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Standardization of blanching/boiling time on different varieties of dates for making dry dates

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The date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.) is considered as one of the most important cash crop of the country and holds a very significant position on the agricultural horizon. Pakistan is the fifth largest producer of dates. In Pakistan, there is one big threat in the form of monsoon season which coincides with the harvesting season every year which creates lots of problems for the poor farmers in terms of loss of major portion of their ready crops. Having this scenario, there was an urgent need of establishing such appropriate facilities where dates could be secured by way of turning them into dry date or only by getting rid of their extra moisture due to rains. Hence the present investigation was carried out at Horticultural Research Institute, Ayub Agricultural Research Institute Faisalabad during 2016-2017 to standardize the suitable blanching/boiling time for making dry dates under electric hot air dryer. Dates at doka stage were picked, cleaned and boiled in boiling water for 10, 15, 20 and 30 minutes and placed in electric dryer for drying at 52°C temperature. Fruit physio chemical characteristics such as fruit weight, fruit size, firmness, total soluble solids, ascorbic acid, total phenolic contents, antioxidants and moisture contents were studied after drying. Results showed maximum fruit weight (12.30 g), fruit size (850.1 mm²), total soluble solids (17.27%), ascorbic acid (3.25 mg/100mL) total phenolic contents (7.59 µg GAE/mL) antioxidants (86.42% DPPH), firmness (5.2 kg/cm³) and moisture contents (9.0%) when boiled for 20 minutes. It is suggested that electric hot air dryer can be an effective postharvest technique to obtain good quality, hygienic dry dates with short dehydration time when boiled for 20 minutes before drying.

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