANE AND AMMONIA BY ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE CHEMICAL IONIZATION ION MOBILITY-MASS SPECTROMETRY (IMS-MS)	261

# INVESTIGATING THE COMBINED ANTIYEAST EFFICACY OF PLASMA-ACTIVATED WATER AND NATURAL PHENOLICS ON PLANKTONIC DEBARYOMYCES HANSENI

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Plasma-activated water (PAW) has gained attention as a potent antimicrobial agent, demonstrating its capacity to regulate the growth of microorganisms. The production of PAW entails exposing water to cold atmospheric plasma (CAP) which introduces short and long-lived reactive oxygen and nitrogen species (RONS) such as  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ,  $\text{O}_3$ ,  $\text{NO}_2^-$ ,  $\text{NO}_3^-$  and OH radicals. The reactive species in PAW interfere with the structural integrity and functional capabilities of microbial cells. Phenolic compounds are secondary metabolites in plants known for their health-promoting and antimicrobial properties. The combination of PAW with natural compounds as an antiyeast strategy could potentially yield additive or synergistic effects. Such an approach may broaden the antimicrobial spectrum and delay the development of microbial resistance.

This study involved the use of 1 kHz transient spark (TS) discharge PAW combined with cinnamic acid, vanillin, gallic acid and *p*-coumaric acid separately to create phenolics concentration of 2 or 1 mg/mL, and incubated with  $10^6$  CFU/mL of yeast *Debaryomyces hansenii* SZMC 8045Mo for 24 hours at 30 °C. In addition,  $10^6$  CFU/mL of *D. hansenii* in sterile tap water was directly treated with TS for 10 min and incubated with each of the four natural compounds under similar conditions. The efficacy of the PAW-phenolics was evaluated through agar plated colony counts. The results of this study suggest that the integration of PAW with natural phenolics constitutes an effective approach for combating yeast.

## 1. Introduction

Non-Thermal Plasma (NTP) technology serves as a green alternative that may be instrumental in the progress of agricultural production, biomedical innovations, food industry, water purification, air decontamination, and soil remediation, along with a wide array of other uses [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

The control of fungi in agricultural, industrial and medical environments is fraught with challenges, stemming from their resilience and the multifaceted nature of these contexts [6]. Yeasts are exceptionally adaptable, able to endure extreme environmental conditions, such as low pH and high concentrations of sugar or salt, as well as surviving in cold storage [7]. Emerging technologies, including NTP and the incorporation of bioactive compounds such as phenolics, have shown substantial effectiveness in mitigating pathogenic and non-pathogenic microbes [8]. These contemporary approaches provide advantageous alternatives to traditional chemical interventions.

The utilization of plasma-activated water (PAW) in conjunction with bioactive compounds such as natural phenolics offers a promising avenue for microbial management [9]. PAW contains short-lived reactive species such as nitric oxide (NO), superoxide ( $\text{O}_2^-$ ), ozone ( $\text{O}_3$ ), hydroxyl radical (OH), peroxyxynitrate ( $\text{OONO}_2^-$ ) and peroxyxynitrite ( $\text{ONOO}^-$ ), and long-lived species such as nitrates ( $\text{NO}_3^-$ ), nitrites ( $\text{NO}_2^-$ ) and hydrogen peroxide ( $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ) [10]. These reactive species can disrupt the cellular integrity of yeasts, resulting in cell death [11]. The antifungal action of natural bioactive compounds, including phenolics, is primarily due to their ability to compromise cellular and membrane structures, denature proteins, and disrupt fungal metabolic processes [12, 13]. By integrating plasma with phenolics, it is possible to target yeasts through multiple pathways, thereby improving efficacy and reducing the potential for antifungal resistance. Furthermore, this combined approach can lead to a reduction in the concentrations of phenolics needed, which may help to minimize adverse effects on non-target organisms.

## 2. Methods

The transient spark (TS) discharge was generated through a power electrode connected to a high voltage DC power supply through a 10 M $\Omega$  resistor. A metal ring as a grounded electrode was submerged in the tap water/yeast-containing water. The treatment time for the transient spark was 10 min/10 mL. The schematic diagram of the TS plasma setup is shown in Figure 1.

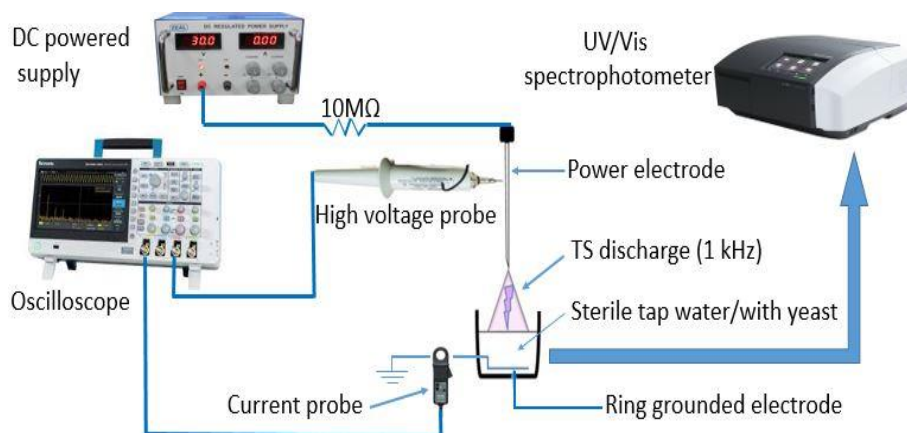


Fig. 1. The experimental setup of the transient spark discharge generating system

Two approaches to antiyeast treatment were investigated: (1) the direct application of TS discharge to 10 mL of *D. hansenii* suspension at a concentration of  $10^6$  CFU/mL, followed by incubation with either 2 or 1 mg of phenolic compounds; and (2) an indirect method in which transient spark PAW was used to dissolve 2 or 1 mg of phenolics, which were then incubated with  $10^6$  CFU/mL of yeast. The effectiveness of the plasma-phenolics treatment was evaluated by counting the number of yeast colonies on agar plates after a 24-hour incubation at 30°C.

## 3. Results and discussion

In the context of directly treating yeasts with TS discharge followed by the incubation with natural phenolics, it was observed that plasma-cinnamic acid displayed the highest level of antiyeast activity, followed by plasma-vanillin, plasma-gallic acid, and plasma-*p*-coumaric acid, respectively (Figure 2). Plasma-cinnamic acid showed a complete growth inhibition at both 2 and 1 mg/mL phenolic concentration (Figure 2). Plasma-vanillin resulted in growth inhibition values of 3.16 and 2.21 log at 2 and 1 mg/mL, respectively (Figure 2). Additionally, plasma-gallic acid and plasma-*p*-coumaric acid produced growth inhibition of 1.46 and 1.35 log at a concentration of 2 mg/mL, respectively (Figure 2).

In an indirect treatment scenario where PAW was used to dissolve phenolic substances at concentrations of 2 or 1 mg, followed by incubation with  $10^6$  CFU/mL of yeast, PAW-cinnamic acid completely inhibited growth at a concentration of 2 mg/mL and achieved a growth inhibition of 3.2 log at 1 mg/mL (Figure 3). PAW-vanillin demonstrated growth inhibition of 2.1 log and 1.6 log at 2 mg/mL and 1 mg/mL, respectively (Figure 4). Additionally, PAW-gallic acid produced growth inhibition of 1.2 log at 2 mg/mL and 1.1 log at 1 mg/mL, while PAW-*p*-coumaric acid resulted in growth inhibition of 1.4 log at 2 mg/mL and 1.0 log at 1 mg/mL (results not shown).

The combination of plasma and phenolics generally exhibited varying growth inhibitory effects on *D. hansenii* SZMC 8045Mo, with direct plasma treatment showing a higher antiyeast activity than the indirect treatment. Cinnamic acid, gallic acid, and *p*-coumaric acid, identified as hydroxybenzoic acids, exhibited varying levels of antiyeast activity when combined with PAW. These variations may be explained by the distinct chemical properties of each compound [12]. The dynamics between RONS



and phenolic functional groups, together with the antiyeast efficacy of the individual compounds, could have been pivotal in determining the final results. The presence of RONS in PAW may have augmented the effectiveness of phenolics by altering their chemical structure, enhancing solubility, and promoting effective penetration into yeast cells. In cases where antiyeast activity was notably high, such as with plasma-cinnamic acid, the combined oxidative stress from RONS and phenolics may have effectively compromised the yeast's defense mechanisms.

The plasma-phenolics antiyeast strategy holds promise in applications such as agriculture and food safety, where fungal contamination is a significant challenge [14]. Research continues to explore the optimization of PAW treatment and phenolic compound concentrations for maximizing their antiyeast efficacy [15,16,17].

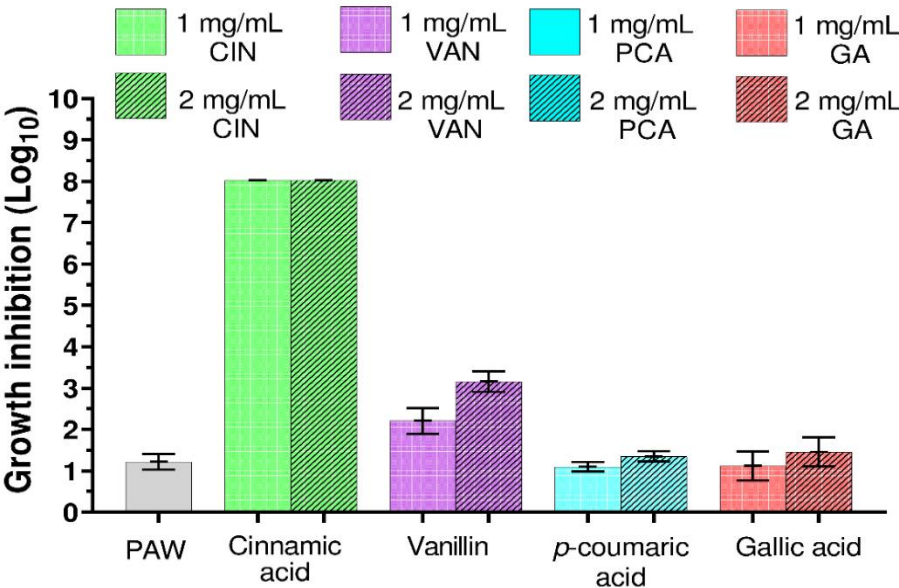


Fig. 2. Growth inhibition of direct transient spark treatment on 10 mL of  $10^6$  CFU/mL *D. hansenii* SZMC 8045Mo, followed by a 24-hour incubation in phenolics.

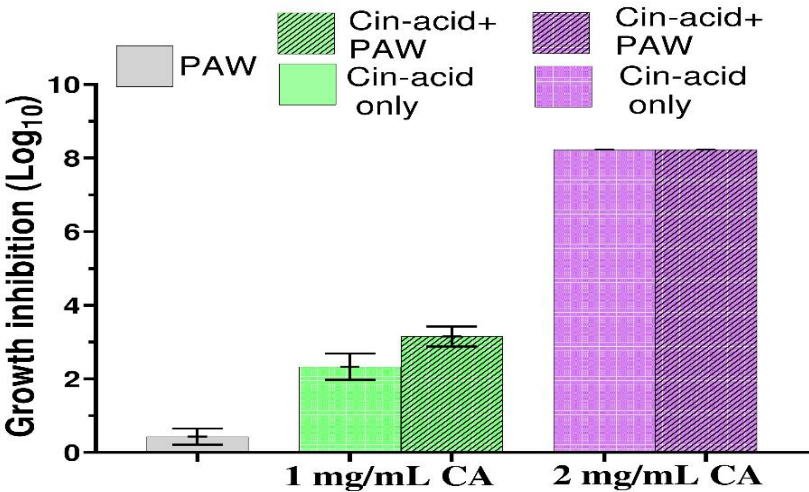


Fig. 3. Growth inhibition of transient spark PAW combined with cinnamic acid (CA) on *Debaryomyces hansenii* SZMC 8045Mo.

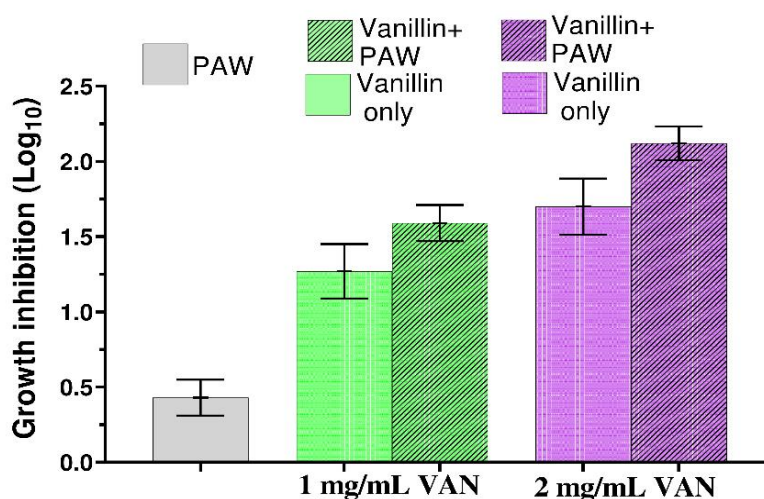


Fig. 4. Growth inhibition of transient spark PAW combined with Vanillin (VAN) on *Debaryomyces hansenii* SZMC 8045Mo.

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