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PROCESS AND MEDIA FOR PRODUCING CELLS OF LACTIC ACID BACTERIA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

This invention relates to some highly selective culture media for micro-organisms which permit the isolation and production on a commercial scale, of particular strains of lactic acid producing bacteria. Control of pH, surprisingly different in the case of agar and of broth media, is critical for the preparation of the media.

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This invention relates to media for producing cells of lactic acid bacteria. More specifically, it relates to a medium for promoting the rapid and luxuriant growth of bacteria capable of producing lactic acid in saline solutions under acid conditions. Still more specifically, it deals with a process for selectively isolating and producing large quantities of desirable lactic acid bacteria useful in the commercial production of brined vegetables.

In the copending application of Etchells, Bell and Costilow, Ser. No. 672,722, filed Oct. 4, 1967, which is a continuation-in-part of application bearing Ser. No. 324,898, filed Nov. 19, 1963, now abandoned there is disclosed and claimed a process for the Pure Culture Fermentation Process for Cucumber Pickles employing as an inoculum a lactic acid fermentation inducing micro-organism selected from the group consisting of the genera *Lactobacillus*, *Pediococcus*, and *Leuconostoc*. These bacteria may be in the form of either dried pellets, dried granules, dried powder or broth form.

Not all the species of these three genera produce satisfactory fermentation. Even different strains of the same species may cause undesirable fermentation differences. For example, a decided difference in color and odor of brine-stock was obtained with certain strains of the species *Pediococcus cerevisiae*. Some gave the brine a stale hay-like odor and the pickles revealed an off-color, with evidence of bleaching. As the result of the above important findings, screening tests involving several hundred pure culture fermentations were carried out using over 50 individual cultures of lactic acid bacteria representing 10 species in the three genera, namely: *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, *L. Brevis*, *L. delbrueckii*, *L. fermenti*, *L. helveticus*, *L. lactis*, *L. plantarum*, *L. thermophilus*; *Pediococcus cerevisiae*; and *Leuconostoc mesenteroides*.

It became necessary, therefore, to separate the species of a genus and, in many cases, the different strains of a species. After the species, or strains, had been separated, it was then necessary to produce rapidly large quantities of the desired species, or strains, for commercial use. Therefore, two problems were involved. The first problem was to determine which genera, or which species of a genus, or which strains of a species produced the required, desirable fermentation results. The second problem involved the development of a selective isolation medium (SIM) for the selective isolation of the strains, species, and genera; it also involved the development of a growth medium (GM) for the production of these selected micro-

organisms in commercial quantities. The solution to the first problem has been disclosed and claimed in the above-cited copending application, Ser. No. 324,898, filed Nov. 19, 1963. The present invention deals with the second problem. Although the pure cultures of the present invention were used in the above copending application, neither the media nor the procedure for isolating the desired bacteria and producing them in commercial quantities was described and claimed. Ability to promote commercial growth is critical.

Accordingly, it is a prime object of the present invention to develop a medium for promoting the rapid and luxuriant growth of desirable bacteria capable of producing lactic acid in saline solutions. These desirable bacteria may be defined as those of the three genera and 10 species listed above. These lactic acid fermentation inducing micro-organisms should be usable in the form of either dried pellets, dried granules, dried powder or broth.

Another object of this invention is to develop a process (sometimes referred to as method) for producing large quantities of these desirable lactic acid bacteria useful in the production of brined vegetables wherein the brine-stock may have a salt content of about 3.0 to 8.0 weight percent salt. The lactic acid micro-organisms so produced should be capable of growing (or multiplying) in brine-stocks having a pH of about 4.6 to 4.2 resulting from the addition of food-grade, edible lactic, citric, or acetic acid. One or more of these acids may be incorporated into the brine-stock to retard, or completely inhibit the growth of any spore-forming types of bacteria that might be present in the raw vegetables prior to fermentation.

It is a still further object of the present invention to selectively isolate colonies of the desirable, lactic acid bacteria for inoculation of the novel medium of our invention. Other objects will be apparent to those skilled in the art.

In the past tomato juice has been widely used as a medium for the selective isolation of lactobacilli. However, it has the disadvantage that molds, streptococci, and "spreading organisms" also grow on, and in, this medium and there is considerable danger of contamination of the lactobacilli. The pH of tomato juice is about 6.1.

Another medium developed by Rogosa, Mitchell and Wiseman (J. Bacteriol. 62, 132 (1951)) for the selective isolation of lactobacilli consists essentially of the following:

	Grams
Trypticase	10.0
50 Yeast extract.....	5.0
Monopotassium phosphate.....	6.0
Ammonium citrate.....	2.0
Dextrose	20.0
Sorbitan mono-oleate.....	1.0
55 Sodium acetate hydrate.....	25.0
Magnesium sulphate.....	0.575
Manganese sulphate.....	0.120
Ferrous sulphate.....	0.034
Agar	15.0
60 Total (dry)	84.709

Addition of 84.709 grams of the dry material to a liter of distilled water, mixing, addition of 1.32 ml. acetic acid, boiling about two minutes and cooling to at least 45° C. produces a medium useful for plate counts. According to Rogosa et al., the above medium gave results similar to tomato juice agar, and has a pH of 5.4.

Quite surprisingly, the Rogosa medium proved to be inhibitory for the growth of the desirable *Leuconostoc mesenteroides*; and some desirable strains of *Pediococcus cerevisiae* and *Lactobacillus plantarum*. However, when

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the pH was changed to 5.6 ± 0.05 , this inhibition was reversed and the modified medium retained a high degree of selectivity. This was unexpected. Further, it was discovered that by the addition of about 0.0075% by weight of a brom cresol green dye (to aid colony counting), this novel medium could be successfully used for separating relatively low populations of the desirable lactic acid bacteria occurring on the fresh vegetables, i.e., pickling cucumbers, from exceedingly high populations of other microbial groups. Most important, the colonies of the desirable species of lactic acid bacteria were unusually large when compared with colonies of the same lactic acid bac-

was unexpected that luxuriant growth could be obtained in a broth having a pH of 5.8 when conventional broths in industry range from about 6.1 to about 7.2.

As an illustrative example of the method of our invention, experiments were conducted comparing cell yields from the growth medium (GM) having a pH of 5.8 which was prepared from the individual ingredients, brought to a boiling temperature and subsequently cooled, with the yields from a broth having the following composition: Trypticase, 1%; yeast extract, 1%; dextrose, 1%; dipotassium phosphate, 0.5%; and a pH of 6.8-7.0. This product is known herein as (TYE).

TABLE I.—CELL YIELDS OF VARIOUS SPECIES OF LACTIC ACID BACTERIA GROWN IN GM AND TYE BROTH

Organism	Strain	No. of g. (dry wt.) of cells per liter		No. of cells per ml. $\times 10^{-3}$	
		GM	TYE	GM	TYE
<i>Pediococcus cerevisiae</i>	FBB-39.....	2.5	0.4	1,523	112
<i>Lactobacillus plantarum</i>	FBB-12.....	2.8	0.4	1,850	273
<i>L. brevis</i>	FBB-70.....	1.4	0.3	194	58
<i>L. fermenti</i>	NRRL B-585.....	1.3	0.3	300	110
<i>L. delbrueckii</i>	NRRL B-443.....	0.8	0.3	130	-----
	NRRL B-445.....	4.3	1.0	3,580	670
<i>L. thermophilus</i>	NRRL B-1952.....	1.5	0.5	60	23
<i>L. lactis</i>	NRRL B-736.....	1.5	0.8	960	300
<i>G. helveticus</i>	NRRL B-1842.....	1.3	0.5	100	-----
<i>L. bulgaricus</i>	NRRL B-734.....	1.0	0.5	200	40
<i>Leuconostoc mesenteroides</i>	FBB B-41.....	1.0	0.3	705	340

teria occurring on other media known to those skilled in the art. These large colonies could readily be separated from the modified medium and developed into stock cultures using TSA stabs (Trypticase Sugar Agar) by conventional processes.

Medium for production of cells of desirable lactobacilli

Following the development of a suitable medium for the selective isolation of individual species, and even strains of the species, the problem of finding a medium for promoting the rapid and luxuriant growth of these desirable, fastidious bacteria became critical. Various broths known to those skilled in the art were tried and either inhibited the growth of the micro-organism, or slowed down the growth, or were deficient in some other property.

It was then discovered that an aqueous broth having a special composition and a special pH promoted the rapid and luxuriant growth of many species of *Lactobacillus*. The composition of this novel medium follows:

	Grams
Trypticase	10.0
Yeast extract	5.0
Monopotassium phosphate	6.0
Ammonium citrate	2.0
Dextrose	20.0
Sorbitan mono-oleate	1.0
Sodium acetate hydrate	25.0
Magnesium sulphate	0.575
Manganese sulphate	0.120
Ferrous sulphate	0.034
Total (dry)	69.709

This was then converted into a broth by the addition of 70 parts to a liter of water, adding an organic acid, such as citric, lactic, or acetic, to give a pH of 5.8, after which the broth was brought to the boiling temperature and subsequently cooled. We prefer to use acetic acid in obtaining the pH of 5.8. This medium (broth) will be referred to herein as the growth medium (GM).

Just why these particular species of lactic acid bacteria grow so luxuriantly in the above broth at pH 5.8 is not known. Typical media (broths) used in the industry for the isolation and growth of lactic acid bacilli have a pH ranging from about 6.1. to 7.2. It certainly was unexpected that changing the pH of the plating medium from 5.4 to 5.6 ± 0.05 would reverse the inhibitory effect of the selective isolation medium (SIM). Further, it certainly

Tubes containing 10 ml. of each medium were inoculated from stock cultures of the bacteria grown in TSA stabs, incubated 18 to 24 hours at the optimum temperature for the species used (32 or 45° C.), and the entire culture used to inoculate 190 ml. of the respective media. Cell yields were determined after 24 and 48 hours incubation. Plate counts were determined using (SIM) medium, and total cell counts by use of a Petroff-Hausser counting chamber. For dry weight yields, cells were centrifuged from 200 ml. of culture; the pellet resuspended in a small volume of water, and transferred to a tared bottle, dried at 110° C. for 48 hours, and weighed.

A summary of typical results is given in Table I. Cell yields after 24 and 48 hr. incubation were comparable, so only the 48 hr. data are presented. The growth medium (GM) produced higher cell yields than the TYE broth with all species tested. However, its most pronounced effect was observed with *P. cerevisiae*, *L. plantarum*, and certain strains of *L. delbrueckii*, the cell yields of these species in LBS broth were 4 to 6 times higher than in TYE. However, four of seven strains of *L. delbrueckii* tested grew poorly in both media.

The plate count data are not presented since they correspond closely with the total cell counts. There was no rapid loss in cell viability in any of these cultures within 48 hr. resulting from the growth medium (GM) broth.

The (GM) broth is easily prepared, and does not have to be sterilized, only brought to a boiling temperature. Plating studies demonstrated that some microbial groups other than lactic acid bacteria (e.g., coliform bacteria) will grow in LBS agar when the pH is raised above that specified herein. However, when lactic acid bacteria are inoculated into the broth medium (GM), the initial pH (5.8) is rapidly lowered by acid development to a level that precludes development of endospores or incidental contaminants. No contamination of any of the cultures produced in the (GM) medium has been observed. However, there are undoubtedly bacterial endospores present in the boiled medium so the method would not be suitable for producing cell preparations wherein these residual spores would constitute a problem.

Resting cells of *L. plantarum* harvested from the (GM) cultures fermented glucose to lactic acid rapidly.

The luxuriant growth of these lactobacilli made possible the production of cells in sufficient quantities to determine the desirability of genera, species, or strains of species, for the inoculation of brine stock in the development of pure culture fermentation processes for vegetables

