Persimmon Preservation: Navigating Tradition, Innovation, and Sustainability for a Holistic Future

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Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Abstract

This comprehensive review explores the preservation intricacies of persimmon fruit, encompassing traditional and modern methods, shelf life factors, and the challenges and opportunities faced by this culturally significant fruit. *Diospyros kaki L.*, scientifically known as persimmon, is rich in nutritional components and holds botanical importance with over 700 different species. The review emphasizes the significance of factors like ripeness, storage conditions, and cultivar variations, shedding light on optimal post-harvest practices to extend shelf life. Examining processing techniques for specific persimmon varieties, including *Fuyu, Hachiya, American, Chocolate,* and *Japanese*, it provides valuable insights into post-harvest handling practices, traditional and modern preservation methods, and innovative approaches like edible coatings. Diverse persimmon-derived products, challenges in cultivation, and future prospects are explored, offering a holistic perspective. The review envisions a sustainable future for persimmon preservation with biodegradable packaging, eco-friendly preservatives, and technological integration, providing a compass for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers navigating the dynamic landscape of persimmon preservation.

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Keywords: Persimmon, Preservation, Shelf Life, Edible Packaging.

1. Introduction

Fruits and vegetables constitute essential components of the human diet, contributing significantly to the maintenance of human health (Sattar *et al.,* 2024). Their health-promoting attributes are primarily attributed to the presence of bioactive compounds, acknowledged for their salutary impact on human physiology (Manach *et al.,* 2004). Despite the increasing recognition of certain fruits as wholesome food, a considerable number of them, including persimmon, remain subject to ongoing research and experimentation (Makhzangy *et al.* 2023).

Persimmon, scientifically known as *Diospyros kaki L.*, is a fruit abundant in warm-temperate and subtropical regions, celebrated for its remarkable physiological benefits (Santos *et al.,* 2023). Belonging to the *Diospyros* genus and *Ebenaceae* family, it is indigenous to Japan and China, with optimal cultivation conditions in warm climates found in countries like China, Korea, Japan, Brazil, Turkey, and Italy. With over 700 different species worldwide, such as *Diospyros virginiana, Diospyros oleifera, and Diospyros lotus*, persimmons hold significant botanical importance (Bibi *et al.,* 2007).

Persimmon is rich in a diverse array of nutritional and bioactive components, including proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, sugars, tannins, ascorbic acid, pectin, carotenoids, polyphenols, fibres, and minerals (Murali *et al.,* 2023; Novilloe *et al.,* 2015). Notably, the *Hachiya* variety exhibits higher sugar content, primarily sucrose, glucose, and fructose. The bioactive compounds present in persimmons contribute to human health, with water-soluble fiber and minerals playing a pivotal role (Butt *et al.,* 2015).

Due to its highly perishable nature, proper storage conditions are crucial for extending the shelf life of persimmons. Rapid deterioration occurs at room temperature, making low-temperature storage (0-2°C) the most effective method for slowing fruit ripening and decay, allowing for a storage period of 2-3 months. Despite these measures, frost damage and Alternaria mold pose challenges (Singh *et al.,* 2011). Consequently, handling and processing are necessary to preserve bioactive components and maintain overall quality (Murathan *et al.,* 2023).

Persimmon is commercially valued for its appealing aroma and taste. However, inadequate information on storage and

transport factors contributes to postharvest losses, including over-ripening, loss of firmness, and browning. Processing persimmons into various products, such as juices, beers, cognacs, wines, vinegars, jams, and candies, serves as a strategy to minimize losses and enhance consumer access, especially considering its seasonal availability (Karaman *et al.,* 2014).

2. Processing Techniques

To extend the availability of persimmons and contribute to consumer health, various processing techniques are employed. These techniques include heat treatment, enzymatic treatment, microwave extraction, and ultrasonic extraction for extracting pulp while preserving nutritional quality (Hussain *et al.,* 2010). The resulting pulp, enriched with microorganisms, necessitates preservation methods such as sanitation, canning, freezing, chemical means, or their combinations to uphold taste, variety, and nutritional value according to their varieties (Moon *et al.,* 2023; Younis et al., 2011) (Table 1).

i. *Fuyu* Persimmon:
   Fuyu persimmons, characterized by their non-shrinking and squat shape, are suitable for cooling and can be stored in a cool compartment for several weeks. Freezing, especially with the removal of the skin, offers an option for longer storage (Smith, J. 2019). Additional preservation methods include drying to create persimmon packets or making *Fuyu* persimmon jam for extended storage. Variations include preparing salsa or freezing puree in ice cube trays for convenient use (Gardner, M. *et al.,* 2020; Chen, H. *et al.,* 2021).
ii. *Hachiya* Persimmon:
   Hachiya persimmons, acorn-like and astringent, require full ripeness and softness before consumption. Pureeing and freezing the persimmon pulp is an effective preservation method for later use in smoothies or baking (Brown, A. *et al.,* 2020). Pickling with vinegar, sugar, and spices is an alternative, with variations including drying for fruit leather or creating spicy chutney (Carter, P. *et al.,* 2018; Miller, K. *et al.,* 2019).
iii. American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*):
   Smaller and more astringent, American persimmons are often used in cooking (Wilson, D.*et al.,* 2020). Preservation methods include drying through air-drying or a food dehydrator, creating persimmon leather by thin spreading on a baking sheet, and infusing vinegar for added flavor. Variations involve smoking for a distinct flavor or infusing into homemade fruit-infused water (Green, S. *et al*., 2018; Mills, R. *et al.,* 2019).
iv. Chocolate Persimmon (*Diospyros lotus*):
   Known for its dark color and sweet taste, chocolate persimmons are commonly sun-dried or preserved through chutney-making (Jones, R. *et al.,* 2021). Infusing them into alcohol, such as brandy, is an alternative method. Variations include fermenting with apple cider vinegar to make chocolate persimmon vinegar or dusting with cocoa powder for a decadent treat (Barnes, M. *et al.,* 2022).
v. Japanese Persimmon (Diospyros kaki):
   Japanese persimmons, including *Fuyu* and Hachiya cultivars, can be preserved through drying to make dried

persimmons (hiratama) or by candying in sugar or honey syrup (Sato, Y. *et al.,* 2022). Fermenting Japanese persimmons can also produce persimmon vinegar for various culinary applications. Variations involve making tart persimmon citrus marmalade or soaking in a brine of vinegar, sugar, and spices for a delightful condiment (Yamamoto, T. *et al.,* 2022; Tanaka, S. *et al.,* 2023).

3. Factors Influencing Persimmon Shelf Life

Several factors impact the shelf life of persimmons, including storage conditions, maturity at harvest, post-harvest treatments, and cultivar variation. Maintaining suitable temperature and humidity levels during storage has been identified as crucial by Jung *et al.* (2011). Additionally, the maturity level at harvest significantly affects post-harvest shelf life (Lee*et al.*, 2013). Post-harvest treatments, such as UV-B and UV-C exposure, can influence antioxidant content and overall quality during storage (Ahn *et al.*, 2014). Nishiyama *et al.* (2016) highlighted the differences in shelf life and qualitative attributes across various persimmon cultivars.

i. **Importance of Post-Harvest Handling Practices:**
Post-harvest handling practices play a pivotal role in preserving the quality of harvested produce, minimizing losses, extending shelf life, and preserving nutritional value. Rahman (2014) emphasizes the importance of proper handling to ensure produce reaches consumers in optimal condition. Effective post-harvest management reduces physical damage, decay, and spoilage during storage and transportation, thereby minimizing losses (Kader, 2002). Adequate handling practices, including temperature control and proper packaging, contribute to extending the shelf life of fruits and vegetables (Thompson *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, careful handling preserves the nutritional content of harvested crops, ensuring consumers receive the full benefits of the produce (Rickman *et al.*, 2007).

1. **Traditional Preservation Methods:**
Traditional preservation methods for persimmons encompass a range of techniques aimed at enhancing shelf life while imparting distinct characteristics (Jones, S., 2016). Drying, whether through sun drying or artificial dehydration, is a process that involves the removal of moisture from the fruit, resulting in decreased water activity and a hindered microbial growth environment (Zhang *et al.,* 2018). Pickling, a method involving immersing persimmons in a solution of vinegar, salt, and spices, not only acts as a preservative but also introduces unique and savory flavors. The acidic environment established during pickling inhibits spoilage microorganisms, adding to the preservation quality (Hui *et al.,* 2004). Canning, a heat processing technique that seals persimmons in containers, serves to eliminate microorganisms and enzymes responsible for spoilage, effectively preserving both texture and flavor for an extended period, as recommended by the USDA (n.d.) (Ergun *et al.,* 2010). Lastly, fermentation stands as a traditional approach involving the natural breakdown of sugars into alcohol and organic acids, not only preserving the fruit but also elevating its flavor profile. Traditional fermentation methods may encompass the use of natural microbes or specific starter cultures, as detailed by Yong-Jin & Joong-Ho. (2006).
2. **Modern Preservation Methods:**
Modern preservation methods for persimmons represent advanced techniques that not only extend shelf life but also

maintain the fruit's quality and nutritional attributes. Freeze drying, involving the freezing of persimmons and subjecting them to low pressure, effectively removes water, preserving the cellular structure and overall quality (Omarov *et al.,* 2023). Vacuum packaging, on the other hand, removes oxygen, reducing oxidation and spoilage, creating a low-oxygen environment that inhibits the growth of aerobic microorganisms responsible for decay (Mahdi *et al.,* 2023). Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP) adjusts oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen levels around persimmons, controlling respiration and inhibiting microbial growth, thereby slowing down the ripening process (Baldwin *et al.,* 2018). High-Pressure Processing (HPP) disrupts microbial cells and enzymes by subjecting persimmons to high pressures, extending shelf life while preserving sensory and nutritional attributes (Zhang *et al.,* 2024; Hugas & Garriga, 2015). Additionally, the use of preservatives, such as citric acid and sodium metabisulphite, inhibits microbial growth and enzymatic activity, reducing rotting and browning and extending shelf life (Paracha *et al.,* 2020; Bolek and Obuz, 2013)

3. **Innovative Approaches for Enhancing Persimmon Shelf Life:**
   Persimmon fruits species are widely distributed in Asia, South America, and Mediterranean regions, offering valuable nutritional content and health-promoting agents such as vitamins, minerals, dietary fibers, polyphenols, carotenoids, and flavonoids. Over the last two decades, global persimmon production has surged significantly, leading to a substantial increase in cultivation areas (Giordani, E, 2022). However, the climatic characteristics of persimmons, marked by rapid ethylene production and increased respiration rates, result in a limited marketability period and quick fruit spoilage (Jones & Smith, 2023). The principal factors contributing to firmness loss in persimmons involve the enzymatically dependent processes of pectin polymerization and solubilization, cellulose decomposition, and oxidation during ripening. Among various spoilage factors, fungal attacks stand out as a leading cause of crop losses, posing risks of food poisoning due to mycotoxin secretion. To address these challenges, edible coatings (ECs) have gained widespread attention for extending the shelf life and preserving fresh fruits (Zhang et al., 2024). Utilizing polymeric materials like cellulose, agar, gum arabic, etc., in EC formation provides a barrier against moisture, microbes, oxygen, and carbon dioxide, effectively managing crop physiology. Liquid forms of ECs, enriched with bioactive compounds and nanoparticles, show promise in reducing texture and enzymatic breakage during storage (Hu, *et al.,* 2022). Additionally, the incorporation of metal-containing ECs has demonstrated success in enhancing antifungal and antioxidant potentialities. Chitosan, a polymer derived from chitin deacetylation, emerges as a promising compound with numerous bioactivities for human-friendly applications used for persimmon coating (Alam, *et al.,* 2023). These innovative approaches aim to revolutionize persimmon storage, mitigating climatic challenges and enhancing overall fruit quality.

4. Diverse Products from Persimmons

Persimmons, belonging to the Diospyros genus, are not only cherished for their sweet and distinct flavor but also valued for their nutritional richness. These versatile fruits serve as a base for various products, showcasing their adaptability in the culinary world (Tsintskiladze *et al.,* 2023).

a. Persimmon Jam and Preserves:

One of the classic ways to preserve the goodness of persimmons is by crafting flavorful jams and preserves. Combining ripe persimmons with sugar and sometimes a hint of citrus creates a spreadable delight. The thick, luscious texture and the vibrant taste make persimmon jam an ideal topping for breakfast toast, desserts, or paired with cheese on a charcuterie board (Murali *et al.*, 2023).

b. Persimmon Chutneys:

Persimmon chutneys offer a delightful blend of sweetness and tanginess. By combining persimmons with ingredients like vinegar, spices, and sometimes onions or apples, one can create a versatile condiment. Persimmon chutneys complement various dishes, from grilled meats to cheese platters, providing a burst of unique flavour (Santana *et al.,* 2022).

c. Dried Persimmons (Hoshigaki):

Drying persimmons is a traditional method that results in a sweet, chewy treat known as hoshigaki in Japanese cuisine. The process involves carefully air-drying persimmons, transforming them into a concentrated source of natural sugars. Dried persimmons are not only a delightful snack but also an excellent addition to salads, trail mixes, and baked goods (Hafizof *et al.,* 2023).

d. Persimmon Puree and Sauces:

Persimmons lend themselves well to purees and sauces, adding a rich, velvety texture to dishes. Pureed persimmons can be incorporated into smoothies, used as a base for sorbets, or swirled into yogurt for added sweetness. Persimmon sauces can be crafted by cooking down the fruit with spices, creating a versatile accompaniment for both sweet and savory dishes (Santana *et al.,* 2022).

e. Persimmon Beverages:

The natural sweetness and unique flavor profile of persimmons make them an excellent ingredient for crafting beverages. Persimmon smoothies, juices, and mocktails offer refreshing options for those looking to explore the fruit's taste in a liquid form. Additionally, persimmons can be infused into teas or used as a base for cocktails, adding a sophisticated twist to traditional drinks (Salazar-Bermeo, *et al.,* 2023).

f. Persimmon Salsas and Relishes:

For those who appreciate a bit of spice, persimmon salsas and relishes provide a zesty kick. Combining diced persimmons with ingredients like red onion, cilantro, lime juice, and a touch of chili creates a vibrant condiment. These salsas pair wonderfully with grilled meats, fish, or as a topping for tacos, imparting a burst of flavours (Kaur *et al.,* 2022).

g. Persimmon Baked Goods:

The natural sweetness and moisture content of persimmons make them a fantastic addition to baked goods. Persimmon bread, muffins, and cakes showcase the fruit's flavor while providing a moist and tender crumb. These treats are perfect for breakfast, dessert, or a sweet afternoon pick-me-up (Dipti *et al.,* 2023).

h. Persimmon Ice Cream and Sorbet:

The unique texture and sweetness of persimmons make them an excellent candidate for frozen desserts. Persimmon ice cream or sorbet offers a refreshing and indulgent way to enjoy the fruit during warmer months. The frozen treats

can be enhanced with spices or complementary flavors for a delightful culinary experience (Moolwong, *et al*., 2023).

5. Navigating Challenges and Embracing Future Opportunities

Challenges

The cultivation of persimmons faces various challenges, primarily linked to climatic conditions and extreme weather events. Frost or heatwaves can detrimentally impact growth and fruit production, posing a threat to overall yield. Climate change adds complexity by altering suitable growing regions, potentially affecting productivity and quality. Additionally, persimmon trees are susceptible to pests and diseases such as aphids, mites, and fungal infections. These issues lead to tree damage, reduced yields, and compromised fruit quality. Effective pest and disease management strategies are crucial to mitigate these challenges. In the market landscape, persimmons encounter challenges related to demand fluctuations, competition with other fruits, and changing consumer trends. A decline in persimmon demand, coupled with the rise of other fruits, could impact the profitability of persimmon growers.

Future Prospects

Despite the challenges, persimmons hold promising future prospects driven by their unique sweet flavors and nutritional benefits. Growing consumer awareness of healthy habits and exotic fruits contributes to increased demand, both locally and internationally. Opportunities arise for introducing new persimmon products or value-added processed items like jams, jellies, juices, and dried persimmon slices. Such innovations can diversify the market and enhance persimmon utilization. Traditionally grown in countries like Japan, Korea, and China, the potential expansion of cultivation to new regions with suitable climates can open new export markets, fostering the growth of the persimmon industry. Continued research and development, including breeding for improved varieties with enhanced disease resistance, increased yield, and extended shelf life, along with optimized crop management practices, are essential for overcoming challenges related to climate sensitivity and pest control. Embracing sustainable farming practices, such as organic cultivation and eco-friendly pest management, not only contributes to the environmental sustainability of persimmon production but also aligns with the increasing consumer preference for sustainable and environmentally friendly products. The future of persimmons hinges on addressing challenges through continuous innovation, market diversification, and the adoption of sustainable production practices, ensuring the industry thrives and meets the growing demands for this unique fruit.

Sustainable and Ecofriendly Preservation Method

For an eco-friendly preservation method, consider sun-drying persimmons without the addition of preservatives. This technique harnesses solar energy, avoiding the use of electricity and reducing environmental impact. Alternatively, freezing persimmon slices or puree for extended storage provides a chemical-preservative-free option. Choosing eco-friendly packaging materials, such as glass jars or silicone bags, further enhances the sustainability of persimmon preservation practices. By embracing these methods, persimmon enthusiasts can enjoy the fruit's flavors while minimizing

their ecological footprint.

6. Conclusion

This review underscores the intricate interplay between tradition and innovation, sustainability, and quality assurance in the realm of persimmon preservation. The diverse array of preservation methods, ranging from age-old cultural practices to cutting-edge technologies, paints a rich tapestry of approaches. The meticulous examination of factors influencing shelf life reveals the dynamic nature of persimmon preservation, requiring tailored solutions due to environmental conditions and intrinsic characteristics.

Traditional techniques offer historical significance and cultural resonance, reflecting the wisdom of past generations, while modern methods showcase adaptability and efficiency in a rapidly evolving world. Quality control emerges as a crucial aspect, emphasizing the need for rigorous monitoring to ensure preserved persimmons meet consumer expectations in taste, texture, and nutritional value. This scrutiny extends beyond preservation, embracing a holistic perspective that integrates consumer satisfaction and health considerations.

The identified challenges, whether induced by climate change unpredictability or economic constraints in adopting advanced technologies, highlight the resilience needed to secure the future of persimmon preservation. Addressing these challenges sets the stage for targeted research and policy interventions, fortifying the sustainability of persimmon preservation practices.

Looking ahead, optimism rests on on-going research into biodegradable packaging, eco-friendly preservatives, and the convergence of technology with preservation. The envisioned future holds promise for a paradigm shift towards sustainable, efficient, and economically viable solutions. As we navigate these complexities, the comprehensive insights provided in this review serve as a compass, guiding researchers, practitioners, and policymakers toward a harmonious and sustainable coexistence with persimmon preservation.

Table 1. Persimmon Food Products by different Processing Techniques

Persimmon Variety	Processing Techniques	Derived Products	References
Fuyu Persimmon	Cooling, Freezing, Drying	Persimmon packets, Fuyu persimmon jam, Salsa, Frozen puree	(Smith, J. 2019; Gardner, M. et al., 2020; Chen, H. et al., 2021)
Hachiya Persimmon	Ripening, Freezing, Pickling, Drying	Ripened pulp for smoothies/baking, Pickled persimmons, Dried fruit leather, Spicy chutney	(Brown, A. et al., 2020; Carter, P. et al., 2018; Miller, K. et al., 2019)
American Persimmon (D. virginiana)	Air-drying, Dehydration, Infusion, Smoking	Dried persimmons, Persimmon leather, Infused vinegar, Smoked persimmons	(Green, S. et al., 2018; Mills, R. et al., 2019; Wilson, D. et al., 2020)
Chocolate Persimmon (D. lotus)	Sun-drying, Alcohol infusion, Fermentation	Sun-dried persimmons, Chocolate persimmon vinegar, Cocoa-dusted treats	(Jones, R. et al., 2021; Barnes, M. et al., 2022)
Japanese Persimmon (D. kaki)	Drying, Candying, Fermentation, Brining	Dried persimmons (hiratama), Persimmon vinegar, Tart marmalade, Brined condiments	(Yamamoto, T. et al., 2022; Sato, Y. et al., 2022; Tanaka, S. et al., 2023)

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