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**Changes in internal meat colour and colour opacity
as predictors of cooking time**

I n a u g u r a l – D i s s e r t a t i o n

zur

Erlangung des Grades

Doktor der Ernährungs- und Haushaltswissenschaft
(Dr. oec. troph.)

der

Hohen Landwirtschaftlichen Fakultät

der

Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn

vorgelegt am

06. März 2012

von

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aus

Bonn

(D 98)

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Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 10. Mai 2012

Erscheinungsjahr: 2012

Schriftenreihe der Haushaltstechnik Bonn

Band 1/2012

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D 98 (Diss. Universität Bonn)

Shaker Verlag
Aachen 2012

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Zugl.: Bonn, Univ., Diss., 2012

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Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-8440-1074-9

ISSN 1863-320X

Shaker Verlag GmbH • P.O. BOX 101818 • D-52018 Aachen

Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 • Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9

Internet: www.shaker.de • e-mail: info@shaker.de

Abstract

Roasted beef loin is traditionally served at different degrees of doneness, depending on the preferences of the consumer for rare, medium or well-done meat. While automatic cooking programmes assess the degree of doneness, and thus the end of the cooking process, by measuring the internal meat temperature, consumers and cooks often assess the degree of doneness of roasted beef by the internal meat colour.

The aim of this work was, therefore, to develop real-time colour measurement in order to determine the degree of doneness by the changes in internal meat colour. In addition, theoretically modelling the increase in colour lightness caused by heat treatment and generating deeper knowledge about the changes in meat colour caused by heat treatment was attempted.

The experiments were conducted with pieces of bovine *longissimus dorsi*. The meat was cooked in dry heat in an oven commonly used in private households. The oven temperature and internal meat temperature were measured by thermocouples and the changes in internal meat colour were measured with a true colour sensor. The design of experiments (DoE) method was used to investigate the influence of various oven temperatures, meat weight and final meat temperatures, and to ensure the reproducibility of the experiments. The increase in colour lightness was theoretically attempted by using the Verhulst equation of biological growth.

The results show significant variation within initial and final *XYZ* values measured by the true colour sensor. Converting the *XYZ* values to the CIE $L^*a^*b^*$ system reveals that the change in colour lightness (L^*) is dominant. The cooking time until the desired degree of doneness is reached can reliably be predicted from the point of most rapid changes in colour lightness, and the end of the cooking process can also be determined by final b^* values. The model created by using the Verhulst equation shows that the change in colour lightness cannot be readily explained by the increase in internal meat temperature. Other parameters, such as the water content of the meat, might have to be considered to generate a universally applicable model.

Kurzfassung

Traditionell werden gebratene Fleischstücke vom Rind in unterschiedlichen Garstufen, *rare*, *medium* oder *durch* serviert. Während in automatischen Garprogrammen die Kerntemperatur des Fleisches gemessen wird, beurteilen Verbraucher und Köche den Garzustand von Fleisch häufig nach der Farbe im Inneren des Fleischstücks.

Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist daher die Entwicklung einer Echtzeit-Farbmessung zur Bestimmung des Garzustandes. Außerdem soll, zur Vertiefung der Kenntnisse über die Veränderung der Fleischfarbe während des Garprozesses, die Helligkeit der Fleischfarbe theoretisch modelliert werden.

Die Experimente wurden mit Bratenstücken aus dem *Longissimus dorsi* vom Rind durchgeführt. Das Fleisch wurde in einem haushaltsüblichen Ofen in trockener Hitze zubereitet. Ofen- und Fleischtemperatur wurden mit Thermoelementen gemessen. Die Farbmessung wurde mit einem Echtfarbsensor durchgeführt. Zur Untersuchung der Einflüsse verschiedener Gargrade, Fleischgewichte und Ofentemperaturen und zur Gewährleistung der Wiederholbarkeit der Versuche wurde die Methode der statistischen Versuchsplanung „Box Behnken“ angewandt. Mithilfe der Verhulst Gleichung für biologisches Wachstum wurde die Veränderung der Farbhelligkeit theoretisch modelliert.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen signifikante Unterschiede innerhalb der gemessenen XYZ Anfangs- und Endwerte. Die Umrechnung der Werte in das CIE $L^*a^*b^*$ System macht deutlich, dass die Veränderung der Farbhelligkeit (L^*) dominant ist. Vom Punkt der schnellsten Veränderung der Helligkeit bis zum Ende des Garprozesses kann die restliche Dauer des Garvorgangs, in Abhängigkeit vom gewünschten Gargrad, zuverlässig vorhergesagt werden. Auch mithilfe der b^* Endwerte lässt sich das Ende des Garvorgangs bestimmen. Das Modell zeigt, dass die Veränderung der Helligkeit nicht vollständig mit dem Anstieg der Temperatur im Kern des Fleischstücks erklärt werden kann. Weitere Parameter, wie z.B. der Wassergehalt im Fleisch sollten berücksichtigt werden, um ein universell anwendbares Modell erstellen zu können.

*“It is only shallow people
who do not judge by appearances.
The true mystery of the world
is the visible, not the invisible....”*

Oscar Wilde

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