
An assessment of heavy salting and salted drying on yield of Talang Queen (*Scomberoides commersonianus*) fish fillets

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Dried fish is one of the most popular protein sources among Sri Lankans. Current dried fish processing methods cause to reduce the yield by 1/2 of fresh fish fillets. Salting and drying methods lead to unfavourable effect on quality and safety of products by cross contaminations through wind, soil and animals. This study was planned to introduce heavy salting and compare with salted drying on yield, quality and safety of Talang Queen ('kattawa') dried fish which has higher demand in the local market. Prepared 'kattawa' fish fillets were separated in to two groups. First group was salted with excess amount of salt and stacked in a box which had drain outlet in the bottom and the second group was salted at 1:4 (salt to fish) ratio and stacked in a similar box. Both were kept in room temperature ($31 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$). After 24 hours, second group was directed to sun drying after removing and washing salt crystals on the surface of fillets. Drying of 'katawa' fillets continued until the water activity level reduced below the 0.75 while first group was kept in the same box for five days. Analyses were conducted for moisture, water activity, protein, salt and yield. Samples were collected form fresh fillets, after 24 hours, after four and five days. According to results, the level of water activity and salt content of both groups were not significantly different ($P > 0.05$) at the end of the process. Yield of heavy salted 'kattawa' recorded 25% higher value than salted dried fillets. Heavy salting in a closed box assured the quality and safety preventing cross contaminations.

Key words: Cross contaminations, dried fish, sun drying

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