

## Screening for Thermotolerant Yeasts in the Sudan

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### Abstract

A total of Seventy-four (74) thermotolerant yeast strains were isolated from 67 samples taken from different areas in the Sudan. Among the collected yeasts 47 isolates were regarded as thermophilic, 5 isolates regards as extremely thermophilic because they grow at 200C and 490C. The yeasts described as extremely thermophilic were identified to the genus and species level according to Lodder and Barnett. Three isolates were assigned to species *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and one isolate was assigned as *Kluyveromyces* ssp. The optimum growth temperature ranged between 300C and 400C. The extremely thermophilic yeast isolates were used in fermentation tests for the production of ethanol. The isolate identified as *Kluyveromyces* ssp gave final ethanol concentrations in the mash of 6% (w/v). This amount represented a yield of 83% of the theory. The other isolates gave ethanol concentrations of 3% to 2.5% (w/v) representing yields of only 50% of the theory. This indicates that these isolates area not suitable for ethanol production. Being thermotolerant they could be of interest for single cell protein production.

**Keywords:** Thermotolerant; Yeast Thermophilic; *Saccharomyces*; Fermented Foods

### Introduction

The Sudan is a hot country with day temperatures in summer going far above 400C. in such a hot climate, thermotolerant and thermophilic microorganisms are likely to dominate. Studies done so far support this assumption [1,2]. Thermotolerant and thermophilic microorganisms are associated with processing of fermented foods, with food spoilage and with diseases of humans, animals and plants. Therefore, they are of great economic importance and hence it is highly important that these microorganisms should be screened for and identified so that proper propagation methods for the useful ones could be developed and suitable control methods for the harmful ones could also be established. Moreover, thermophilic and thermotolerant microorganisms are important in the industry. The use of such microbes in the industry will lead to reduction in the cooling cost. These microbes could be used directly in the fermentation industry or could be used as a source of genes that confer this property on other microbes used in the fermentation industry. Therefore, it is important to screen for such microbes and to seek for their thermotolerance genes and prepare gene banks from them. Yeast are widely used in the industry especially for the production of baker's yeast single cell protein and ethanol. Such industries convert cheap raw materials such as molasses, whey, sulphite liquor etc. to products of economic importance for example foods, feeds and fuels. Most of the yeast strains used in these industries are mesophilic, with optimum growth temperatures of about 300C such yeasts suit the cold climates of European and American countries. In hot climates such as those prevailing in Africa in general and in the Sudan in particular, the use of such mesophilic yeasts in the fermentation industry necessitates the application of intensive cooling. This will add much to the cost of production and will put a heavy burden on the meager energy resources of the country. The end effect will be a retardation in the establishment of these industries in the Sudan. The use of Thermotolerant and thermophilic yeasts in these industries will remove this constraint and the fermentation industry can find a good start in this country. Thermotolerant and thermophilic yeasts are also important in food spoilage Abdelgadir and Mustafa [3], Bawewald and Hamad [4], and Hamad [2], isolated many types of thermotolerant and hemophilic yeasts from spoiled food that were subjected to processing. This indicates that yeasts weren't killed by the pasteurization processes employed in these factories. Some of these thermotolerant yeasts, isolated from spoiled processed foods were potential pathogens Hamad [2]. Therefore, it is very important to study the presence of these yeasts in foods so as to have an idea about the extent of food contamination with these, microbes and to be able to develop proper pasteurization methods that eliminate them from our foods.

## Material and Methods

### Collection of samples

Samples were collected from food processing factories, households markets and flowers. Liquid samples were taken in to sterile Duran bottles with screw caps and solid samples in sterile polythene bags. Samples taken from areas near Khartoum were transported on the same day to the faculty of agriculture in Khartoum north and the yeasts were isolated immediately. Samples from Kenana were transported to the faculty of agriculture and the isolation of the yeasts was carried out on the same day of arrival.

### Isolation of yeasts from samples

The yeasts were isolated by the direct plating of the samples or their suspensions on a medium of malt extract yeast extract agar according to Hamad [2].

### Purification of the yeast isolates

Different yeast colonies were purified by inoculating them onto solidified yeast extract and malt extract agar plates in quadrantic streaks manner, then they were incubated at 40°C for 48 hours. The streaking was repeated until pure yeasts cultures were obtained. Pure yeasts cultures were transferred onto slants of the same medium and incubated at 40°C for 48 hours. After that the slants were kept in a refrigerator for further studies. Sub culturing was performed periodically every 1 - 2 months.

### Screening for thermotolerant yeasts

The yeast isolates were grown on plates of the malt extract- yeast extract agar medium at incubation temperatures of 42°C, 46°C, 49°C and 50°C. The yeasts that showed growth at these temperatures were selected for further studies.

### Determination of the optimum, minimum and maximum growth temperatures

The yeasts isolates that proved to be thermotolerant as a result of the previous tests were subjected to tests for the determination of their optimum, minimum and maximum growth temperatures. The yeasts were grown in 500 ml. Erlenmeyer flasks containing 300 ml. Malt extract- yeast extract broth. The media were inoculated with quantities of inocula that gave the same amount of initial absorbance. The flasks were incubated at temperatures of 19°C, 20°C, 25°C, 30°C, 35°C, 40°C, 45°C, 49°C and 50°C.

The growth was followed by measuring the absorbance in a spectrophotometer (Dr/ 3 spectrophotometer model 41700/41800) at a wave length of 640 nm [5].

### Identification of yeasts

Selected yeast isolates were identified according to the methods described by Barent., *et al.* [5], Lodder [6], Barentt., *et al.* [7], Kiss [8] and Van der wolt [9].

### Ethanol production

The medium used was a urea molasses medium (1% sodium dihydrogen phosphate+ 0.35% urea+ molasses with 14.5 w/v sugar concentration, modified from Agab [10]. The pH was 5.02. the fermentation was done in flasks each containing 400ml. of medium. The flasks were incubated at room temperature and were shaken before sample taking. Samples were taking every hours and the ethanol concentration was determined by two methods:

1. Caputi and Wright [11]
2. Weighing method

### Sterilization of media and glassware

The malt and yeast extract and the molasses media were sterilized in the autoclave at 121°C for 15 min. The sugar solutions were sterilized by tandalization and ethanol by filtration. Glassware were sterilized in the oven at 160°C for 3 hours. Paraffin - wax layer was sterilized at 160°C for 2 hours.

### Yeast concentration

Yeast concentration was determined by using a spectrophotometer (DR/3 Spectrophotometer model 41700/41800) at a wave length of 460nm according to Barnett., *et al.* [5].

### Alcohol determination by Caputi and Wright chemical method

According to Caputi, and Wright 1969 one ml of sample was steam- distilled into acidified  $K_2Cr_2O_7$  solution of known volume and concentration. Oxidation of ethanol (EtOH) to formic acid (HOAC) was completed by heating. Unreacted dichromate was determined by titration with standers  $Fe(NH_4)_2(SO_4)_2$  solution, using O. phenanthroline as indictor. Kjeldahl apparatus was used.

### Result and Discussion

Seventy-four pure yeast cultures were obtained at the end of the screening programme as shown in table 1. All of these yeast isolates were grown at 40°C and hence they can be regarded as thermotolerant yeasts [12]. It is interesting to notice that almost all samples collected contained thermotolerant yeasts with some samples containing more than one yeast type these shows how thermotolerant yeasts are abundant in the Sudanese’s environment. Because most of these yeasts were isolated from food materials, this condition makes clear that yeasts contribute much to food spoilage and to food fermentation.

Source of samples	Number of samples	No. of pure yeast cultures
Market	10	11
Sugar factory	21	19
Dairy plant	15	22
Food processing factory	11	10
Households	09	11
Flower	01	01

Table 1: General view of the yeast isolates.

### Ability of the isolated yeasts to grow at elevated temperatures

The ability of the isolated yeasts to grow at elevated temperatures was tested by growing the yeast isolates in petri dishes containing malt extract and yeast extract agar at temperatures, starting with 40°C. The results are shown in Table 2. As can be seen from this table, all isolates showed growth at 40°C. at 42°C only three out of the 74 isolates tested didn’t show growth and at 46°C only 25 isolates didn’t show growth. The isolates which showed growth at 49°C were only 5 and at 50°C there was not growth at all. According to Arthur and Watson [12] mesophilic yeasts have a temperature growth range between 5°C and 35°C thermotolerant yeast between 8°C and 42°C and thermophilic yeasts between 20°C and 46°C. therefore, all of the 74 isolates can be regarded as thermotolerant and as many as 47 isolates were thermophilic. The 5 isolates that showed growth at 49°C are extremely thermophilic yeasts. Such yeasts are highly interesting for the biotechnologist, for the food microbiologist and for the genetic engineer. They can be used in the fermentation industry, they are dangerous potential food spoilers and they are an attractive source of genes. Hamad [2] tested 200 yeast isolates collected from different areas in the Sudan. Eighty of these isolates were classified as thermotolerant; because they were not killed by heating at 55°C for 20 minutes and 46 out of these 80 isolates were classified as thermophilic; because they grew at 45°C and 50°C.

Sample source	40°C	42°C	46°C	49°C	50°C
<i>Saccharum officinarum</i>	+	+	-	-	-
Milk (spoiled)	+	+	-	-	-
Yogurt	+	+	+	-	-
<i>P. guava L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
Hulu Mur	+	+	-	-	-
Milk (spoiled)	+	+	+	-	-
Marisa	+	+	-	-	-
<i>P. guava L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>Hameliaspherocarpa</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>M. indica L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>M. sapientum L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
Sharbout	+	+	-	-	-
Pickled (carrot/cucumber)	+	+	+	-	-
<i>M. indica L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>Citrus paradise L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>P. dactylifera L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa1 L</i>	+	+	+	-	-
<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa2 L</i>	+	+	+	-	-
<i>P. dactylifera1 L</i>	+	+	+	-	-
<i>P. dactylifera2 L</i>	+	+	-	-	-
<i>P. dactylifera3 L</i>	+	+	+	-	-
<i>Cucurbitamoschata L</i>	+	+	+	+	-
Jam concentrate	+	+	+	+	-
Canned jam 1	+	+	+	+	-
Canned jam 2	+	+	+	-	-
Mango juice	+	-	-	-	-
Ketchup	+	+	+	-	-
Souse raw material 1	+	+	+	-	-
Souse raw material 2	+	+	-	-	-
Souse concentrate 1	+	+	+	-	-
Souse concentrate 2	+	+	-	-	-
Butane milk	+	+	+	+	-
Milk (pasteurized 1)	+	+	-	-	-
Milk (pasteurized 2)	+	+	+	-	-
Milk (pasteurized 3)	+	+	+	-	-
Butane yogurt	+	+	+	+	-

Sample source	40°C	42°C	46°C	49°C	50°C
Butane mish 1	+	+	-	-	-
Butane mish 2	+	+	+	-	-
Yogurt	+	+	+	-	-
Butane (milk + yogurt)1	+	+	+	-	-
Butane (milk + yogurt)2	+	+	+	-	-
Butane washing water	+	+	+	-	-
Yogurt before incubation	+	+	-		-
Butane milk cheese1	+	+	+	-	-
Butane milk cheese2	+	+	+	-	-
Kuku milk	+	-	-	-	-
Cheese end product 1	+	-	-	-	-
Cheese end product 2	+	-	-	-	-
Kuku washing water	+	+	+	-	-
Kuku butter + yogurt	+	+	+	-	-
Kuku butter 1	+	-		-	-
Kuku butter 2	+	+	+	-	-
Kuku butter 3	+	+	+	-	-
Sugar cane (burned)	+	+	+	-	-
Crusher diluted	+	+	+	-	-
Impipition water 1	+	+	-	-	-
Impipition water 2	+	+	-	-	-
Sewage water	+	+	-	-	-
Bagasse 1	+	+	+	-	-
Bagasse 2	+	+	+	-	-
Sugar juice 1 <sup>st</sup> mil 1	+	+	+	-	-
Sugar juice 1 <sup>st</sup> mil 2	+	+	+	-	-
First crusher from 1 <sup>st</sup> mill	+	+	+	-	-
Gelatinize sugar	+	+	+	-	-
Extract from 1 <sup>st</sup> mill	+	+	+	-	-
Molasses (fermented)1	+	+	+	-	-
Molasses (fermented)2	+	+	+	-	-
Mud (certified juice)1	+	+	+	-	-
Mud (certified juice)2	+	+	-	-	-
Extract from 1 <sup>st</sup> mill 1	+	+	+	-	-
Extract from 1 <sup>st</sup> mill 2	+	+	-	-	-
Extract from 1 <sup>st</sup> mill 3	+	+	-	-	-
Kisra	+	+	-	-	-

**Table 2:** Yeast isolates and their ability to grow at different elevated temperatures.

These thermophilic yeasts were isolated from different areas in the Sudan. They included species like *Kluyveromyces marxianus*, *Candida Kefyr* and *Hansenula polymorpha*. If these yeasts are used in the fermentation industry, the advantages described by Einsele [13] will be realized. These advantages include the decreased costs for cooling equipment, reduction of energy costs needed for cooling, easier handling in regions with warmer climates and fewer problems with yeast contamination. Agab [10] and Hamad [2] used thermotolerant and thermophilic yeasts for the production of ethanol and SCP. From laboratory experiments and from calculations with simulated data, Hamad [2] found results that support the benefits mentioned by Einsele [13] in using thermophilic yeasts in the industry. Thermotolerant and thermophilic yeasts are also dangerous potential food spoilers, because they can stand mild pasteurization temperatures. Abdelgadir and Mustafa [3] and Hamad [2] isolated thermophilic and thermotolerant yeasts from many foods, such as spoiled milk and milk products and different beverages. The most dominant thermophilic and thermotolerant yeast isolates by these authors were *Issatchenkia orientalis*, *Candida krusei*, *Kluyveromyces marxianus*, *Candida kefyr*, *Hansenula polymorpha*, *Debaromyces hansenii*, *Candida famata*, *Pichia membrani-faciens*, *Candida valida* and *Saccharomyces* ssp. Some of these thermophilic and thermotolerant yeasts are also potential pathogens such as *L. orientalis*, *C. krusei*, *Debaromyces hansenii* and *C. Famata*. This constitutes an additional health hazard to the public. These yeasts are also an important source of genes that code for these characters. Gene banks could be made and stored for different purposes.

**Determination of the growth temperature range**

The extremely thermophilic yeast isolates were grown at the temperatures 20°C, 25°C, 30°C, 35°C, 40°C, 46°C, and 49°C to determine their optimum, maximum and minimum temperatures of growth as described in the methods. The results are presented in figures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The minimum and maximum growth temperatures for the 5 extremely thermophilic yeast isolates with the codes A, B, C, D and E are 20°C and 49°C respectively. The minimum growth temperature of these yeasts is similar to that suggested by Arthur and Watson [12] for thermophilic yeasts, but their maximum growth temperatures are higher than the 46°C suggested by them. For this reason, these yeasts can be regarded as extremely thermophilic. The optimum temperature for the growth of isolates A and B seems to be 30°C, because they gave the highest amount of growth at this temperature. The second-best amount of growth was given at 35°C followed by 40°C and then 25°C and 46°C (Figure 1 and 2). On the other hand, isolates C, D and E seem to have 40°C as their optimum temperature for growth. The second-best temperature for this group was 35°C followed by 30°C and then 46°C and 25°C (Figure 3, 5 and 5).

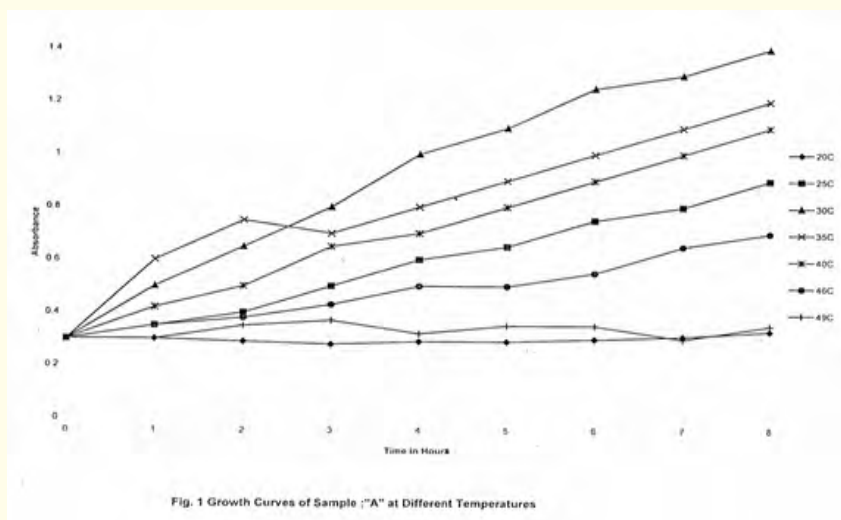


Figure 1: Growth curves of samples: "A" at different temperature.

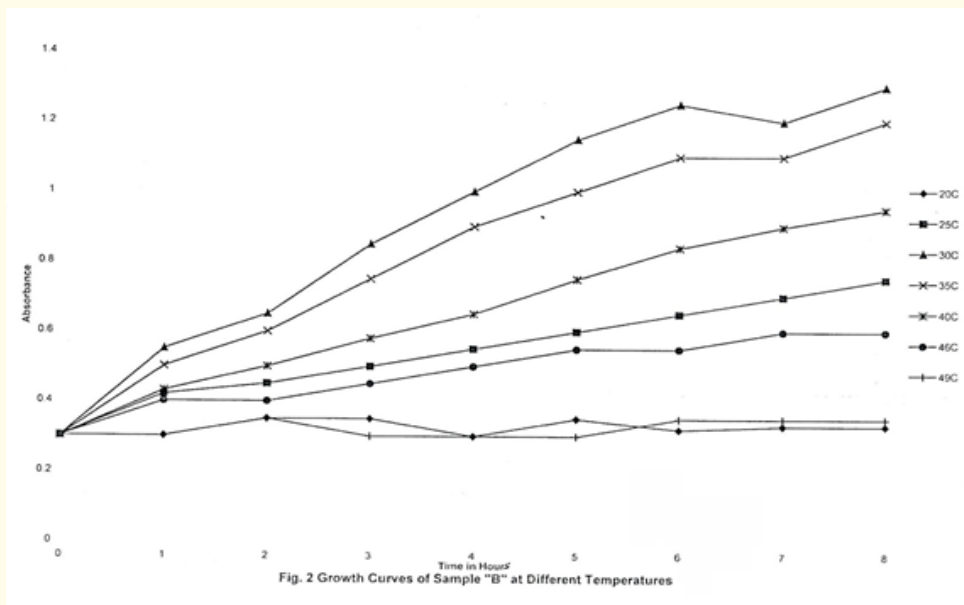


Figure 2: Growth curves of samples: "B" at different temperature.

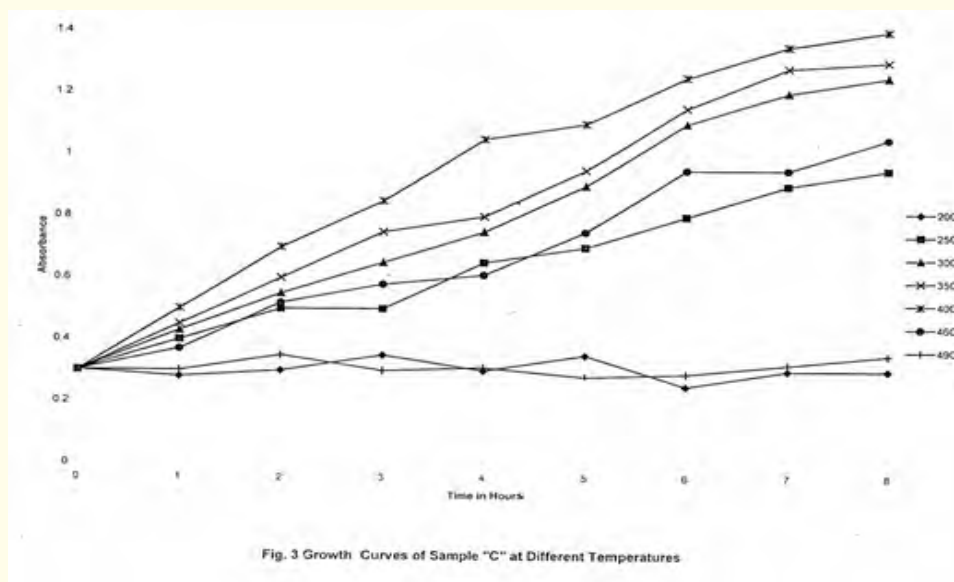


Figure 3: Growth curves of samples: "C" at different temperature.

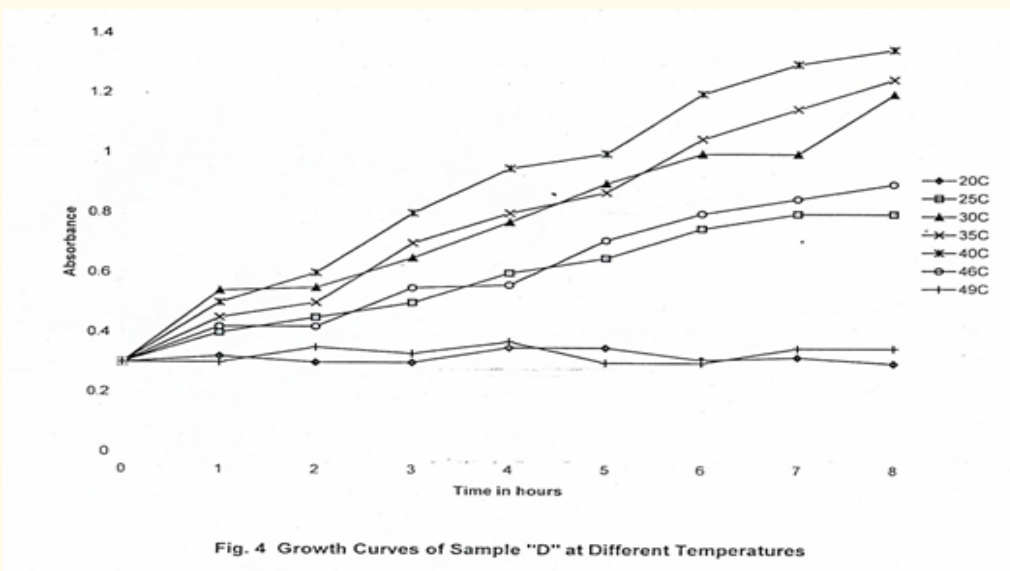


Figure 4: Growth curves of samples: "D" at different temperature.

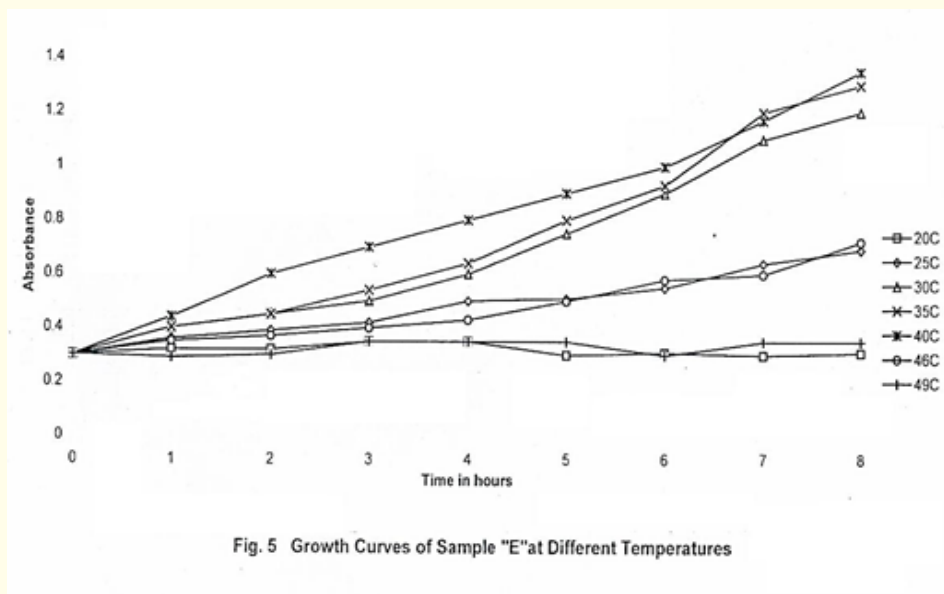


Figure 5: Growth curves of samples: "E" at different temperature.

It is worth mentioning that these yeasts grew better at 46°C than at 25°C. this is another indication of their thermophilicity. These findings are in agreement with results obtained by Hamad [2] for the extremely thermophilic yeasts *C. kefyi* and *Kluyveromyces marxianus*. The other extremely thermophilic yeast described by Hamad 1986 namely *Hansenula polymorpha* had 40°C as its optimum growth temperature, but it gave better growth at 45°C than at 35°C, and also it grew at 50°C.

**Yeast identification**

Four yeast isolates were subjected to preliminary identification tests that included morphological and physiological characters. The results are presented in table 3. Using identification keys in Lodder [6], Barnett, et al. [5], Barnett, et al. [7] the isolates were tentatively identified as:

- A *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*
- B *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*
- C *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*
- E *Kluyveromyces* ssp.

Colony	A	B	C	E
Shape	Circular	Circular	Circular	Circular
Color	White	White	White	White
Surface	Smooth	Smooth	Smooth	Smooth
Edge	Entire	Entire	Entire	Entire
Elevation	Convex	Convex	Convex	Convex
<b>Cells</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>
Shape	Oval	Oval	Oval	Oval
Division	Budding	Budding	Budding	Budding
Hypha	Pseudohyphae	Pseudohyphae	Pseudohyphae	Pseudohyphae
<b>Spores</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>
Shape	Spherical	Spherical	Spherical	Oval
Number	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Fermentation	A	B	C	E
Glucose	+	+	+	+
Sucrose	+	+	+	+
Raffinose	-	+	+	+
Maltose	-	-	-	+
Lactose	-	-	-	-
Galactose	+	+	+	+
D-Ribose	-	-	-	-
<b>Growth</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>
Sucrose	+	+	+	+
Maltose	-	-	-	+
Raffinose	+	+	+	+
D-Galactose	+	+	+	+
Ribose	-	-	-	-
Lactose	-	-	-	-
Ethanol	+	+	+	+
Methanol	+	+	+	+
Nitrate	-	-	-	-
Starch formation	-	-	-	-
Starch hydrolysis	-	-	-	-
33.3% Glucose	+	+	+	+
37.5% Glucose	+	+	+	+

**Table 3:** Some morphological and physiological characters of the yeast isolates.



As can be seen in table 3 these yeasts can grow aerobically and anaerobically on many sugars as carbon and energy sources. They are also osmotolerant, and in addition, they are thermophilic. These properties make them dangerous potential food spoilers. These same characteristics also make these yeasts of potential technological importance, for example for the production of SCP, ethanol of baker's yeast. Abdelgader and Mustafa [3] reported on the presence of yeasts in carbonated beverages in the Sudan. They found among these spoilers some thermophiles that grew at 44°C. Hamad [2] isolated thermophilic yeasts from spoiled milk and from the line of production in different food factories that process fruits and vegetables and from the line of production in a sugar factory. The extremely thermophilic yeast *Hansenula polymorpha* that grew at 50°C was isolated from different stages of the line of production in a sugar factory, especially in a juice of 60% sugar concentration. Physiological tests proved the osmotolerance of this yeast and in addition it was found that this yeast could assimilate under aerobic conditions, many hexoses and pentoses. It can also assimilate the organic acids succinate and citrate, which are widely used as preservatives in the food industry. This yeast is therefore, a dangerous food spoiler. Another yeast described by Hamad [2] was *Kluyveromyces marxianus* and its sexual state *Candida kefyr*. This yeast was isolated from a spoiled milk and from the line of production in many food factories. It was also extremely thermophilic (grew at 47°C) and osmotolerant (grew on 50% glucose). It was able to assimilate aerobically and anaerobically many hexoses, pentoses and polysaccharides such as lactose and inulin. In addition to the organic acids lactate, succinate and citrate. It is, therefore, also an extremely dangerous food spoiler. These findings support the results obtained in our work. It is obvious that many of the existing yeast species are food spoilers causing food losses of unknown dimensions.

### Ethanol from molasses

Four of the yeast isolates namely three strains of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and *Kluyveromyces* sp. were used for ethanol production as described in the methods and the results are represented in Figure 6.

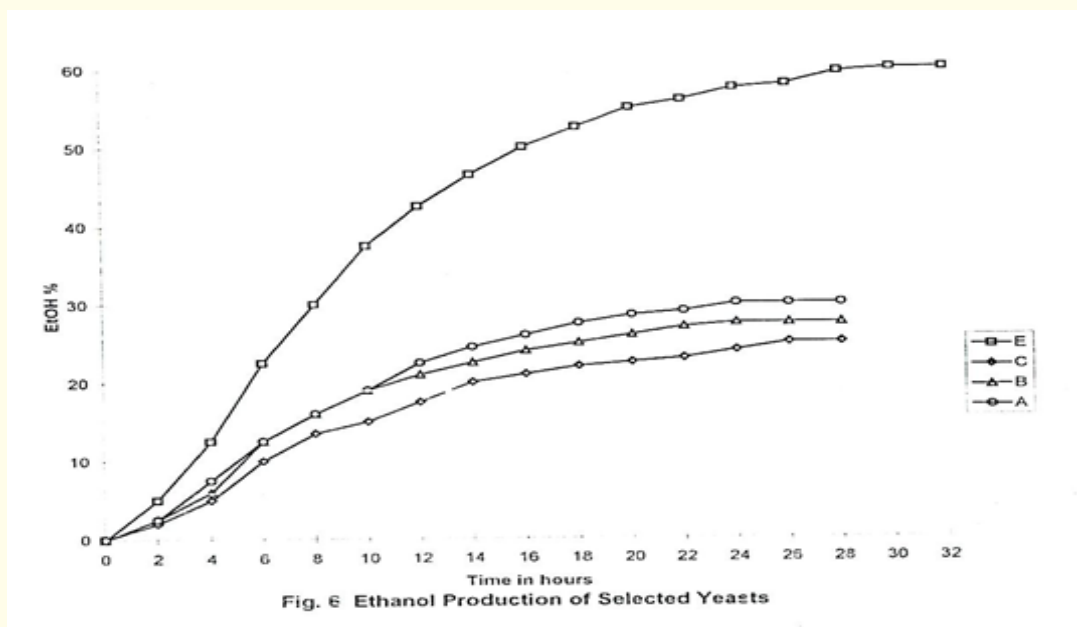


Figure 6: Ethanol Production of selected yeasts.

The strain *Kluyveromyces* sp. gave 7.6% (v/v) ethanol in unshaken flask fermentation, representing a yield of 83% of the theoretical one. This yield is quite reasonable because the fermentation conditions were not optimum. Shake flask condition are better and a stirred bio-reactor is the optimum condition. In addition, yields in fed batch fermentation are higher than yields in batch fermentation. Hamad [2] found that the yield increased from 92% in batch fermentation to 97.7% in fed batch fermentation. Hacking, et al. [14] described yeasts that gave yields of 94% to 69% and final alcohol concentration in the fermentation broth of 6.8% to about 4% (w/v). The best yeasts described by Hamad [2] gave under optimum fermentation conditions yields of 97.7% and final alcohol fermentation in the fermentation broth of 7.9% (w/v). Ibrahim [15] reported about commercial yeast strains that gave ethanol concentration in the broth between 7.5% (w/v) and 7.7% (w/v) representing yields of 98% to 90% of the theory. Agab [10] used yeasts isolated from different habitats in the Sudan for ethanol production in flask experiments. The highest ethanol concentration recorded in these experiments was 5.24% without indicating whether it was by weight or by volume and without giving yield percentage. Ali [16] reported about yeasts that gave 8.5% (v/v) ethanol concentration from 30% sugars in the mash. This represents a yield of only 44.8% of the theory, which is very low. The ethanol concentration reached in this experiment was reasonable, but the yield was low, because the sugar concentration was too high. Ethanol concentrations and yields could have been better if lower sugar concentrations of about 20% (w/v) were used. The three strains of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* tested in this study gave ethanol concentrations of 3% to 2.5% (w/v) representing yields less than 50% of the theory. This is very low and indicates that these yeast strains are of no importance for ethanol production. Being thermotolerant they could be of interest for SCP production. This has to be tested in further experiments.

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