

## Nutritional Analysis And Functional Properties Of Some Commonly Consumed Insects In Nigeria

### ABSTRACT

Edible insects have played a vital role in the history of human nutrition in Nigeria. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the nutritional value and functional properties of some commonly consumed insects in Nigeria. These insects included *Rhynchophorus phoenicis* larva, *Oryctesrhinoceros* larva, *Acheta domesticus* and *Macrotermesbellicosus* from the orders of Coleoptera, Isoptera and Orthoptera. Proximate composition, vitamin content and functional properties of the insects were determined using standard analytical methods. Statistical analysis was performed using ANOVA to determine significant differences. The moisture content ranged from  $9.2 \pm 0.29\%$  to  $58.9 \pm 0.78\%$ . The highest lipid value of  $28.7 \pm 0.29\%$  was found in *M. bellicosus* and the least value of  $8.3 \pm 0.51\%$  found in *A. domesticus*. The difference in lipid content among the insects was statistically significant with  $P < 0.05$ . The highest amount of  $38.2 \pm 0.21\%$  crude protein was found in *A. domesticus*. The difference in the crude protein content among the insects was also statistically significant with  $P < 0.05$ . *A. domesticus* had the richest carbohydrate value of  $31.9 \pm 0.37\%$  with *R. phoenicis* having the least amount of  $3.1 \pm 0.14\%$ . The ash content ranged from  $2.9 \pm 0.15\%$  to  $14.1 \pm 0.24\%$ . *A. domesticus* had the highest vitamin A value of  $4.2 \pm 0.01$  with *M. bellicosus* having the lowest value of  $2.2 \pm 0.08$  in  $\mu\text{M}$ . The observed vitamin C values were in the range of  $56.8 \pm 0.96$  to  $11.5 \pm 0.66$  in  $\mu\text{M}$ . *M. bellicosus* had the highest vitamin E value of  $32.6 \pm 0.24 \mu\text{M}$ . Water and oil absorption capacity ranged from  $136.7 \pm 0.19\%$  to  $170.0 \pm 0.06\%$  and  $103.3 \pm 0.06\%$  to  $146.7 \pm 0.13\%$ . Emulsion activity, capacity and stability ranged from  $39.7 \pm 1.42\%$  to  $84.3 \pm 1.14\%$ ,  $37.0 \pm 0.58\%$  to  $87.7 \pm 0.34\%$  and  $33.3 \pm 0.34\%$  to  $79.0 \pm 1.53\%$  respectively. Foaming capacity and stability ranged from  $5.3 \pm 0.34\%$  to  $7.7 \pm 0.34\%$  and  $1.3 \pm 0.34\%$  to  $3.0 \pm 0.58\%$ . These results indicate that **these insects/insect larvae** have potential for exploitation in combating nutritional deficiencies of public health concern and could form a base for new food products of considerable nutritive value.

**Keywords:** *Rhynchophorus phoenicis* larva, *Oryctesrhinoceros* larva, *Acheta domesticus*, *Macrotermesbellicosus*, proximate analysis, functional properties.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the prominent issues facing world development is that of under-nutrition and poverty. A recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO and WHO, 2020) estimated the number of people globally experiencing food insecurity at 750 million, a number which rises to two billion when moderate food insecurity is considered, with over 20% of children under five showing stunted growth. Increasing world population growth increases demand for protein but available farmland is limited. A lack of protein in the diet can greatly affect growth, immune function, metabolism and sometimes lead to protein-energy malnutrition (Sani et. al., 2014).

Many species of insects have been used as human food in Nigeria some of which include grasshoppers, winged termites caterpillars, beetles as well as crickets (Citation ?). They are conceived as alternative food source, oil and protein, providing essential nutrients. Yet, unlike a meal-based approach, they are not considered as complete foods. In recent times, there has been a renewed research interest on the potential of insects for food and animal feed (Van Huis, 2020; Babarinde et. al., 2021). This may be probably due to their high protein, vitamin and mineral benefits (Parker et. al., 2020; Naseem et. al., 2021).

The larva of the beetle *Rhynchophorus phoenicis* (F) popularly known as snout beetle has high nutritive value and therefore, is a delicacy in various regions in Nigeria. Some tribes (the Urhobo's and Isoko's in Delta state) strongly recommend it for their pregnant women, probably as a source of essential nutrients (Ekpo, 2003, Ekpo and Onigbinde 2005, 2008). The larva of *Oryctes rhinoceros* (coconut rhinoceros beetle) and adult *Macrotermes bellicosus* (winged termite) are delicacies served as snacks or taken with carbohydrate foods (Citation?). *Acheta domesticus* popularly known as house cricket is dug from its hole and then roasted for eating. (N.B: Crickets that are dug from its hole are not *A. Domesticus* but *Brachytrupes membranaceus*)

Edible insects present a lot of benefits in combating nutritional deficiency. Although, variable between insect species (Van, 2013), the high protein and fat contents of edible insects compares favorably to meat and fish (Barroso et. al., 2014). Furthermore, the amino acid profiles of several species have been demonstrated to contain a high proportion of essential amino acids. Edible insects also present a promising source of micronutrients. Knowledge dissemination is important in achieving global use of insects as food (Govorushko, 2019) and increasing willingness to pay for insect-based food (Lombardi et. al., 2019).

While individual nutrient compositions of these insects have been studied (Ekpo and Onigbinde, 2008), this research provides a comparative analysis across multiple species, contributing new insights for combating nutrient deficiency, industrial food processes and animal feed formulations.

## 2. Materials

Live larvae of *R. phoenicis* and *O. rhinoceros* were collected from rot palm trees and raphia palms respectively at Illushi, Edo State, Nigeria. Live house crickets (*A. domesticus*) were collected by hand and live termites (*M. bellicosus*) by hand during their nuptial flight.

### 3. Methodology

Insect collection was performed in accordance with local regulations and ethical guidelines for environmental research. Within 24 hours of collection, the fresh samples were blended separately using an electric blender and stored in air-tight containers for further analytical use.

The proximate composition was determined as follows: Determination of crude protein content was performed by the modified Kjeldahl method of William (1964). By using a factor of 6.25 to multiply the Gram nitrogen, the crude protein content was obtained. Lipid was extracted by the method of Bligh and Dyer (1959). The moisture content was quantified by making use of oven drying method as described by Association of Official Analytical Chemists (AOAC) in 1990. The total ash was determined using the method described by Kirk and Sawyer (1991). The carbohydrate content was estimated by difference as the total percentage composition of moisture, lipid, protein and ash were summed up and subtracted from 100%.

Vitamin A was estimated using the method of Jakutowicz et. al., (1977). 0.5g of the grinded sample was weighed, homogenized with sulphate buffer saline and centrifuged. 5.0ml of supernatant was pipetted into test tube, 0.5ml of ethanol and 4.0ml of petroleum ether were added respectively. The absorbance was read using a spectrophotometer at 450nm and the amount of vitamin A extrapolated from a standard vitamin A curve. The vitamin E content was also quantified using the method of Jakutowicz et. al., (1977) while the vitamin C was evaluated by the method of Omaye et. al., (1979).

Water and oil absorption capacity were determined by the method of Sosulki et. al., (1976). Water and refined vegetable oil were used respectively for the analysis. 1g each of blended sample was weighed into two measuring cylinders and 20ml of distilled water and vegetable oil added to each. The contents were stirred for 30 seconds with a glass rod and suspended for 10 minutes to rest. Each of the contents were poured individually into a blender and grinded for 10 minutes. The water and oil were decanted from each of the cylinder and percentage of water and oil absorbed were calculated as ratio of the weights of sample multiplied by 100. Emulsion capacity, activity and stability were determined by the method described by Okezie and Bello (1988). Foam capacity and stability were estimated by the method of Narayana and Narsinga (1982).

Analytical procedures were carried out in triplicate and the mean values recorded. The mean and Standard Error of Mean (SEM) of the triplicate analyses were calculated. Statistical analyses were conducted using one-way ANOVA to compare the proximate value, vitamin content and functional properties of the insects. A significance level of  $P < 0.05$  was used to determine differences across the species.

#### 4. Results

The order, local name and consumption stage of the studied insects are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Order, local name and consumption stage of four edible insects consumed in Nigeria**

Order	Scientific name	Common Name	Local name	Consumption stage
Coleoptera <i>Phoenicis</i>	<i>Rhynchophorus</i>	Palm weevil Odidi	Isoko:	Larva
Coleoptera <i>rhinoceros</i>	<i>Oryctes</i> beetle	Rhinoceros Akpakara	Isoko:	Larva
Orthoptera <i>domesticus</i>	<i>Acheta</i> cricket	House Ozeze	Isoko:	Adult
Isoptera <i>Bellicosus</i>	<i>Macrotermes</i> termite	Winged Ofuru-Ukpe	Isoko:	Adult

Result of the proximate analysis of *R. phoenicis* larva, *O. rhinoceros* larva, *A. domesticus* and *M. bellicosus* are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Proximate analysis (%) of four edible insects in Nigeria**

Insects	Moisture	Lipid	Protein	Carbohydrate	Ash
<i>Rhynchophorus</i> <i>phoenicis</i>	58.5 ± 0.78 <sup>a</sup>	23.8 ± 0.29 <sup>b</sup>	23.8 ± 0.29 <sup>b</sup>	3.1 ± 0.14 <sup>c</sup>	2.9 ± 0.15 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Oryctes</i> <i>rhinoceros</i>	58.2 ± 0.23 <sup>a</sup>	13.7 ± 0.29 <sup>c</sup>	13.9 ± 0.91 <sup>c</sup>	9.3 ± 0.27 <sup>b</sup>	4.9 ± 0.07 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Acheta</i> <i>domesticus</i>	9.2 ± 0.29 <sup>c</sup>	8.3 ± 0.51 <sup>d</sup>	38.2 ± 0.21 <sup>a</sup>	31.9 ± 0.37 <sup>a</sup>	12 ± 0.35 <sup>a</sup>

*Macrotermes bellicosus* 12.1 ± 0.59<sup>b</sup> 28.7 ± 0.29<sup>a</sup> 35.0 ± 0.91<sup>a</sup> 10.1 ± 0.33<sup>b</sup> 14.1 ± 0.24<sup>a</sup>

Results represent the Mean ± SEM of three estimations; Values are % wet weight of the larvae. Different letters within the same column indicate significant differences (P < 0.05). (It wasn't stated whether post hoc test was carried out as ANOVA test cannot determine which specific groups differ)

Proximate analysis of the studied edible insects showed that, moisture was highest in *R. phoenicis* larva with a content of 58 ± 0.78% and the least value of 9.2 ± 0.29% was found in *A. domesticus*. The difference in moisture content among the insects was statistically significant with P < 0.05. The highest crude protein content was found in *A. domesticus* with a value of 38.3 ± 0.21%. The high protein content in *A. domesticus* may be attributed to its adult stage, as insect maturity can influence nutrient accumulation. The difference in protein content among the insects was also statistically significant with P < 0.05. The insect with the richest carbohydrate content of 31.9 ± 0.37% was *A. domesticus* while *R. phoenicis* larva had the least content of 3.1 ± 0.14%. The highest lipid value of 28.7 ± 0.29% was recorded in *M. bellicosus*. Ash value of the four insects ranged from 2.9 ± 0.15% to 14.1 ± 0.24%.

Result of vitamin A, C and E of the studied insects are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Vitamin Content (µM) of four edible insects in Nigeria**

Insects	Vitamin A	Vitamin C	Vitamin E
<i>Rhynchophorus phoenicis</i>	3.2 ± 0.01 <sup>b</sup>	56.8 ± 0.96 <sup>a</sup>	21.8 ± 0.33 <sup>c</sup>
<i>Oryctes rhinoceros</i>	2.6 ± 0.06 <sup>c</sup>	27.5 ± 0.38 <sup>b</sup>	25.3 ± 0.39 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Acheta domesticus</i>	4.2 ± 0.01 <sup>a</sup>	11.5 ± 0.66 <sup>d</sup>	24.1 ± 0.31 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Macrotermes bellicosus</i>	2.2 ± 0.08 <sup>c</sup>	14.7 ± 0.22 <sup>c</sup>	32.6 ± 0.24 <sup>a</sup>

Results represent the Mean ± SEM of three estimations; Different letters within the same column indicate significant differences (P < 0.05)

Vitamin A value of the studied insects/insect larva ranged from 4.2 ± 0.01 to 2.2 ± 0.08 in µM. *A. domesticus* was richest in vitamin C when compared to the other insects investigated while *M. bellicosus* was observed to contain the highest vitamin E value.

Result of the functional properties (%) of the studied insects are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Functional properties(%) of four edible insects in Nigeria**

Parameters	<i>Ryhnchophorus Phoenicis</i>	<i>Oryctes rhinoceros</i>	<i>Acheta domesticus</i>	<i>Macrotermes bellicosus</i>
Water absorption capacity (WAC)	140.0 ± 0.21 <sup>a</sup>	136.7 ± 0.19 <sup>a</sup>	166.7 ± 0.06 <sup>a</sup>	170.0 ± 0.06 <sup>a</sup>
Oil absorption capacity (OAC)	113.3 ± 0.10 <sup>b</sup>	103.3 ± 0.06 <sup>b</sup>	146.7 ± 0.13 <sup>b</sup>	143.0 ± 0.10 <sup>b</sup>
Emulsion activity (EA)	39.7 ± 1.42 <sup>c</sup>	79.3 ± 0.87 <sup>c</sup>	84.3 ± 1.14 <sup>c</sup>	81.6 ± 1.2 <sup>c</sup>
Emulsion capacity (EC)	37.0 ± 0.58 <sup>c</sup>	82.0 ± 1.16 <sup>c</sup>	87.7 ± 0.34 <sup>c</sup>	82.5 ± 1.46 <sup>c</sup>
Emulsion stability (ES)	33.3 ± 0.34 <sup>c</sup>	75.7 ± 2.19 <sup>c</sup>	79.0 ± 1.53 <sup>c</sup>	76.3 ± 0.88 <sup>c</sup>
Foam capacity (FC)	7.7 ± 0.34 <sup>d</sup>	5.3 ± 0.34 <sup>d</sup>	6.7 ± 0.34 <sup>d</sup>	7.7 ± 0.34 <sup>d</sup>
Foam stability (FS)	3.0 ± 0.58 <sup>d</sup>	1.3 ± 0.34 <sup>e</sup>	1.7 ± 0.34 <sup>e</sup>	2.7 ± 0.67 <sup>e</sup>

Results represent the Mean ± SEM of three estimations; Different letters within the same column indicate significant differences (P < 0.05)

The results revealed that *Macrotermes bellicosus* had the highest water absorption capacity (WAC) of 170.0 ± 0.06% with *Ryhnchophorus Phoenicis* and *Oryctes rhinoceros* having comparable values of 140.0 ± 0.21% and 136.7 ± 0.19%. The difference in the water absorption capacity (WAC) among the insects was statistically significant with P < 0.05. Oil absorption capacity (OAC) was highest in *Acheta domesticus* with a value of 146.7 ± 0.13% and lowest in *Oryctes rhinoceros* with a value of 103.3 ± 0.06%. Emulsion activity (EA), Emulsion capacity (EC) and Emulsion stability (ES) were highest in *Acheta domesticus*. Foam capacity (FC) and foam stability (FS) were in the range of 7.7 ± 0.34% to 5.3 ± 0.34% and 3.0 ± 0.58% to 1.3 ± 0.34%.

## 5. Discussion

The consumption of edible insects (entomophagy) in Africa, is a traditionally and culturally acceptable way by which the income group in the society supplement the meagre protein content of their high carbohydrate diets (Ekpo et. al., 2009). In Nigeria, insects such as termites, crickets, beetle larva form an important portion of the diets of many cultures and communities, where they are included as a planned portion of the diet or snacks. Although, they are not



available all through the year but processing them can help in extending the period of availability for consumption and income generation.

Results of this research agree with the broader cultural practice of entomophagy in Africa, revealing that edible insects can serve as sources of essential nutrients for the poor in the society. Specifically, *Acheta domesticus* and *Macrotermes bellicosus* were discovered to be rich in protein and other nutrients.

Some studies earlier conducted reported morphometric parameters and/or proximate values of insects/insect larva which closely agrees with observations of this study. The insect larva had higher moisture values than their adult counterparts making most of their nutrients available to the body upon consumption. The major setback of high moisture content is that, it reduces the period of preservation due to risk of spoilage by micro-organisms.

Edible insects have been reported to possess higher protein content when compared to other animal sources such as beef, chicken and fish (Defoliart, 1989) (Halloran et al., 2018; Cullere et al., 2019; Stull and Patz, 2020). The protein content of the studied insects ranged from  $13.9 \pm 0.91\%$  to  $38.2 \pm 0.21\%$ . These results were quantitatively comparable to 11.1% and 20.1% (wet weight) reported by Davis (1918) (Reference too old) for *Lachnosternalarva* and adult beetle species, 22.1% (wet weight) reported by Fleming (1968) for the Japanese beetle *Popillia japonica*. This result indicates that edible insects are indeed good sources of protein for man and animals.

Protein plays a vital role in the maintenance of body tissue including development and growth. In the absence of energy, it can be broken down to release energy, it is involved in the production of hormones, which help to control body functions and help regulate cell growth. It also plays a major role in the formation of enzymes which increases the rate of chemical reactions in the body.

The fat content in *Macrotermes bellicosus* and *Ryhnchophorus Phoenicis* were higher than in other insects, which could be the reason why their gross energy is high, as fat contributes more calorie than twice the contribution of carbohydrates and proteins. Although, the fat content in *M. bellicosus* was high but can be quantitatively compared with published data for insects of various species. Fast (1966) reported a fat content for *R. palmarum* as 22.3% (wet weight). Calvert et al., 1969, reported a fat content value of 15.5% for *Musca domestica* pupae. Fat functions as an important depot for energy storage, insulates and protects the body, regulates temperature and helps the body to absorb vitamins A, D and E.

The carbohydrate content of the studied insects is lower when compared to values of 24.7% for winged termite and 48.2% dry weight for grasshopper as reported by Ahmad et. al., (2013). Carbohydrates are important nutritive elements in human body. They are most valuable among other food components (Offiah et. al., 2019).

Ash is a reflection of the mineral content contained in a sample. Ash content analysis showed that *M. bellicosus* and *A. domesticus* had higher values than the other insects whose results closely agree with other values of 4.3% reported by Solomon et. al., 2012, 2.8% and 2.6% for green and brown *Ruspoliadifferens* reported by Kinyuru et. al., 2006.

Vitamins are a group of organic substances needed for normal cell function, growth and development. With the exception of vitamin D, vitamins cannot be synthesized in the human body, they must be supplied in the diet. The vitamin content of these insects/insect larva is suggestive of their potentials in alleviating vitamin deficiency.

Winged termites (*M. bellicosus*) contained high content of vitamin A and C. Vitamin A plays vital role in vision, immune function, reproduction, growth and development. It also forms and maintains healthy teeth, skeletal tissue, mucus membrane and skin.

*R. Phoenicis* had the highest vitamin C value when compared to the other insects studied. Vitamin C forms an important protein called collagen used to make skin, tendons, ligaments and blood vessels. It aids in the absorption of iron, wound healing, repair of cartilages, bones and teeth.

*M. bellicosus* was observed to contain the highest amount of vitamin E which is a fat-soluble nutrient found in many foods. It acts as an antioxidant in protecting the body tissues from damages caused by free radicals, helps keep the immune system strong against viruses and bacteria and helps the body in making use of vitamin K.

The water absorption capacity (WAC) ranged from  $136 \pm 0.19\%$  to  $170.0 \pm 0.06\%$ . This shows that the insect/insect larva can be incorporated into aqueous food formulations. Oil absorption capacity (OAC) ranged between  $103.3 \pm 0.06\%$  to  $146.7 \pm 0.13\%$ . Oil absorption capacity (OAC) is important since oil acts as flavor retainer and increases the palatability of foods. The emulsion capacity, activity and stability were high and can be compared to what other researchers earlier reported. The results suggest that these insect/insect larvae would be highly desirable for preparing comminuted meats. Foam formulation and stability are functions of the type of protein PH, processing methods, viscosity and surface tension. Foam capacity and stability ranged between  $5.3 \pm 0.34\%$  to  $7.7 \pm 0.34\%$  and  $1.3 \pm 0.34\%$  to  $3.0 \pm 0.58\%$  respectively. Akubor and Chukwu (1999) reported that foams are used to improve the texture, consistency and appearance of foods.

A limitation of this research is that the nutritive value of these insect/insect larva can vary with seasons and environmental factors, which were unaccounted for here. Future research should find out how these factors affect nutritive levels in order to provide a broad knowledge of their potential in combating nutrient deficiency.

## 6. Conclusion

The health and well-being of an individual depends on the interaction between his/her genetic potential and on exogenous factors like adequacy of nutrition, safety of the environment and social interaction. Protein, lipid, carbohydrate and vitamins are vital food nutrients required in the body for growth, repair of worn-out tissues, energy production, reproduction and health maintenance. Deficiency of these nutrients results in different disease conditions such as marasmus, night blindness, soft bones, stunted growth, poor immunity, kwashiorkor, sterility



among others. Milk and eggs are great sources of these nutrients but due to their high cost, they are unavailable to the low-income group in the society.

This research affirms the fact that edible insects provide higher amounts of proteins, fats, carbohydrate and vitamins than beef and chicken. Their consumption could play a crucial role in alleviating protein-energy malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies, particularly in resource poor-settings. Moreover, this knowledge justifies the fact that these **insect/insect larvae** are important food items requiring industrial application and commercialization to provide sustainable solutions in meeting nutritional needs.

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